



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property. This house has been evaluated several times since 1982 and the nomination was never submitted and at the time the owner wishes to see if the house is still eligible for nomination and he would like to have the house added to the National Register in honor of his grandmother who was not able to complete the forms.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_

1. General Property Information

Property name: Royster Parr House/ Woodlawn/ Oak Valley

Property address: 156 Parrtown Rd

City or Town: Amherst

Zip code: 24521

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Amherst

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building  Site \_\_\_\_\_ Structure \_\_\_\_\_ Object \_\_\_\_\_

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 5.28 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Royster Parr House is located in the Temperance area of Amherst County. It is about three miles south of the village of Lowesville. It is located in a hollow along Parrtown Road (Secondary Route 753) and the property straddles the road. This is a farmstead with five outbuildings. There is a machine shop near the point where the circular gravel drive meets Parrtown Road. The house and three outbuildings are in a yard with maturing trees and shrubs, most of the landscaping was planted by the current owner. The tobacco barn is located in the field to the northeast of the yard and across Parrtown road.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Greek Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

If the builder is known, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of construction (can be approximate): c. 1843

#### **Narrative Description:**

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

The Royster Parr farmstead is comprised of a c.1843 house with additions and five late 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings. The complex represents a typical farm complex of the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The center of the complex was the frame house. It was constructed by Dr. Samuel Gibson (1811-1874). The original house was a two-story frame, single pile, I-house with Greek Revival details. In 1860, a frame, one-story, rear ell was added. In 1935, the house was remodeled and given modern updates such as electrification and running water. The house was enlarged to accommodate kitchen and bathroom spaces. The two concrete porches were also added. All of the various roofs are sheathed in standing-seam metal. The house is currently unoccupied, but is maintained.<sup>1</sup>

The c. 1843 section of the house has a stuccoed, brick foundation, gable end chimneys, and a standing seam metal gable roof. The current weatherboard siding replaced the beaded weatherboard in 1935, according to the 1980 survey. The gable end chimneys appear to have been redone with the 1935 renovation and the stucco on the foundation redone as well. The house retains the original reeded trim and plain corner blocks around the doors and windows. It also retains its original 9/9 double-hung sash windows on the first story and 6/6 double-hung sash windows on the second story. The main elevation of the house faces north and is symmetrical with three bays across each story. The single-leaf entry is centered and is protected under the 1935 concrete porch. This door has a four light transom above the door. The original door with ten panels is a rare architectural feature for Amherst County.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This property has been under consideration and review since 1986. Twice it was determined ineligible and twice as eligible. This current PIF contains new research and evaluation. The new chain of title suggests that the house was built around 1843 by owner, Dr. Samuel Gibson. Property tax records need to be consulted, but due to the virus the information was unavailable.

<sup>2</sup> Gloria E. Scott, *Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey Form for Woodlawn (Royster C. Parr house DHR# 005-0165)*, June 1980, Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives.



This is a photo c. 1890 showing the house at that period, courtesy of owner.

The interior plan features a single room on either side of a center hall. The house retains its original plan and interior trim and mantels that are in all of the rooms. Featured in all rooms are wide baseboards and chair rails. The mantels in the four main rooms are original. The center hall has a dog-leg stair with square balusters, a rounded banister, and a turned newel post with finial decoration. The chair rail features reeding and there is a curved decoration on the exposed ends of the risers. The chair rail in the other areas is simple and the wet room features picture rail, near the ceiling. The mantels are similar in shape but each is slightly different in its decoration; all have fluted side pieces that appear as columns. The capitals and frieze of each mantel is different. The west room mantel has a reeded frieze and capitals; the east room mantel has a plain frieze and capitals. The west bedroom has a reeded frieze and the east bedroom mantel has a reeded frieze and decorative trim on the column sides. The original medium gauge wood floor remains visible on the second floor and in the first floor west room.

The 1860 rear ell is a story and a half high and was a single room. The addition stood on piers that were changed in 1935. The current foundation is concrete piers with random rubble infill between the piers. The addition had a brick chimney on the southern elevation. This chimney has a stone base and the date of 1860 is painted on a brick near the shoulder of the chimney on the west side. Two single 6/6 double-hung sash windows with simple trim flank the chimney. There is a single 6-light fixed sash window on the both the east and west elevations at the half-story.

The interior of the 1860 addition is simple. There is a boxed corner stair in the northwest corner of the room. Entry to the room was created on the north side by replacing an early window. The south wall has a mantle with a double arched frieze and a narrow over mantle mirror. The half-story was not accessed. When this addition was attached, the east bedroom of the main house lost a window on the south wall; the ghost remains. This window was moved to the east wall, south side of the chimney.

