



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 128-0012

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Villa Heights is a distinct and impressive structure with a great deal of architectural, social, and cultural history relevant to both the Virginia frontier and to Roanoke City's early development. After ten years of vacancy and a fire in 2011, the house is in a state of disrepair and is in need of an extensive rehabilitation. The applicants are seeking an evaluation to potentially seek eligibility for the Historic Register and to potentially utilize the State and Federal Historic Tax Credit program to restore the structure back to its historic legacy.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes x No

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes x No

1. General Property Information

Property name: Villa Heights

Property address: 2750 Hoover Street NW

City or Town: Roanoke, VA

Zip code: 24017

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Roanoke City

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building x Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 3.4

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban x Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

Villa Heights stands on a large parcel of land, approximately 3.4 acres, bordered on the South and East sides by a cluster of trees, on the West by a park owned by the City of Roanoke, and by row of houses on the North side. The landscape features a forecourt in front of the main facade as well as a playground and basketball court on the Northeast side of the property. A very large Oak tree is positioned directly in front of the main facade.

There are no extant detached outbuildings.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Federal style, Classical Revival style

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: _____

Date of construction (can be approximate): Ca. 1820

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

Villa Heights, also known as the Compton-Bateman House, is a circa 1820 house, originally built as a wood-frame brick-clad, central-corridor, single-pile, two-story structure, which was originally used as a homestead along a large tract of farmland in an undeveloped part of the early Virginia frontier. The single pile plan was elaborated upon at some point during the late 19th century with an addition that incorporated a kitchen and lavatory. In 1925, it underwent a substantial rehabilitation involving new architectural details in the Classical Revival Style. These details included fluted pilasters and Doric columns along a new, dramatic two-story portico with a deep entablature complete with block modillions along a wide and shallow front-facing gable. Placed in the center of the gable is a small oculus window. The front door has a demi-lune transom window above and flanking square side-panel windows. The cornice detailing follows the perimeter of the structure's roofline. All of these details were presumably part of the 1920s remodeling.

Within the house, the 1925 additions include an elaborate Neo Classical mantel trim (with fluted column plinths), fluted Doric column room "dividers" marking the entrance to the Living Room, picture and chair rail molding, base trim and fluted door and window molding, and hardwood paneled doors throughout.

In 1958, the structure was sold from private owners to the City of Roanoke to be used as an after-school recreational facility for children. Under the City's ownership, the structure gained several more additions, including a shingle-clad structure in the back to accommodate an ADA-accessible bathroom, a cinderblock "recreational room" space to the rear-left of the main entrance with an ADA-accessible ramp, and a pair of exterior public restrooms. In addition, the brick exterior (which had remained exposed since the building's construction) was painted over throughout the building.

In 2007, the property was vacated by the City of Roanoke and has sat empty ever since. In 2011, a fire succumbed part of the west half of the building, predominantly affecting a section of the ca. 1920s roof, including the rafters, and sections of the second-floor near the southwest corner of the house and rear addition. Throughout the interior of the building, as a result of the fire, large sections of paint and wallpaper and small pieces of plaster burned off from the heat of the flames. Few, if any of these wall finishes, however, were original to the house.

As a result of both the fire and the subsequent years of vacancy and weather infiltration, the impressive house known as Villa Heights is in a state of disrepair with boarded-up windows, scattered debris on the interior, significant water and fire damage on the upper rear right side of the structure, and general deterioration

throughout. Yet even in this condition, much of the historic architectural integrity remains in tact with a solid brick foundation and Flemish bond walls on all sides of the main block, original tree-trunk floor joists on the first level, and hardwood flooring, trim, doors, and other design details largely all intact but with some in-kind restoration needed. The original window apertures are intact, with evidence of nine-over-nine single-sash windows, yet only one set of original window sash appears to be extant.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are no extant detached outbuildings.

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Villa Heights, also known as the Compton-Bateman House, stands on land originally acquired by William McClanahan Sr. (1740-1819) in 1779 when he obtained an inclusive grant for land on the North side of the Roanoke River. The whole 1,690 acres he acquired was ultimately divided between his sons, Elijah and James. Elijah's share of the estate was the 814-acre tract known as "Long Meadow", conveyed to him by his father in 1807. Today this tract lies on both sides of 24th Street, bounded on the south by the Roanoke River and ultimately became the location of Villa Heights.

William McClanahan Sr. was a lieutenant colonel of the American Revolutionary War. He was also active in local political life serving as both deputy sheriff and sheriff in the late 1700's. Today his namesake, McClanahan Street is a prominent Roanoke City Street.

Colonel Elijah McClanahan (serving in the War of 1812), owned most of the land that ultimately became the Northwest section of Roanoke City, which included "Long Meadow". He married Agatha Lewis, daughter of Colonel Andrew Lewis (a prominent soldier of Colonial Virginia and brigadier general in the American Revolutionary War) and had five children. Colonel McClanahan served as a justice when Roanoke County, Virginia, was formed from part of Botetourt County and was later appointed the first high sheriff. He was also among the trustees chosen at the founding of the town of Salem, among the founding elders of Salem Presbyterian Church (Salem, VA), and was one of the largest landholders in the county.

