Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 28 1977
DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

VLR Listed: 2/15/1977
NRHP Listed: 11/17/1977

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Sweet Hall

AND/OR COMMON:

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: On the north bank of the Pamunkey River; .2 mile south of State Route 634; approximately 1.6 miles SSW of the intersection of State Routes 634 and 30; .4 mile SSW of Sweet Hall (See continuation sheet # 1)

X NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: ~~Sweet Hall~~ King William — X VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First (Paul S. Trible, Jr.)

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Virginia	51	King William	101

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Miss Elizabeth R. Palmer

STREET & NUMBER: Box 154 F, Sweet Hall

CITY, TOWN: West Point — __ VICINITY OF

STATE: Virginia 23181

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: King William County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER:

CITY, TOWN: King William

STATE: Virginia 23086

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (3) (See Continutation Sheet #1)

TITLE: (1) Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE: 1937, 1941

X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN: Washington, D. C.

STATE:

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sweet Hall is situated on an open tract of land at a bend of the Pamunkey River in King William County. Because of its proximity to New Kent Court House a ferry was located at Sweet Hall in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Sweet Hall is a story-and-a-half, asymmetrical, T-shaped structure probably constructed late in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It is built of brick laid in English bond throughout, except for the (south) front, which is in Flemish bond with glazed headers above the beveled water table. The water table, which is carried around the entire building, breaks about two feet from either jamb of the front entry, suggesting the former existence of an original entrance stoop, and is mitred over the head of the cellar entrance (in the east gable end of the main block), in the manner of a label mold. The house was covered with scored stucco early in the nineteenth century; this survives on most of the principal facade, and on the east wall of the ell.

The main block is five bays long with throating under the windows and possibly with jack arches above them. The nine-over-nine sash are mid-eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century replacements (the original windows were probably lead casements). A nineteenth-century porch shelters the central three bays of the facade. The gable ends have segmental arches with alternating glazed headers over the original window openings. Those on the west end were widened late in the eighteenth century and their nine-over-nine sash date from that time. Of the east end openings the southern window is an early nineteenth-century alteration; the northern one is original and has not been enlarged, but the frame dates from the mid-eighteenth-century, and the six-over-six sash in both windows are modern. The main block is crowned with a gable roof embellished with a mid-eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century modillion cornice on the front and a molded box cornice on the rear (these cover the remains of corbeled brick cornice stops). Five gabled Greek Revival dormers break the front slope; it is not presently possible to ascertain whether they replace earlier dormers. Two interior end chimneys with T-shaped stacks, small weatherings on their backs above the ridge line and elaborately molded caps surmount the main block.

The ell, which is set off-center to the east, has on its north end an asymmetrical, T-stack, pyramidal exterior chimney with a single steep tiled weathering on the east and a vertical ascent on the west. The east window on this end is not original; the west door (which leads into a small, frame, twentieth-century kitchen ell) was possibly an original window. The openings (a door and a window) in the east wall of the ell are original; of the corresponding openings in the west wall, the door has been changed to a window in the present century. A full-length, late nineteenth-century screened porch shelters the east side of the ell.

Sweet Hall has a hall-parlor-plan main block, with a single large room in the ell. Against the west wall of the ell is a Colonial Revival stair installed by the owners in the 1920s as a replacement for, and on the site of, the original enclosed stair.

See Continuation Sheet #2

The interior woodwork of Sweet Hall dates principally from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. In the hall (west room) is a plain Greek Revival mantel with unadorned pilasters and frieze. The fireplace has been closed to accommodate a furnace flue, and the chimney breast is flanked by niches with round-headed openings. The doors, door frames, hardware and double-beaded chairboard all date from the early nineteenth century, and graining survives on the mid-nineteenth-century window jambs.

The parlor mantel is a simple mid-nineteenth-century frame with a light shelf. Flanking the fireplace are closets with fine four-panel, raised-panel doors. The north closet has an original four-panel exterior door (to the east porch) with a striking Suffolk "bean" latch.

No early trim survives in the ell room, and the fireplace has been closed.

The second floor retains a variety of original four-panel, raised-panel doors hung on unusual foliated HL hinges, except for a closet door in the east chamber that is hung on cross-garnet hinges which are not common in Virginia.

