

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 PropertyHistoric name: Francis Land House (Boundary Decrease and Additional Documentation)Other names/site number: Rose Hall; DHR ID 134-0031

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 3131 Virginia Beach BoulevardCity or town: Virginia Beach State: VA County: Independent CityNot For Publication: N/AVicinity: N/A**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 X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B X C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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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:) _____

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

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0

buildings

O

0

sites

0

0

structures

O

0

objects

O

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COLONIAL: Dutch Colonial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, WOOD

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.)

Summary Paragraph

The Francis Land House is located on what is now a 7.71-acre urban property bordered by residential apartments and commercial development on the south side of Virginia Beach Boulevard in north-central Virginia Beach. Built in c. 1805, the house is a two-story brick dwelling built in the Dutch Colonial style that was popular throughout what was historically Princess Anne County and the lower Tidewater during the late Colonial/early Federal period in Virginia. The house features a symmetrical five-bay façade that is embellished with Flemish bond brickwork and intentional rubbed and gauged brick accents, as well as a compound modillion roof cornice. Although the exterior of the building has undergone a variety of alterations over time, most have been keeping with the historical character of the house. Similarly, the interior of the building has undergone renovation and remodeling but retains much of its early-nineteenth century character, including basic layout and many materials and finishes. The house is the only resource within the updated boundary.

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When the property was originally nominated in 1975, the boundary encompassed approximately 35 acres around the historic house. Most of that acreage has since been subdivided and developed with a mixture of residential and commercial buildings. This nomination update and boundary decrease reduces the listed boundaries to 7.71 total acres, which represents the remaining intact acreage around the historic building.

Narrative Description in 1975

The 1975 nomination for the Francis Land House provided only a brief description of the house, including the setting, exterior, and interior of the property. Regarding the setting, the nomination simply characterized the property as set on the south side of the highly commercialized Virginia Beach Boulevard with remains of a garden to the front of the house. It similarly provided only a brief discussion of the exterior, summarizing its form, roof shape, and a few details on its trim, while the interior description was limited to a summary of its layout with some description of woodwork and specific features. As such, the sections below provide additional documentation of the current physical conditions of the property, including a discussion of the existing setting and updated property boundary, a thorough description of the exterior, and additional analysis of the interior and its integrity.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Francis Land House is located at 3131 Virginia Beach Boulevard in north-central Virginia Beach. Although historically at the center of a large plantation estate, much of the land was sold and subdivided over the years so that the house now rests on what is now a 7.71-acre property comprised of four parcels bordered by mid-sized roadside commercial development on the east and north and apartments on the west. The house is set back from the south side of Virginia Beach Boulevard by roughly 300 feet and faces northwest at an angle to the general east-west alignment of the road. It rests on manicured grounds with a grass lawn and ornamental shrubs and shade trees scattered throughout the property (Figure 1). The house is approached from the road by a circular driveway that loops just in front of the building. A brick walkway extends from the driveway to the front steps of the house. An extension of the driveway splits from the loop and travels past the west side of the house to a parking lot set to the rear. A short driveway continues from the south end of the parking lot to Francis Land Lane to the rear. A walkway from the parking lot extends around the building and connects to the garden paths. A spur extends from the parking lot to an entry on the west side of the building with another spur leading to the entrance on the opposite side of the building. Set in the yard to the opposite rear corner of the building is a small formal garden enclosed by a picket fence. This garden has shell walkways and a variety of ornamental plantings. Further to the east side of the house, on a separate but connected parcel, is a larger kitchen garden and pollinator garden. The kitchen garden is enclosed with a picket fence, while the pollinator area and fruit trees are set outside of

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the fence. All of these areas are managed by the Master Gardeners of Virginia Beach who use the produce from the site to stock local food pantries.

Located across Francis Land Lane to the rear of the property are two separate parcels, all totaling 7.71 acres, that are also owned by the City of Virginia Beach and managed as the Francis Land House property. This area was part of the large plantation landholding with which the house was historically associated and acquired by the City of Virginia Beach in 1975. The parcels are now maintained and operated as the Francis Land Park. Both tracts are mostly wooded and have a gravel walking path and wooden boardwalk that leads from Francis Land Lane through a wooded area along the Pine Tree Branch of the Lynnhaven River and adjacent swampy areas that characterized a portion of the historic plantation and was an significant provider of natural resources and transportation (Figure 2). Adjacent to the entrance to the trail, but on a separate parcel not included in the boundary of the Francis Land House nomination, is a small twentieth century brick water management building.



Figure 1: General view of Francis Land House property from Virginia Beach Boulevard

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Figure 2: Boardwalk in Francis Land Park

Exterior

The Francis Land House is believed to have been built c.1805 based upon dendrochronology that reveals the primary timbers were felled and hewn soon after the growing season of 1804. The house represents a relatively ornate example of the Dutch Colonial style popular in Tidewater Virginia in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. The building's architect is unknown; however, it exhibits a variety of design features that likely drew influence from other similar contemporaneous houses in the area including the use of decorative brickwork, modillion cornices, and interior trim and woodwork. The building stands two stories above a full English basement, which is a relatively uncommon feature in the area due to the low elevation above sea level. The house has a double-pile, center-passage form. The masonry walls are composed of red brick with scattered glazed headers laid in a Flemish Bond that extend from ground level to the roofline without a water table or other break. The building is topped by a gambrel roof that is covered with fish-scale wood shingles and pierced by five evenly spaced window dormers on the front and rear slopes. Wide brick wall chimneys with corbeled tops pierce each end of the roof centered on the ridge.

The façade faces northwest and features a balanced, symmetrical, five-bay massing centered on the primary entrance (Figure 3). The entry holds a large, raised-panel wood door set within a compound wood frame architrave that is approached by an unsheltered wood stoop and flight of stairs. The stairs and landing are of non-historic construction with white oak, open runners, and horizontal board railings. The pedimented door hood that was noted in the 1975 nomination, and likely added as part of twentieth century renovations, has been removed, although subtle

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ghosting remains on the brickwork above the door. Set to each side of the entry are a pair of evenly spaced windows. The openings are believed to have been widened based upon non-original brickwork to each side and their width beyond the original jack arches above (Figure 4). The compound molded frames rest on concrete sills and hold replacement double-hung sash windows with six-over-six light configurations. Set at ground level below each of the first story windows are smaller windows that light the raised English basement. Each holds a fixed, single-pane window sash within a plain wood frame and slatted vents. While the width of these openings appears to be original based upon the retention of closer bricks to each side, modern jack arches are cut through the interior lintels, indicating the openings have been made taller. The historic jack arches over the entry and the first story windows feature rubbed and gauged brick with finely struck joints.

Set three courses above the entry jack arch and immediately above those of the first story windows is the lower cornice of the gambrel roof that forms the face of the second story. The compound wood cornice features a molded architrave below a modillioned soffit with a molded frieze above. Each end is adorned with a sawn skirt board (Figure 5). Similarly molded trim adorns the top edge of the lower slope beneath a slight overhang of shingles from the upper slope. Piercing the lower slope are five evenly spaced gabled window dormers. The windows are set several feet up from the bottom edge of the lower slope and the ridge of their rooflines abuts the upper trim of the lower slope. Each dormer has flush wood paneling to the front and sides with clapboards in the gable areas. The rooflines are adorned with molded trim. Each has a double-hung, six-over-six window.



Figure 3: (Northwest) Facade

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Figure 4: Detail of window opening on facade



Figure 5: Detail of roof cornice on facade

The two side elevations of the building are generally similar with just slight differences in fenestration pattern. Both are brick-laid from ground level up to the raking cornice of the

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roofline. The compound cornice extends the full length of the roofline, including over the chimneys (Figure 6). The cornice of the upper slopes has been widened with an extra layer along the lower edge, presumably to cover altered brickwork resulting from the lifting of the roof c.1912. Most of the fenestration on both side walls is believed to be non-original. The exception is a doorway on the first story of the west elevation near the front corner that leads into what would historically have functioned as the dining room. The single-width doorway is set within a compound molded frame atop a slightly projecting brick header sill. The door itself is paneled and is a c. 1990 replacement of what had been an out-of-character mid-twentieth century replacement. At present, the door floats several feet above ground level without a stoop or flight of steps, however, patched brickwork beneath the sill indicates a former stairway of unknown form. There is no other first story fenestration, but there are three small windows evenly spaced at the second-floor level near the outer edges, just inside the cornice, and one centrally located. All are within molded wood frames and set on wood sills. The brickwork bordering all three suggests they were cut after the original construction of the building. The east elevation has three windows on the first story and two on the second. On the first story are two windows of similar size to those on the facade, one of which is set centrally and one towards the front corner. Both have molded wood frames and are set on concrete sills with brick header lintels. The third window on the first story is set towards the rear corner, and has a wider, shorter opening with two fixed panes divided by a wood mullion. The two second story windows are smaller openings near the outer edges, similar to those on the west side of the building. The brickwork bordering all the windows on the east side suggests they were cut after the original construction of the building.



Figure 6: Detail of chimney and raking cornice

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The rear of the building has been obscured by several additions made throughout the early- and mid-twentieth century. Extending the width of the rear is a one story addition that is believed to have been built as a full-width porch in the 1920s; the eastern half of the porch has since been enclosed (Figure 7 and Figure 8). The addition is set on a brick foundation and topped with a hipped roof. The western half of the addition remains as a screened porch and has wood support posts with a vertical-board-clad knee wall. Above the screened panels is a plain cornice and frieze with scalloped brackets under the wide roof overhang. A relic door is set in the second bay from the side and historically had a flight of stairs that would have led down to a well set in the yard beside the house, however, the door is currently floating without any stairs or access. The eastern half of the addition has been enclosed with brick siding while retaining the cornice. The roofline of the porch addition ties into the original rear wall of the building just below the cornice, leaving the modillioned cornice visible at the outer edges while the central length is covered by roof flashing. Piercing the forward-facing slope of the gambrel roof above are five evenly spaced window dormers identical to those on the front.



