

VLR- 6/20/89 NRHP- 11/13/89

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Phillips-Ronald House

other names/site number Carrington Lybrook House; Five Chimneys; 150-15

2. Location

street & number South corner of Draper Rd. at Washington St. N/A not for publication

city, town Blacksburg N/A vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Montgomery code 121 zip code 24061

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
2	0 buildings
0	0 sites
0	0 structures
0	0 objects
2	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Prehistoric and
Historic Resources of Montgomery County

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

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): _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: double-pile center-passage plan

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof metal: tin

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Phillips-Ronald House is located on the southwest edge of the sixteen original squares of the town of Blacksburg, on a large lot on a low hill above a branch of Troubles Creek, which flows between it and Draper Road (formerly Water Street). The one-story brick house is situated halfway to the back of the 325-foot-deep lot, near the Washington Street side. The section of Troubles Creek flowing before the house is the only portion of the creek visible on this side of Main Street. A brick wall dating from the twentieth century separates the house and its domestic space from Washington Street, and a large, very old maple tree stands to the immediate north of the north corner of the house, just inside the wall. The house is surrounded by a large and extensive ornamental garden.

The house takes the form of a hip-roofed, one-story, double-pile, center-passage house. The four major chimneys are placed in the conventional positions along the side walls. The house has a five-bay principal (northeast) facade, with a central entrance featuring a transom and sidelights. The six-over-six double-hung sash windows and the doors are headed with wooden lintels with cornerblocks. Windows lighting the near range of rooms are located only in the side walls, flanking the chimneys. The front is constructed in Flemish-bond brick but, as is typical in the area in the first half of the nineteenth century, the sides and rear are built in six-course American-bond brick. The house was painted red at an early date and the mortar joints were penciled. The house has a wooden box cornice and a wooden concrete-perimeter foundation. An integral ell extends from the rear of the south room to the southwest.

The interior features square trim, plain cornerblocks, and flush panels below the windows. Most of the original four-panel doors survive. The mantels were removed before the 1930s and the last owner installed Greek Revival mantels from a demolished house in Christiansburg. The internal structural framing shows up-and-down saw marks. A room is built into the passage at the rear end, and shows by its up-and-down sawn studs and trim that it is contemporary with the original building campaign. The one-

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1850-1938

Significant Dates

1851-1852

Significant Person
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Phillips-Ronald House is significant under criterion C as a good example of a regionally popular vernacular form in a rare one-story variant. It is the only one of five houses of the double-pile center-passage form built during the mid-nineteenth-century period to take a one-story form. The house incorporates decorative features from the mid-nineteenth century and the late nineteenth century, and was repaired and given its splendid landscaped setting in the 1930s. The house illustrates how regional buildings were changed as expectations and needs altered. Alterations to the building do not impair its significant form and decorative features. The contributing frame garage dates from the ownership of A. G. Smith in the 1930s and illustrates the changing function of domestic space and auxiliary buildings.

The house seems almost certainly to have been built in 1851-1852. The form and details suggest a mid-century date, and documentary sources confirm this. John R. Phillips, a Blacksburg merchant and physician, bought land from Alexander Black in the immediate vicinity. No deed survives in the county records, but there is a lawsuit between Alexander Black and Phillips over the failure of Phillips to pay Black \$1,000 for the more than eighteen-acre tract. During the mid-1840s Black subdivided and sold his land adjoining the southwest edge of Blacksburg. The price paid by Phillips is commensurate with prices paid for undeveloped land near Blacksburg in the period (Pezzoni, p. 6). He was practicing medicine in Blacksburg as early as 1840, and by 1849 had opened a dry goods store, probably in a building described as his dwelling and store house (now gone) on Water Street beside the Presbyterian church. He was still practicing medicine in 1856, when a deed records his ownership of a medical library (Deed Book Q, p. 26). Phillips was also a director of the new Blacksburg Savings Bank (1849) and of the Olin and

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Conway, W. B. "In Blacksburg" Typescript 1916, Newman Library, V.P.I.&S.U.

Duray, Donna, et al. Blacksburg: Understanding a Virginia Town. Blacksburg, Virginia: Townscape Committee, 1986.

"Independence: A. G. Smith lived 95 years to the fullest." News-Messenger, Christiansburg, Virginia, February 23, 1986, p. 3H.

Pezzoni, Daniel. "Five Chimneys: A Documentation and Proposal", Report to Townscape Committee, 1986.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
221 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than two acres. one acre

UTM References

A 1|7 5|5|2|0|2|0 4|1|2|0|0|0|0
Zone Easting Northing
C

B
Zone Easting Northing
D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at point A on the southwest side of Draper Road 150 feet southeast of the intersection of Washington Street and Draper Road, thence 325 feet southwest to point B, thence 165 feet northwest to point C, thence 325 feet northeast with the southeast side of Washington Street to point D, thence 165 feet southeast with the southwest side of Draper Road to the point of origin.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen to include the house and sheds, landscape features, and the domestic-related space, as defined by property lines.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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room ell has a wide chimney and fireplace in the basement room below. Since the main floor fireplace is smaller, it would seem that cooking was done in the basement. A full basement extends under the house.