In 1935, the house underwent expansion and renovation. The rear ell was expanded on both the east and west first story sides. On the west side, a bathroom and enclosed porch were created. The east side was a

kitchen and a porch that extended the length of the main block to the northeast corner. A one-story porch was added to the main or northern elevation. A cellar was dug out beneath the west side of the original house. There is a 6-light fixed sash window on the west side of the bathroom and the enclosed porch has aluminum storm windows and a screen door. It is accessed by a six riser open wooden stair. There are two 6/6 double-hung sash windows on the east wall of the kitchen addition and a single-leaf entry on the north side of the addition and opening onto the east porch. The east porch is three bays wide with a concrete base and the shed roof is supported by squared columns. It has a concrete stair leading to the concrete walk that leads to the three outbuildings on the southeast side of the house. On the south side of the chimney a single-leaf entry with nine lights in the upper half of the door was created in 1935. The north elevation received a new concrete porch in 1935. The porch is centered and is three bays wide. The hip roof is supported by square columns on brick piers. It has a concrete stair leading to the sidewalk that ends at the circular drive and is flanked at the end of the walk by concrete piers with lanterns. The brick chimneys appear to have been rebuilt at this time, and a cellar was created under the west end of the original house. There is a concrete stair on the southwest corner leading to the cellar. The cellar has concrete walls below the original brick foundation. The original floor joists can be seen in the cellar. The original sleepers are visible.<sup>3</sup>

The interior of the house was remodeled and modernized. Narrow gauge wood flooring was placed atop the original flooring in the east room, center hall, and the 1860 addition. The treads of the staircase were also replaced at this time. The bathroom retains most of its original bathroom fixtures; it is accessed from the center hall, south wall where the original exterior door was located. The kitchen is a well preserved example of a typical 1930s kitchen with original cabinets, building-in cabinets, fixtures, and appliances. Throughout the house much of the original interior ceiling light fixtures remain.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are five remaining late 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings associated with the house. These are a meat-house, wood shed, summer kitchen, machine shop, and a tobacco barn. All are built on the ground with a foundation except the kitchen. All but the tobacco barn, have board and batten siding; the tobacco barn had vertical board siding. All have gable roofs sheathed in standing-seam metal. The kitchen is a story and a half and the tobacco barn is two stories high. These are all in need of repair and are used for storage.

The meat-house, woodshed and summer kitchen are located in the southeast yard near the house. They are connected by a 1935 sidewalk to each building that branches off the sidewalk from the east porch. The meat-house has a center gable front opening on the west side, facing the house. Its door is missing. The wood shed has an asymmetrical opening the gable front of the building which faces west. This building is in poor condition and is leaning. The summer kitchen sits closest to the house. It is a story and a half, and sits on brick piers. The building faces north and has a vertical board single-leaf entry with a 6-light fixed pane sash in the gable at the half-story. Evidence of a breezeway is seen beneath the window. The owner noted the breezeway once covered the sidewalk. The east elevation has a 2-light swinging window; the south elevation has a brick chimney flue on the southeast corner and a 6/6 double-hung sash window centered with a 6-light fixed sash in the gable. The west elevation has a 6-light fixed sash window. On the interior, there is a boxed corner stair in the northwest corner of the room. The half-story was not accessed.

To the northeast of the house, next the driveway where it meets Parrotown Road is the machine shop which faces south. This one-story gable front building has two additions, one to the north and one to the east. There is a vertical board single-leaf entry and a 6-light fixed sash window to the west of the entry. There are two 6-light fixed sash windows on the west elevation and a single-leaf vertical board entry to the rear addition. The rear addition has a shed roof. The north side of the building has no openings. The east

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<sup>3</sup> Current owner, Edward B. Saunders, Jr. related the information from his grandmother, Mary Parr, on some of the changes she made in the house in 1935. Mrs. R. C. Parr, *PIF for Woodlawn (Royster C. Parr House, DHR #005-0165)*, July 22, 1982, Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives.

elevation has a 9-light fixed sash window in the rear addition and the east addition is in poor shape. It was enclosed except for the south side.

The vertical board, two-story tobacco barn is located in the adjacent field across Parrtown Road. It sits to the southeast of the main house. It has an asymmetrically placed opening in the north elevation and is used as a hay barn.

#### 4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The house and its surviving outbuildings are significant locally in the area of architecture. The house retains much of its earliest c. 1843 details. Each of the later additions reflect the period in which they were constructed and have acquired their own significance. The house and outbuilding are an excellent example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century farmstead.