Figure 7: Rear porch on original block

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Figure 8: East side and rear oblique

Extending from the rear porch addition is a one-story, T-shaped ell that was added to the building c. 1950 but has since been expanded with an extension from the west wall of the hyphen portion of the block (Figure 9). This addition is set lower than the original block, with the floor level just above grade on a short concrete foundation. The wood frame structural system is clad with clapboard siding, although the east gable end is clad with a brick veneer. The gabled roof is covered with fish-scale shingles and is pierced at the ridge by a brick wall chimney that is integral to the brick-clad east gable wall. There are multiple entrances to this addition, the primary of which is located on the west wall bump out. This entry consists of a multi-light doorway with an adjacent sidelight that is sheltered by a flat-roof hood and is approached by a short ramp from a brick walkway. On the opposite side of the hyphen, directly across from the main entrance, is another multi-light doorway. This entry is sheltered by a short canopy supported by decorative knee braces. Set to the side of this entrance, on the forward wall of the rear cross-wing, is an unsheltered doorway and a fourth entry is located on the rear wall of the rear cross-wing. Other fenestration on the rear addition consists of three individually set double-hung sash windows with six-over-six light configurations spaced along the rear wall and a set of paired windows on the west wall of the rear wing. A fixed, multi-light window on the west wall of the hyphen remains in place but is now within the interior of the building as a result of the later bump-out. The addition incorporates typical Colonial Revival-influenced ornamentation with molded roof cornices and scalloped cornice skirts.

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Figure 9: West side with rear addition

Interior

The interior of the Francis Land House retains much of its early nineteenth century character, despite having undergone multiple remodels and restoration efforts. The house has a double-pile, center passage plan with two rooms on each side of a wide central passage with a staircase; however, the present location and set of stairs is the result of an early- to mid-twentieth century renovation. The current staircase was relocated to the house from another unidentified historic house at that time. It is believed that the original Francis Land House staircase was located in what is now the southeast room of the house, therefore, the central passage would have been more open with the stairs offset in the rear corner. The front two rooms are substantially larger than the rear rooms and paint chip analysis suggests that the layout remains as originally built. Both front rooms and the southwest (rear) room have fireplaces roughly centered on the outside wall while the southeast (rear) room does not have a fireplace, which is further evidence that this space originally held the staircase. All rooms have nineteenth century-inspired trim and finishes, although much of this is believed to date from twentieth century renovations; however, the majority of woodwork, paneling, and trim in the northwest room are believed to be original.

The front entrance leads into the central passage, from which doors lead to each of the four first story rooms, as well as a door at the rear of the passage that provides access to the rear additions. The stairway to the second floor is situated on the left wall of the passage (Figure 10). The hallway has wide-plank wood floors and plaster walls above paneled wainscoting. The doors each have compound molded frames, and crown molding wraps around the ceiling. The staircase has a full-turn configuration with a landing on the wall just above the rear doorway to the rear

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porch. The stairs are believed to have been moved from a nearby house and installed in the Francis Land House in the early- to mid-twentieth century, replacing what is believed to have originally been offset in what is now the southeast (rear) room. The staircase is of modest, more delicate design and construction suggesting it may date from the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The balustrade is composed of simply turned spindles supporting a wide handrail. The lower and upper newel posts are square with pyramidal caps and the lower post is set on the floor rather than the first step. The rake is subtly embellished with scalloped trim. The paneled wainscoting of the hallway extends up the wall bordering the stairs and the area beneath the stairs is enclosed with a similarly paneled wall. A door at the back of the stairs leads into a small, unfinished closet space under the stairs.



Figure 10: First story central passage looking towards rear

At the base of the staircase is a door into the northeast room that likely functioned originally as a parlor. This room is finely finished with wide-plank wood floors, plastered walls and ceiling, and woodwork that is believed to have been installed in the 1950s (Figure 11). At the base of the walls is a black mopboard or baseboard with a simple beaded edge. A chair rail extends along the front and back walls of the room but does not continue around the outside wall. Crown molding wraps around the perimeter of the ceiling. Set centrally on the outside wall is a Neoclassical mantelpiece that, according to a local newspaper in 1955, came from a house in Washington, DC that was serving as the German embassy at the time. The mantel features compound pilasters with a three-paneled frieze and denticulated mantel with carved urn and swag motifs. Flanking each side of the fireplace and spaced along the front wall are window openings with molded trim boards. A wide opening on the back wall of this room leads into the southeast room where the staircase was believed to have historically been located. This opening is believed to have been cut through the dividing wall in the 1940s as part of the conversion of the rear room into a dining

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room. This is the only first floor room without a fireplace and is more modestly finished than the other spaces. It features crown molding and a picture rail that is believed to be not original, as well as a later window opening on the outside wall.



Figure 11: First story, northeast room

The most formal first story room is the northwest room that is likely to have served as the dining room based upon its finishes and exterior door. This room has a variety of fine finishes and woodwork, much of which is believed to be original based upon paint chip analysis conducted by Artifacts, Ltd. in the 1990s. This includes paneled wainscoting that wraps around the room beneath a simple chair rail (Figure 12). The paneling continues within the window bays, including beneath the sill but above the relief ledge, as well as inside of the window openings where interior shutters may historically have been located, however, the present paneling is fixed and may be contemporary to the widening of the windows (Figure 13).

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Figure 12: First story, northwest (dining) room



Figure 13: Detail of window shutter paneling in dining room

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The doors and windows all feature compound molded trim and crown molding wraps around the ceiling. Centered on the outside wall is a fireplace with a simple molded architrave around the firebox. There is no mantel or shelf, but the trim extends the full height to the ceiling with a wide board blank panel above. To the right of the fireplace is an exterior doorway that is occupied by a six-panel door that was installed in the 1990s and replaced what was a mid-twentieth century door. To the left of the fireplace is a closet that is believed to be a later addition based upon the continuation of trim and paneling within the closet, however, it has been speculated that the door and trim may have been moved to this location from the second story due to its similar profile and moldings but shorter height. A doorway on the back wall of this room leads into the southwest room.

The southwest room is modestly finished and much of the trim and features are believed to not be original as a result of alterations due to changing use of the space. The original function of this room is unknown but is believed to have been utilized as a kitchen by the 1920s. As such, most of the floor has been replaced, most recently around the turn of the twenty-first century to replace what was an earlier replacement, however, some small sections of original floor remain near the fireplace and along the interior wall. The trim in this room is limited to simply molded door and window surrounds and crown molding. Centered on the outside wall is a fireplace that differs from those in the front two rooms with an arched firebox. The mantel has a simple architrave with a molded cornice and shelf (Figure 14). Set to the left side of the fireplace is a closet that is believed to have been created later due to the historic baseboard extending through the casing for the closet door.



Figure 14: First story, southwest room

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Also cut through the back wall of the room are a nonoriginal door and window opening, both of which are believed to have occurred in the 1920s concurrently with the conversion of this space to a kitchen and the addition of the rear porch. The doorway was cut where a window was originally located, based upon exterior brickwork, and the adjacent window was cut through where no openings originally existed. This window differs from the others on the house with a two-over-two light configuration indicative of its turn-of-the-twentieth century date.

The layout of the second story of the original block is believed to be the result of later renovations and reconfiguration. At present, there are two rooms to the east side of the central passage and three rooms to the west. Each of the rooms and the passage are generally similar in form and fashion with most woodwork and trim believed to be nonoriginal. All rooms feature molded baseboards, doors, and window trim on plastered walls. Only the central hallway has crown molding as well as a series of boxed beams that span the width of the hall (Figure 15). The front two rooms feature a fireplace with an arched opening and simple architrave mantels with a shelf (Figure 16). The small, middle room on the west side appears to have been created by shifting the original division wall between rooms, as evidenced by empty mortises that remain in an exposed beam in the floor. This space previously served as a bathroom and may have been created circa 1920 when plumbing was brought into the house to serve the kitchen in the southwest room on the first story. The southwest room on the second story was also adapted to serve as a kitchen in the 1950s when the second story was adapted to serve as an apartment independent from the first story, where a commercial business was in operation at the time.



Figure 15: Second story, central hallway looking towards rear

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Figure 16: Second story, northwest room

The rear portions of the house were added in response to changing needs and spaces in the twentieth century. Through the door at the rear of the first story passage is a small vestibule room within an enclosure on what was built as an open porch in the 1920s. To the right side of this space, a door leads onto what remains of the screened porch, while a door to the left leads into a small room that was also enclosed. Both spaces are believed to have been enclosed in the 1940s when the kitchen was moved from the southwest room of the main block to the then recently enclosed porch area. At present, this room is simply finished with wood floors and plaster walls. A window with plain board trim pierces the outside wall.

A half-flight of stairs from the vestibule leads down to the interior of the rear addition. At the base of the stairs is a central hallway off of which several rooms are located (Figure 17). To the right side is a small room within the later space that is just inside of the primary exterior entrance to the rear addition. From this location, a doorway leads into a room that occupies the rest of the extension (Figure 18). To the left side of the central hall is a small area off of which the secondary exterior doorway is located. At the rear of the hall is a bathroom, beside of which sits a small kitchenette/break room. The rear addition has recently been renovated and some of the original 1950s features remain. The floors are covered with a variety of materials, including square brick pavers in the central hall, ceramic tiles in the bathroom, and laminate wood in the kitchenette and primary room. The walls are covered with sheetrock, but the doors and windows generally retain molded trim. The original 1950 multi-light fixed window on what would have been the exterior wall of the central hall also remains in place between the hall and later room.

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Figure 17: Stairwell from rear addition to original block



Figure 18: Room within bump-out of rear addition

At the front end of the hallway, adjacent to the stairs that lead up to the former porch and first story of the original block, is a half-flight of stairs that lead down to the area beneath the rear porch and the original basement. The area beneath the back porch is believed to originally have

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been open but later enclosed and is occupied by a room on each side of the stair landing. Both of these rooms serve as utility space and have brick floors and walls. The basement of the original block is under renovation and mostly unfinished, however, is believed to historically have been finished as living and working space. The layout has also been modified, as evidenced by cuts and fills in the interior brick support walls, and currently comprises two full-depth rooms divided by a slightly off-center division wall (Figure 19). The rooms are further interrupted by two brick support piers under the first story division wall beam, one of which is believed to be original and one that has a date of 1941 with the name of the mason inscribed in it.



