

Reconnaissance Architectural Survey of “A Village”

Hopewell, Virginia

Management Summary

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Prepared by

Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian and Kristin H. Kirchen, Iron Dog Preservation, LLC

Prepared for

Virginia Department of Historic Resources and City of Hopewell

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

On behalf of the City of Hopewell's Department of Development and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), the project team of Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian, and Kristin H. Kirchen, Iron Dog Preservation, LLC, has completed selective architectural survey and preliminary evaluation of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of the community known as "A Village" located in the City of Hopewell. The project was funded as part of DHR's 2019 Survey and Planning Cost-Share Program (Project #2009-001G). Architectural field survey occurred between February and April 2019 and limited historical research was undertaken simultaneously. In addition to this Management Summary, the project team also produced new or updated inventory forms for 38 resources and the proposed historic district, which includes a narrative description of the resources, a statement of significance, and supporting maps and photographs. This information has been entered into DHR's Virginia Cultural Resources Inventory System (VCRIS) (Appendix A). The project team members performing the architectural survey and evaluation meet or exceed the qualifications described in the Secretary of the Interior's *Professional Qualifications Standards*

Using the context provided in the 2010 WMCAR Report "Architectural Survey of Mail Order Kit Houses in A Village, B Village, Crescent Hills, and Mansion Hills Neighborhoods of Hopewell, Virginia," the team was asked to selectively survey a minimum of 30 resources within "A Village," with a focus on identifying dwelling types, including potential Aladdin kit house models, and documenting the best examples of each, along with examples exhibiting typical alterations. The goal of the survey was to record a sample of historic resources within "A Village" and to make a recommendation about the potential for "A Village" to be eligible for listing on the NRHP and the Virginia Landmarks Register either as a stand-alone district or as an expansion of the City Point Historic District (the nomination for which was also being updated by this team at the same time).

Background History of "A Village"

"A Village" was laid out in 1914/early 1915 by the DuPont Company to house workers, largely management and company officials, who came to town to work in the new guncotton plant erected by DuPont at Hopewell in the vicinity of City Point. The area was part of Prince George County at the time; it was not annexed by the City of Hopewell until 1923. DuPont had first established themselves in City Point in 1912 when they opened a dynamite plant, but following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Du Pont purchased 1600 additional acres from the Eppes family and converted the dynamite plant into the largest guncotton production facility in the world. As was the case with many wartime industries created all over the United States at this time, the establishment of these massive manufacturing facilities resulted in an immediate demand for affordable worker housing. DuPont's solution to the housing demand and their need to attract workers, was to build entire towns – various sizes of houses and dormitories, but also clubs, schools, commercial shops, etc. Kit house researcher Rosemary Thornton has identified other DuPont towns in Old Hickory, Tennessee; Carney Point, New Jersey;

Ramsay, Montana; and Penniman, Virginia (located where Cheatham Annex now stands since the Penniman buildings were moved after the end of World War I). In City Point, DuPont built three distinct villages on the edges of the existing town in proximity to their plant. They purchased the former farm land for the villages from the Eppes family, longtime owners of Appomattox Manor, which occupied the peninsula of City Point. The villages included different types of housing and each was geared toward a different level of employee – “A village,” for company officials and management, “B village,” for white workers and their families, and “South B Village” or South City, for African American workers.

A remarkable document provided by Jean Langford, archivist with the Local History and Genealogy Collection at the Hopewell Library, titled “Townsite Construction and Cost Estimation, 1915-1916” by F.W. Foote provides precise details about DuPont’s construction efforts. Foote, a DuPont employee, was in charge of the design and construction of their worker housing. He describes the scope of his labors as, “The installation of a townsite in Virginia to accommodate about 200 families of the higher class and 1000 of the working class, 200 bachelors of the higher class and 4000 of the working class – with the necessary public and welfare buildings for health and comfort”(Foote 1). According to Foote, on January 1, 1915, “‘A’ Village consisted of one hotel and twenty houses. ‘B’ Village had not been started. On January 1, 1916, ‘A’ Village consists of two hotels, with 85 foot additions to each, and dining hall between, a club house, school house, railroad station and 140 houses.” In addition to these buildings, “A water system, electric lighting system, surface drainage system, sewerage and disposal system” were installed for each village and concrete roads and sidewalks had been laid and trees planted in “A Village;” “B Village” had plank walks installed (Foote 12).

Foote’s document indicates that DuPont relied heavily on kit houses from the North American Construction Company (manufacturers of Aladdin houses) and International Mill and Timber Company (manufacturers of Sterling houses). He notes that “61 Aladdin houses, assorted types” were erected between January 1915 and March 1915 by C.W. Hancock & Sons from Lynchburg, Virginia, and “30 Sterling houses, assorted types” were erected between June and September 1915, also by Hancock & Sons. He lists the Sterling models constructed – “5 Lowell type, 5 Bonnie Brae, 10 Trysteale, 10 Browning,” but not the specific models of Aladdin houses (Foote 15). As noted in the WMCAR report, Aladdin Homes was the first mail-order company to develop distinct designs for construction of industrial housing communities, and in 1914, DuPont placed the first large industrial order with Aladdin for company housing in Hopewell. Aladdin’s records show that Du Pont ordered 10 Gretnas, 6 Denvers (later called Edisons), 6 Genevas, 6 Forsyths, 6 Loraines, 6 Carnations, 6 Florences, 6 Royton, 6 Texas, 1 Brighton, and 1 Kentucky. In addition to these 91 Aladdin and Sterling houses, Foote also lists “Two Wenonah Type...One Plaza...26 Haskell houses” constructed in “A Village”(51). Aladdin had models called the Wenonah and the Plaza so it isn’t clear why Foote listed these two models separately from the other Aladdin models. (The Haskell model is discussed below.)

