

Wyndhurst, City of Charlottesville, DHR #104-0048

Wyndhurst was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1982 as part of the Charlottesville Multiple Resource Area (MRA). From approximately 1981 to 1983, the MRA was an experimental approach to listing multiple resources under a single thematic document. A single-page documentation form for each listed property accompanied the MRA's thematic document. The National Park Service discontinued use of the MRA in favor of Multiple Property Documentations (MPDs). Wyndhurst also is a contributing resource in the Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District, listed in 1984.

Due to the brevity of the MRA's documentation form for Wyndhurst, the property's areas and period of significance were not clearly defined. DHR's evaluation committee reviewed documentation about the property at a meeting on December 7, 2017. Based on the information below, the committee recommended that the property is locally significant under Criterion B in the area of Education for Thomas Preston's contributions as Rector of the University of Virginia and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the house is a rare extant example of a vernacular Greek Revival antebellum dwelling in Charlottesville. The property's period of significance is recommended as ca. 1857-1903, beginning with construction of the house and ending with Preston's death.

Description

Wyndhurst is a two-story, three-bay, double-pile, frame dwelling with a central-passage plan. It rises from a raised brick foundation laid in five-course American bond and the walls are clad with weatherboard siding. A low-pitch hipped roof with projecting eaves and a boxed cornice shelters the house. Two capped interior brick chimneys on either side of the central hall between the north and south rooms heat the original section of the house. The windows have double-hung, wood, 6/9 sash with architrave trim. A casement window was placed to the east of the central bay on the second floor when interior renovations occurred sometime during the second quarter of the twentieth century. A one-story, tetrastyle entry porch with Greek Revival-style details covers the central bay on the facade. The square posts and pilasters with inset panels support the low-pitched hip roof with a simple entablature. The raised porch stands on a brick-pier foundation with wooden steps and a simple railing. The four-panel, Greek Revival-style entrance door is surrounded by sidelights and a rectangular transom. Two one-story, frame additions extend from the dwelling's east elevation. Constructed prior to 1920, the earlier addition is a one-story extension with five double-hung, wood, 8/8 sash along its east wall. The second addition is a one-story, bowed extension with a brick foundation and weatherboard siding; based on Sanborn maps, it postdates 1929. A complex series of one- and two-story weatherboarded additions with a variety of window configurations stand on parged cinderblock and concrete foundations at the rear of the house. These additions were built between ca. 1920 and ca. 1970 and are reflective of the building's evolution from a single-family residence to a boarding house to a multiple-unit apartment building for university students.

The double-pile, two-story, central passage plan of the original house features four rooms on each level. A wide dog leg stair, which dominates the central hall, features a turned newel post and square balusters with open stringer. The walls and ceilings are original plaster and the hardwood floors consist of random boards. The doors throughout the house are flat, four-panel

doors, and the door and window trim is flat with a backband. Greek Revival-style mantels adorn the fireplaces in each room with simple, flat pilasters supporting a simple frieze and a mantel shelf. These mantels appear to date to the original 1857 construction of the house. The pre-1920 addition retains its unadorned plaster walls and ceilings with hardwood floors and simple trim. The interiors of the rear additions have been modified, reflecting their utilitarian function and ongoing evolution, with finishes that post-date World War II.

Historical Overview

The building at 605 Preston Court was likely built in 1857 by Sally Ann McCoy as the primary residence on a 102-acre parcel of farmland. Sally Ann McCoy and her husband William, together with six children, were recorded in the 1850 federal population census as residents of Ashby's District in Fauquier County, Virginia. William McCoy was listed as a farmer owning \$8,700 in real estate and 12 enslaved African Americans. By the summer of 1851, the couple had relocated to Albemarle County where William McCoy was appointed hotelkeeper at the Monroe Hill dormitories at the University of Virginia. William McCoy died in early 1857, however his wife appears to have continued to serve as University hotelkeeper, at least through 1858. In the 1860 federal population census, 60-year-old Sally Ann McCoy was recorded as a boarding house operator owing \$25,000 in real estate and living with three of her grown children as well as a University professor of surgery, B. W. Allen, and his wife. As they were recorded as residents of Fredericksville Parish, which lay north of the old Three Notched Road/University Avenue, it appears that Sally Ann McCoy was living at Wyndhurst by 1860.

In 1863, Thomas Lewis and Anna Maria Saunders Preston bought the 102.25-acre Wyndhurst tract from Sally Ann McCoy. According to the Virginia Historical Society, Thomas and Anna Preston owned 21 enslaved people before the Civil War. In 1864-1865, Thomas Preston was appointed Rector of the University of Virginia, his alma mater, and on March 3, 1864, Preston was one of three University representatives who met Union Brig. Gen. George A. Custer upon his arrival in Charlottesville and requested protection for the University and for the town. This act saved the historically significant architecture of the University of Virginia from the type of damage suffered at other Southern colleges and universities upon Union occupation. Several of the enslaved individuals owned by the Prestons, however, emancipated themselves by moving to Union-held territory.

