

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Duff Mansion House

Other names/site number: Duff Homestead; Duff House and Farm; DHR #052-5122

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 4354 Kane Gap Road

City or town: Duffield State: VA County: Lee

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

    A     B X C     D

<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure: smokehouse

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural Outbuilding: Hay/Livestock barn

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural Outbuilding: Dairy barn

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural Outbuilding

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Center Passage Dwelling

NO STYLE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE; BRICK; WOOD; METAL:

Aluminum; ASPHALT

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Known historically as the Duff Mansion House, the mid-nineteenth-century dwelling stands on an elevated landform overlooking the Wallen (or Wallens) Creek Valley to the south, and is surrounded by farm buildings, cultivated fields, pasturelands, and steep, wooded mountains. Located in eastern Lee County, Virginia, less than five miles north of the Tennessee state line, the two-story hip-roofed frame house is one of the oldest extant buildings in Lee County, with hand-crafted woodwork and both stone and hand-made-brick masonry, and is in an exceptional state of preservation. The house is historically associated with the locally prominent Duff family who were among the earliest Euro-American settlers and most prosperous farmers in the area throughout much of the nineteenth century. The nominated parcel also includes an early plank-log meat house/smokehouse, a concrete-block dairy barn, and a frame hay/livestock barn, all contributing buildings. The property has outstanding integrity of location and setting as the rural, rugged landscape that characterizes the area has seen few changes over recent decades. The property's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship also are very good, most notably in the primary dwelling, which retains historic interior and exterior fabric despite some more recent alterations. The Duff Mansion House's integrity of feeling and association are apparent as a rural farmstead, retaining two historic barns and a meat house/smokehouse that illustrate historic farming operations as well as common design and construction methods for vernacular outbuildings.

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

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## Narrative Description

### Detailed Description

#### *Setting*

The Duff Mansion House is located within the Ridge and Valley province of the Southern Appalachia Mountains, on the eastern edge of the Cumberland Mountain Range. It is sited at the headwaters of Wallen (or Wallens) Creek, a tributary of the Powell River, within the unusual and distinctive U-shape of Powell Mountain's northern reaches, which wrap around the Wallen Creek Valley to the south, east and north. Rising to the north and east is another unusual geologic feature: the Z-shaped turn in the otherwise linear Wallen Ridge. The famous historic Wilderness Road followed part of Wallen Creek between Powell Mountain and Wallen Ridge.

The Duff Mansion House stands on a small knoll on the north side of Kane Gap Road, 4.25 miles north of Wilderness Road (U.S. Highway 58/421) at Sticklelyville. Kane Gap, part of the route used by early Euro-American settlers, lies to the east. The crossroads village of Duffield, named for members of the Duff family, is about four miles to the southeast. The Lee County Courthouse in Jonesville is approximately 14.5 miles to the west-southwest. The western tip of Virginia at Cumberland Gap is 45 miles to the west-southwest. The nearest Lee County town of Pennington Gap is 9.25 miles to the west-northwest, and the Wise County town of Big Stone Gap is 9.75 miles to the north-northeast. Kingsport, Tennessee, is 20 miles to the southeast.

The Duff Mansion House stands 135 feet north of the road. There are Norway spruce, maple, chestnut, and dogwood trees in the yard. Nearby, to the north and east, are a dairy barn, a hay/livestock barn, and a meat house/smokehouse. There are lots fenced in around the barns, with a creek running alongside the property. A hay field across the highway is directly in front of the house, with pastureland and two other hay fields adjoining the property.

#### *House Exterior*

The house is built of wood framing with cut-nailed weatherboards that remain intact behind aluminum siding. The foundation is constructed of coursed limestone ashlar stonework, on which hewn log sills are laid. Projecting from the roof are two central interior chimneys built of brick. The footprint of the house's two-story hip-roofed main block, built circa 1860, measures approximately 50 x 30 feet. The 1½-story gable-roofed kitchen ell extends 16 feet to the rear, off the northeast corner of the main block, and is nearly 25 feet wide including small porches on the east and west sides that share the ell's main roof. The west-side porch has been enclosed. The small, one-story gable-roofed springhouse addition off the ell's rear elevation is constructed of concrete block and probably dates to the 1930s or 1940s.

