STATE: Virginia
COUNTY: Charles City
ENTRY DATE:

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

1. NAME
COMMON:
Westover

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Westover

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER:
7 miles southwest of Charles City

CITY OR TOWN:
Charles City

3. CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
(District) □ Building □ Site □ Structure □ Object

(Structure) □ Public □ Private □ Both

OWNER'S NAME:
Mrs. Bruce C. Fisher

PRESENT USE
(Agricultural) □ Government □ Park □ Private Residence □ Transportation
(Commercial) □ Industrial □ Religious □ Other (Specify)
(Educational) □ Military □ Scientific □ Comments

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
(Yes) □ Restricted □ Unoccupied □ Unrestricted
(X) □ In Process □ Preservation work in progress □ No

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
OWNER'S NAME:
Mrs. Bruce C. Fisher

STREET AND NUMBER:
Westover

CITY OR TOWN:
Charles City

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Charles City Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CHARLES CITY

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY:
□ Federal □ State □ County □ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress/Annex

STREET AND NUMBER:

Washington, D.C.
Westover mansion may well be the most famous Georgian house in America. It is noted both for the quality of its workmanship and for its architectural completeness. The mansion proper consists of a two-story central section on a high basement with two attached wings; the eastern wing is a replacement of the original, destroyed during the Civil War.

Several dependencies stand nearby, including the original kitchen, which may predate the main house. A brick privy, brick fence, and an iron gate leading to what once were the slave quarters also date to the seventeenth century. A brick house, barn, and silo lie northeast of the main building. They are contemporary structures, but are shielded from view by a tall hedge standing between them and the mansion.

The mansion itself features formal doorways in Portland stone on both main facades; a steeply pitched hip roof, rising to a sharp ridge rather than a deck; an off-center main hall, utilizing one of the regularly spaced facade windows as a light source; and a finely detailed interior with full-length paneling and enriched plaster ceilings. Exterior features include three original wrought iron gates of great intricacy; an under-ground tunnel from the house to the river bank; the site of the first Westover church, where William Byrd I and his wife are buried; the remains of an old ice house; and formal gardens, at the center of which is William Byrd II's grave.

The mansion group was restored about 1920 and came into possession of the present family shortly thereafter. The grounds are open to the public, but the interior of the main house is not.

Boundaries:
The historic extent of the Westover property is described by the description found in "Evidences Relating to Westover:

The Patent to Capt. Thomas Pawlelt January the 15th 1637 by Sir John Harvey:

"Now know ye that I the said Harvey Knight do with the Consent of the Council of State accordingly give and Grant unto Captain Thomas Pawlelt Two Thousand Acres of Land Situate, Lying, and being in the Country of Charles City bounding to the River South, Northwest to the Main [?], Eastward to the Land of Capt Perry, West upon Berkeley Hundred Land extending by the Rivers Side from Herring Creek to a Gut of Land dividing said Land from the land of Barkley Hundred."

(Westover Title Book, John H. Guy, ed., Richmond 1921)

In 1666 Captain Pawlelt transferred this same property to a Theodorick Bland and on February 4 of the same year Bland sold it, still intact, to William Byrd I. The landmark boundaries include all this land still belonging to the Westover estate.
Westover is a superb example of early Georgian architecture. It was also the home of William Byrd II (1674-1744), American colonial planter, writer, politician, and a founder of Virginia gentry society.

History:

Westover is located on one of the earliest Virginia plantations, first occupied in 1619. The present mansion is quite possibly the most famous Georgian house in America. It was built between the years 1730 and 1734 by William Byrd II, colonial planter, speculator, author, and public official.

Biography:

William Byrd II (1674-1744) was the son of William Byrd I, one of the founders of Virginia gentry society. The elder Byrd sent his son to London for study, and left him 26,000 acres of land upon his death in 1704.

The younger Byrd had been very popular in London due to his wit, looks, and personal charm. But he left immediately to look after his father's estate. When he himself died forty years later, it had grown to include some 180,000 acres. Despite his many holdings, or because of them, Byrd was often short of funds and was frequently obliged to sell land or slaves to make ends meet.

Byrd owned the largest library in the colonies up to that time, more than 4000 volumes. He was also a member of the scientific Royal Society and a prolific author. Less than a renaissance man but much more than a dilettante, his manuscripts and diaries are written in a witty, cutting style which establish him as one of America's first important authors. His History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina describes his work settling the boundary dispute between those two colonies. The accounts of the scheming and intrigue involved in the establishment of that border are as fascinating as his opinions of North Carolina, its swamps and its inhabitants are droll. History of the Dividing Line has become a classic of early American literature.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period (New York, 1952).
Sale, Edith T., Interiors of Virginia Houses of Colonial Times (Richmond, 1927)
Sale, Manors of Virginia in Colonial Times (Philadelphia, 1909)
Waterman, Thomas T., The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.025

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE:</th>
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE
2/1/75

12. 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 ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:
Keeper of the National Register

Date
The present Westover estate is entirely within the original boundaries, and about one half its size. As shown by the yellow line on the accompanying U.S.G.S. topographic map, entitled "Westover" and dated 1965: Beginning on Route 633, at a point approximately 3300 feet east of the junction of Routes 633 and 5, proceed northeast about 3000 feet to the center Herring Creek, then east and south about 14,000 feet along Herring Creek to the eastern tip of Ducking Stool Point. Proceed west along the James River northern shoreline about 9000 feet, then north about 4000 feet to Route 633. Proceed northwest along Route 633 about 2000 feet to the point of beginning.