In 1920, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a report titled, Housing by Employers in the United States by Leifur Magnusson. Magnusson visited and documented, with great attention to detail, company towns across the U.S. In his report he does not provide the names of the towns that he describes, but he provides enough locational and descriptive information that it is possible for a researcher with sufficient knowledge of a particular place to recognize it in his descriptions. DuPont’s Hopewell is described ca. 1918 beginning on page 187 as “Community I.” According to Magnusson, “A Village” was built to house “officials and staff employees” and consisted of “free standing cottages;” it was described in the report as the “better village” (188). According to the report it included 156 houses that

contained between 5 and 7 rooms with hot air furnaces and “all the modern improvements” like baths, hot and cold water, and electric lights. The houses were clad with weatherboard or wooden shingles on the exterior and plastered inside. Lots were 25’ x 100’ except for four larger properties for superintendents, two of which measured 100’ x 150’ and two of which were 50’ x 100’, and the community had trees, lawns, flowers and shrubs (188-189). No fences were allowed in the village because of the belief that “unfenced lawns are more pleasing” (192). The company offered prizes for the best kept premises and encouraged gardening (192)(Figure 1).

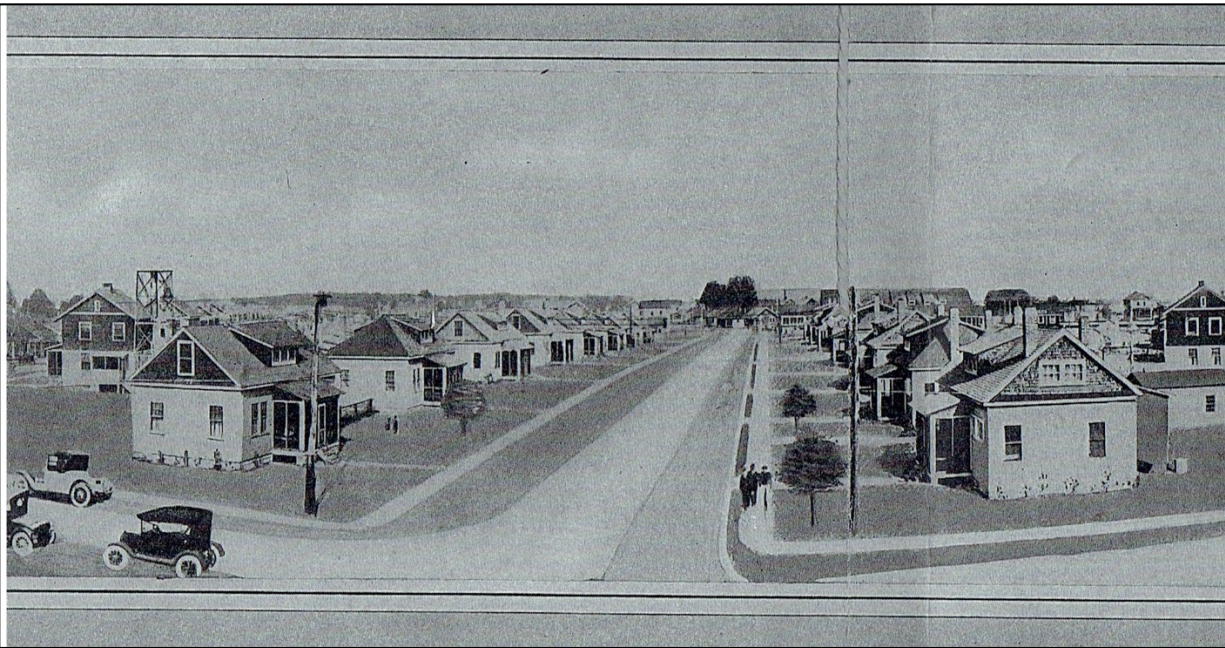


Figure 1. General view of “A Village” from the 1920 publication “America’s Greatest Industrial Opportunity – Hopewell, Virginia” by DuPont Chemical Company.



Figure 2. View looking north along the east side of the 300 block of Allen Avenue from the intersection of Allen Avenue and East Broadway. One of the blocks shown in the 1920 image above. March 2019.

In addition to the freestanding cottages, DuPont also constructed the DuPont Hotel in “A Village.” According to the 1920 Magnussen report, this is where the company housed salaried employees without families; it could accommodate 365 people. Presumably, it also accommodated overnight guests of the company. The DuPont Club was also located in “A Village” and provided social and recreational opportunities for the residents.