Sweet Hall's principal distinction lies in its roof structure. The ell is framed with a principal rafter-common rafter-principal butt purlin roof, which was used commonly in seventeenth-century New England houses and in large seventeenth-century Virginia houses, but rarely in the eighteenth century in Virginia. The main block is framed with an upper cruck (or curved-principal) and butt-purlin roof, a member of a family of roof types believed until recently not to exist in America. Sweet Hall is the third such roof to be discovered in America, and the first in Virginia. One rafter couple is exposed in the partition between the passage and the east chamber. Another is believed to exist in the west chamber, a comparable distance from the west gable end, but the unbroken ceiling at collar-beam level at present prevents the confirmation of this hypothesis or the inspection of the blades above the level of the collars.

No early outbuildings survive. The tombs of the builder and his son lie about 100 feet north of the house.

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8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

King William County's venerable Sweet Hall, a T-shaped, brick manor house is a highly significant example of Virginia's rare pre-Georgian architecture. Its fine brickwork, unusual plan, and surviving interior appointments would in themselves distinguish Sweet Hall; but its upper cruck, or curved-principal, roof, one of only three found in America to date, and the only one discovered in Virginia, marks the house as one of the most important architectural documents of the colonial period, one which promises to yield new information on the cultural processes and transformations of a little known period of colonial history. Probably built late in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Sweet Hall was the home first of the Claibornes and then of the Ruffin family, both prominent in the early history of Virginia.

Recent archaeological excavations and architectural discoveries in Virginia and Maryland have challenged traditional notions of "first-period"building in the Tidewater South. As a result, early building in this region has come to be recognized as a vastly more diverse phenomenon than was previously thought. Well-preserved pre-Georgian buildings such as Sweet Hall provide rare examples of the use of archaic building practices in the South, practices that were eventually abandoned because of their association with the shoddily built structures of the seventeenth century, because of the homogenization of building technology in eighteenth-century Virginia, and because of the sweeping rebuilding of rural Virginia in the early nineteenth century.

Cruck and cruck-like building construction is a case in point. Because building in America was thought to rely heavily on southeastern English practices, and because cruck construction, a northwestern English practice, was thought to have disappeared in the mid-sixteenth century, it was assumed that few, if any, such buildings were erected in America, and none at all after the first years of settlement. As recent research in America has led scholars to expect more architectural diversity students of English vernacular architecture have at the same time reinterpreted their own cruck-building tradition and have shown it to have survived, in its derivative forms, well into the eighteenth century.

Such offshoots of cruck building are considered derivative "cruck-<u>like</u>" forms because they do not support the entire weight of the building from ground level, as true crucks do. Rather, they are transitional between cruck forms and roofs with straight rafters. Like the former they are curved; like the latter they are supported on, rather than supporting, the vertical walls.

See Continuation Sheet #3

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bloodworth, Jane. "Old English Home Located on the Pamunkey", Tidewater Review, April 15, 1976.

Claiborne, G. M. Claiborne Pedigree. Lynchburg, 1900.

Clarke, Peyton Neale. Old King William Homes and Families. 1897. Reprint. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1964.

King William County Records I, II.

See continuation sheet # 1

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

E 18 332000 4160040

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 65 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	332180	4160030	B	18	332180	4159140
C	18	331640	4159500	D	18	331560	4159760

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The 65 acres comprising the Sweet Hall property are bounded by a line beginning at a point (A) 600 feet E of east side of State Route 634, 700 feet S of intersection of State Route 634 with Southern Railroad tracks; then extending nearly 3000 feet S through marshland to Pamunkey River; then following shoreline of Pamunkey River approximately 2500 feet in a generally westward direction; then extending approximately 900 feet NNW following east side of light-duty road to junction with State Route 634; then running approximately 1700 feet NE along south side of State Route 634; then extending 600 feet E 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
January 1977

STREET & NUMBER
221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE
(804) 786-3143

CITY OR TOWN
Richmond

STATE
Virginia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X 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

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 15 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 11/3/77

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11-2-77

GPO 892-453

Upper crucks are one of several cruck-like forms. Upper crucks in England are typically found in masonry buildings and surviving examples date from the early seventeenth century through the fourth decade of the eighteenth century. Sweet Hall fits these criteria. It represents, as the English examples do, an advance from a poorer housing standard to a much higher, but still modest, one. That the house is called a "Hall," like Ocean Hall, a Maryland upper-cruck house, and like the better English upper crucks, is an accurate reflection of its status. Sweet Hall was the home of a well-to-do but not audaciously wealthy provincial family; it was the equivalent of a small manor house.

