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

VLR Listed: 7/18/1978
NRHP Listed: 12/13/1978

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

PH06810067

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 2 1978
DATE ENTERED DEC 13 1978

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON Agecroft

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 4305 Sulgrave Road — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Richmond — VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Third (David E. Satterfield)

STATE Virginia CODE 51 COUNTY (In City) CODE 760

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME President, Agecroft Association

STREET & NUMBER 4305 Sulgrave Road

CITY, TOWN Richmond — VICINITY OF STATE Virginia 23221

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Richmond City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 900 East Broad Street

CITY, TOWN Richmond STATE Virginia 23219

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE December 1977 — __FEDERAL X STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission - 221 Governor Street

CITY, TOWN Richmond STATE Virginia 23219

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	X UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
GOOD	RUINS	ALTERED	MOVED DATE
FAIR	UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Agecroft is situated on twenty-three acres of land located between the James River and Sulgrave Road in the Windsor Farms area of Richmond. Entrance to the estate is provided by two access roads, one for service and a more formal drive containing the gate. The property consists of the main dwelling and its amenities as well as a formal English garden located to the east of the manor house.

Erected in 1926-8 in the Tudor-Revival style, the house incorporates architectural fragments from a 16th-century English priory and from Agecroft, a late 15th-century English manor house. On the use of the fragments, an early history of the house contains the following notice:

> The new Agecroft was to be smaller than the original, since only the best parts had been brought from England, and the needs of Mr. Williams [for whom the house was built] were not excessive. However, a new addition was necessary-a service wing in harmonizing style. Changes in ground plan were also made, certain sections were to be placed in new relations to each other. All four sides of the former quadrangle were not to be reproduced.

Agecroft consists of a two-and-one-half-story, stone-foundation, gable-roof manor house from which radiates a series of wings and dependencies. The exterior walls of the complex are finished in a variety of decorative timber framing including ornamental and herringbone paneling and small framing. Most of the architectural fragments found on both the interior and exterior of the house date from the late 16th and 17th centuries. Between the exposed timbers is rough-cast stucco which conceals a steel frame. Casement windows of latticed leaded glass are used throughout the building. Stone shingles cover the roof.

The main (north) facade is divided into two sections by a projecting central wing which defines one wall of a flagstone-laid courtyard. The main entrance is approached through an open loggia, the posts of which support the projecting wing. The entrance consists of a simple, segmental Tudor arch doorway similar in execution to others found throughout the complex. The most commanding feature of the elevation is a multi-sectioned, five-part transom window, twenty-five feet long, which retains most of its diamond-shaped quarrels. A stained-glass coat of arms as well as circular quarrels date to the 19th century. The window was transported intact from the original Agecroft and dates to the 17th century. Above the window are found smaller leaded-glass casement windows of the same variety repeatedly used throughout the house. Two projecting gables break the roof line, which is accentuated by the ornamental paneling found on the facade.

A service wing comprises the other half of the north elevation. Like the opposite end of the elevation, an enclosed cobblestone courtyard is formed from the projecting central wing and a side wing which contains a four-bay garage. Leaded-glass windows and close studding with middle rail framing characterize the facade.

Although the river (south) facade is more regular than the north, it contains similar detailing. Each bay of the elevation contains a large, leaded-glass window on the first story and an oriel window on the second story with a projecting gable on the roof line. The southwestern section contains the service wing, set back from the river elevation and enclosed by a brick wall on the west elevation.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	X COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	X SOCIAL/~~HUMANITARIAN~~
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1926-28

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Homer G. Morse, Architect
Allen J. Saville & Co., Builder
Charles Gillette, Landscape Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Set above the James River in the fashionable Windsor Farms residential district of Richmond, Agecroft is a striking Tudor-Revival dwelling which is significant at once as an architectural monument and as a product of the social and aesthetic ideals of upper-class Virginians in the 1920s. Built in part with fragments from a post-medieval English manor house, Agecroft was erected in 1926-28 for Thomas C. Williams, Jr., a Richmond businessman.

In the twenties many Americans felt threatened both by the growth of an urban industrial society and by the large numbers of central and southern European immigrants who provided the labor for it. This sense of threat was manifested in many ways; some were political and involved efforts to reduce the numbers of new immigrants as well as to limit the influence of those who had already arrived. Events such as the Red Scare of 1919 reflected this fear that the new ethnic groups were a threat to accustomed ways of life.

A less active but equally direct manifestation of this fear lay in the renewed appreciation for the values and heritage of "Anglo-Saxon" society. Patriotic and genealogical societies multiplied, and the American experience was defined by many in terms of the contributions of pre-Revolutionary English settlers.

Architecturally this impulse was expressed in a fondness for the domestic architectural forms of late Tudor and Stuart England. Whereas the wealthy and powerful of late 19th-century America tended to build palaces modeled after those of the European Renaissance, men like Williams fancied themselves the heirs of the landed gentry of post-medieval England and clothed themselves in the picturesque trappings of that era. It was not surprising, then, that Williams should take advantage of the opportunity to acquire Agecroft Hall, a large, courtyarded manor house in Lancashire, England.

