

VLR-9/9/69 NRHP-10/15/66 NHL-7/19/64

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Rockbridge	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
MCCORMICK (CYRUS) FARM AND WORKSHOP

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
WALNUT GROVE

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Steeles Tavern

STATE: Virginia 24476      CODE COUNTY: 51 Rockbridge      CODE: 163

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sits Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other, (Specify) _____ _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Blacksburg

STATE:  
Virginia 24060

CODE:  
51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Rockbridge County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lexington

STATE:  
Virginia 24450

CODE:  
51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
HABS

DATE OF SURVEY:  
1957

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D.C.

CODE:  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia  
COUNTY: Rockbridge  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

a. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Cyrus H. McCormick successfully produced a reaper shortly after he took over the project on which his father, Robert McCormick, had worked spasmodically for twenty years. An inventive talent inherited from his father, direct experience with the problems of harvesting grain, and the long testing of various mechanical principles by his father gave Cyrus a sound foundation for taking over the reaper project.

Avoiding his father's mistakes, Cyrus, in the early summer of 1831, constructed a small experimental machine designed on principles entirely different from his father's machines.

A public trial held in the field of John Steele in late July successfully proved his theory of cutting. Seven basic principles incorporated in this reaper, the divider, reel, straight reciprocating knife, fingers or guards, platform, main wheel and gearing, and the front-side draft traction, together with their distinctive combination, remain essential to reaping machinery today. Forerunners of McCormick had used one or more of these seven principles prior to 1831, but he was the first to unite them all into an effective whole.

Cyrus recognized that this first machine was far from perfect in cutting the grain. So skeptical was he of its value that he waited until 1834 to patent it, and he did not feel justified in seeking a wide market for it until 1840. Close thought and experimentation continued for fifteen years. Each one of the principal parts was considerably refashioned prior to 1846, but no basic change in construction proved to be necessary.

A counter-claim advanced in the recent past on behalf of Cyrus' father by some members of the McCormick family deserves consideration. If Robert McCormick were the inventor of the reaper, Cyrus would still merit recognition as its successful manufacturer. However, his chief title to fame would be transferred to his father. A recent and thorough biographer, William T. Hutchinson, has critically examined the facts and the motivation for the controversy. His conclusion is that the wealth of material on agricultural history, carefully assembled over a period of twenty-five years, makes certain beyond a doubt that Cyrus McCormick invented the reaper which bears his name.

Hutchinson's work presents with conviction the thesis that the reaper was probably the most important of all the inventions made during the first half of the 19th century which revolutionized agriculture. Grain was a staple crop throughout the temperate zones of the world, and the appearance of a machine which permitted the farmer to reap as much grain as he could now brought changes in cereal-culture as far reaching in their importance as those flowing from the cotton gin. As Whitney's invention significantly affected one of the basic necessities of human life, so the first successful reaper was of great influence upon the food supply of the world.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

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7 a. CONT'D.

Cyrus McCormick not only pioneered in the invention and evolution of reaping machinery, but also in the creation of modern business methods. He became a large-scale producer bringing the reaper to a national market; he was one of the most successful manufacturers in America's first era of "big business." More than most men, he possessed the ability to translate his creative ideas into reality.

The blacksmith shop at Walnut Grove handled the manufacture of the reapers as long as the market for them was local. Robert and Leander McCormick, with the help of their slaves and an occasional hired man, formed the factory personnel. The steel sickles required fine workmanship and were made by a skilled workman in the vicinity.

Beginning in 1843, the franchise to build the reaper was sold to men in various sections of the state. The following year Cyrus made a swing through the north and west and arranged manufacturing franchises in Brockport, New York, Cincinnati and other western points. These licensed manufacturers, however, proved less careful than the workers at Walnut Grove and turned out poorly made machines. McCormick determined to save the good reputation of his reaper by concentrating their manufacture in one place and under his own direction. Thus, in 1847 he established his own plant in Chicago and closed other manufacture in one place and under his own direction. Thus, in 1847 he established his own plant in Chicago and closed other manufacturing contracts as promptly as possible. By 1850 the McCormick reaper had won a national reputation and market. World-wide recognition followed.

The French, for example, made him a chevalier of the Legion of Honor and in 1879 elected him a member of the French Academy of Sciences as having done more for agriculture than any other living man.

Status: The workshop where Cyrus McCormick built the first successful reaper and the family home are both very well preserved. The workshop is a small square log building on a high stone foundation. It is to the side of a well-kept picnic and parking area and is kept open as the McCormick Memorial. The large, two-story brick farm home is equally as well maintained and provides office space for the work of the Shenandoah Valley Research Station.

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7 b. BOUNDARIES: This property consists of approximately 3 acres which have been set aside by the current owners to memorialize McCormick. Within this tract are 3 buildings used by McCormick. There is also a brick house which serves as an office and home for farm Superintendent McClure. Mr. McClure advises that the brick house is not normally considered a part of the McCormick memorial, even though it was built when McCormick was about 10 years of age and McCormick lived there for many years.

The property referenced above is located on the north side of Route 606, about 1 mile west of Route 11 and about 1 mile east of Route 81.