Figure 19: Basement, room under east side of house

The entire basement area is minimally finished with many of the structural features exposed. The floors are covered with a combination of square brick pavers and standard bricks that were re-laid following a recent renovation but were first installed in the 1950s when square pavers were used on the west side and standard bricks on the east. At an unknown date, but likely before the brick floors were laid in the 1950s, large pipes were installed beneath the basement floor, likely related to an early heating system. The exterior brick walls of the building are also exposed although a poured concrete footer has been added around the base in an effort to stabilize the structure and address moisture issues. The ceilings are open to the timber framing and wood flooring of the first story. Utility soffits around the perimeter of the rooms are enclosed with sheetrock, while lighting consists of tracks lights mounted within the ceiling frame cavities. Brick support arches are present under the two front room fireplaces of the first story, although the arch beneath the northwest room has been partially disassembled. A more substantial support that appears to have functioned as a fireplace and possibly cooking hearth is in the southwest corner of the basement (Figure 20). The basement is illuminated by a series of windows spaced along the front wall. The openings were made taller at an unknown date as evidenced by the cut-

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through of the embedded wood lintels. Similar openings in the brick remain on the back wall as well, however, they are infilled and were likely removed when the rear porch and rooms were added in the 1920s.



Figure 20: Basement, cooking hearth under southwest room

Integrity

The Francis Land House retains moderate integrity from its period of construction in circa 1805. Some aspects of integrity have been compromised by historic and non-historic renovations, as well as twentieth century restoration efforts, but overall retains a sufficient level of those aspects of integrity necessary to convey its historical and architectural significance. The building continues to occupy its historic **location** on the north side of Pinetree Branch in what is now the Lynnhaven area of the City of Virginia Beach; however, because the majority of property historically associated with the property was subdivided, the house is now sited on a small property bordered on both sides by dense commercial development. An additional area along the creek to the rear was also part of the City's acquisition of the property in 1975, and now remains mostly wooded as park which provides some sense of a historic setting and connectivity to the woods and watercourses of the area with a new boardwalk and trail, although the overall integrity of **setting** is diminished. Although the compromised setting no longer conveys the house's former prominence at the center of a large estate, a variety of aspects have been preserved or enhanced to foster a sense of the historic setting including a deep setback from the road with mature vegetation and landscaping to the front and along the edges of the property, and the acquisition and creation of Francis Land Park with its boardwalk system to the rear. The City

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of Virginia Beach has also embarked in past and ongoing efforts to preserve and restore the physical aspects of the building to further promote a historic sense of place and feeling.

The original **design** of the building was altered at an unknown date when the entire second story was expanded by lifting the roof, and again throughout the first half of the twentieth century when several additions were made to the rear of the main block. The rear additions mimic the style and character of the original building and embellishments, and remain secondary to the primary main block, therefore the basic character of its Dutch Colonial design remains evident. Historic brickwork in the attic confirms the house originally had a gambrel roof, and the original framing and slopes remain, but was simply extended at the lower edge to raise the height (Figure 21). The interior layout and circulation patterns are believed to generally be intact, with the exception of the reconfiguration and replacement of the staircase, from the southeast room to the central passage, and the partition of the west rooms on the second story.



Figure 21: Relic brickwork in attic revealing lift of gambrel roof

Many original **materials** have been removed or replaced over time, while others have been covered or obscured as a result of renovations, however, the materials and finishes present are generally appropriate to its original period of construction. Much of the exterior brickwork remains intact with some patches and cuts related to modification of fenestration, but this work is sufficiently differentiated from the original work. Similarly, the interior finishes include a mix of historic and replacement wood floors, door and window trim, and other details. While most of the woodwork and trim throughout the house is believed to be a result of twentieth century renovations, therefore not historic nor dating to the period of significance, it is generally in character with the period of construction and original style of the house. The exceptions are a mantel in the front parlor that was installed in the 1950s but is more reflective of nineteenth

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century Neoclassical design than what would likely have been present in the house, as well as the staircase that was also moved to the house in the 1940s and reflects later nineteenth century styling. The most intact room is believed to be the northwest first story room in which nearly all of the woodwork and paneling is believed to be original, as based upon paint chip analysis. The historic materials and finishes that remain intact contribute to the retention of **workmanship** as displayed through the exterior masonry and the handcrafted woodwork and paneling in the dining room. Similarly, the exposed c.1805 timber framing in the basement exhibits well-crafted pegged mortise and tenon joinery.

The intact physical aspects of integrity help convey the **feeling** of an embellished late Colonial/early National period house in Virginia as the building was revealed to have been built ca. 1805 based upon dendrochronology. The building also continues to retain a degree of historic **association** as a significant early nineteenth century house in the region, although it has been diminished by changing use and function, including conversion to a mixed-use commercial/residential operation for over two decades. In the years since, it has been preserved as a historic house museum with plans to open to the public again, which will help promote and convey the historic function and association of the property.

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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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1805

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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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.)

When the Francis Land House was listed in the National Register in 1975, it was noted as deriving primary significance from its representation of a “substantial rural dwelling of the mid-eighteenth century and one of a small, rapidly diminishing group of Colonial buildings in the City of Virginia Beach. As such, the property was listed under Criterion C in the area of **Architecture** at the statewide level of significance. The earlier nomination broadly identifies the period of significance as the “eighteenth century” under the assumption that the dwelling was built by Francis Thoroughgood Land, a late-eighteenth century county resident. Further investigation revealed the house does not date from the mid-eighteenth century but was built circa 1805 based upon dendrochronology. However, the building is still considered significant for its architectural merit and continues to be considered representative of a small collection of remaining gambrel roofed dwellings from the Early National Period or earlier; not just in what was historically Princess Anne County and now the City of Virginia Beach, but all of Tidewater Virginia. Therefore, the Francis Land House continues to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture**, at the **statewide** level, with a period of significance of **1805**.

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

Statement of Significance in 1975

The 1975 National Register Nomination for the Francis Land House does not provide sufficient detail justifying its significance under the National Register criterion, only briefly touching upon the history of the estate and its notable architecture rather than providing sufficient historical data and analysis to place the property within a context for evaluation of significance. The following section of the nomination update presents a more thorough discussion of the history and criterion for which the Francis Land House is eligible.

Historical Background

The Land family arrived in Virginia, from England, by the 1630s with Francis Land I (c.1604-1657) leading. Francis I had land in the colony as early as 1638 and served as churchwarden for the Lynnhaven Parish in 1647. Lynnhaven Parish was one of three parishes created from Lower Norfolk County and its boundaries formed Princess Anne County when it was created in 1691. He had established a plantation by 1643 and eventually owned over a thousand acres in the region acquired from a land grant and purchases from Thomas Keeling, Thomas Watts, and Cobb

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Howell.¹ After his passing in 1657, the land was transferred to his two sons from his first wife, Frances.²

His older son, Renatus, received 670 acres, while Francis II (1643-1692) received 350 acres with the understanding that when one brother passed away, the remaining brother would acquire the rest of the estate. In 1662, however, Renatus Land combined the entirety of their father's 1,020-acre estate under his own name, including the portion that had been assigned to Francis II and on which he was living. Renatus bequeathed his Land family estate to his second and third sons Edward and Robert, respectively, to be equally divided. With this transfer, therefore, Renatus's brother Francis II, and Renatus's sons had legal right to the Land estate.³ Francis and Edward Land came to an agreement in 1692, and Edward took the 670 acres that Renatus had originally been assigned by Francis I, and Francis II would retain the 350 acres he had originally received.⁴ In the agricultural county of Princess Anne, Francis Land II's family remained on the property and operated it as a plantation.

There is documented evidence of four enslaved Black laborers working on the Land's estate as early as 1694.⁵ In 1660, the Virginia General Assembly established a system of "perpetual servitude," which came decades after the first individuals from Africa and the Caribbean were forcibly brought to Virginia in 1619 on the ship *White Lion*.⁶ This resulted in enslaving large numbers of Africans and using their labor to support a growing plantation economy based on the labor-intensive crop tobacco. Those individuals listed in 1694 as working on the Land's property include Robin (approximately 48 years of age), Jack (about 24 years of age), Jenny (about 30 years of age), and Sarah (approximately 9 years of age).⁷ Though it is unknown, given the span of ages, this may have been a family.

It is likely that goods produced on the Land plantation would have been transported to markets by batteaux on the Pinetree Branch to the Lynnhaven River and beyond. Like other planters in the region, the first generations of the family on the land cultivated tobacco as their cash crop, which

¹ College of William & Mary. *An Archaeological Assessment of the Francis Land House Property City of Virginia Beach, Virginia*. (September 1997), 10. Accessed 6 March 2024, <https://archive.org/details/archaeologicalas00derb>.

² Francis Land I was married three times and had two sons by his first wife, Frances. After her passing, Francis married Janice or Janie, the widow of Richard Rutherford, followed by Anne, the widow of Lawrence Phillips. It is unclear at this time if he had children with his later wives. "Francis Land Family of Lower Norfolk County, VA. Princess Anne County, VA after 1691." <https://www.familysearch.org/>.

³ College of William & Mary, 10; Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants 1623-1666*, Vol. 1 (Richmond, VA: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1983), 489; Lower Norfolk Co., VA Deed Book 4:96.

⁴ It is unclear if or how Edward's brother, Robert Land, fit into this agreement. Princess Ann County, VA Mixed Records 1 1691-1708:19.

⁵ College of William & Mary, 10.

⁶ Margaret Palmore and John M. Kerr, *Powhatan Pathways: Houses, History, Structures, and Stories*. (Powhatan, VA: Powhatan County Historical Society, Powhatan, VA, 2009), 14.

⁷ Princess Anne County, VA Mixed Records 1 1691-1708:75.

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had become the dominant cash crop in the colony in the early seventeenth century.⁸ As such, the property likely included a wide variety of additional outbuildings and supporting infrastructure that no longer remains intact.