The main block was originally a single-pile form. The roof was completely rebuilt with new materials and extended to the rear to cover a 1½-story portion of the house including the dining room and two small rooms west of the dining room, probably within the first quarter of the twentieth century. The two-by-four-inch roof rafters are nailed to a ridgeboard. The sheathing

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

boards laid across the rafters are no more than six or seven inches wide. Now a hip roof, the original roof could have been a gable roof; but the earliest photographs, from the early twentieth century, show the same hip roof, including the 1½-story extension at the rear, with standing-seam sheet metal cladding. The entire house roof is now covered with asphalt shingles.

The kitchen ell, dining room, and two small rooms (one now the bathroom) were originally built as additions on the rear of the existing house, likely in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This is plainly evident given the weatherboards on the front wall of the dining room, which is now an interior wall, and the two window openings in the wall. The east window opening has been made into a two-sided bookshelf, but the west window retains its original nine-over-six sash. In the servant quarters above the dining room, the former rear exterior-wall weatherboards and main-roof molded wood cornice, matching the front cornice, remain exposed. The dining room has six-over-six sash windows in the east and west walls.

The symmetrical three-bay façade faces south-southeast. The front entrance has a five-panel door with porcelain knob, flanked by partial-height four-pane sidelights. Across the top of the entrance, aligned above each mullion, are miniature turned corner blocks. The entire entrance—door, sidelights, surround—appears to be original. Identical miniature corner blocks appear on exterior window trim on what was the rear elevation of the house before the dining room/servant quarters addition was constructed. The weatherboards surrounding the front entrance were replaced with board-and-batten sometime after the mid-twentieth century. The front windows of the house, seen in historic photographs, were six-over-six sash on the first story and nine-over-six on the second story, all of which were replaced with one-over-one sash in the late twentieth century.

The present one-story full-width front porch has a flat, balustraded roof supported in part by brick piers that historically were part of a circa 1930 porch, but otherwise is all new construction. It was built in 2018 to replace a 1990s porch with second-story sunroom that was altogether incompatible with the house's historic character. Old photographs depict a number of front porches, beginning with a two-story columned portico with a second-story walkout. All iterations of the front porch had a second story.

The wall framing above the sills is not observable, but hewn-log joists carrying the first floor can be seen in the small, brick-lined cellar beneath the southeast room. The overhead joists in the cellar, however, are massive round logs, hewn to a flat surface only on the top side. Ideal for food storage year around, the cellar is accessed via an exterior entrance on the east side of the house, through a brick-lined bulkhead with limestone steps. The cellar has walls of good quality hand-made bricks laid in neat common-bond, with intact original lime/sand mortar.

### *House Interior*

The house's main block has a center passage with stair, flanked by roughly equal-size rooms on both floors. The two handmade-brick central interior chimneys, located on opposite sides of the center passage walls, serve four arched-brick fireplaces—two on each floor. The kitchen chimney, also of handmade brick, was built only to accommodate a stove flue.

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

Presumably the work of local craftsmen, the house's interior is exceptionally well preserved. Throughout the house is an abundance of hand-planed wooden material. Much of the woodwork throughout the house, such as the fireplace mantels, built-in chimney presses, other cabinetry including a punctate-tin pie safe and kitchen pantry, and numerous doors, was fashioned of walnut lumber likely felled on the property. Yellow-poplar and pine wood materials are also present. The walls and ceilings of the front rooms are treated with three-coat plaster with horsehair, applied to riven oak lath fastened with machine-cut nails. In the added rooms to the rear, such as the dining room, the walls and ceilings are finished with flush-mounted boards. The floors throughout the house consist of original heart-pine boards, although later flooring has been applied on top of the pine boards in the first-floor center passage.

The center-passage stair design is typical of the mid-nineteenth century in the region, with newels in the form of slender colonettes, a blocky square-shaped hand rail, square balusters, a paneled spandrel, and a small closet beneath the stair. At the landing near the top of the stairs, in the original second-floor rear wall of the house, is a doorway with a three-panel door and a six-light transom. The doorway now opens into the servant quarters, but its presence indicates the house originally had a two-story rear porch or external staircase that was removed when the dining room addition was built.

Virtually all of the many doors in the house, including those of some cabinetry, were designed and made as part of an overall scheme that included the fireplace mantels, with common materials and decorative patterns in variations on a theme; which suggests that most, if not all of the interior woodwork was made about the same time, by the same craftsmen. Each door is made of hand-planed through-tenoned stiles and rails, with one of several combinations of two to five panels that impart an eye-catching, yet unpretentious character. The panels, perhaps best described as peak-molded or faceted, play on the effects of shadows, becoming more or less visually perceptible with the changing levels and direction of light in the house throughout the day. Some of the best-preserved doors, including several on the second floor, have three to five panels and original hardware such as porcelain and brown-mineral knobs and rim locks. The boards making up the door frames are mortised and pegged together. Several doors and cabinets in the front rooms feature well-preserved faux graining that seems to simulate mahogany. Although the fireplace mantels lack stylish carvings, they embody distinctive vernacular designs with vague Federal- and Greek Revival-style references. The first-floor west room's mantel frieze has its own peaked moldings matching the doors.