This property has historically been called the Royster Parr house, Woodlawn, and Oak Valley. Royster Parr (1884-1955) was likely born in this house and he got sole ownership of the house in 1934 and was responsible for the last major rehabilitation of it. The Parr family had a large tract of land and many descendants live on the lands; the area is locally known as Parrtown and the Road through this community is called Parrtown Road. The original land patent was held by Edward Carter (1726-1792). It was divided between his heirs and a plantation called Woodlawn was created, and part of the area was once part of the Woodlawn plantation. The site on which the house was built was also called Oak Valley, after the Woodlawn plantation was divided and sold. Oak Valley was the home of Dr. Samuel C. Gibson (1811-1874), the man who had the house built.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Samuel Gibson was a physician in the Temperance community, which was also known as Waller's Mill. Gibson purchased the land in 1843 and constructed his home. Gibson was a politically active and served in the House of Delegates in 1857/1858. He was also a delegate to the succession convention in 1861. He also was a supervisor for the county's construction of the New Market to Buffalo Springs Turnpike.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Gibson expanded the house in 1860 after his second marriage. His new wife brought in several children in addition to his own children from his first marriage. Gibson's widow left the home sometime around 1880 and Patrick (b. 1839), Gibson's son, sold the property to Stephen Landrum.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Oak Valley name was discovered through a fresh look into the chain of title for the house. *Amherst County Deed Book* 106, p.39; W, p. 157; Y, p. 458; Z, p. 159; BB, p. 40; and MM, p. 444.

<sup>5</sup> *Acts of General Assembly of Commonwealth of Virginia 1851-1852 Session*, (Richmond: William F. Ritchie, 1852), 38, accessed July 3, 2020, books.google.com; *Report of the Virginia State Library*, Vol 13-14, (Richmond: Davis Bottom, 1916), 167, accessed July 3, 2020, books.google.com; William Thomson, *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory 1851-1852*, (Baltimore: William Thomson, 1851), accessed July 3, 2020, books.google.com; "Local Leaders Met to Urge Secession in 1861," *News and Advance*, 28 April 2011, accessed July 3, 2020, newsadvance.com; *Alexandria Gazette*, 24 April 1874, 2, accessed July 3, 2020, newspapers.com; *Richmond Enquirer*, 27 January 1842, accessed July 3, 2020, newspapers.com; *Richmond Enquirer*, 4 March 1846, accessed July 3, 2020, newspapers.com; *Richmond Enquirer*, 16 June 1857, accessed July 3, 2020, newspapers.com; and *Richmond Enquirer*, 31 January 1860, accessed July 3, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>6</sup> *Virginia Marriage Records*, accessed July 3, 2020, ancestry.com; *1860 U.S. Federal Census*, accessed July 3, 2020, ancestry.com; and *Amherst County Deed Book* MM, p. 444.

There is little information on Landrum. He seemed to have financial difficulties and entered into an agreement involving Thomas B. Royster (1808-1894) and his son, William T. Royster (1850-1917) served as a trustee on the deed.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, the property was included in several court cases. Thomas Royster eventually ended up with the house after the cases were settled. The estate of Thomas Royster assigned the property to William T. Royster and his unmarried sister, Anne E. Royster (1845-1905). Ann became the sole owner, and she shared the house with her sister, Marry Parr (1846-195) and husband John H. Parr (1835-1903). John and Mary had nine children. The children divided the combined estate of their parents and aunt between 1910-1915. The youngest sons, Royster and Harry Parr (1881-1942) divided the property that included the house; Royster got the house.<sup>8</sup>

In 1935, Royster remodeled, modernized, and enlarged the house. Mary, his widow remained in the house until her death in 1988. The house passed to their daughters: Cecil Gray Tunstall (1924-2001) and Mary Isabel Saunders (1920-2013). Mary gradually transferred, over time, ownership to her son, Edward Saunders, Jr. beginning in 1993. In 1995, Cecil deeded her interest to Mary. Edward received full title to the house and five acres in 2003.<sup>9</sup>

Today, the house is currently unoccupied, but the owner maintains the house and plans to restore it. This house has been under consideration for the National Register several times and the intent is to complete nomination should it still be found eligible.

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<sup>7</sup> *Amherst County Deed Book* NN, p. 293; and SS, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> *Amherst County Chancery Book* 11, pp. 23, 125, 127, 331; *Amherst County Deed Book* SS, p. 144; TT, p. 345; 63, pp.179, and 255; 66, p. 445; 67, p. 262; 72, p. 325; 77, p. 373; and 106, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> *Amherst County Deed Book* 590, p. 682; 669, p. 724; 675, p. 350; 703, p. 308; 794, p. 696; and 933, p. 501.

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private:  X  Public\Local \_\_\_\_\_ Public\State \_\_\_\_\_ Public\Federal \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title:  Edward B Saunders, Jr.