Because the King William County records were among those most severely decimated by nineteenth-century disasters, the complete documentation of Sweet Hall is not possible. However, it is certain that the Sweet Hall lands first belonged to the Claiborne family. Lt. Col. Thomas Claiborne (1647-1683), (the son of William Claiborne (1587-1676), Secretary of the colony and a major figure in the mid-seventeenth-century politics of Virginia and Maryland) patented land in King William County (then New Kent County) in 1655 and again in 1677. By the time of his death the family was established at its principal plantation, Romancoke, where Col. Claiborne was buried. His son Capt. Thomas Claiborne (1680-1732) apparently settled at Sweet Hall late in the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century. A figure of some local importance, Capt. Claiborne was an original landholder in Dillaware Town (now West Point). In 1720 at about the time that he built Sweet Hall the General Assembly authorized Claiborne to operate a ferry "from Sweet Hall . . . to mouth of Tanks Queen's Creek," authority which was reconfirmed to his heirs in 1748 as permission to run a ferry "from Sweet Hall to Claiborn Gooch's."

Capt. Claiborne was buried a few feet north of the present house. His tomb has survived as has that of his son Thomas Claiborne, Jr. (1704-1735), clerk of Stafford County. Nineteenth-century sources also claim that the elder Claiborne's second wife, Anne Fox (1684-1735), is buried in the same lot.

At Claiborne's death his son Nathaniel Claiborne "of Sweet Hall" (d. ca. 1756) inherited the property; he, and later his widow, continued to operate the ferry. Subsequently, Robert Ruffin, two of whose daughters had married Claibornes, came into possession of the plantation. In December 1773 he advertised in the Virginia Gazette "by virtue of a deed in trust from Mr. Roger Gregory to ROBERT RUFFIN," "SWEETHALL, A Very pleasant situation on Pamunkey river with about 400 acres of high LAND, and several hundred acres of valuable marsh," to be sold at auction at King William Court House. Apparently Ruffin himself (who owned two other important plantations: Mayfield in Dinwiddie County and Rich Neck in Surry County) purchased or repurchased the property, for he and his heirs owned it until the early nineteenth century.

See Continuation Sheet #4

In 1801 James Ruffin, "residing at Sweet Hall," insured the property with the Mutual Assurance Society. The "Dwelling house" and "Wing" (ell) were valued at $2000 "after the Deduction of One thousand Dollars for decay or bad repair." The property was reinsured by Ruffin's heirs in 1805 at $2500 less $500 for the same reasons. A wooden porch had been added to the east side of the ell supplementing the full-length "Wooden Piaza" at the front of the house which had first appeared in the earlier policy.

Sweet Hall was sold before 1816 to William George Vidal who reinsured it in that year for $2000 with "nothing" deducted for bad repair. This suggests that the Federal detailing, notably the doors and trim and some of the windows and sash on the first floor, along with the exterior stucco, were installed during repairs between 1805 and 1816.

Vidal (or Videlle) is reported to have "committed suicide in one of the rear chambers" and in 1829 "Claiborn Hall on the Pamunkey" was advertised for sale in the Richmond Enquirer. It was subsequently acquired by Capt. Sterling Lipscombe and then by his son-in-law R. T. Puller who owned the property in 1897. The Palmer family, the present owners, purchased Sweet Hall in 1924.

DU/MTP

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory
1958 Federal
Library of Congress
Washington, D. C.

(3) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1968, 1976 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
Richmond, Virginia

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Mercer, Eric. English Vernacular Houses. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1975.

