

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VVR 6/19/8
NRHP 9/12/8

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Hunt - Sitterding House

Other names/site number: Sitterding House; Gilbert Hunt House (127-0202-0001)

2. Location

Street & number: 901 Floyd Avenue not for publication N/A

City or town: Richmond vicinity N/A

State: Virginia code: VA county: Independent City code: 760 zip code: 23220

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally Statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 7/29/08
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling with office

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: education related (offices)

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian, Queen Anne/Romanesque subcategory

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stucco, roof slate, walls brick, other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ___ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
[X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ___ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
___ B removed from its original location.
___ C a birthplace or a grave.
___ D a cemetery.
___ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
___ F a commemorative property.
___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1891-1921 (dates of Gilbert Hunt's occupancy)

Significant Dates 1891

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Hunt, Gilbert J., Jr.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
<u>18</u>	<u>283256</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4158166</u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Calder Loth

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date April, 2008

street & number 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone 804 367-2323

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Virginia Commonwealth University, Office of Facilities Management

street & number 700 West Grace Street telephone 804 828-9647

city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23284-2502

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description

The Hunt-Sitterding house is an imposing late-Victorian town house displaying the influence of the both the Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles fashionable at the time. Built in 1889-91 by the contractor/architect Gilbert Hunt for his own residence, the house was the end dwelling of a row of similarly robust houses lining the south side of Floyd Avenue between North Cherry and North Linden streets. All of the houses in the block, save for the Hunt-Sitterding house, have been demolished and the site is now occupied by the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Student Commons, a sprawling essay in Modernism. Though isolated, the house remains a visually dominant historic anchor in this formerly prestigious residential neighborhood. Its exterior remains relatively unchanged. The interior, however, has undergone at least two alterations since its 1975 acquisition by VCU. Despite the changes, sufficient architectural trim remains to signal the original rich character of the interior spaces. Particularly noteworthy is the decorative main staircase, which retains its honey-brown natural oak finish.

Detailed Description - Exterior

Faced with pressed brick veneer highlighted with rough-faced gray granite trim, the 2 ½-story Hunt-Sitterding house, with its 3-story corner tower, dominates its quadrant of the intersection of Floyd Avenue and North Cherry Street. The house strongly contrasts with the modernistic VCU Student Commons building on its same block, as well as the architecturally vapid 1970s VCU James Branch Cabell Library across Floyd Avenue. Despite VCU's modern interventions into the neighborhood fabric, reminders of the historic character of the area remain. These include the massive Cathedral of the Sacred Heart diagonally across Floyd Avenue and a row of late-Victorian town houses across North Cherry Street. (The cathedral and the aforementioned row of houses are included in the Monroe Park Historic District [NHRP, 1984]. The district's western boundary is North Cherry Street, thus excluding the Hunt-Sitterding House.)

Characteristic of its period, the general impression of the Hunt-Sitterding house is one of verticality. The tall, narrow façade is dominated by a single-bay entrance. This is flanked on its east side by the corner tower which is topped by a steeply pointed octagonal roof. The front door is sheltered by a projecting room-like brick porch entered through a wide Romanesque-style arch. The arch is supported on polished pink granite columns with gray granite Romanesque-style foliated capitals. The porch's side walls have arched openings as well. The entrance retains its original multi-panel double front doors. The porch floor is paved with black and white marble squares in a diagonal checker-board pattern. The porch's flat roof is lined with rough-faced granite coping with corner blocks topped with granite spheres. The voussiors of the arch are rough-faced gray granite blocks. The porch is approached by a flight of eight steps set between sloped granite parapets. Its center iron railing is a modern addition. The porch and its arch form the exterior's principal character-defining feature.