All three of the villages were very much “company towns” in that DuPont owned all the houses and the workers had to apply to live there and, if they were approved, paid rent to the company. DuPont also provided schools, a hospital, land for churches, a police force, fire protection, and garbage collection. In 1918, DuPont provided 1,949 dwellings for white families, and 515 dwellings for colored families. Overall, DuPont had a workforce of 12,225 in 1918 and they provided housing for approximately 4200 married couples and 2600 single men, or 55.6% of their workforce (Magnusson 187, 191).

The scale of this enterprise is staggering – in four years, DuPont constructed 2,464 dwellings in Hopewell alone (keep in mind that they were doing very similar things in Tennessee, New Jersey, Montana, and Penniman, Virginia at the same time), in addition to dormitories, barracks, the entire guncotton plant itself, a hospital, schools, sidewalks, streets, a hotel, a social club. Such an ambitious undertaking was facilitated by the proliferation of house catalogs, kit houses, and readi-cut lumber, and the beginning of a beautiful friendship with Aladdin Homes. Foote’s document makes it clear that DuPont was relying heavily on these types of houses in “A Village.”

One entry on his list, however, is a bit of a mystery and may point to DuPont as more than a simple kit house consumer. The “26 Haskell houses” listed by Foote are intriguing. “Haskell” was the last name of J. Amory Haskell, a DuPont executive from 1902 until 1923. Well-known kit house researcher and author Rosemary Thornton has documented other “Haskell” models in Penniman, Virginia and Old Hickory, Tennessee and provides an image on her blog of a page from a house design catalog showing a model called the Haskell. She does not provide a source for this image, but she refers to it as a “DuPont Design.” Did DuPont collaborate with Aladdin Homes to develop a line of house models specifically targeted for use in its company towns? This is an intriguing question and an avenue for further research. An oral history interview located at the Hagley Museum and Library with Mr. Robert E. Pyle, Sr. in October 1958 suggests that DuPont did have employees on staff who were engaged in house design. Mr. Pyle recounts that his first job with DuPont was “drawings of houses” for the Hopewell plant. He states that he worked with Henry Eaton who “looked after housing work at Hopewell;” Pyle was later shifted to drawing powder buildings for the company. The role that the DuPont Company played in the housing of its workforce is a promising area for further research.

In researching the history of DuPont and the creation of their company town, one of the things that stands out is how short-lived DuPont’s relationship with the town really was. With the end of World War I in 1918, the seemingly insatiable demand for guncotton dried up and DuPont closed its plant immediately. Residents literally left overnight. In November 1919, the DuPont Company first advertised their Hopewell properties for sale as a complete town and factory (*America’s Greatest Industrial Opportunity: Hopewell, Virginia*, 1920). The Tubize Artificial Silk Corporation purchased the largest plant and large sections of the Villages and renewed the “company town” operation. Other early peacetime industries were Stamsocott Company (manufacturer of cellulose products) and Mayhew Corporation (a tool manufacturing company). The residential villages, or large portions thereof, were purchased by

investors as rental property. A 1921 map of “A Village,” which shows parcels and owners names, illustrates both Tubize Co. and Stamsocott Co. as substantial property owners, along with an individual named E.C. Kent. The City of Hopewell officially annexed City Point, A and B Villages and the old DuPont plant site in 1923.

The Tubize Corporation was the largest manufacturer of its type in the United States and at its peak it employed 4200 people in Hopewell (Calos 95). Combined with the significant number of employees needed by the other manufacturing operations in town, this added up to a “housing problem,” as it was described in the Hopewell News in 1929. Local newspapers of the mid- to late 1920s are full of stories about planned construction projects and the number of building permits issued each week. The two apartment buildings constructed in “A Village” in 1927, the Brown Apartments on E. Broadway (116-5149) and the Solt Apartments on Allen Avenue (116-5036), were clearly built to satisfy this demand, as were many new bungalows built along the City Point peninsula. With the stock market crash in 1929 and the beginning of the Great Depression, many businesses closed overnight. The Tubize Corporation hung on for several years and continued to operate but ultimately closed their plant in 1934, bringing to an end for good the “company town” arrangement in Hopewell.

Maps and Boundaries

Along with his description of the Village, Foote also provided a “Map of A-Village” which is dated December 19, 1915 by R.L. Bains (Figure 3). The map shows the layout of the village with street names and individual lots with building footprints. The DuPont Hotel, the DuPont Club, and City Point School are all shown, along with the railroad tracks that separate the houses along Ramsey Avenue from the rest of the Village. The City of Hopewell Planning staff also provided the project team with another plat dated June 28, 1921 and revised October 6, 1921 that omits building footprints but includes the owners name for every parcel (Figure 4). A comparison of the two maps reveals few differences between the Village in 1915 and 1921, but perhaps more significantly, a comparison of both maps with a current map, shows remarkably few alterations to the plan of the Village in over 100 years (Figure 5). The large lots that were occupied by the DuPont Hotel and the DuPont Club are now parks; the lot occupied by the City Point School is now open space. As noted, two apartment buildings were constructed in the Village, both in 1927. What was Dynamite Street in 1915 and 1921 is today Allen Avenue; what was Railroad Avenue in 1921 is now Riverview Avenue. Otherwise, there are remarkably few changes. Original parcels appear to be intact and almost all of the original cottages remain. The project team utilized these two maps to determine appropriate boundaries of the survey area. During the course of our work, the project team noticed that the 800 block of East Broadway includes several Aladdin kit house models and is laid out as a boulevard with a median, both of which suggest that it was part of DuPont’s initial plan and construction. It is not, however, shown on either of the contemporary plats of the Village and so it was not included in this preliminary survey. Additional research can illuminate how this area developed.