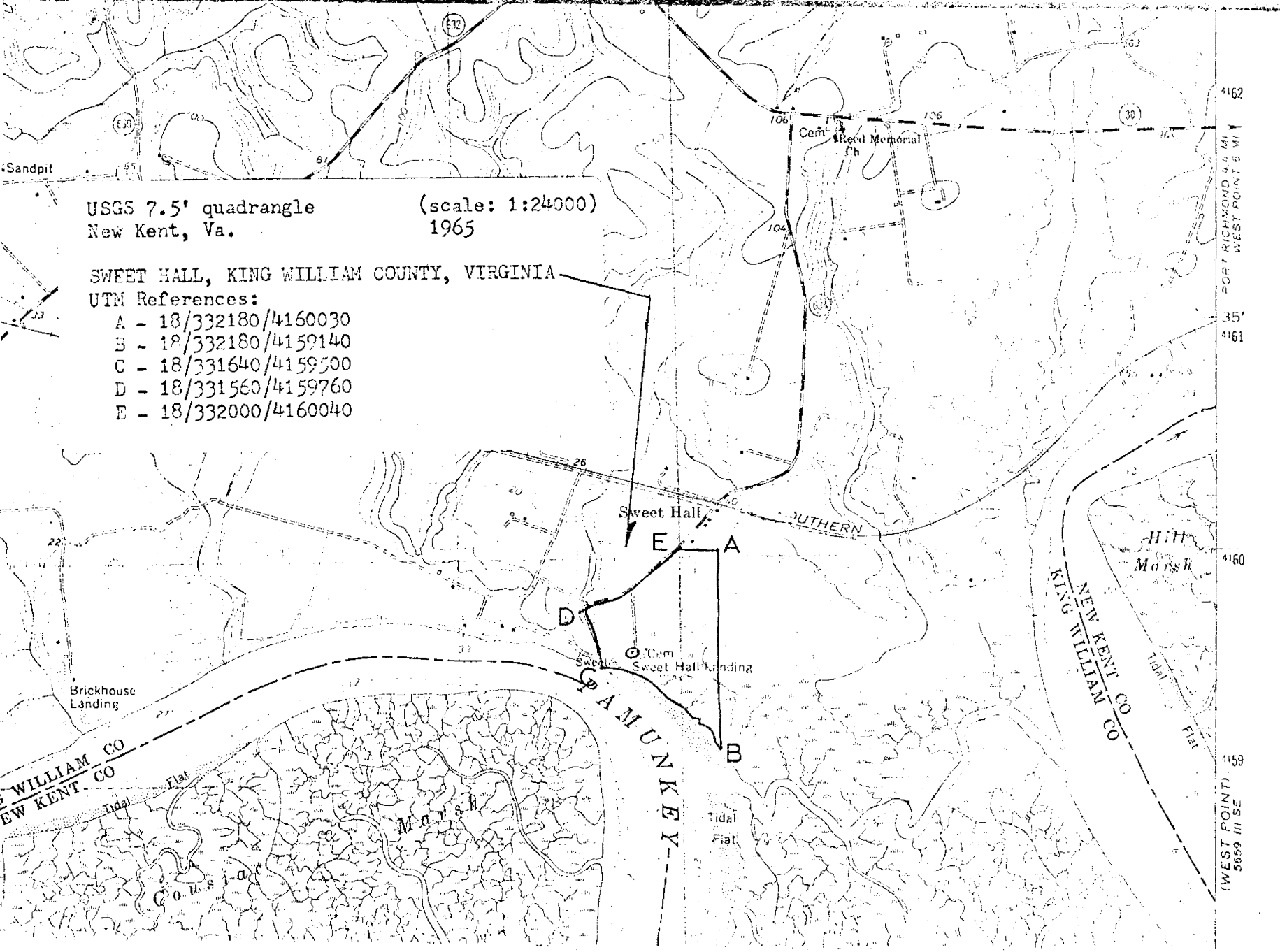
Mutual Assurance Society policies #446, May 27, 1801, R2 V14; #1011, December 14, 1805, R4 V39; #2048, May 3, 1816, R5 V44.

Ryland, Elizabeth Hawes, compiler. King William County, Virginia, from Old Newspapers and Files. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1955.

Upton, Dell. "Early Vernacular Architecture in Tidewater Virginia." Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University. (In preparation)

2. LOCATION

(Location for publication in "Federal Register")
On north bank of Pamunkey River; south of Sweet Hall, Virginia.


USGS 7.5' quadrangle
New Kent, Va.
(scale: 1:24000)
1965
SWEET HALL, KING WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA
UTM References:
A - 18/332180/4160030
B - 18/332180/4159140
C - 18/331640/4159500
D - 18/331560/4159760
E - 18/332000/4160040
Sandpit
Cem
Reed Memorial Ch
Sweet Hall
SOUTHERN
E
A
D
C
B
Cem
Sweet Hall Landing
Brickhouse Landing
PAMUNKEY
Tidal Flat
Hill Marsh
NEW KENT CO
KING WILLIAM CO
WILLIAM CO
NEW KENT CO
Tidal Flat
Marsh
Cousiac
POPT RICHMOND 4.4 MI.
WEST POINT 6 MI.
(WEST POINT)
5659 III SE
4162
4161
4160
4159
35'