Possibly begun in the late 15th century by John Langley, Agecroft Hall, as it stood in 1925, was a late 16th-century house. Its half timbering, linenfold paneling, decorative chimney stacks, and other salient features were peculiarly characteristic of late Tudor building in the West of England. Williams had the building dismantled and brought parts of it back to Virginia. Under the direction of New York architect Homer G. Morse and the construction firm of Allen J. Saville and Company, a new, steel-framed house was erected. The new house was not a reconstruction of the original. It did incorporate some of the structural elements and many of the decorative features of the English house as well as a stairway from Warwick Priory, another large post-medieval English house which had been dismantled. Parts of Warwick Priory were erected as Virginia House, adjacent to Agecroft in Richmond.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Agecroft Hall, The Story of a Tudor Manor House. Richmond: privately printed, 1940.

Binney, Marcus; Strong, Roy; and Harris, John. The Destruction of the English Country House. Catalogue of the Exhibit of the Albert Museum in London, 1973.

Burcher, Becky. "English Tudor House Pieced Together in Richmond." Newport News Daily Press, 10/28/77.

Higham, John. Strangers in the Land. New York, 1955.

Latham, Charles. In English Houses. London: Country Life, 1904. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 23.106 acres

UTM REFERENCES

E - 18/278340 /4158900

F - 18/278400 /4159060

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	278800	4159100
B	18	278830	4158900
C	18	278750	4158660
D	18	278630	4158750

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The acreage comprising Agecroft is bounded by a line beginning at a point at the SE corner of the intersection of Sulgrave Road and Long Lane; thence extending approximately 150' SE along S side of Sulgrave Road; thence extending SW, then curving S, all for about 800', then curving approximately 500' SW into wooded area to approximately 50' N of Kanawha Canal; thence extending 1000' WNW paralleling said canal; thence extending approximately 500' NNE, continuing in wooded area; thence extending 400' SE to end of Long Lane; thence extending about 1000' NE along E side of said lane to point of origin. These boundaries coincide with those recorded (See Continuation Sheet #2)

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: June 1978

STREET & NUMBER: 221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE: (804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia 23219

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ 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 Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE JUL 18 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

for KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12-13-78

ATTEST: Lynn P. Beeler

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE Dec. 12, 1978

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nicholson, Brian. Agecroft Hall. (Scrapbook at Agecroft Hall), 1972.
O'Neal, William B. Architecture in Virginia. Richmond: Virginia Museum, 1968.
Stanard, Mary Newton. Windsor Farms. Richmond, 1926.

7. DESCRIPTION

The garden or east elevation contains a simple-frame, segmental pointed-arch doorway with leaded-glass windows on the first and second stories in a wing that projects from the main block of the house. The elevation faces onto a magnificent formal garden ornamented with statuary and lined with boxwood. The garden is terraced in order to conform to the slope of the promontory and was laid out by the noted landscape architect Charles Gillette.

The plan of Agecroft is as asymmetrical as the exterior. The first floor contains a formal entry foyer with an intricately carved oak staircase taken from Warwick Priory. Of special note are the grape-motif carved newels of medieval inspiration. Recessed paneling with incised molding down the stiles and rails complements the stair. The hall ceiling is decorated with ornamental strapwork which is also found throughout the first-floor rooms. The staircase leads to a balcony which overlooks the "Great Hall", from which radiate the principal rooms on the first floor. Besides the previously mentioned window, the Hall contains oak recessed paneling similar in execution to that found in the entry foyer. Other notable rooms are the formal dining room and drawing room, each containing oak recessed paneling and strapwork ceilings. A passage between the first-floor rooms exhibits elaborate linenfold paneling and a series of eight oak relief carvings. Four of the carvings are believed to represent portraits. The other four represent a classic Renaissance-style man. The second floor contains the bedrooms and a library, the largest room in the house. The library contains oak recessed paneling and an exposed timber ceiling. It is the only room that preserves the original furnishings of the builder of Agecroft, Thomas C. Williams.

The park surrounding the house is beautifully landscaped, also after the designs of Charles Gillette. When viewed from the river, the estate presents a picture of an English manor as revived and interpreted on the Virginia landscape.

RCC

Agecroft consists of 23.106 acres, the original size of the estate as laid out by T. C. Williams and landscaped by the landscape architect Charles Gillette. The northern boundary of Agecroft abuts the southern line of Sulgrave Road, the eastern boundary abuts the property line of Virginia House, the southern boundary parallels the natural shoreline of the James River, and the western boundary follows the southern line of Long Lane.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Williams built his new house on Windsor, a farm which he owned on the western edge of Richmond. Most of the tract was then divided into generous building lots, and an exclusive subdivision was erected over the next several years. In its American Georgian-style houses, Windsor Farms reflected the ideals discussed above; its "Colonial" architecture graphically expressed the social and architectural relationship between Agecroft and its neighbors.

The antiquarian, Anglophile, anti-urban impulses which led to the creation of Agecroft and Windsor Farms were explicitly acknowledged in a 1926 essay by Mary Newton Stanard, a prominent Virginia antiquarian of the 1910s and 1920s. Windsor Farms (a "typically English name") had "felt the heel of Indian warrior and English pioneer." Now T. C. Williams was fulfilling there his "vision of again planting an English village--a glorified English village on the banks of James River." Windsor Farms roads would "lead the way from city noise and unrest to homes of English architectural sturdiness. . . distinctly country homes." In the erection of Virginia House and Agecroft in their midst, Stanard went on to say, "England is literally being brought to America", a feat "almost too good to be real."[1]

In 1968 Agecroft was given to the Agecroft Association, a group organized for the purpose of caring for and exhibiting the house, which was opened to the public in 1969.

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[1] Mary Newton Stanard, Windsor Farms (Richmond: Privately published, 1926), n.p.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

in the survey drawings of the property done in 1940 by Charles Gillette, landscape architect. A copy of the drawings is filed with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.