Figure 3. Map of “A Village,” December 15, 1915, drawn by R.L. Bains. Courtesy of the Local History and Genealogy Room, Hopewell Library.

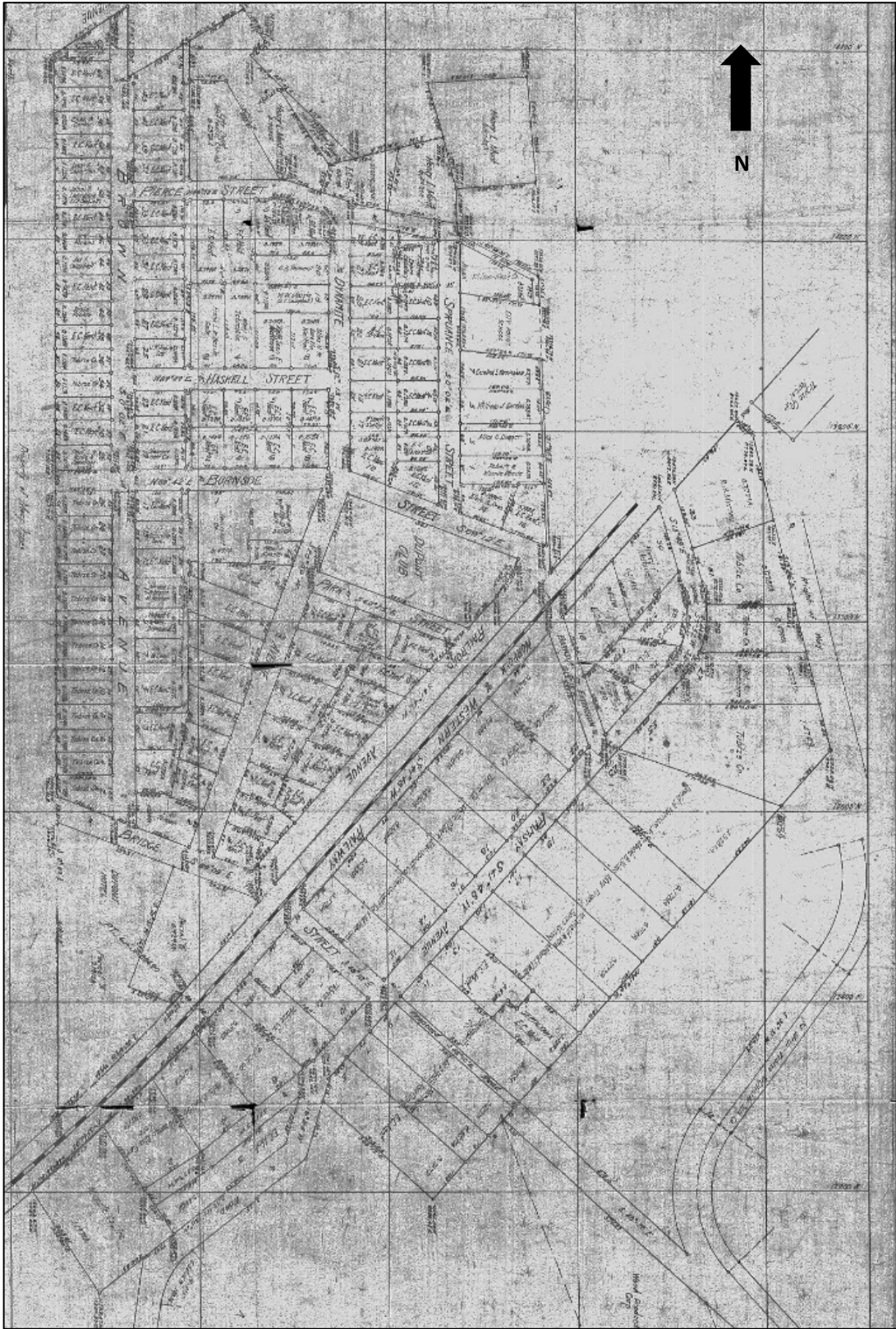


Figure 4. "Plan of 'A' Village, Hopewell, VA," June 28, 1921, Revised October 6, 1921. Courtesy of the City of Hopewell.



Figure 5. Survey area and proposed "A Village" Historic District shown on 2014 aerial photo.

Survey Results

With the list of house models provided by Foote, combined with the 1915 catalogs of Aladdin Homes and Sterling Homes, the project team's objective was to identify and document at least one of each house type within the original boundaries of "A Village," which was defined based on Foote's 1915 plat and a 1921 plat provided by the City of Hopewell (see Figure 5). The project team surveyed a total of 39 resources, 34 of which are cottages dating to 1915, and successfully identified an example of almost every model listed by Foote and in the Aladdin records (as listed in the WMCAR report) (Figures 6-13).



Figure 6. "The Browning," from the 1915 Sterling System-Built Homes Catalog.



Figure 7. A "Browning" in "A Village" at 404 Brown Avenue (116-5134). March 2019.