Located next to the fireplaces in each of the first- and second-floor front rooms are built-in handcrafted storage features, each with a different configuration of cabinets or cupboards, wardrobes, and drawers. Historically referred to as a chimney press, the piece is tucked into the niche between the fireplace/chimney and a wall. In the Duff Mansion House, the niches are between the fireplace and the north wall of each room. The first-floor east-room piece is suited for a dining room and includes a pie safe with three-part punctate-pattern tinwork that is reminiscent of clipped-corner panels seen on Colonial-era doors, with rectangular borders and diamond shapes in the center. Above the pie safe are two drawers with round wooden knobs, and

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

above them are three cabinets with glazed, 16-light hinged doors. The built-in storage pieces in the other three rooms are referred to by the Duff family descendants as chiffarobes, a term used mainly in the American South for pieces that combine tall hanging spaces for clothes with a chest of drawers. Typically, however, chiffarobes are free-standing pieces that are not built into a room.

The first-floor west room is the most formal room, likely where guests were entertained. It has the most elaborate mantel and the only chair rail in the house. The original fireplace has been infilled with an iron coal-burning insert, embossed with floral designs, surrounded by bricks, and a stove-flue hole was cut into the original brick arch spanning the firebox opening. Both first-floor hearths have been modified with poured concrete, but the second-floor brick hearths remain unaltered.

The kitchen, located in the rear ell, also has built-in storage areas. In the second-floor loft above the kitchen is a room with a grain bin which, it is said, could easily hold a ton of flour or cornmeal. The flour or meal poured down in measured quantities through a hopper into a deep cupboard with a bin/sifter in the kitchen below. To the rear of the kitchen is the one-story, one-room "springhouse" addition with a built-in concrete water trough use to keep crocks of dairy products cool. The water is piped in from a spring located several hundred yards up the mountain and runs continuously. The dining room, which occupies the rear portion of the two-story main block, is connected to the kitchen by both a doorway and a pass-through cupboard. It allowed items in the shelved cupboard to be accessed from either room, and passing food through it allowed the kitchen door to remain closed, keeping kitchen heat from entering the dining room. Above the dining room are the servant living quarters, accessed by a steep, narrow, enclosed corner staircase in the southeast corner of the dining room, or via the second-floor doorway off the main stair landing in the center passage. A bathroom was added off the east end of the dining room early in the 1920s.

#### Secondary resources

##### 1) Meat House or Smokehouse, mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century. Contributing building

The building is located 40 feet north of the house. It is an approximately 16 x 18-foot, one-story, front-gabled building constructed of sawn "plank" logs, half-dovetail-notched at the corners, on a fieldstone foundation. The exterior was clad with vertical boards, but only those on the front remain. The building is in deteriorated, yet salvageable condition.

##### 2) Dairy barn, ca. 1940. Contributing building

Sited 115 feet to the north of (behind) the house, the rectangular 60 x 20-foot, one-story dairy barn is constructed of concrete block. It has a side-gable roof clad with V-crimp sheet metal panels. Although no longer in use, the building is in reasonably good condition. It contains some small storage areas in addition to two large rooms, including the milking parlor in the east room, which retains remains of cow stalls and the milking apparatus. The rooms have separate entrances within an inset central bay on the south (front) side of the building. Next to the bay is an old painted metal sign reading "World's Finest – The Duncan Dry-Cold Milk Refrigerator – Manufactured by Star Bucket Pump Co. St. Louis."



Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

### 3) Hay/livestock barn, early twentieth century. Contributing building

Sited 120 feet northeast of the house and 27 feet east of the dairy barn is the front-gabled hay and livestock barn, likely built in the early twentieth century. Its footprint measures 75 x 50 feet including a shed addition at the rear. It is in generally good condition and is still used for hay storage. It has also been used for hanging and drying tobacco leaves in the past. The frame structure is built mostly of nominal sized mill-sawn lumber, except the sawn roof rafters rest on round log purlins. Through the center of the building, from front to rear (south to north), is a drive-through bay flanked by hay pens and livestock stalls. The barn exterior is clad with unpainted vertical boards and a V-crimp metal roof.