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number:  163 Stage Rd

city or town:  Arrington  state:  VA  zip code:  22922

e-mail:  EdwardSaunders1959@gmail.com  telephone:  434-660-4932

Legal Owner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title:  Sandra F. Esposito

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number:  140 Cradon Hill Ln

city or town:  Amherst  state:  VA  zip code:  24521

e-mail:  sandieposito@Icloud.com  telephone:  540-529-0205

**6. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager

name/title:  Dean Rodgers/County Administrator

locality:  Amherst County

street & number:  PO Box 390

city or town:  Amherst  state:  VA  zip code:  24521

telephone:  434-946-9400

## Bibliography

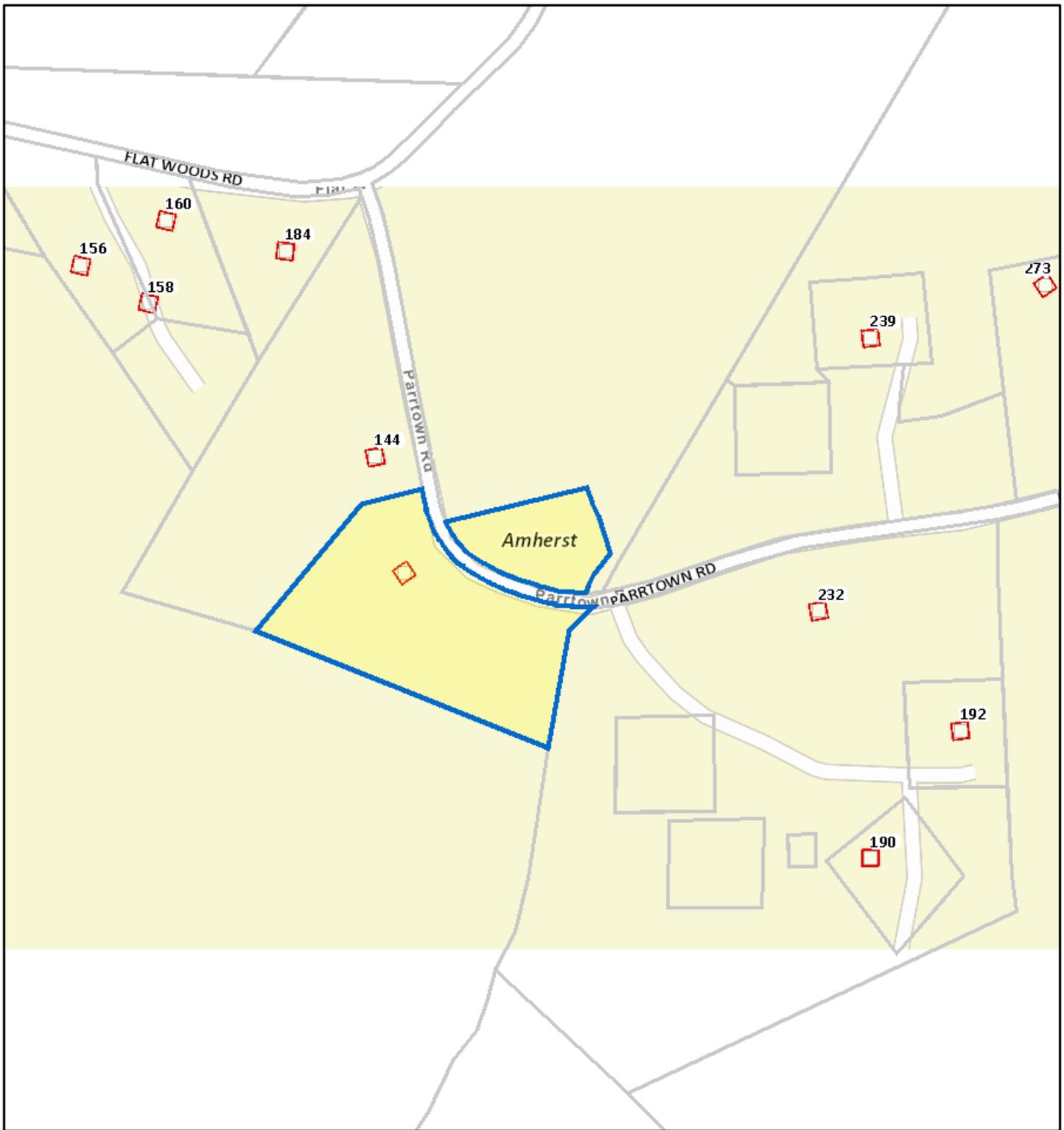
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005-0165

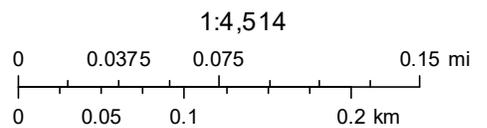
Parr Cemetery

Woodlawn/Royster C. Parr House/Oak Valley



July 5, 2020

Woodlawn/Royster C. Parr House/Oak Valley  
Amherst County Tax Map 39 A 114A  
156 Parrtown Rd.  
Amherst, VA 24521



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