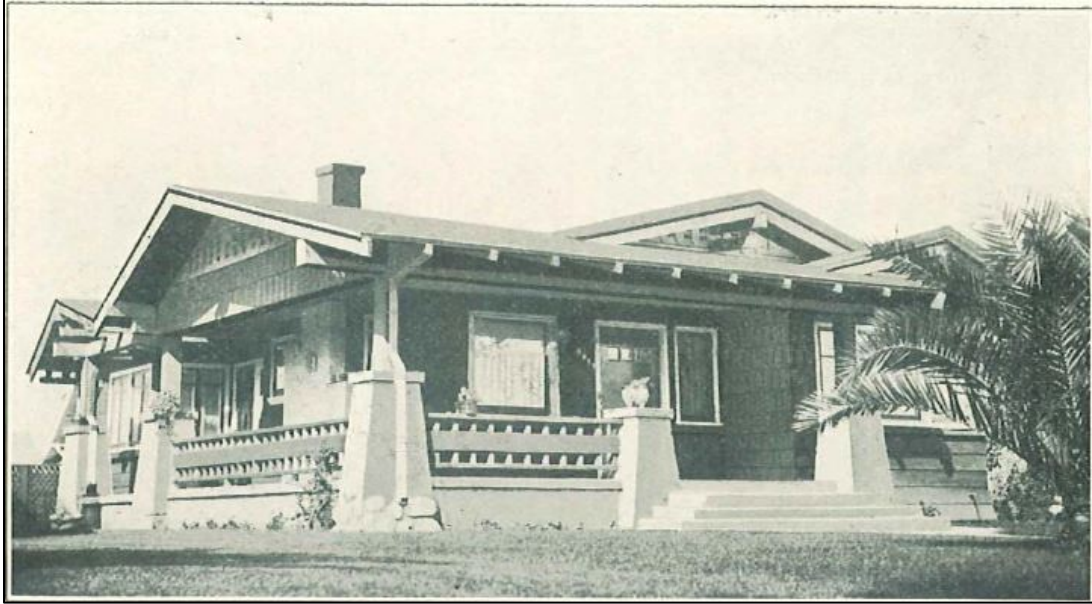


Figure 8. “The Plaza” from the 1915 Aladdin catalog.



Figure 9. “The Plaza” in “A Village” at 404 Ramsey Avenue (116-5147). March 2019.



Figure 10. “The Carnation” from the 1915 Aladdin catalog.



Figure 11. “The Carnation” in “A Village” at 405 Allen Avenue (116-5156). March 2019.



Figure 12. “The Denver” from the 1915 Aladdin catalog.



Figure 13. “The Denver” in “A Village” at 407 Allen Avenue (116-5157). March 2019.

All of the large communal buildings constructed by DuPont – the Hotel, the Club, and City Point School – were demolished many years ago (DuPont Hotel burned and demolished 1979, DuPont Club burned to the ground in 1940 and City Point School was demolished in the 1950s), but the site of each is still open space within the district. The site of City Point School was recorded as an archaeological site years ago following some archaeological survey on the property, while the sites of the Hotel and the Club are both parks – Heritage Gardens and City Point Playground, respectively. Table 1 provides a summary of every resource surveyed along with its kit house model name, if known (Figure 14).

TABLE 1. RESOURCES SURVEYED IN "A VILLAGE" IN FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019

DHR #	Property Name(s)	Construction Date	Kit House?	Notes
116-5036	Parkside Apartments/Solt Apartments	1927	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5130	House, 420 Brown Avenue	1915	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5131	House, 417 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Forsyth	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5132	House, 410 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Sterling Bonnie Brae	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5133	House, 409 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Forsyth	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5134	House, 404 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Sterling Browning	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5135	House, 318 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Sterling Lowell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5136	House, 316 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Sterling Browning	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5137	House, 315 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Gretna	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5138	House, 314 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Sterling Trysteale	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5139	House, 305 Brown Avenue	1915	Yes - Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5140	House, 211 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Brighton	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5141	House, 301 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Royton	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5142	House, 309 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Denver (aka, Edison)	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5143	House, 400 Ramsey Avenue	1915	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5144	House, 401 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Kentucky	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5145	House, 402 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Wenonah	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5146	House, 403 Ramsey Avenue	1915	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5147	House, 404 Ramsey Avenue	1915	Yes - Aladdin Plaza	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5148	House, 407 Ramsey Avenue	1915	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5149	Heritage Garden Apartments	1927	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5150	"A Village" Historic District	1915		
116-5151	House, 306 Riverview Avenue	1915	(Likely, but model not determined)	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5152	City Point Service Station	1915	No	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District

DHR #	Property Name(s)	Construction Date	Kit House?	Notes
116-5153	Trinity Methodist Cemetery	ca.1847	No	Non-contributing to potential A Village Historic District
116-5154	House, 307 Allen Avenue	1915	Yes--Aladdin Texas	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5155	House, 311 Allen Avenue	1923	Model not yet determined	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5156	House, 405 Allen Avenue	1915	Yes--Aladdin Carnation	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5157	House, 407 Allen Avenue	1915	Yes--Aladdin Denver (or Edison)	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5158	House, 411 Allen Avenue	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5159	House, 413 Allen Avenue	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5160	House, 401 Spruance Street	1915	Yes--Aladdin Loraine	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5161	House, 403 Spruance Street	1915	Yes--Aladdin Loraine	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5162	House, 406 Spruance Street	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5163	House, 1004 Haskell Street	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5164	House, 1006 Haskell Street	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5165	House, 1005 Burnside Street	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5166	House, 1007 Burnside Street	1915	Yes--Haskell	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District
116-5167	House, 1004 Pierce Street	1915	Yes--Aladdin Geneva	Contributes to potential A Village Historic District



Figure 14. Map showing the boundary of the proposed historic district and the individual surveyed properties. Base map is a 2014 aerial.