In 1820, Elijah built a house on the site of "Long Meadow" for the sum of \$2,700. This would have been a substantial amount of money at the time and it was able to afford the construction of a large brick two-story structure on an already impressive tract of land. His family owned the house and land for several decades thereafter before it was transferred in ownership to several other families during the 19th century. One of the subsequent families was the son of Colonel Maurice H. Langhorne (War of 1812), a prominent family from Lynchburg, VA, who inherited the house and land in 1868 from a family trust.

Villa Heights' alternative name of the "Compton-Bateman House" originated with the last two private owners of the structure before it was gifted to the City of Roanoke in 1958. The Compton Family, consisting of Charles W. Compton (1865-1937) and Sallie Stine Compton (1871 Clarke Co VA – 1942 Shenandoah VA) lived in the house at the turn of the 20th century until it was sold to the Bateman family in 1923.

Although he began as a farmer, Charles Bateman worked for over thirty years as a wholesale coal broker, according to census records.

From 1923-1953, Villa Heights belonged to the Ernest E. Bateman family. After Bateman's first wife Malissa A. Firestone, died in 1936, he married her sister, Georgia Boone Firestone, in 1940. The Firestone sisters were the daughters of Paulina C. Moomaw Firestone and Joseph J. Firestone. Paulina Moomaw's Botetourt County family were pioneers in the fruit industry. They started the first commercial growing and fruit canning industry in Virginia in 1867. It was not only the first enterprise of its kind in Virginia, but one of the first in the United States. By 1958, descendants of the Bateman family deeded the property to the City of Roanoke Parks and Recreation and it became known as the Villa Heights Recreation Center.

For these reasons, Villa Heights is eligible under Criterion B for Historic Register eligibility for its association with the lives of significant persons in our past.

In addition to its association with prominent figures of Virginia's history, Villa Heights is an impressive example of a Federal-style brick structure with 1920s Classical Revival details. With its monumental portico, Doric pilasters and columns, entrance fanlight and sidelights, the front façade is both dramatic and architecturally distinct. The interior is equally remarkable in its hardwood construction, wood molding, trim, door paneling, and mantel designs. The central corridor, single-pile plan that comprised the original floor plan of the circa 1820 house is still intact (though the living room columned entry is in alteration from the 1920s). While there have been several additions and alterations over the years, the house is a unique combination of early 19th century and early 20th century American architecture. The house embodies the distinctive characteristics of building type, period, and methods of construction. For these reasons, Villa Heights appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Sources

Barnes, Raymond P. A History of Roanoke. Radford: Commonwealth Press, 1968.

Barnes, Raymond. "Graves of Pioneers Lie Sadly Neglected: McClanahan Burial Site Desecrated." The Roanoke Times, Roanoke, VA. February 5, 1965.

Cox, Ray, "Early Roanoke County founder rests at well-groomed gravesite." The Roanoke Times, Roanoke, VA. April 10, 2017.

Deed of Land, F. Johnston (Administrator of Charles Snyder's Last Will & Testament) to John B. Bransford & Wife and R.R. Dickson & Wife, 14 May 1867, Roanoke County, Virginia, Deed Book G: Page 355, County Clerk's Office, Salem.

Estate of Elijah McClanahan, Settlement of Estates Book 1, Page 230. Deed of Land, Elijah McClanahan Executors to Charles Snyder, 25 Oct 1862, Roanoke County, Virginia, Deed Book F: Page 783, County Clerk's Office, Salem.

http://services.dar.org/Public/DAR_Research/search_adb/?action=full&p_id=A074918. DAR -Daughters of the American Revolution Genealogy Research – William McClanahan.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Lewis_\(soldier\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Lewis_(soldier)). Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia: Andrew Lewis (soldier).

http://www.newrivernotes.com/topical_history_books_1929_history_of_virginia_moomawbenjamin.htm. "New River Notes" – Benjamin F. Moomaw, History of Virginia, Volume VI, Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1929.

Kagey, Deedie Dent. When Past Is Prologue: A History of Roanoke County. Roanoke, Va: Roanoke County Sesquicentennial Committee, 1988. Page 106.

Kegley, F. B. Kegley's Virginia Frontier: The Beginning of the Southwest, the Roanoke of Colonial Days 1740-1783. Roanoke: Southwest Virginia Historical Society, 1938.

Summers, Lewis Preston, George W. L. Bickley, and Charles B. Coale. Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800. Baltimore, Maryland: Clearfield Company, 1929. Page 383.

“Virginia News.” Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, Alexandria, VA. Wednesday, March 18, 1868.

White, H. M. The McClanahans. 1894. Chapter IV. Also pages 40-42. Roanoke, Virginia. The Stone Printing and Manufacturing Company. 1894.