### Additional Resources

The Duff Mansion House's historic boundary includes two prehistoric archaeological sites, described below, that are known to have produced countless lithic artifacts that were taken by collectors over many years. Although both archeological sites are thought to be largely undisturbed below the plow zone, it must be emphasized that there has been no professional investigation of either site; therefore the level of stratigraphic integrity and site boundaries, i.e., the extents of artifact deposits, are unknown. Further research is needed to determine if the sites can be considered contributing resources with their own areas and periods of significance.

#### 1) Cornfield prehistoric archaeological site, Archaic Period.

The cornfield location thought to be the approximate central locus of the prehistoric archaeological site is 550 feet north-northwest of the house. Situated just to the west, above a small tributary of Wallens Creek, the landform slopes gently to the south. It has been in cultivation, mainly corn, for a long period of time. Diagnostic lithic artifacts ranging from the early to late Archaic Period have been recovered from the site, including dark- and light-gray chert projectile points. Projectile point types include Lecroy and McCorkle from the early Archaic Period; Bare Island, Iddins, and Iddins Undifferentiated Stemmed from the late Archaic Period; and Brewerton Corner-notched, which spans from late-middle to late Archaic. [Types identified by Virginia Department of Historic Resources western regional archaeologist Thomas Klatka, August 21, 2018. Also see Virginia Department of Historic Resources website, projectile point pages at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/points>.]

The cornfield site is believed to have excellent potential to provide important information about indigenous life during the full span of the Archaic period. Although Archaic sites are not rare in the area/region, relatively few sites with good stratigraphic integrity have been documented. Both the Duff cornfield site and the hayfield site (detailed below) appear to have good potential for subsurface integrity, considering that archaeological research in southwest Virginia has demonstrated that sites on stream terraces are subject to flooding events and accumulation rather than depletion of soil; and because plowing depths in southwestern Virginia (typically 6-9 inches below ground surface) never changed much. [Thomas Klatka, personal communication, August 21, 2018.]

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

2) Hayfield prehistoric archaeological site, Middle Woodland Period.

The hayfield location thought to be the approximate central locus of the prehistoric archaeological site is 325 feet south of the house, across Kane Gap Road. Situated just to the east of a small tributary of Wallen Creek, the landform is relatively flat, and has been in cultivation or in pasture since the early settlement period. One projectile point known to have been collected from the site, made from a type of microcrystalline translucent stone called Chalcedony, has been described by the Virginia Department of Historic Resource western regional archaeologist as a “Swannanoa-like projectile point with attributes similar to a number of early Middle Woodland projectile point types that remain poorly understood due to a paucity of examples from stratigraphic contexts.” Very similar points have been recovered along the Roanoke River in or near the City of Roanoke, Virginia, and are clearly associated with the early Middle Woodland period. [Thomas Klatka, personal communication, September 5-6, 2018.]

Notes from Historic Photos

The earliest photographs available, from the early twentieth century, provide a great deal of information about the Duff Mansion House and its surroundings. One of the oldest shows the house and a fenced-in front yard. On the hillside in front of the fence are numerous cattle and an idle ox-drawn wagon. The house looks almost as it does today, but with a two-story, two-tiered columned entry portico and a standing-seam metal roof. The most notable photo, probably taken the same day (the cattle and wagon are still in front of the house) has handwriting scrawled across the top and bottom, reading: “Birthplace of Guy B. Duff, Stickleyville Va.” The photo depicts the greater extents of the Duff Farm, which was obviously a large-scale operation, bustling and highly developed with infrastructure including a huge hip-roofed bank barn on the hilltop opposite the front of the house. The barn had numerous apertures, vertical-board siding, and a wood-shingle roof. Had it survived to the present day, the barn would likely be considered the most remarkable in southwestern Virginia. The barn was connected to the house by a wooden pedestrian bridge, perhaps 200-300 feet in length, across the swale between the two buildings. In the foreground is a fenced pasture with a herd of sheep and a gable-roofed corncrib. Beyond the corncrib, closer to the house, and around the barn are a number of other one-story agricultural buildings. Some of the fencing is the split-rail type, but most is post-and-rail. Cattle appear to be grazing everywhere except the sheep pasture. Another photo, possibly from the 1930s, is taken from the pedestrian bridge. It provides a good view of the west side and front of the house. At the time of the photo, the chimneys retained their corbeling at the top, which was later removed when the chimney tops were repaired. Most of the earliest known portico had been replaced, except for the roof. The columns had been replaced with four-by-four-inch wooden posts. Another photo, credited to Hugh Robinette, shows eleven members of the large family in front of the same portico with lattice added to the upper level. A photo from the 1950s or early 1960s shows a young Mr. Eunice Laster with a horse in front of the front portico, which now has Craftsman-style tapered square wooden columns on brick piers on the first-story, but the upper level with lattice had not been altered. The portico had a poured concrete deck, but had not yet been widened to a full-width porch across the façade. Board-and-batten had not yet replaced the weatherboards around the front entrance.