The 1870 census taker recorded Thomas L. and Anna M. Preston at Wyndhurst together with three female children and three African American servants. Ten years later in 1880, the federal census taker listed Thomas L. Preston as a 67-year-old farmer residing with his wife Anna (age 54), their three adopted children, three boarders, and four African American servants. Immediately next door to the Prestons, possibly in present-day 611 Preston Place, the census taker recorded the family of Hezekiah "Kiah" Logan, who had once been enslaved by Thomas Preston.

In 1892, the farm was subdivided when the Prestons sold the bulk of their property to the Charlottesville Land Company, which subdivided and marketed the tract as Preston Heights.⁹ The Prestons reserved about 11 acres containing the house. Preston died on May 20, 1903, at Wyndhurst and Mrs. Preston continued living at Wyndhurst until her death in 1911. After her death, the land was again subdivided. Anna Preston Lockwood, the Preston's adopted daughter,

inherited the property after her mother's death. Anna and her husband George Lockwood were located in St. Louis and therefore likely leased the property until they sold it to Preston Place Corporation in 1919. Preston Place Corporation subsequently subdivided the tract into 26 lots and laid out Wyndhurst Circle and Wyndhurst Way, precursors to the present-day Preston Place.

Wyndhurst itself remained a single-family dwelling but had four owners between 1919 and 1930. In 1930, Mrs. Charity Pitts acquired the building and converted it to a boarding house. The various rear additions on the dwelling likely date to Pitts's ownership. In 1970, Pitts's estate sold the property to Preston Court, Inc., and it was converted to an apartment building for university students.

Proposed Relocation of Wyndhurst

Wyndhurst house is proposed to be moved approximately 648 feet north from 605 Preston Place to a vacant lot located at 5-116 Preston Place. Only the original dwelling and the pre-1920 addition are planned to be moved, along with the historic front porch; the later rear additions postdate the property's recommended period of significance.

The proposed location was historically part of Wyndhurst's mid- to late 19th century acreage when it was a 102-acre farm. The Prestons subdivided their land in 1892, selling the majority of it to a land development company, which built the Preston Heights neighborhood. The Prestons retained 11 acres surrounding their dwelling. In 1919, the Preston family sold the farm to the Preston Place Corporation and the remaining 11 acres were subdivided into residential lots. In 1928, the Preston Court apartment building was constructed a short distance in front of Wyndhurst, occupying the former front yard.

The lot at 5-116 Preston Place is located within the boundaries of the Rugby Road–University Corner Historic District. The proposed new site is currently vacant; a series of garages dating to 1929-ca. 1950 occupied this lot until they were demolished in 2008. The dwelling is proposed to be sited facing south, the same orientation as it presently has. Adjacent lots are occupied by historic-age single-family dwellings associated with the aforementioned suburban development Preston Place, which dates to 1919.

Before a building can be moved to a new location, National Park Service guidance requires that the proposed site be tested for the presence of significance archaeological deposits. An archaeological investigation was conducted at this parcel in 2017. The Phase I archaeological survey entailed systematic shovel testing across both the present parcel and the receiving parcel. Owing to the presence of the mid-nineteenth-century Wyndhurst within the present parcel and the high potential for associated archaeological deposits, systematic shovel testing within this parcel was conducted at 20-ft intervals, with a total of 21 shovel test pits. Within the vacant receiving parcel at 5-116 Preston Place, where only 20th-century garages are known to have stood, Phase I shovel testing was performed at 50-ft intervals, with a total of 9 shovel test pits. Shovel tests in both parcels measured 1.2 – 1.5 feet in diameter and were excavated to culturally sterile subsoil where possible; however very dense gravel and/or rocky fill halted almost all shovel tests excavated in the receiving parcel. The fill is assumed to date to the post-1919 suburban development. All soil removed during shovel testing was screened through ¼-inch

hardware cloth to ensure consistent artifact recognition and recovery. Standardized forms recording location, depth, soil stratigraphy, and artifact content were completed for each shovel test pit excavated. The locations of all excavated shovel tests were accurately plotted on a scaled map of the project area.

Testing of the lot at 5-116 Preston Place yielded few artifacts, owing at least in part to the importation of fill after 1919 to create a buildable lot for the Preston Place development. A small amount of miscellaneous early to mid-20th artifacts such as wire nails, window glass, and machine-made bottle glass were uncovered. Two artifacts—a fragment of ironstone ceramic and a piece of olive-green bottle glass—were recovered that may date to the nineteenth century, but their origin is unclear.

Testing of the dwelling's current site also was completed, and resulted in identification of an inactive glazed terracotta drain line buried less than one foot below grade and thought to be an early sanitary sewer line that exited the rear of the house. A portion of an early-19th century brick walkway was discovered at the northeastern corner of the house. An intact carved soapstone splash guard was found next to the southeast corner of the house. Broadly similar hand-carved stone splash guards have been observed in a variety of settings at the nearby University of Virginia and the form likely dates to the nineteenth century. Beneath the front porch of Wyndhurst, a large block of carved stone was found; the block closely resembles the rectangular pilaster bases used on the north and south porticos of the 1853 Robert Mills Rotunda Annex at the University; the annex was destroyed by fire in 1895.

Based on findings of the archaeological investigations, the proposed new site for Wyndhurst does not have significant archaeological deposits that would be affected by placement of the dwelling at this location. The dwelling's current location lacks significant archaeological deposits that could be affected by the dwelling's removal.