Analysis of survey data also indicated that some models were consistently modified in the same way. For example, the team noticed that a 1 ½ story, side-gabled cottage with a shed-roofed dormer repeats on both sides of the 300 block of Allen Avenue (see Figure 2). The best match for this type appears to be the Aladdin Texas model, six of which were ordered by DuPont in 1914, but in every case the front porch is modified to be a partial-width shed-roofed porch rather than an engaged entry porch which is shown in the Texas plan. Similarly, the Aladdin Forsyth models that we located in the 400 block of Brown Avenue also had a shed-roofed entry porch rather than the engaged porch which was illustrated in the plan; the records show that DuPont ordered six of these models as well (Figures 15-16). “A Village” examples of the Aladdin Loraine also reflect the modification from an engaged corner porch to a shed-roofed porch (Figure 17-18). It is important to note that rather than being a modification that occurs on a single example, every single example of these models was modified in exactly the same way.



Figure 15. “The Forsyth” from the 1915 Aladdin Catalog.



Figure 16. “The Forsyth” in “A Village” at 409 Brown Avenue (116-5133). Note the modified porch. March 2019.

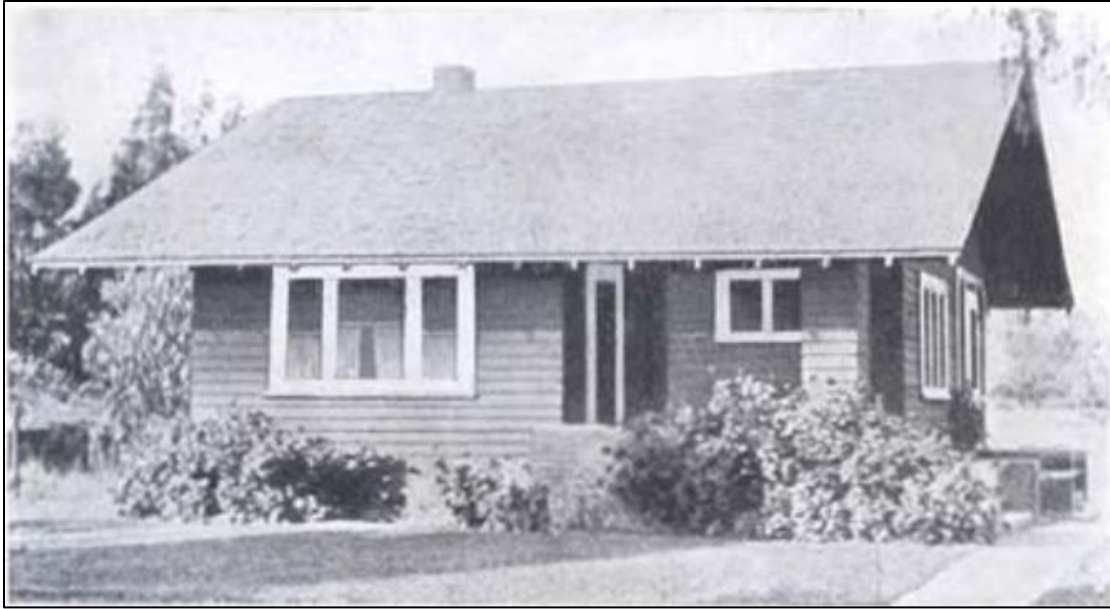


Figure 17. “The Loraine” from the 1914 Aladdin Catalog.



Figure 18. “The Loraine” in “A Village” at 401 Spruance Street (116-5160). Beneath the screened porch, the side-entry door and the smaller rectangular front window match the plan. March 2019.

Based on the number of kit houses provided in Foote’s report in 1916 (120) and the total number of cottages standing in 1918 as documented by Magnusson (156), it appears that there were over 30 dwellings constructed in “A Village” between 1916 and 1917 that may not have been kit houses. Several of these outliers were documented in the survey. Three of the most distinctive houses in “A Village” are found near the north end of Ramsey Avenue. The largest and most architecturally detailed houses on

the largest lots are found along Ramsey Avenue; it can be surmised that this area was where DuPont housed its most important executives. The houses along Ramsey Avenue are also physically separated from the rest of “A Village” by the railroad tracks and sit slightly above the other houses on a rise along the river bluff. The houses at 403 and 407 Ramsey Avenue command sweeping views of the James River, occupy lots close to an acre in size, and both contain over 2000 sq. ft. of living space (Figures 19-20). Both are Dutch Colonial Revival style dwellings with gambrel roofs and dormers across both the front and rear. The dormers are detailed with very similar flanking pilasters, but the houses have different porches. No kit house models were found to match either dwelling, and it seems likely that they were architect designed to be unique dwellings within “A Village.” The house at 403 Ramsey Avenue is pictured in the 1920 advertisement “America’s Greatest Industrial Opportunity” where it is identified as the residence of the plant superintendent for DuPont Chemical Company.