On the façade, the steep hipped roof is broken by a single, hipped-roof dormer with slate sides. Similar hipped dormers are found on the side and rear of the house. The roof retains its original gray slate covering, which is decorated with a band of green slate. The tower roof has patterned slate decorations with touches of red. All of the windows both on the Floyd Avenue and the main part of the North Cherry Street elevations have their original one-over-one sashes which diminish in size on each level. The windows have stone sills and rough-faced flat granite

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

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lintels. The light gray granite contrasts with the red brickwork and its thin red mortar joints. Offering further variety to the principal elevations is the high basement faced with scored stucco to resemble ashlar. On the North Cherry Street elevation is an areaway guarded by a low iron fence. At the northern end of the fence is a gate which opens to steps leading to a basement door. The door is the entrance to the basement area that Gilbert Hunt used for his office. The North Cherry Street elevation is given emphasis by being interrupted with a very shallow, two-bay pavilion of three stories capped by a hipped gable.

The walls of the principal elevations are capped by a plain wooden cornice supported on a series of brick corbels. Attached to the rear of the main part of the house is a 2-story service ell fronted on its Cherry Street side by a two-level wooden porch with square posts topped by decorative brackets. The southernmost bay of the porch appears to be a later addition. Under the porch is a basement areaway. A large area of reworked brickwork on the south (rear) wall suggests an alteration of the window arrangement.

The west wall of the house is treated very plainly as it was not intended to be visible, being originally set very close to its next-door town house, since demolished. Although now partially hidden by landscaping and the adjacent student commons building, the west wall is more noticeable than intended. A principal alteration, but an inoffensive one, is the insertion of a tall arched window in the middle of the west wall. This was part of the 1984 alterations, done to provide daylight to the stairwell. Any rear garden or stable that once may have existed is now occupied by a surface parking area for the student commons building.

Detailed Description - Interior

From the interior's remaining original elements, it can be assumed that the principal rooms were richly decorated. It is difficult to determine what, if any, alterations may have occurred prior to VCU's acquisition of the property. VCU undertook its first series of changes in 1977, when the interior was adapted to house the Student Activities Center. It underwent further changes in 1984, when it was adapted to house personnel and administration offices. Fortunately, the original main staircase, a primary character-defining feature, survived with minimal alteration. The stair, including its parallel paneled wainscoting, is executed in varnished golden oak and ascends in an open well to the third floor. It features turned balusters and heavy square newels decorated with carvings and corner colonnettes and topped with finials.

Double parlors occupy the space on the south side of the stair hall. The double doors between the two rooms were closed in the 1984 alterations. The rooms retain their original mantels both of which have decorative carved friezes and shelves supported on colonnettes with spiral carvings. The mantels, which are slightly different, are now painted. They probably were originally natural-finished oak. Each fireplace preserves its original cast-iron fireback, both of which are significant artistic artifacts. The front parlor's fireback has a relief of the face of the "Green Man," a medieval male version of Mother Nature. The second parlor's fireback is a relief of Elihu Vedder's painting of "Young Marsyas Charming the Hares." Also surviving in the parlors and well as in the stairhall are most of the original window and door surrounds, which have cornerblocks decorated with carved flowers. The coved cornices in the rooms appear to be original. The applied panel moldings in the walls are probably a later addition. The first-story floors are covered with carpet making it impossible to determine whether any original flooring remains.

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

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The room beyond the double parlors was originally the dining room. It has been extensively modernized and preserves little historic fabric. The fireplace, formerly located on the south wall, has been removed. All of the rooms in the service ell beyond have been extensively modernized and retain no visible historic trim. It's original room configuration appears to have been altered as well. The rear staircase, however, has survived. The rooms on the second floor likewise have been extensively modernized and retain very little original trim except in the stairhall and on some of the window frames. All of the second-floor mantels have been removed. The original floor plan, however, remains discernible.

The third floor has been extensively modernized as well. Despite the changes, the middle room retains its marbled slate mantel with cast-iron fireplace covering. With its incised decoration, the mantel is a type common for houses of the period in the neighborhood.

The basement rooms also have been extensively modernized. The removal of the lateral partition between the middle rooms has created a large open space with a hung ceiling. However, both of the original marbled slate mantels, similar to the attic mantel, were kept. The south mantel is below what would have been the dining room fireplace. The basement front room, at the bottom of the corner tower, is accessed by an exterior door on the east wall. Because of the entrance, this space presumably was Gilbert Hunt's front office, where clients were received.