Francis Land II's only son, Captain Francis III (1662-1736), inherited all of his father's land under the law of primogeniture, presumably this would have been 350 acres.⁹ Francis III maintained the family's prominent social standing, and throughout his life he served as a Burgess from Princess Anne County between 1728 and 1734, a justice of the Princess Anne County Court, a county sheriff, on the vestry of Lynnhaven Parish, and he appears to have had an appointment in the militia.¹⁰ He married Margaret Thorowgood.¹¹

The Land plantation continued operating and growing the family's wealth and workforce. Upon Captain Land's death in 1736, his will and estate's inventory indicate the wealth of the family. Though his inventory does not include enslaved persons, his last will and testament does. Among these individuals, the following were named: Ceasar, Jeffrey, Bob, Joe, Cate, Jack, Camino, Kent, Judy, and Nedd.¹² Court minutes may provide additional information for some individuals. For example, in 1726, a 12-year-old Quammino was "lately imported into this colony."¹³ This would have been "Camino" listed in Land's will.

When Captain Land passed away, his real estate, though the actual acreage of the estate was not listed, and houses thereon was bequeathed to his son, Francis Thorowgood Land (1736-1760).¹⁴ Though not addressed in the will, in the eighteenth century it was common for widows, in this case Margaret Land, to receive interest in one-third of her late husband's real property during her lifetime. Her interest would have transferred to her son, Francis Thorowgood, at her death.¹⁵ Like his predecessors, and other members of the Thorowgood family who were prominent in the region, Francis Thorowgood was a gentleman of good standing who served as vestryman in 1754 and warden in 1758; typically, descriptions of prominent White men during this era that are described as good or of high moral standing do not take into account their enslavement of workers.¹⁶ He and his wife, Elizabeth Moseley, had two children, Elizabeth and Francis V. In 1753, Francis Thorowgood reconsolidated Land family real estate holdings by purchasing the 670 acres that

⁸ *Beach: a history of Virginia Beach, Virginia* (Virginia Beach: Virginia Beach Public Library, 2006), 128.

⁹ College of William & Mary, 10; "Francis Land House 1732 & The Herb Garden," pamphlet on file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

¹⁰ College of William & Mary, 10.

¹¹ "Francis Land House 1732 & The Herb Garden."

¹² College of William & Mary, 10; Princess Anne County, VA. Mixed Records 5 1735-1740:71.

¹³ Princess Anne County, VA. Minute Book 3 1717-1728:258.

¹⁴ Princess Anne County, VA. Mixed Records 5 1735-1740:71.

¹⁵ With their very limited rights, dower rights were used as a means of ensuring financial stability for women after the death of their husbands and typically consisted of a lifetime interest in one-third of her husband's real property to use or lease and full ownership of one-third of her husband's enslaved workers. Usually, if the widow remarried, her new husband would control her dower share. Upon her death, the dower would be distributed to her children.

¹⁶ Sadie Scott Kellam and Vernon Hop Kellam, *Old Houses in Princess Anne, Virginia*. (Portsmouth, VA: Printcraft Press, Inc. 1931), 97.

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had previously been assigned to Edward Land in the 1690s.¹⁷

As Virginia's soil became depleted of necessary nutrients from repetitive cultivation of tobacco, planters and farmers were forced to transition to different crops to remain profitable. The Land family transitioned their cash crops to wheat, oats, corn, and flax, and raised cattle, hogs, and sheep by the mid-eighteenth century, as indicated by items listed on Francis Thorowgood Land's estate inventory. Additionally, like other self-sufficient plantations in the colony, kitchen gardens used to feed those on the plantation would have been located on the property. Production on the plantation continued to be completed through the efforts of an increased number of enslaved laborers.¹⁸ Francis Thorowgood Land's 1760 inventory provides a glimpse of those held on his plantation. Those listed included Kate and her child Fanney, Bob, Will, Sarah and her child Tabb, Cloe, Rose, Frank, John, George, Stanford, Hiless, Solley, Willoughby, Charity, Mason, George, Ishmael, and Toney.¹⁹

Construction also appeared to be ongoing on the plantation, as indicated by building materials on the property inventoried after the death of Francis Thorowgood Land. Elizabeth Land remarried William Haynes, and he became the legal guardian of the Land children. During Haynes tenure, the Land plantation was rented out to generate income. Additionally, Land's personal estate was divided to some extent with two-thirds of the enslaved laborers hired out until the Land children came of age; the remaining one-third being part of Elizabeth Land's dower.²⁰ This familial disruption to families in enslavement was a deplorable common occurrence in the south.²¹

When Francis Land V came of age, he assumed control over the Land plantation and maintained the Land's prominent role in the community by serving as a justice of Princess Anne County, a commissioner of tax, and a vestryman for Lynnhaven Parish. Francis V married Mary White and the couple had two children, Francis Moseley and Elizabeth.²² Francis Land V passed away in 1785. Court records indicate that at the time of his death, 19 enslaved workers operated the plantation in various ways. They included: Frank, George, George Wisdom, Mason, Hylas, Ned, Will, Berry, Harry, Nicholas, Solly, Rachael, Isbell, Mary, Betty, Kate, Murreah, Hanna, and Bridget.²³

Francis's widow, Mary, served as guardian for their children until she married Thomas Keeling in 1792. Her mother-in-law, Elizabeth Land Haynes and her husband, William Haynes, continued to have her dower land and 1787 court records indicate that there were multiple dwellings on the

¹⁷ Edward Land's estate had been passed down to his grandson, John Barinsen. Barinsen then sold the land out of the family to Wishart in 1744. It was from Wishart that Land purchased the real estate from. College of William & Mary, 10; Princess Anne Co., VA, Deed Book 7:410; Princess Anne Co., VA, Deed Book 7:411.

¹⁸ College of William & Mary, 10; *Beach*.

¹⁹ Princess Anne County, VA. Mixed Records 8 1755-1762:572.

²⁰ Coming of age in the eighteenth century was at 21 years.

²¹ College of William & Mary, 10-11.

²² *Ibid*, 11.

²³ John Harvie Creecy (ed), *Princess Anne County Loose Papers 1700-1799*. (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1954), 152.

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Land property.²⁴

The Land property would come into the hands of Francis Moseley Land (1785-1819) likely when he came of age circa 1806, and it was under his ownership, or anticipation of, that the present dwelling known as the Francis Land House was constructed circa 1805. Francis Moseley married Ann Gardner and the couple had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Ann White. Like his predecessors, he was a leader in the Commonwealth, serving in the House of Delegates, the county militia during the War of 1812, and as a commissioner of Peace.²⁵ The plantation continued to operate through the toiling of 18 enslaved laborers: Ned, Powell, Harry, Parker, Kent, Peter, Ned, Sam, Africa, George, Enoch, Hilas, Jacob, Murrier, Pender, Nancy, Sall, and Cate.²⁶ Put into context, there were 109 families in Princess Anne County that held 10 or more enslaved laborers in 1810. The average number of persons held by these families was 17 and the median number was 15.²⁷

When Francis Moseley Land passed away in 1819, the estate encompassed 689 acres.²⁸ As both of his wives predeceased him, he left 300 acres and the dwelling to his daughter, Mary, and the remainder to his daughter, Ann.²⁹ They were underaged and were raised by a guardian in Norfolk, while enslaved laborers were once more rented to other plantations.³⁰ It may be that not all enslaved laborers belonging to the Land family were hired out, as Henry Keeling, the Land sisters' guardian, paid expenses for service or care for at least five individuals: Nancy, Moody Kent, Sall, and Hilas. It also appears that enslaved workers were also hired as necessary, and the Land real estate was divided into thirds and rented to out to Ed. Wilson, William K. Land, and J. Villory, followed by Johnson N. James.³¹

Much of the contents of the Francis Land House, save a few pieces, were auctioned in 1825 and the house was rented until Mary married circa 1827, at which point she and her husband, John N. Walke, occupied it.³² The 1830 federal census places Walke at the head of a household with seven enslaved laborers.³³ In 1836, Ann and her husband, John M. Galt, sold Ann's 389 acres of the Land estate to John N. Walke.³⁴ The Walkes then sold this land to John Petty, Jr. in 1836.³⁵ In the early 1850s, the Walkes' interest in the 300-acre Land estate, which included the dwelling

²⁴ College of William & Mary, 11.

²⁵ Ibid, 11; Virginia Beach History Museums. Welcome to the Francis Land House. Video, 2020.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_gp-Cjg4YM.

²⁶ Virginia Beach History Museums, 2020.

²⁷ *Virginia Tax Records*. (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1983), 336.

²⁸ Land House Preservation Committee.

²⁹ After the death of his first wife, Ann, Francis Moseley Land married Nancy Haynes. College of William & Mary, 11; Virginia Beach History Museums, 2020.

³⁰ Virginia Beach History Museums, 2020.

³¹ Princess Anne Co., VA Guardian Accounts 9 1827-1833:343.

³² College of William & Mary, 11.

³³ United States Census Bureau, Federal Census 1830.

³⁴ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 38:338.

³⁵ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 38:421.

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that was sold to John Petty.³⁶ The plantation that had been in the Land family since the seventeenth century was now in another family's hands.

According to the 1850 federal census, John Petty was a farmer and "Timber Getter" with real estate valued at \$25,500. He lived with his wife, Hannah, and three young children. As a wealthy man, he also had 55 enslaved workers split between his house (presumably the Francis Land House), the Galt Farm (presumably the portion of the Land real estate that had been owned by John M. and Ann Galt), and the Beech Grove Farm.³⁷ Petty passed away in 1853. Following a chancery suit, the 1,309-acre Galt Farm, as the Francis Land estate was then known, was sold to William N. Gregory in 1859 for \$23,200.³⁸ Gregory was a farmer using enslaved labor, 18 individuals, according to the 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule. The schedule identified the enslaved population of Princess Anne County as being approximately 40 percent of the total population.³⁹ A chancery suit begun in 1866 indicated that Gregory continued living in North Carolina, presumably leaving an overseer in charge of the land in Princess Anne County. William N. Gregory passed away in 1862 at his residence in Camden County, North Carolina. Upon his death, Samuel W. Gregory, William Gregory's brother, was employed by Gregory's administrator to superintend the farm, which he did until 1864.⁴⁰ U.S. Freedmen's Bureau records provide a bit of information regarding the plantation and its laborers. In 1863, Gregory's plantation was a "self-supporting" plantation that had 350 acres under cultivation, 650 acres of woodland, and 300 cleared acres. At least two formerly enslaved persons held by Gregory in Princess Anne County were listed; these were Smith Dozier and John Bray.⁴¹

Though Virginia seceded from the Union at the start of the Civil War, no formal military engagement took place in Princess Anne County. By May 1862, Princess Anne had fallen into Union hands and remained there under martial law until the end of the war.⁴² Property throughout the county was seized for federal use.⁴³ From the Galt Farm, as it was referred to, the Federals took one-third of the corn and nearly all of the animal stock, and according to a survey conducted by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the house was used as a hospital.⁴⁴ Furthermore, with the presence of the Federals and Union Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's 1861 decision to treat escaped enslaved workers as contraband and not force them to return to

³⁶ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 45:88; Deed Book 45:89.