Figure 19. House at 407 Ramsey Avenue (116-5148). March 2019.



Figure 20. House at 403 Ramsey Avenue (116-5146). March 2019.

Another outlier is the large bungalow with the clipped gable roof at 400 Ramsey Avenue (Figure 21). It is the only example of its type in “A Village,” and no matching kit house models could be located for it either. To further emphasize their prestige, the houses at the north end of Ramsey Avenue in the 400 block were all sited on their lots to face the James River. For 401, 403, 405, and 407 Ramsey, this means that their rear elevation faces the road (Figure 22). All of the houses in this block are also set at the same angle to capture the best view, rather than being set square on their lots like the others in “A Village.”



Figure 21. House at 400 Ramsey Avenue (116-5143). March 2019.



Figure 22. House at 405 Ramsey Avenue (not surveyed) and 402 Ramsey Avenue (in the background, 116-5145). Ramsey Avenue runs between these two houses; this is the modern-day rear of 405 Ramsey, the original front, facing towards the James River. Both houses are examples of the Wenonah model of Aladdin kit houses. March 2019.

Several other outliers were documented elsewhere in “A Village” – 420 Brown Avenue is an American Foursquare that does not match any kit house design and is not repeated elsewhere in the village, and 311 Allen Avenue is a modest Dutch Colonial Revival with a tax record construction date of 1923. On Riverview Avenue in the 300 block is a row of modest cottages that are all nearly identical in design but have not yet been identified as an Aladdin or Sterling model. The best example, 306 Riverview Avenue, was documented as part of this survey. Additional research could determine where the designs for all of these outliers came from and which company DuPont utilized to continue their construction work between late 1916 and 1919. One theory, as suggested by Rosemary Thornton and supported by the recollections of Mr. Pyle, is that DuPont had its own catalog of designs drawn in-house, and perhaps the company continued to utilize the construction services of local companies like Hancock & Sons to build additional examples from their own catalog.

Typical Alterations

Many houses over 100 years of age have had some alterations over the years, and those in “A Village” are no exception. By far the most typical alterations documented during this survey included the addition of synthetic siding (which in most cases is probably installed over original wood weatherboards or shingles) and the replacement of original wood windows with vinyl windows. Some houses have had additions, though all are on the sides or rear of the original dwelling and are subordinate to the original design. In some cases, front porches have been screened in or enclosed, although it is possible that some porches may have been screened originally rather than being a later alteration. Such an amenity would not have been unusual, given the area’s climate, and are exhibited on many of the area’s historic dwellings. Historical photographs of streetscapes of “A Village” do show many of the houses with screened in porches, and Mary Calos’ book includes a historic photograph of three bungalows under construction in City Point at the corner of Brown Avenue and Maplewood (adjacent to, but not in “A Village”) and all appear to have front porches that were originally screened in. It isn’t clear what the original roof material was on the “A Village” cottages, but, in the case of almost every building surveyed, asphalt shingle roofs are now the norm. In sum, typical alterations have affected the integrity of materials of the individual houses in “A Village,” but the overall plan of the Village, along with the design of the individual houses, remains very much intact.

National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register Eligibility

The survey team’s assessments and NRHP eligibility recommendations were developed utilizing the WMCAR historic context and by applying the NRHP Criteria for Evaluation to the “A” Village resources to determine whether the area or any individual resources possessed sufficient significance and integrity to qualify for listing in the NRHP. The NRHP is the official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture and is maintained by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The NRHP Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.4) divide the significance of properties into four areas (A-D). Resources may be eligible if they have important historical associations that are:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

National Register Bulletin 16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form, states that a building, site, structure or object may contribute to a historic property (in this case, a historic district) if it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period (McClelland 1991).

A historic district possesses a significant concentration of resources (sites, buildings, structures or objects) that are united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. A district may be eligible even if all of the individual elements lack individual distinction, provided that the grouping achieves significance as a whole within its historic context. In other words, it is not necessary for each building (or element) in a historic district to be individually eligible. A district may also contain elements that do not contribute to its significance, such as buildings that were built outside of the identified period of significance, resources that do not relate to the identified areas of significance, or those that have been so modified or altered that they do not retain their historic character or appearance.

The Virginia Landmarks Register is the Commonwealth's official list of places of historic, architectural, archaeological and/or cultural significance. This register is administered by the Department of Historic Resources on behalf of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources and has the same criteria and nomination process as the National Register of Historic Places.

As a residential suburb, "A Village" should also be evaluated according to the National Register Bulletin, Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places. The Bulletin states that one of the ways in which a historic residential suburb may be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A is if it "represents an important event or association, such as the expansion of housing related to wartime industries during World War II" (or, in the case of "A Village", World War I). With regards to eligibility under Criterion C, the bulletin states that eligible residential suburbs may be a "Collection of residential architecture [that] is an important example of a distinctive period of construction [or] method of construction." As a collection of pre-1920 kit houses representing the expansion of housing related to the World War I wartime industry of guncotton production, "A Village" meets these criteria.