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### 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.
- 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
ca. 1860 – ca. 1940  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
ca. 1860  
ca. 1940  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Duff Mansion House, as it was known historically, along with some of the surrounding farm acreage, is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The nominated parcel, context, and setting, with domestic and agricultural buildings surrounded by farmland, continue to convey the homestead's historic architectural significance. The house itself, built for the Duff family in the mid-nineteenth century, is the primary significant resource, notable for being one of the oldest extant buildings in Lee County as well as for its locally handcrafted woodwork and its exceptional state of preservation. The house was probably built shortly before or fairly soon after the Civil War, possibly by William Powell Duff, who turned 23 in 1860; yet a considerable amount of research has been inconclusive regarding the early ownership and construction date. The period of significance for the nominated parcel spans from circa 1860 with construction of the Mansion House, to circa 1940, when the latest contributing building, the dairy barn, was constructed.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

#### Criterion C – Architecture

The very epitome of a commodious, mid-nineteenth-century vernacular house in far southwestern Virginia, the Duff Mansion House meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion C in the area of Architecture for embodying the distinctive characteristics of its era by local craftsmen. The house has an interesting evolution, yet its overall form and character have changed little since the first period of its construction. Most notable is the extraordinarily well-preserved interior with early historic materials that are significant for their vernacular design, construction, and craftsmanship. The abundance of hand-worked, locally sourced material in the house, including numerous doors and mantels designed according to a common theme with peaked or faceted panels; stairs, handrail, and built-in cupboards, cabinets and chiffarobes fashioned from walnut wood harvested on the grounds; and three-coat plaster applied to riven (hand-split) oak lath; handmade-brick chimneys and cellar; and limestone ashlar foundation, are combined to emanate a unique character. The contributing secondary buildings on the farm – a plank-log meat house/smokehouse, a hay/livestock barn, and a dairy barn – lend additional architectural interest and significance to the property.

Due in part to a generally diminished concern for historic preservation in the economically distressed, former agricultural and mining province with mountainous topography, well-preserved buildings, particularly those from the early settlement through antebellum periods, have become increasingly rare in Lee County. Few remain extant, making the Duff Mansion House an exceptionally rare resource. The property is located in an area lacking extensive representation among Register listings. Of only seven total listings, and only five individually-listed architectural resources in Lee County, just two are domestic sites (with or without farm

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

buildings). The other two listings are the Cumberland Gap Historic District and the Ely Mound archaeological site.

### Integrity Statement

The Duff Mansion House's outstanding integrity of design, materials, and workmanship has already been well documented in the paragraphs above. The integrity of location and setting are easily summed up by adding that the house has never been moved from its original location and the setting remains mostly farmland with farm buildings, much as it was in the nineteenth century. Two other aspects of integrity, association and feeling, are more difficult to express with words, yet they get at the very substance that makes the Duff Mansion House special. It means experiencing a distinct sense of being in the rural home of a large family during the era following the Civil War, which is made possible by an exceptional state of preservation that has not involved, and need not involve, substantial restoration. Between 1905 and 1948, the house saw little use and only a few, relatively minor modifications. The Laster family, who lived in the house and farmed the land from 1948 to 1984, made remarkably few modifications to the house, which thereafter stood largely unused until 2017. The house needed attention, but little restoration work.