³⁷ United States Census Bureau, federal census (1850); United States Census Bureau, Slave Schedule (1850).

³⁸ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 47:117.

³⁹ Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. and Debra A. McClane, *Historic Architectural Resource Survey Update City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, Northern Half*. (December 2018), 14.

⁴⁰ Princess Anne Co., VA Chancery 1879-007. G.W. Grandy etc. v. Admr of William N. Gregory etc. 1879-007. Digital case, Library of Virginia.

⁴¹ U.S. Freedmen's Bureau Records, 1865-1878.

⁴² Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. and Debra A. McClane, *Historic Architectural Resource Survey Update City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, Northern Half*, 15.

⁴³ Virginia Beach History Museums, 2020.

⁴⁴ Princess Anne Co., VA Chancery 1879-007. G.W. Grandy etc. v. Admr of William N. Gregory etc. 1879-007. Digital case, Library of Virginia. Daisy Lawrence, House of Francis Lan, Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historical Inventory, August 25, 1937, Library of Virginia.

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their enslavers, enslaved workers fled to Union lines for safety and the freedom provided there.⁴⁵

When Gregory passed away in 1862, he was massively indebted, which resulted in the sale of his real estate.⁴⁶ In 1865, his Princess Anne County property was turned over to his administrator, Silas S. Gregory.⁴⁷ An 1866 advertisement for the 1,309 acres noted that it had two small dwellings and the necessary outbuilding, barns, stables, and various outbuildings. The farm was “regarded by competent judges as the finest body of land within the limits of the county, and well adapted to the crops raised in this section of the State,” and there was a sufficient amount of timber.⁴⁸

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the property was subject to several land transactions: L.D. Starke (1871-1874), Willis B. Sanderlin (1874-1877), Lasalle and W.A. Jackson (1877-1885, 1885-1886), John Tyler (1886-1909), and T.B. Knight (1909-1912).⁴⁹ A deed during this period indicated multiple titles that the property went by including: the Galt Farm, the Petty Farm, and the Gregory Farm. By 1885, the land that encompassed the Francis Land House was 460 acres.⁵⁰

In 1912, Junius Thompson Sheets, originally from Ohio, purchased the property with the Francis Land House for \$9,000.⁵¹ The owner of the property became a farmer, having previously worked as a timber inspector, and the property became known as Groveland Farm.⁵² It is under his ownership that the second story of the dwelling was raised slightly to create a full second story (Figure 22).⁵³ In 1917, J.T. and his wife, Flora L. Sheets conveyed the property to their sons, Warren W. Sheets and Emmet Don Sheets.⁵⁴ It appears that in addition to farming, the family bred horses.⁵⁵ A rear porch was added to the house in the 1920s during their ownership.⁵⁶

Warren W. Sheets passed away in 1927 and bequeathed the real estate to his brother, Emmet Don and sister, Jane (Jennie) Huntingdon DeFrees; Don conveyed his interest in the property to his brother-in-law Raymond G. DeFrees in 1929. Like so many during the Great Depression, the DeFrees family faced financial troubles and payments on the property defaulted. Multiple

⁴⁵ Joanna Wilson Green, Lena McDonald, Brenden Bowman, and John Clark, “Hickory Hill Slave and African American Cemetery,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, February 2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ U.S. Freedmen’s Bureau Records, 1865-1878.

⁴⁸ “Commissioner’s Sale,” *The Day Book* (Norfolk, VA). October 4, 1866; Princess Anne Co., VA Chancery 1879-007. G.W. Grandy etc. v. Admr of William N. Gregory etc. 1879-007.

⁴⁹ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 50:192; 51:355; 53:183; 57:595; 58:259; 82:132.

⁵⁰ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 57:595.

⁵¹ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 89:594.

⁵² United States Census Bureau, federal census.

⁵³ FHMaster, “Francis Land House,” *Forgotten History*. March 28, 2021. Accessed April 12, 2024, <http://mail.forgottenhistory.us/node/1352>.

⁵⁴ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 100:567.

⁵⁵ “Notice.” *The Princess Anne Times*. December 14, 1917.

⁵⁶ Commonwealth Preservation Group. *Historic Building Treatment Plan for Francis Land House 3131 Virginia Beach Boulevard, Virginia Beach, Virginia*. November 2020, Revised December 2020.

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parcels, including that on which the Francis Land House stood, was sold to J.N. Morse.⁵⁷ Jennie Huntingdon DeFrees repurchased the Land estate in 1948, at which time the property was 67 acres.⁵⁸ Jennie's husband, civil engineer Raymond DeFrees, worked for the Bureau of Evaluation and was a member of the Amateur Astronomer's Club in Washington, D.C., leading to telescope parties at the Francis Land House.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Jennie DeFrees managed a dairy farm on the property, which was then known as Colonial House Farm.⁶⁰



Figure 22: Photograph of the Francis Land House when it was surveyed in 1937.

When World War II began, in addition to the DeFrees son, Lindsay, serving in the military, the family in Princess Anne County did their part. Some World War II German prisoners of war were placed in the county at Camp Ashby. Two of these prisoners were assigned to the Colonial House Farm where they worked as dairy hands under Jennie DeFrees and occupied the pump house on the property.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 171:64.

⁵⁸ Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 251:96.

⁵⁹ FHMaster, "Francis Land House"; Amy Hayes Castleberry, *Then & Now Virginia Beach*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010).

⁶⁰ FHMaster, "Francis Land House"; Jorja Jean, "Land house exhibit will bring WWII history house," *The Virginian-Pilot* (Norfolk). January 13, 2019.

⁶¹ Jean, "Land house exhibit will bring WWII history house."

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Land on which the Francis Land House stood continued to be associated with farming until the 1950s as drastic changes came to the county. Mary L. Studds purchased the DeFrees property in 1954 and chose to adjust to the changing environment. In the 1950s, the population was moving into Princess Anne County and housing subdivisions were being established along Virginia Beach Boulevard (US 58). In response to the growth of the region, Studds opened “an elegant women’s and young girl’s attire shop” in the Francis Land House; this was Rose Hall.⁶² The transition from a dwelling to a store led to the construction of a large rear addition that served as a lobby and back entrance to the shop, which was housed in the basement of the dwelling. The second story of the Francis Land House served as an apartment for the owners and the first story was open to the public during the week.⁶³

After nearly 20 years in business, Rose Hall closed in 1974, and developers swooped in with plans for newly constructed stores. In order to protect the historic dwelling, and to some extent, its setting, from development, the City of Virginia Beach rezoned the area into a Historical and Cultural District. The city then purchased 35 acres in 1975 and had the house listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁶⁴ The City then received income from selling a portion of the larger Francis Land property and renting the Francis Land House to Brill’s Antiques for a short time in the early 1980s. Following the store’s closure in 1982, the city looked for new tenants and uses for the house.⁶⁵ Concerned citizens began lobbying the City of Virginia Beach for the house’s use as a museum. The resource became a historic house museum in 1986, depicting early plantation life in Princess Anne County and use of the house at various times in its history.⁶⁶

Further documentary and physical research were conducted on the Francis Land House as funds became available. Dendrochronology was undertaken in 1992, which determined that the southern yellow pine trees used to construct the Francis Land House were hewed and sawn from trees felled after the growing season of 1804, placing its construction between 1805 and 1810.⁶⁷ Paint analysis was undertaken in the 1990s by Artifacts Ltd. of Baltimore, Maryland and though woodwork in the house was believed to have been stripped and varnished in the 1950s, evidence of paint was found in various locations.⁶⁸ Archaeological surveys were conducted in 1997 and 2012. In 1999, the Francis Land History Park was created.⁶⁹ A landscape plan was created for

⁶² “Stitching Together the History of the Rose Hall Dress Shop,” City of Virginia Beach. February 9, 2024. March 6, 2024, <https://virginiabeach.gov/connect/blog/stitching-together-the-history-of-the-rose-hall-dress-shop>.

⁶³ Commonwealth Preservation Group; Louisa Venable Kyle, “Business and Pleasure Combine to Restore 18th Century House to Former Graciousness,” *Virginian-Pilot*, April 24, 1955.

⁶⁴ “Francis Land House 1732,” *Virginia Beach Sun*. September 16, 1987; Princess Anne Co., VA Deed Book 1506:465.

⁶⁵ “Virginia Beach realizes profit from Rose Hall property sale,” *Virginia Beach Sun*, March 7, 1979; Danny Barkin, “Rose Hall: Historic house faces uncertain future as antique shop folds,” *The Virginian-Pilot*, June 11, 1982.

⁶⁶ Joseph Dye Lahendro, “Grounds Master Plan for Francis Land Plantation.” September 13, 2002.

⁶⁷ Herman J. Heikkinen, “The Last Year of Tree Growth for Selected Timbers Within the Francis Land House as Derived by Key-Year Dendrochronology.” American Institute of Dendrochronology, Inc. April 1992.

⁶⁸ Mary Reid Barrow, “Beach to open history park today,” *Virginian Pilot*, May 17, 1999.

⁶⁹ Mary Reid Barrow, “Beach to open history park today,” *Virginian Pilot*. May 17, 1999.

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the museum in 2002.⁷⁰

While the landscape of Princess Anne County, now City of Virginia Beach, has been drastically altered, the approximately seven and three-quarters acres of ground on which the Francis Land House sits as a reflection of the history of the evolved site. Though the house features 20th century additions, it continues to read as an early nineteenth century, Dutch Colonial style house.