In summary, the Hunt-Sitterding exterior survives without significant alteration and maintains a high degree of architectural integrity. The exterior is generally well maintained and shows no obvious signs of deterioration or neglect. As noted above, the interior has lost much original fabric but a sufficient amount remains to provide a picture of its original character. Fortunately, the principal feature, the staircase is completely intact and has not suffered the indignity of enclosure for fire safety. Remaining detailing elsewhere is fine quality and must have been used by its original owner as a sample of his architectural and contracting abilities.

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
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Summary Statement of Significance

A noteworthy representative of Richmond's late 19th-century town house architecture, the Hunt-Sitterding house gains interest from being the home of one Richmond's prominent builder/architects. Completed in 1891, the house was designed and built by Gilbert J. Hunt, Jr. to serve as his residence and office. Hunt is best remembered as a leading developer of the Fan District, a signature historic neighborhood of the city. Hunt designed and constructed some fifty-five Fan District houses; around forty are still standing. With its Romanesque porch and its pointed roof tower, Hunt's Floyd Avenue home is a demonstration of the freely interpreted historicism that characterized many American urban dwellings of the 1890s. The house combines elements of the Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles. Richmond realtor Frederick Sitterding, Jr. purchased the property from the Hunt estate in 1922. Virginia Commonwealth University acquired the house in 1975 and now uses it for offices.

Justification of Criterion

The property is eligible under Criterion C as a distinctive example of late 19th-century upper-middle-class urban domestic architecture combining various historical references into an original and visually conspicuous design, and its association with Gilbert J. Hunt, Jr. an prominent architect/builder/developer whose many works contributed to the architectural character of the city of Richmond.

Background Information¹

Gilbert J. Hunt, Jr. (1843-1921) was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia. His father, Gilbert J. Hunt, was originally from New York City and moved to Fredericksburg in 1833, where he worked as a mechanic, a term which at the time signified a craftsman or artisan. The younger Hunt suffered from delicate health as a child. His father thus decided that he should learn a trade that would improve him physically. Hunt followed in his father's footsteps and entered the building and contracting business. He married Ella Griffith of Fredericksburg in 1865. In 1873 he and his wife and two children moved to Richmond where he formed a partnership with William F. Johnson in the carpentry business. The partnership lasted for seven years; the City Directory of 1880 lists Hunt as a carpenter alone. In 1891 he changed both his personal and business address to 901 Floyd Avenue, at which time he lists himself as being in the contracting business. An advertisement in the 1891 City Directory has the following:

*Gilbert J. Hunt
Carpenter and Builder,
Between Cherry & Linden & Main & Floyd Sts.
Richmond, VA.
All work neatly and promptly executed
Estimates given on application²*

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

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Hunt's Floyd Avenue dwelling was the end structure of a row of detached town houses erected by Hunt between 1889 and 1891. Like many end houses of the period, it was embellished with a tall corner tower to provide a visual accent for the intersection. The decorative mix of materials on its exterior served to advertise Hunt's skill as a builder. Hunt operated his business out of a basement office where he could meet his clients and work on his plans. The house was designed so that the basement office would have its own entrance off North Cherry Street.

Hunt's business progressed steadily. In Men of Mark in Virginia (1907), Hunt was described as having "energy and initiative; and in the conduct of his large and successful business as a contractor and builder, he has relied upon his own skill as a designer in making his own drawings, plans, and specifications."³ This description provides firm evidence that Hunt had progressed from being a carpenter/contractor to providing architectural services. Most of his designing and building activity was concentrated in Richmond's Fan District, a large neighborhood of densely packed town houses that extended from Monroe Park west to the Boulevard⁴. Most of the Fan's construction took place between 1880 and 1920, starting in the eastern blocks and spreading westward over the next three decades. The neighborhood was defined primarily by two- and three-story town houses in a variety of styles ranging from Italianate and the Free Style (a picturesque mixture of Romanesque and Queen Anne references), to Colonial Revival. Most of Hunt's contributions to the Fan District were in this Free Style, and demonstrate a particular sturdiness with their towers, stone trimmings and projecting bays.