### House Construction Date

Although there is little doubt that the house was built for members of the Duff family, extensive and methodical research has been largely inconclusive regarding the early ownership and precise construction date. This is partly due to the unreliability of Lee County deed records, and especially the county land tax books from the 1850s through 1870s. Research for this nomination included examination of Lee County land tax books for the years 1856–1883 at the Library of Virginia by historian John Salmon. The tax book entries regarding Duff family holdings are many, but none include “improvements” valuable enough to represent the Duff Mansion House, which would have been assessed at between \$700 and \$1,000. For example, in the 1856 tax book, Thomas D. Duff is assessed for a 110-acre tract 15 miles east of the courthouse, one of many Duff family-owned lands at the head of Wallen Creek. The tract has buildings valued at \$800 until 1868, when the value plummeted to only \$100, hence it clearly is not the Duff Mansion House property. While Captain William P. Duff appears to be the most likely owner of the Duff Mansion House beginning in 1867–1869, there are no William P. Duffs in the land tax books who own buildings totaling more than \$400 in assessed value between 1856 and 1883. The large number of Duff family members owning land at or near the headwaters of Wallen Creek is discussed further in the Duff Mansion House – Family Background section below.

The c. 1860 construction date assigned to the two-story portion of the house is based mainly on physical clues, specifically the overall massing, the center-passageway plan, the central interior fireplace/chimney locations, the predominance of hand-planed woodwork, and the exclusive use of machine-cut nails and three-coat plaster on riven lath. One limitation to physical dating of the house is the fact that the structural framing is not exposed, and therefore cannot be inspected

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

without damaging historic materials. Nevertheless, the visible clues collectively indicate that both pre-1850 and post-1870s construction dates are quite unlikely.

With the exception of a few prestigious houses built in the mid-1850s or later, central interior chimneys with fireplaces on the inside walls of center-passage plans were virtually unheard of before the Civil War in western Virginia. In contrast to the Duff Mansion House, the chimneys/fireplaces of virtually all houses were on the end walls. The first planing mills in the region were established in conjunction with steam-powered sawmills in the early 1850s, when mill planing began to replace hand planing and sawn lath began to replace riven (hand-split) lath; yet both hand-planing and riven lath persisted in remote areas well into the 1870s. As noted in the description above, the house contains a great deal of matching woodwork. Beyond the use of walnut wood, the chief unifying characteristic of the many doors throughout the Duff Mansion House are the broad, peak-molded panels. Such moldings are rare in southwestern Virginia, but are not unique to this dwelling. For example, a number of similar doors with peaked moldings are found in the c.1870 Bowman House [DHR ID 218-0026] in the Fincastle Historic District (Botetourt County, Virginia).

#### Non-applicable Register Criteria

The Duff Farm, as it appeared around the turn of the twentieth century, would almost certainly have been eligible under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture. Unfortunately, as the agrarian economy of the region declined throughout the twentieth century, many of the agricultural buildings and structures were lost. Although notable vestiges remain, such as the hay/livestock barn and dairy barn built in the first half of the century, their presence alone does not meet the high bar for integrity that is necessary for significance under Criterion A.

The house/farm is locally significant for its association with the historically prominent Duff family, who were among the earliest settlers and most prosperous farmers in the area, regardless of which specific members of the family may have built it, owned it, or lived in it. However, there is no single family member associated with the property who is sufficiently documented to demonstrate the level of significance necessary under Criterion B for important persons.

Despite its two known prehistoric archaeological sites, the farm is not being nominated under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology because there have been no professional investigations, only uncontrolled surface collection from the fields by the property owners, family, and friends over many years. Countless artifacts have been removed from the contexts. Though the cornfield and hayfield sites are thought to have potential to produce important information about prehistoric cultures, there has been no investigation of site boundaries or confirmation of intact subsurface stratigraphy, both of which would be necessary to justify significance under National Register Criterion D. The discussion of the two archaeological sites in Section 7 is based on a small collection of stone artifacts in the possession of the current owners.

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

### Duff Mansion House – Family Background

According to extensive Duff family genealogies and related documents, members of the Duff family came to Virginia from Scotland by way of Ireland before 1725. James Duff, Sr., born in Ireland in 1757, was the first to make his way to Lee County, where he lived until 1851. Robert Duff, born in Ireland in 1759, came to Russell County, near Lee County, about 1780, and in the early 1790s purchased lands previously owned by the deceased Archibald Scott at the head of Wallen Creek in Lee County, where the extant Duff Mansion House was later built. Robert Duff, Sr. and his wife Mary Powell Dickenson Duff, who died in 1859, are buried in the family cemetery that is near the Mansion House, but is not included in the nominated parcel. [Bales, Early Settlers of Lee County Virginia and Adjacent Counties, Volume II, 1977: Duff family genealogy, 627-630.]