Criterion C: Architecture

Further research and investigation conducted as part of this effort revealed that the Francis Land House was most likely built circa 1805, as opposed to 1732, as previously noted in a variety of studies and articles, however, it still generally represents the growth of the planter class in Princess Anne County at the turn of the nineteenth century and its increasingly prosperous lifestyle. The end of the eighteenth century and start of the nineteenth century was a period of considerable change in the region as the almost exclusively agrarian society was beginning to accommodate urban centers and civic growth; this economic development was reflected in its architecture. Prosperous farmers began replacing small one- and two-room dwellings with larger, more fashionable residences. Such was the case with the Francis Land House, as the Land family was among the earliest settlers in the Lynnhaven River section of the county and were likely living in smaller, and less permanent dwellings prior to the construction of this building.

Although the Francis Land House was built after the American Revolution, its form and design, with its characteristic Georgian layout, is consistent with that of other similar houses built throughout Princess Anne County and the Tidewater area of Virginia throughout the Colonial era. The configuration, comprised of a double-pile plan including two rooms on each side of a central passage, largely replaced earlier, more compact layouts of this period due to the increased level of privacy and division of public and private space it offered. Guests of the house would almost certainly enter the formal entrance on the front into the central passage. From there, they would be invited into the two front rooms that were most embellished and likely served as the parlor and dining room. More familiar guests may be permitted into the rear rooms, while the second story would likely have been completely private to the family. It is of further interest that while the Francis Land House is generally consistent with a typical Georgian interior layout, the house differs in the original location of the stairway. Historic accounts supported by physical evidence in the building suggest that when the house was built, the staircase was located in the rear southeastern corner of the house rather than in the central passage. Because paint chip analysis suggests the woodwork and wainscoting in the front northwest room is original, this reveals that the existing room layout is also original and therefore the staircase would have been set in the rear corner and possibly not immediately connected to central passage. While less common, several other examples of such a floorplan are known to have existed within houses in Princess Anne County including the ca. 1765 Pleasant Hill (VDHR# 134-0027, NRHP 73002229) and the ca. 1759 Upper Wolfsnare (VDHR# 134-0034, NRHP 75002119). While speculative, such an arrangement may have been intended to further reinforce a sense of privacy

⁷⁰ Lahendro, "Grounds Master Plan for the Francis Land Plantation."

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for the second story with the staircase not located in the public passage.

Also of note is the exterior door on the side of the first story northwest room that likely functioned as the historic dining room in the Francis Land House. While most cooking likely took place in a detached kitchen, particularly during the summer months, there is a fireplace and possible cooking hearth in the basement, suggesting that some level of food preparation took place within the main house. There is no evidence of an interior stairway or ladder to the basement, therefore this exterior door would have allowed direct access to the dining room by the enslaved laborers cooking and serving the family and guests, thereby limiting their presence and interaction with guests of the house in the central passage.

The Francis Land House is significant for its use of the gambrel roof. The gambrel roof was popular in the country from as early as the seventeenth century through the end of the Colonial period. Examples exist from Georgia to Maine but are generally more common closer to the coast. Although the style is commonly referred to as “Dutch” Colonial, its origins have been debated. Some recent studies suggest the use of the gambrel may be a combination of English, Flemish, German, Dutch, and Scandinavian influences, while others suggest it may be derived from the French Mansard roof, and others yet believe it is distinctly American.⁷¹ It has also been asserted that the gambrel roof was popular during this period because only the area below the roof line was taxed, and therefore houses with a gambrel were only taxed as a one story building. This was formalized in the Federal Direct Tax Law of 1798. Regardless of origin and tax ramifications, the gambrel roof was employed on the design of many Colonial houses and commercial buildings, particularly those of the generally more affluent.

The Francis Land House is one of just 53 documented houses in the city that were built prior to 1830 and one of even fewer remaining that reflect the use of the gambrel roof, including:

- Weblin House (ca. 1700; VDHR# 134-0035, NRHP 74002248)
- Thomas Murray House (ca. 1791; VDHR# 134-0022, NRHP 04000482)
- Richard/Isaac Murray House (ca. 1786; VDHR# 134-0723)
- Whitehurst-Buffington House (ca. 1793; VDHR# 134-0042)
- Jonathon Woodhouse house (ca. 1760; VDHR# 134-0038)
- Biddle House (ca. 1775; VDHR #134-0065)
- Thomas Lovett House (ca. 1772, VDHR# 134-0072)

Of these, the condition and relative historical integrity varies and at least one, the Weblin House, is known to have originally had a gable roof and its gambrel roof was added around the turn-of-the nineteenth century. That change perhaps reflects the continued popularity of the gambrel roof leading into the nineteenth century and explains its later use on the Francis Land House in circa 1805.

⁷¹ Sarah E. Mitchell, “Colonial Houses with Gambrel Roofs.”
<https://www.vintagedesigns.com/architecture/colgam/sem/index.htm>.

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While some aspects of the history and evolution of the Francis Land House may never be known, such as the identification of the architect and/or builder, or the reasoning for the adapted Georgian form and offset stairway, it is clear the Francis Land House remains a significant aspect of the architectural heritage of Virginia Beach. Since its construction, the Francis Land House has undergone a variety of alterations and renovations as a result of changing needs and occupancy, evolving fashions, and historic preservation-minded efforts. Some of these modifications have impacted, and in some cases diminished, the historic integrity of the building as constructed in c. 1805, but all contribute to its evolution and history. Early twentieth century renovations reflect the needs of the Sheets and Defrees family to adapt the house to modern lifestyles including adding amenities such as indoor plumbing and updates for cooking. Mid-twentieth century changes and additions reflect the conversion of the house to commercial space but also an effort to replace or add features to the house believed to represent “colonial” fashion in an era when the Colonial Revival style was at the peak of national popularity and as the “Rose Hall” dress shop capitalized on the history of the property. Renovations undertaken in the years since the closure of Rose Hall reflect focus on historic preservation of the building, and increasingly the scholarly approach to doing so. Under ownership by the City of Virginia Beach, the Francis Land House has been subject to a variety of studies including dendrochronology, archaeologic, and intensive documentary investigation. Incompatible architectural features and materials have been removed and replaced while the building has been repaired and stabilized. These efforts have been conducted to aid in the preservation of the building as well as to contribute to its public interpretation and understanding of 19th century construction techniques. While efforts continue, the Francis Land House remains an integral and significant aspect of the architectural heritage of Virginia Beach and the state.

Archaeological Potential of the Francis Land House Property

Preliminary archaeological surveys were conducted on the Francis Land House property in 1997, 2012, and 2018. The College of William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research’s 1997 testing demonstrated that extensive subsurface disturbances have occurred on the approximately 7-acre Francis Land House property (134-0031) due to its continuous occupation and that these disruptions have greatly reduced the property's archaeological potential. Shovel and auger testing yielded no evidence of undisturbed soils in which subsurface archaeological resources would be located. No archaeological remains were identified during the assessment. As such, no further work was recommended.

In 2012, the James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc. (JRIA) was contracted to conduct an archaeological investigation of the front porch area upon demolition of the existing porch. The principal objective of the investigation was to determine whether there was any evidence of surviving archaeological features associated with the original porch. In summary, test units placed beneath the twentieth-century porch and walkway did not reveal evidence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century porch-related features. However, remnants of historic deposits and features were identified, including the builder’s trench for the house. This feature yielded fragments of oil lamp globe glass consistent with an early nineteenth-century construction date for the house. It

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was recommended that the resources identified in the course of this investigation should be taken into account with any planned construction.

In 2018, Dovetail Cultural Resource Group conducted a reconnaissance-level pedestrian survey to inspect previously identified archaeological sites within a broad project area of the northern portion of Virginia Beach, Virginia and examine high probability areas for the potential for unidentified archaeological sites. The project was not focused on the Francis Land property but covered the geographic location. No new information related to the property's archaeological significance was obtained from this survey.

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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 (NRHP Ref. No. 75002118)
☐ 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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR ID 134-0031

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.71 acres

Acreage previously listed in the National Register approximately 35 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 36.842060 | Longitude: -76.079390 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The updated boundary encompasses four tax parcels currently owned by the City of Virginia Beach and totaling 7.71 acres. The property is identified by the City of Virginia Beach as parcels 14971512270000, 14971541270000, 14971437700000, and 14971467550000, as shown on the attached Location Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Francis Land House as originally listed included approximately 35 acres of land, drawn as a square around the historic house. In the years since the Francis Land House was listed, the property has evolved, and adjacent properties have been sold, subdivided, and redeveloped. The property subject to this update and boundary decrease includes the land area and parcels currently owned and maintained by the City of Virginia Beach. This includes the primary parcel on which the house is located, an adjacent parcel immediately to the east on which a kitchen garden is maintained by the Master Gardeners of Virginia Beach, and two parcels located across Francis Land Lane to the south that border Pinetree Branch. Together, these parcels represent the current setting of the Francis Land House, and what remains of the historically massive Land family holdings in the area. While the house and garden tracts convey a sense of the domestic yardspace of the house, the Pinetree Branch tract across the street is the sole surviving connection of the house to the water that was an integral aspect of the operations and economy of the plantation historically. In 1999, the City built a walking trail through this parcel with interpretative signage to aid in the understanding of its role and connection to the Francis Land House.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Robert J. Taylor, Jr. and Dara A. Friedberg
organization: Dutton + Associates, LLC
street & number: 1115 Crowder Drive
city or town: Midlothian state: VA zip code: 23113
e-mail: rtaylor@dutton-associates.com
telephone: (804) 897-1960
date: August 2024

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.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Francis Land House

City or Vicinity: City of Virginia Beach

County: Independent City

State: VA

Photographer: Robert J. Taylor, Jr.