**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

**PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

**SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)**

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal             | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric            | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation           |   |  | _____                                    |

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Of all the inventions that revolutionized agriculture during the first half of the 19th century, Cyrus McCormick's mechanical reaper (1834) was probably the most important. It made it possible for one man to harvest as much grain in a day as had required the labor of several men with the more primitive scythes and cradles. Both McCormick's workshop, a small log building on a high stone foundation, and his large brick farmhouse have been well preserved.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

William T. Hutchinson, Cyrus Hall McCormick: Seed-Time, 1809-1856 (New York, 1930); Cyrus McCormick, The Century of the Reaper (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston & New York, 1931); John F. Stewart, The Reaper: A History of the Efforts of Those Who Justly May be Said to Have Made Bread Cheap (New York, 1931); Herbert Anthony Kellar, "Cyrus Hall McCormick," Dictionary of American Biography, XI, 607-609. Norbert Lyons, The McCormick Reaper Legend: The True Story of a Great Invention (New York, 1955); Roger Burlingame, March of the Iron Men: A Social History of Union through Invention (New York, 1949); Armistead G. Gordon, In the Picturesque Shenandoah Valley (Richmond, 1930); Waldemar Kaempffert ed., A Popular History of American Invention (2 vols., New York, 1924); Virginia Academy of Science, James River Project Committee, The James River Basin: Past, Present, and Future (Richmond, 1950).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	37°	55' 57"	79° 12' 53"
NE	° ' "	° ' "			
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Three**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Frank S. Melvin**

ORGANIZATION: **Virginia State Office, National Park Service**      DATE: **6/30/72**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Box 10008**

CITY OR TOWN: **Richmond**      STATE: **Virginia 23240**      CODE: **51**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Keeper of The National Register*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

07-25

Spottswood School

07-612

Spottswood Mercantile

07-592

Col. Moore House

07-590

McChesney-Wilson House

07-589

B.S. Rowan House Site

07-613

J.A. McClure House

07-591

Bank of Raphine 81-350

Stoner Place

81-219

APHINE HALL

81-55

Cyrus McCormick Farm and Workshop

81-73

Lee Way Inn

07-628

CULTON - KOOGLER HOUSE

81-130

81-470

81-471

SEARSON MILL RUIN

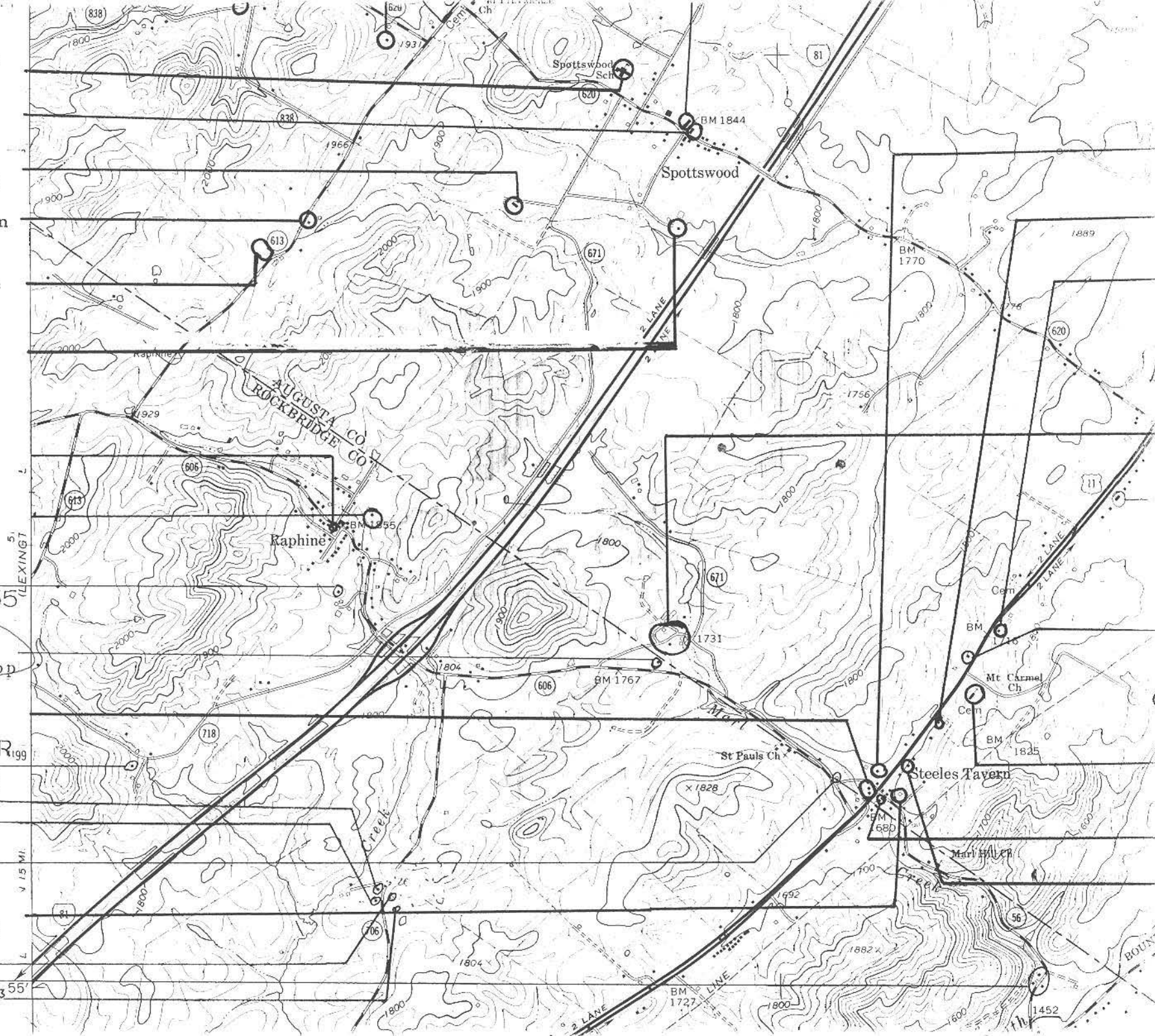
81-153

Mt. Carmel Manse

07-635

MOCEOLA MILL

81-106



81-106