The Duffs are said to have been a family of “prominence and influence” who “played active roles in the political and civic affairs” in Lee County. Robert and Mary had ten children born between 1795 and 1819. Their oldest son, William Powell Duff (Sr.), and his wife Catherine lived at the head of Wallen Creek and had at least seven children before retiring to Kentucky in 1853. The third child, William Powell Duff (Jr.), was born in 1833. Other descendants of Robert Duff, Sr., such as sons Samuel Henry Duff (b. 1799) who had seven children, James Duff, who had six children, and Joseph Duff (1803-1872) who had ten children, lived on the waters of Wallen Creek. Because so many Duffs lived in the area and because Lee County records from the period are incomplete and unreliable, researching specific historic properties such as the Duff Mansion House has proven very difficult. [Bales, 627–628.]

Another factor complicating research is the fact that the names of Duff men were used repeatedly throughout many overlapping generations. The most relevant example is another William Powell Duff, son of James and Elizabeth Young Duff, born in 1837, who became one of the best known of the Duff clan by virtue of his record during the Civil War. He joined the Confederate Army at the beginning of the war and was sent home to recruit more soldiers. He mustered a small company on Wallens Creek in 1861 that was sent to Abingdon for training. William P. Duff was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant under Captain Hanna, Company G, 50<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment. He became a captain in General Stonewall Jackson’s corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, holding the rank until the war closed. He fought in some of the war’s most important battles, including Gettysburg, Chancellorsville and the Wilderness Campaign. He was taken prisoner at Spotsylvania Courthouse in May 1864, and remained a prisoner at Fort Delaware and Morris Island, South Carolina, until returning home to Lee County in July 1865. [Bales, 628–629.]

In 1867, Captain William Powell Duff married Eliza Barbara Newland. By then, he had taken up residence at the Duff Homeplace, which was then either the Duff Mansion House or a predecessor of the Mansion House on the same property. It is possible that he and his bride moved into a new Duff Mansion House that he had built after his return from the War. The couple gave birth to eight children between 1869 and 1883, before moving out of state. The seventh child, Guy B. Duff, wrote his name on a historic photo of the Duff Mansion House with the inscription “Birthplace of Guy B. Duff, Stickleyville, Va.” William P. and Eliza’s first-born child, Joseph Newland Duff, was born in 1869 on Wallens Creek. After completing his education



Duff Mansion House

Name of Property

Lee County, VA

County and State

in Kentucky, he returned to Lee County and married in 1890, settling in “the old Duff home on the head of Wallens Creek and became a very prosperous farmer.” He lived there until 1905 and was the last of the Duff name to live in the Mansion House. [Bales, 629–630.]

#### Post-Duff Ownership, 1906-present

Businessman Fred Steele of Tazewell, Virginia, purchased vast acreage on Wallen Creek from the Duff family in 1918, including the Mansion House. He undertook some limited remodeling of the house, including enclosure of the back porch and installation of the bathroom within the enclosure.

Hal Laster was manager of the 1,600-acre farm for Steele for more than 14 years. In 1948, when Steele began to divide and sell the farm, Hal Laster purchased the Duff Mansion House along with 289 acres of farmland. Laster’s son Eunice lived in the house with his parents from age 10 until he married in 1964. Hal and his wife Callie lived in the house until 1984, after which it was sold, but it then stood vacant for about 25 years. Eunice and Mary Ruth Laster, who lived in a house on farmland northwest of the Mansion House since 1974, purchased the Mansion House in 2017 and began work to remediate deterioration caused by years of vacancy and neglect. In the spring of 2018, they removed the modern front porch with second-story sunroom and replaced it with a new porch that is decidedly more compatible with the house’s historic character. [Eunice Laster, personal communication, February 8, 2019. Fleenor, “The Duff Mansion House,” 2017.]

#### Lee County and The Wilderness Road

Lee County, Virginia, was founded in 1792. In 1814, Scott County was created from parts of Lee and Russell counties, and finally Wise County was created in 1856, further diminishing the land areas of Lee and Russell counties.

Because of Lee County’s unique shape—50 miles east-west and 20 miles north-south—and its mountainous geography of ridges aligned southwest to northeast, few natural highway corridors exist. The Wilderness Road followed the best natural route—east-west through the southern length of the county, ending at the Cumberland Gap at the western end—the westernmost extent of Virginia. The Wilderness Road was absolutely critical to the settlement and development of Lee County, including the Wallen Creek Valley where the Duff Mansion House is located, and nearby Stickleysville, situated along the Wilderness Road itself.

Lee County’s economy is now largely dependent on tobacco cultivation and coal mining, both of which have declined in recent decades, leading to large-scale losses in employment, resident income, and local tax revenues. In 2010, the county’s residents numbered only 25,587.