As with many of the buildings in Fan District, Hunt's houses were built as speculative ventures. Hunt purchased the land, designed the houses, and served as contractor for their construction. Because he was acting as his own client, he could exercise greater freedom in the treatment of the appearance and outfitting of his buildings. Hunt's interest in both architecture and building thus caused his dwellings to have more individuality than many of their Fan District neighbors. A partial list of Hunt's Fan District dwellings includes:

- 925-930 West Franklin
- 2007-2009 West Grace Street
- 2028-2030 West Grace Street
- 1300-1302 Grove Avenue,
- 608-1622 Hanover Avenue
- 1513-1519 Hanover Avenue
- 1608-1622 Hanover Avenue
- 310-316 North Harrison Street
- 302-310 Lombardy Street,
- 400 & 402 Lombardy Street (six additional houses in this row have been demolished)
- 900-902 Park Avenue (demolished)
- 1002-1016 Park Avenue
- 1603-1613 Park Avenue
- 1630-1704 Park Avenue
- 1708-1714 Park Avenue
- 1504-1518 West Avenue

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

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After 1907 Hunt received various individual commissions along with his speculative ventures. In his latter years he also served as a city real estate tax assessor. He continued his business until his death in his Floyd Avenue home in 1921. He is buried in his family plot in Hollywood Cemetery. Hunt left his home to his widow, who died the next year. Upon Ella Hunt's death, Hunt's estate sold the property to Frederick Sitterding, Jr., a prominent Richmond realtor. Like Hunt, Sitterding worked from the house.

In 1975, 901 Floyd Avenue was acquired by Virginia Commonwealth University from Edward and Edith Shaw. The architecturally assertive row of six three-story town houses that Hunt built to the west of his house was also acquired by VCU and subsequently demolished along with the rest of the buildings in the block. The site is now occupied by the VCU Student Commons. Although the removal of all the block's other historic buildings has left Hunt's house without its historic context, it survives as a dramatic architectural contrast to the adjacent modernist buildings of VCU. In 1977, and again in 1984, VCU undertook various interior alterations in order to use the house for offices. Fortunately, a significant amount of architectural fabric was retained so that the character of Hunt's interior treatments is discernible. The exterior has survived with minimal modification.

Endnotes

¹ The biographical information on Gilbert Hunt presented here is extracted from "The Hunt for Hunt: Gilbert J. Hunt (1843-1921)", a VCU Art History student research project by Victoria A. Mallonee; April 2004, a copy of which is in the VDHR Archives File 127-0202-0001

² Ibid, quoted in Mallonne, page 7

³ Ibid, quoted in Mallonne, page 6

⁴ The portion of the Fan District from Lombardy Street to the Boulevard was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places as the Fan Area Historic District in 1985. 901 Floyd Avenue was not included in the district since it is east of Lombardy Street.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Carneal, Drew St. J., Richmond's Fan District, Historic Richmond Foundation, 1996

Lu, Sara, "Gilbert J. Hunt (1843-1921) A Short Summary," unpublished ms in VDHR Archives file 127-0202-0001.

Mallonne, Victoria, "The Hunt for Hunt: Gilbert Hunt (1843-1921)" unpublished VCU student paper in VDHR Archives file 127-0202-0001

Tyler, Lyon G. Men of Mark in Virginia, Vol.. II, Washington, D.C. 1907.

10. Geographical Information

Verbal Boundary Description

The Hunt-Sitterding House is identified as parcel number W0000349010 on the Tax Parcel Maps for the City of Richmond.

Boundary Justification

The property boundary includes the Hunt-Sitterding House and the city lot on which it is located.

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**Hunt-Sitterding House
Richmond, Virginia**

Section Photographic Data Page 8

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Photographic Data

The following is the same for all photographs:
Hunt-Sitterding House, City of Richmond, VA #127-0202-0001
Photos taken by Calder Loth on March 18, 2008
Negative #21425 stored at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Photo 1 of 5
Northwest façade

Photo 2 of 5
Floyd Avenue entrance, front porch

Photo 3 of 5
Cherry street elevation

Photo 4 of 5
Interior, stair hall, looking south

Photo 5 of 5
Interior, first floor second parlor, looking east

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HUNT SITTING-
HOUSE
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