The first addition made to the house seems to have been the three-bay central entrance porch. It has sawn brackets and spindles in the gable, and slender turned posts, all dating stylistically from the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, but harmonizing well with the house. There is no evidence of any earlier porch. When A. G. Smith, the last long-term owner, acquired the house in the 1930s, he extensively repaired the walls and chimneys, except for the front. He also constructed a new ell opposite the original one, and connected the two with an enclosure.

A bath and partitions to create closets were added as well. He also replaced the exterior foundation walls with concrete, as he found the existing walls badly deteriorated (Pezzoni, p. 10).

Also on the property are two sheds and a contributing 1930s weatherboarded frame garage located to the rear of the house. Archaeology performed as part of this project in the summer of 1987 failed to provide evidence of any additional site on the property.

Five 1m² test units were excavated at the Phillips-Ronald House property as part of the project leading to this nomination. The squares were excavated in two to four levels to depths of twenty to thirty centimeters below surface. Squares 1 and 2 were excavated to the rear of the house (behind the kitchen location) in order to locate artifacts relating to kitchen use and food preparation. Square 3 was excavated near the front porch in an unsuccessful attempt to locate an intact builder's trench from the original house construction (subsequent concrete reinforcement of the foundation in this area had obliterated this feature).

Squares 4 and 5 were excavated in the backyard of the house in an effort to locate the foundation of the former stables. These last two squares did not produce any distinctive features or stratigraphy and contained a great deal of poor quality coal. Included in this coal matrix, however, were mostly mid-nineteenth-century plain and blue transferprinted whitewares,

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lead glazed redware and cut nails. Whether these deposits represent fill from another location or in situ materials could not be determined.

Squares 1 and 2 produced brick and coal fragments and both wire and cut nails. The topsoil here was between ten to fifteen centimeters thick and contained most of the more recent artifacts. At about eighteen centimeters below surface in Square 1, however, more substantial concentrations of a brick and limestone "pavement" (formed by brick fragments and limestone flakes) covered the base of the entire square. Artifacts from the seven-centimeter-thick level above this pavement contained mostly cut nails and plain and decorated whiteware ceramics. The dates for the cut nails (1810-1870) and the ceramics (mid-1800s) (Lofstrom 1976; South 1977) suggest that this feature relates to the original construction and occupation of the house (1851 or 1852) (Pezzoni n.d.). Since the feature did not extend into Square 2, it likely served as a walkway from the kitchen to various outbuildings in the rear yard.

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Preston Institute (later Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, founded in 1854).

The first mention of the house is in a deed of April 14, 1853, when Phillips sold one and one-half acres to Charles A. Ronald and Nicholas M. Ronald for \$1,000. Many suits for indebtedness were recorded during the period against Phillips, culminating in a summons to court to answer to a debt of \$600 to James F. Preston one month before his sale of the house. The deed mentions the brick house "formerly occupied by Carrington Lybrook," a young tailor (presumably a tenant). Phillips experienced a serious business failure in 1856 and had left the area by 1860 (Chancery suit 171).

The Ronald brothers were more successful. N. M. Ronald was a merchant and banker, and his brother was Blacksburg's only lawyer during the period 1850-1870 (Pezzoni, p. 8). The house was known to local historians (Conway) as the home of Sarah Kent, apparently the Ronalds' widowed sister, and it seems they bought the house for her use. She lived here as late as 1889, and in 1891 the house passed from Charles Ronald's ownership to O. C. Peters in payment of a debt. The porch may have been added at that time. It passed through a succession of owners until A. G. Smith, a trained horticulturist, acquired it in 1936, and having extensively repaired it, lived there until his death in mid-1986. He sold it with a life interest in 1982, and the buyer then sold it to the Town of Blacksburg in 1986. The town plans to repair and keep the house and grounds as an amenity for the community. Studies have proposed uses ranging from a museum to town offices or meeting rooms.

The front lawn of the Phillips-Ronald house underwent extensive landscaping in the 1930s disturbing archaeological deposits. Important subsurface artifact deposits and features relating to the construction and occupation of the house in the mid-nineteenth century were, however, identified at the rear of the house. Behind the kitchen location, a previously unknown brick and limestone walkway leading to the backyard was identified during archaeological testing performed as part of the project leading to this nomination. Numerous ceramic artifacts and other items relating to food preparation and consumption activities were also recovered from excavations here. The presence of this feature suggests that other contemporary features may be located near the house in the back yard.

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The feature identified in Square 1 is particularly interesting because it was constructed of brick fragments and limestone flakes from dressed limestone blocks. Thus, the by-products of other architecture-related activities were used to construct this walkway.

Finally, the architecture and kitchen-related artifacts provide material culture records of these past site activities. As with similar remains from other archaeological sites, these artifacts provide important details about the artifacts used, and the everyday activities of past site occupants. Such materials therefore, constitute an invaluable research data base for reconstructing past behavior. More testing in the yard of the house is needed to establish suspected features and outbuilding foundations before significance under criterion D can be affirmed.

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