#### The Early Exploration of Lee County

In 1750, an expedition led by Dr. Thomas Walker, an investor in the Loyal Land Company, set out from the Great Valley of Virginia to the west, through the Cumberland Gap and into present-

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

day eastern Kentucky, with the aim of exploring lands for future settlement. Walker's detailed report proved to be valuable in encouraging and guiding later expeditions.

Beginning in 1769, Virginia explorer Joseph Martin, for whom the City of Martinsville, Virginia is named, made several forays into the Lee County area as an agent for Dr. Thomas Walker. Martin made his first expedition to Powell's Valley (now Lee County) in early 1769. He led the construction of the first frontier fort at present-day Rose Hill, Virginia (about 27 miles west of the Duff Mansion House), which was known as Martin's Station. During the same period, Owen Station was established at present-day Ewing, and Gibson Station, which still holds its name, was established about five miles east of the Cumberland Gap. [Wilderness Road State Park webpage.]

In 1774, North Carolinian Richard Henderson organized a land speculation group called the *Transylvania Company* to establish a colony on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains. They hired Daniel Boone to blaze a trail leading through the Powell Valley and the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. The following year Boone set forth from Fort Chiswell, Virginia, identifying the optimal route west. The Wilderness Road, as it became known, was difficult traveling. Nevertheless, it would become the principal westerly route used by Euro-American settlers for more than fifty years. After crossing the Cumberland Gap, the Wilderness Road forked to the south, toward what would become the cities of Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, and to the north toward northeast Kentucky and the Falls of the Ohio River at Louisville. In 1796, major improvements to the road were completed, greatly facilitating wagon and carriage travel. [Cumberland Gap National Historical Park webpage.]

As many as 300,000 settlers traveled along the Wilderness Road between 1775 and 1820. By the time the Duff Mansion House was built about four miles off the Wilderness Road, new, alternative passages to the west had been established and use of the road declined considerably. During the Civil War, however, the Union and Confederate armies heavily traveled the road through the Cumberland Gap, which changed hands four times during the conflict.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to acknowledge important contributions to this document made by Duff Mansion House owners Eunice and Mary Ruth Laster, who provided family documents and photos and assisted with research; retired Virginia Department of Historic Resources historian and Virginia State Review Board member John Salmon, who spent many hours combing through records at the Library of Virginia; and Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Western Region Archaeologist Tom Klatka, who provided valuable interpretive assistance regarding the prehistoric archaeological sites on the Duff property. Finally, Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Register and Archives staff at the department headquarters in Richmond—Lena McDonald, Quatro Hubbard and others—are due heartfelt thanks for their unflagging support and assistance.

Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bales, Hattie Byrd Muncy. *Early Settlers of Lee County Virginia and Adjacent Counties, Volume II*, 1977: Duff family genealogy on pages 627-630.

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[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/wilderness-road.shtml#other\\_info](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/wilderness-road.shtml#other_info)

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### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### 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, Richmond



Duff Mansion House  
Name of Property

Lee County, VA  
County and State

### 11. Form Prepared By

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date: February 2019

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Duff Mansion House & Farm

City or Vicinity: Sticklelyville vicinity

County: Lee State: Virginia

Photographer: Michael J. Pulice, except where noted

Date Photographed: February – August, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, description of view:

1 of 20. Duff Mansion House, looking north-northwest. Photographer: Mary Ruth Laster

2 of 20. Duff Mansion House, looking north. Photographer: Mary Ruth Laster

3 of 20. Duff Mansion House, looking southwest

4 of 20. Duff Mansion House and farm buildings, looking north-northwest

5 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, center passage with staircase

6 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor west room, northeast corner

Duff Mansion House

Name of Property

Lee County, VA

County and State

- 7 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor east room, northwest corner
- 8 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor east room, built-in pie safe
- 9 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor east room, northeast corner
- 10 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor dining room, north wall
- 11 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor dining room, pass-through pantry
- 12 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, first-floor dining room, east wall
- 13 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, second-floor center passage, north wall
- 14 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, second-floor east room doorway
- 15 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, second-floor east room, built-in wardrobe
- 16 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, second-floor west room, east wall
- 17 of 20. Duff Mansion House, interior, second-floor west room, built-in drawers, closets
- 18 of 20. Duff dairy barn, looking north
- 19 of 20. Duff hay/livestock/tobacco barn, interior, looking north
- 20 of 20. Pasture archaeological site south of Duff Mansion House, looking south

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.