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 37 – General view of Francis Land House property from Virginia Beach
Boulevard, facing southeast

2 of 37 –Front facade, facing southeast

3 of 37 –East side, facing southwest

4 of 37 –East side and rear oblique, facing west

5 of 37 –East side of rear addition, facing southwest

6 of 37 –Rear, facing northwest

7 of 37 –Rear of original block, facing north

8 of 37 –West side, facing northeast

9 of 37 –Detail of front door, facing southeast

10 of 37 –Detail of window opening, facing southeast

11 of 37 –Detail of roof cornice, facing southeast

12 of 37 –Detail of chimney and raking cornice, facing southwest

13 of 37 –View of house from garden area, facing northwest

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- 14 of 37 –View of garden, facing east
- 15 of 37 –View towards walking path in Francis Land Park, facing south
- 16 of 37 –Boardwalk in Francis Land Park, facing east
- 17 of 37 –First floor central hallway looking towards rear
- 18 of 37 –First floor, front northwest (dining) room
- 19 of 37 –Detail of wainscoting in dining room
- 20 of 37 –Detail of window shutter paneling in dining room
- 21 of 37 –First floor, northeast room
- 22 of 37 –First floor, southwest room
- 23 of 37 – First floor central hallway looking towards front
- 24 of 37 – Second floor central hallway looking towards rear
- 25 of 37 – Second floor, northwest room
- 26 of 37 – Second floor, northeast room
- 27 of 37 – Second floor, southwest room
- 28 of 37 – Basement view of missing support under northwest chimney
- 29 of 37 – Basement cooking hearth under southwest room
- 30 of 37 – Basement room under east side of house
- 31 of 37 – Enclosed room on east end of back porch
- 32 of 37 – Basement room under back porch
- 33 of 37 – Stairwell from rear addition to original block
- 34 of 37 – Room within bump-out of rear addition
- 35 of 37 – Kitchen in rear addition

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36 of 37 – Bathroom in rear addition

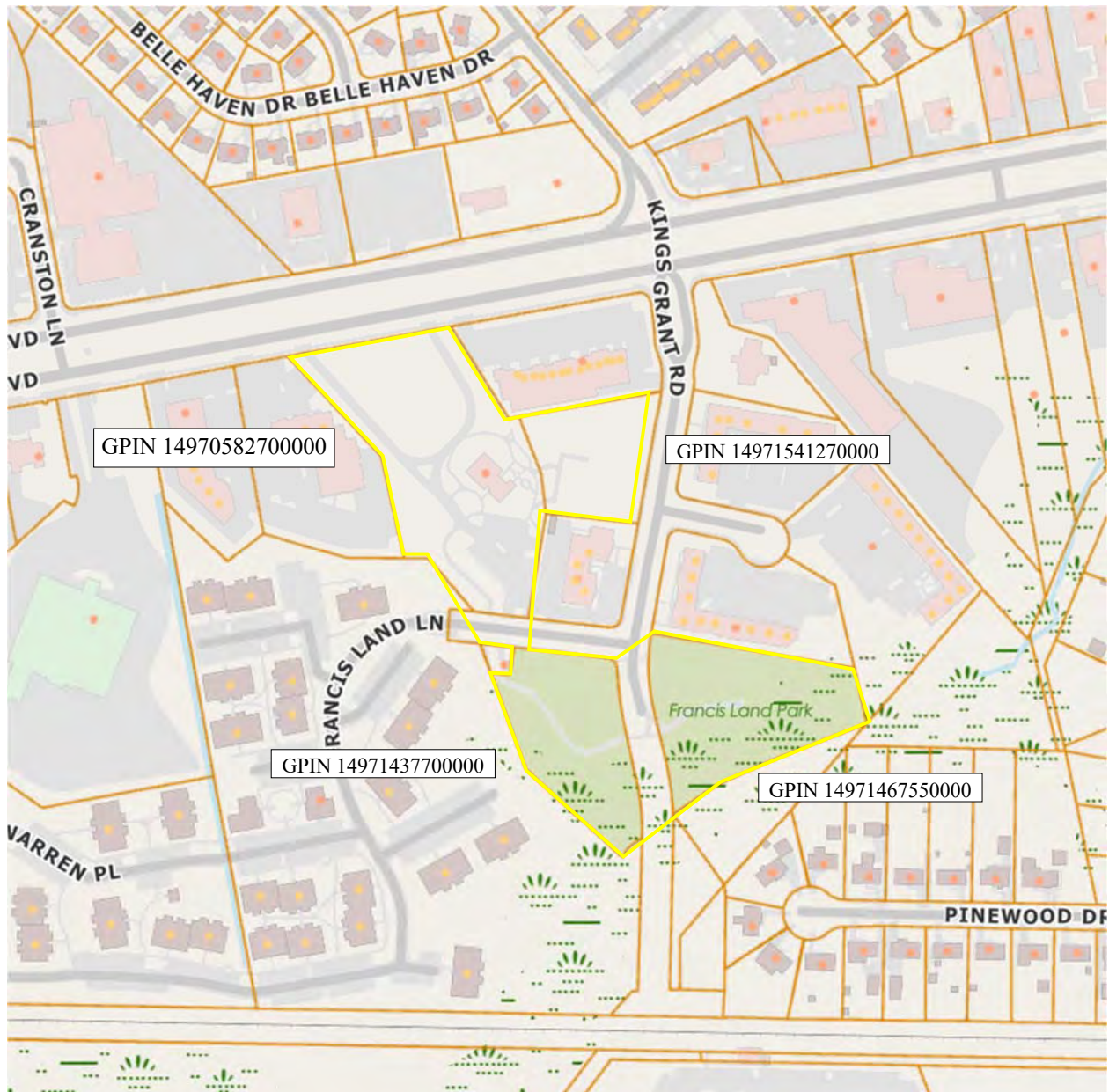
37 of 37 - Relic brickwork in attic revealing lift of gambrel roof

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

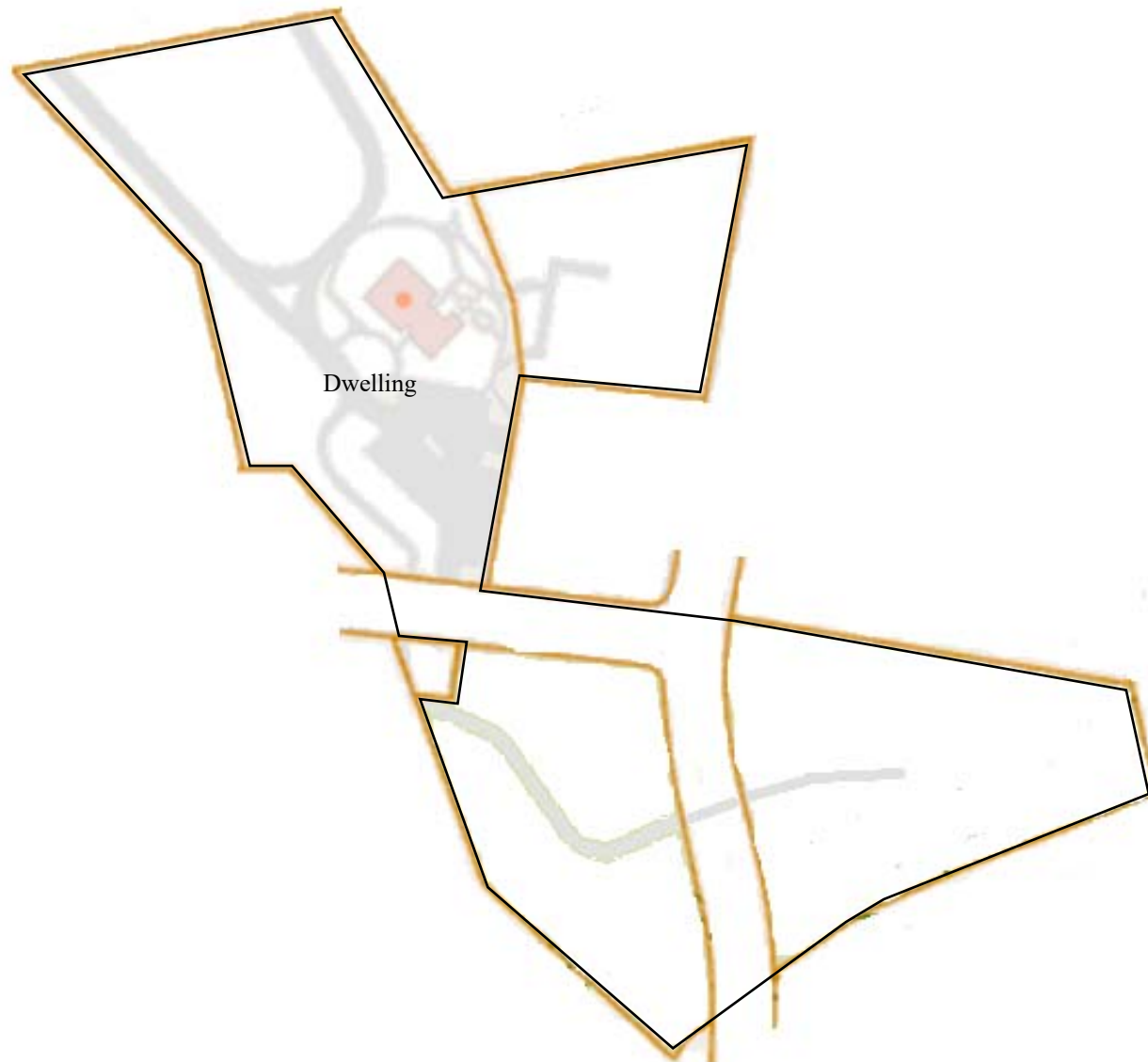


Francis Land House
3131 Virginia Beach Boulevard, Virginia Beach
DHR ID# 134-0031

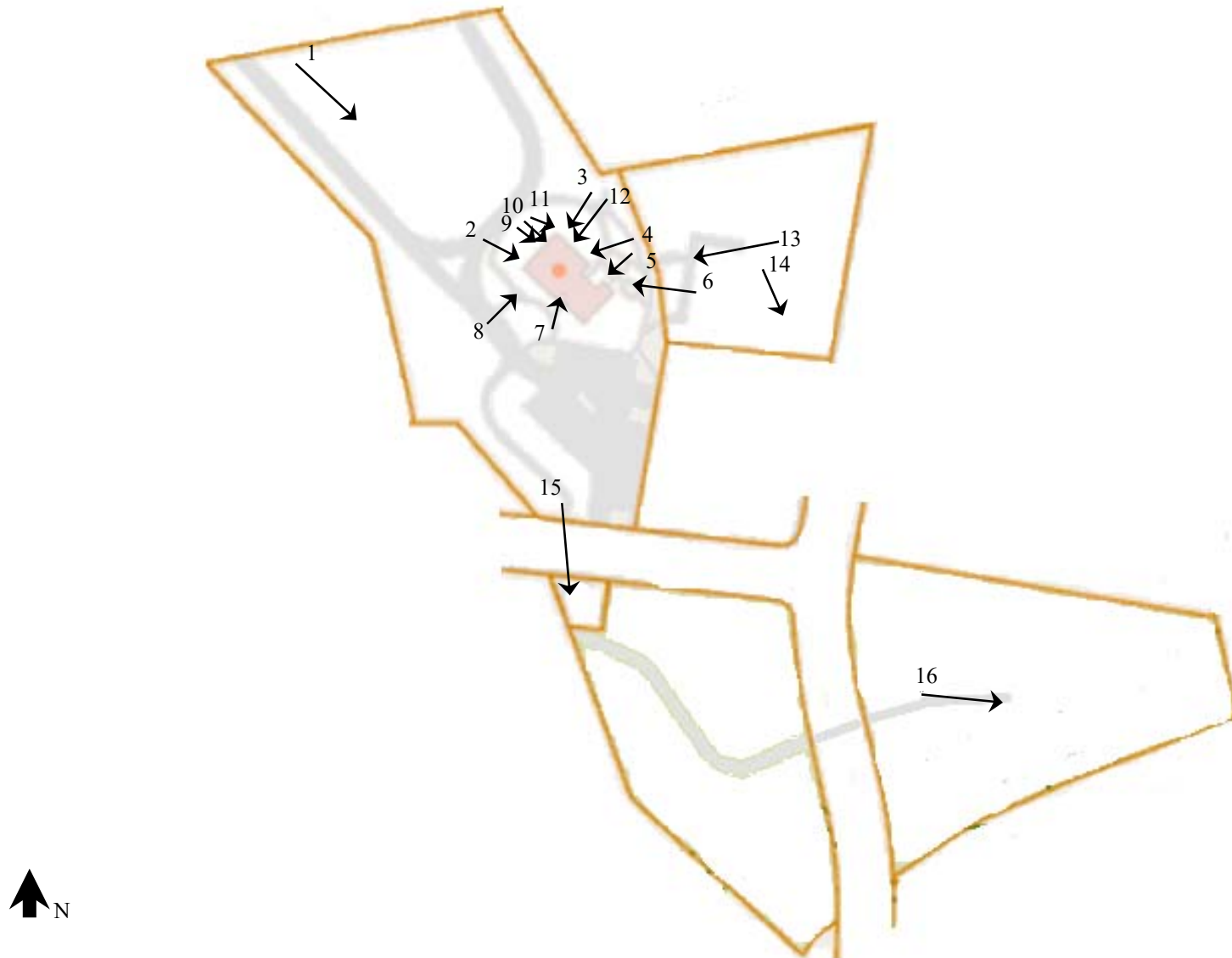
Location Map, Virginia Beach GIS
(<https://vbgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html>)
24 May 2024

Latitude: 36.842060 Longitude: -76.079390

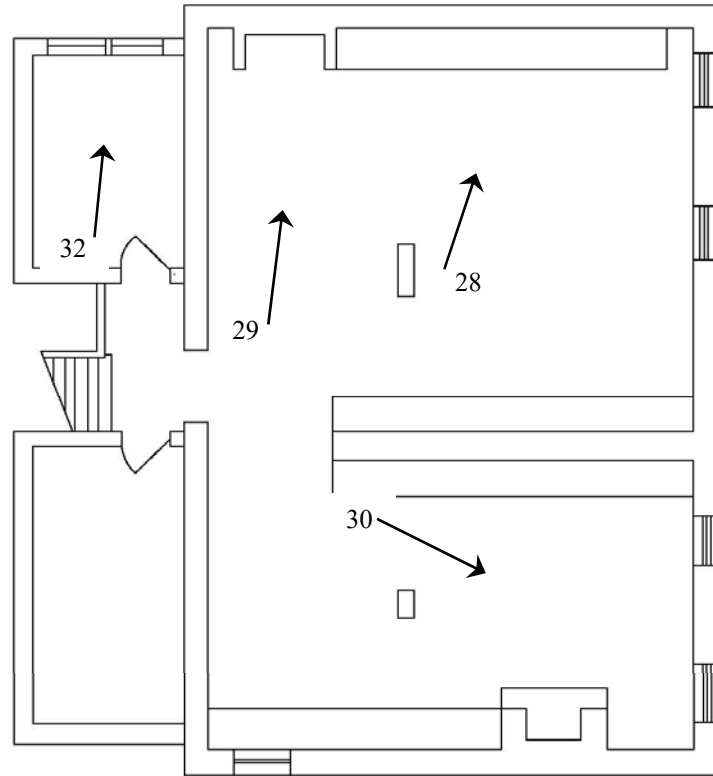
7.71 acres



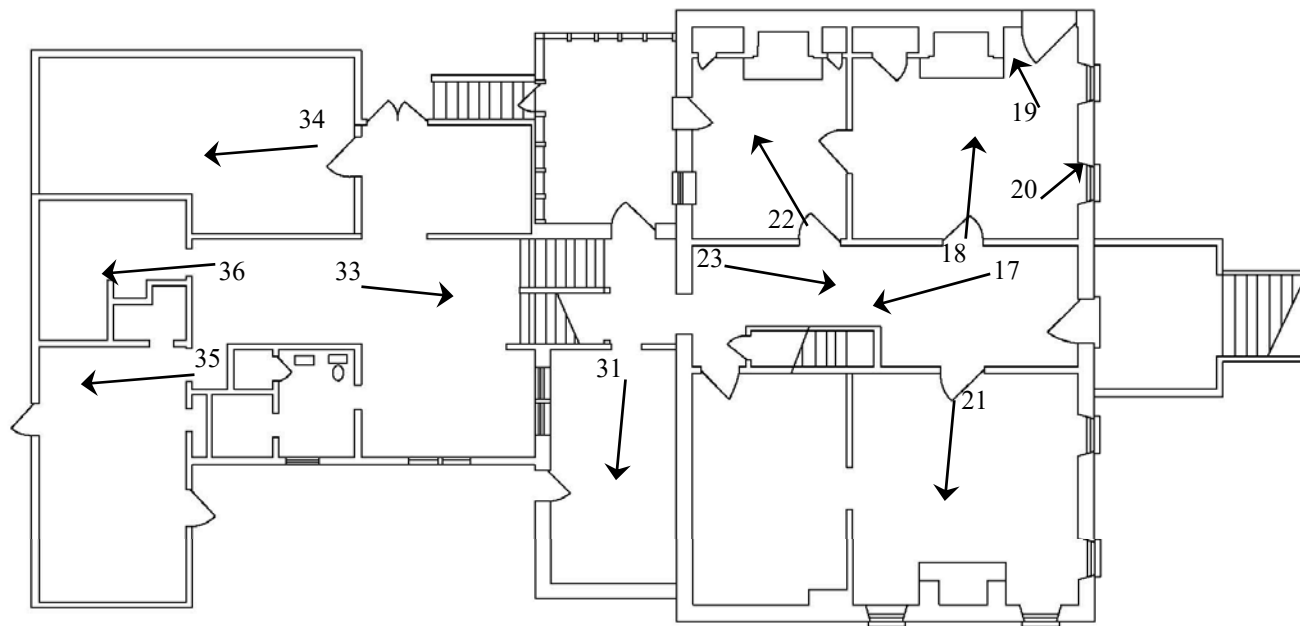
Francis Land House, City of Virginia Beach, VDHR #134-0031



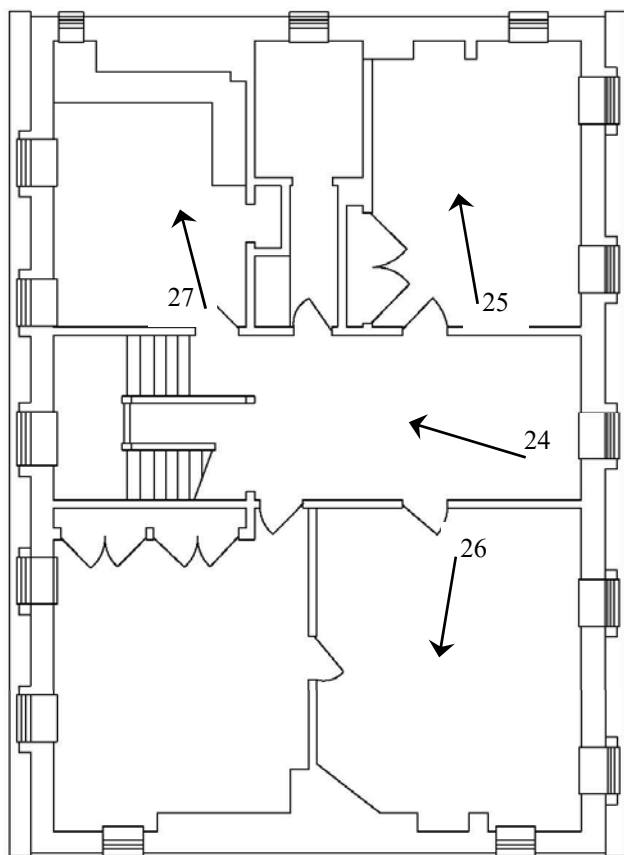
Francis Land House, City of Virginia Beach, VDHR #134-0031



Francis Land House, City of Virginia Beach, VDHR #134-0031
Basement



Francis Land House, City of Virginia Beach, VDHR #134-0031
1st Floor



Francis Land House, City of Virginia Beach, VDHR #134-0031
2nd Floor

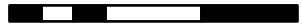


BOUNDARY DECREASE MAP

Francis Land House
City of Virginia Beach, VA
DHR ID# 134-0031

 2025 Nominated Boundary

 1975 NRHP Boundary

0 150 300 450
 Feet