Recommendations

The 2010 WMCAR report made several recommendations about "A Village," and based on a more in-depth study of the resources, the project team suggests the following modifications. First, that report says that "A Village" exhibits a loss of integrity. It isn't clear if this is referring to a particular aspect of integrity according to the NRHP criteria, or if this is a general statement about the neighborhood as a whole. The present survey, however, suggests that "A" Village does, in fact, retain sufficient historical characteristics to convey its historical significance. Although some individual houses within "A Village" exhibit low integrity of materials, all would score well with regards to every other aspect of integrity. Moreover, the district as a whole has excellent integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship,

feeling, and association. Second, the 2010 report mapped “A Village” with boundaries that differ from the historic maps, which may not have been available at the time. This project team mapped the boundaries of “A Village” based on the 1915 plat and the 1921 plat and they are shown in Figure 5. The 2010 report showed them overlapping with the existing City Point Historic District, but that is not accurate. When it was constructed, “A Village” was contiguous with, but separate from, the existing town of City Point. This mapping decision led the authors of the 2010 report to recommend that the City Point Historic District could potentially be expanded to include “A Village.” Because City Point and “A Village” were geographically distinct in the early 20th century and because they have distinctive histories that are both significant but thematically different, this project team would recommend against this approach.

Rather than being evaluated as an expansion to the City Point Historic District, the project team recommends that “A Village” is eligible for listing on the NRHP as a separate historic district. The “A Village” Historic District is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture with a period of significance of 1914, when the planning and first construction in the village took place, through 1934, when the Tubize plant (the successor to DuPont) closed and ended the “company town” feeling of the village. As a company town consisting largely of kit house construction, “A Village” relates to the history of labor and housing; the development and proliferation of kit house architecture; and the history of the DuPont Company and their massive World War I-era build-up of industry and associated housing. In addition to the surviving dwellings and apartment buildings, “A Village” includes the sites of the DuPont Club (the present City Point Playground on Burnside Drive), the DuPont Hotel (116-0009, the site of the present Heritage Gardens Park on E. Broadway Avenue), City Point School (on Spruance Street and recorded with archaeological site number - 44PG0469), and the cemetery of the City Point Methodist Church, which was formerly located on Pierce Street. While the integrity of materials of individual houses is low to moderate, the integrity of design, location, feeling, association, setting, and workmanship of the village as a whole is exceptionally high.

Further Work and Additional Research

This selective survey project provides a strong foundation for additional survey and evaluation work in “A Village” and Hopewell that could be based on the following proposed tasks and research questions.

The completion of a comprehensive survey of “A Village” would be the logical next step in any effort, but in addition an effort should be made to more completely document DuPont’s impact on the physical footprint of Hopewell. The 800 block of East Broadway contains several Aladdin kit house models that are listed on DuPont’s 1914 order, and yet this area is not shown on either the 1915 or 1921 plats as part of “A Village;” this area should be surveyed and its connection to “A Village” determined. Does “B Village” retain as much integrity as “A Village?” What about the African-American village, South B Village (historical documents indicate that portions of the area were called Davisville and Dreamland)? What were the boundaries of this Village and can any existing buildings from the DuPont era within those boundaries be identified? “A Village” is only a piece of the story of DuPont’s housing initiative; an effort should be made to document the remaining resources of all three of their Villages in order to facilitate the city’s long-range historic preservation planning efforts. In addition, a multitude of interesting research questions remain to be answered concerning the historical context of “A Village.” How does “A Village” compare with the other known DuPont company towns in Tennessee, New Jersey,

and Montana? Its significance may reach beyond the boundaries of Hopewell, or even Virginia, and would address the appropriate level of significance for this resource. Did DuPont have its own catalog of house plans that it utilized in its company towns across the United States? The African-American experience deserves additional exploration, as does the social history of the different immigrant groups that came to Hopewell to work. The history embodied in “A Village,” and possibly in other resources as well, provides a unique portal to an intersection of industrial history and social history during the World War I era with many branches of further research.

Community Engagement

The additional survey and historic research efforts would benefit greatly from a concerted effort to engage the residents and property owners. If a NRHP listing is desired, strong support from a solid majority of residents and property owners will be essential. But perhaps more important is a need to share with the stewards the significance of what they possess. “A Village” property owners should be applauded for their efforts to preserve these 100 year old cottages in good condition, informed of best preservation practices, and encouraged to do what they can to preserve the historic character of their houses. In some cases, the installation of synthetic siding in a sensitive manner – leaving character defining brackets and trim exposed, for example, rather than wrapped, as exhibited at 404 Ramsey Avenue – may be an appropriate compromise (Figure 23). Retaining original windows on the fronts of houses, even if more utilitarian sash on the sides and rear are replaced with new vinyl windows, as seen at 309 Ramsey Avenue and 401 Ramsey Avenue, for example, preserves the historic character of the façade (Figure 24). In each of these examples, the project team was able to identify the kit house model due in part to the retention of character-defining features.



Figure 23. House at 404 Ramsey Avenue (116-5147), an example of the Plaza model of Aladdin kit houses. Note that the installation of vinyl siding has not obscured the distinctive eave brackets. March 2019.



Figure 24. House at 401 Ramsey Avenue (116-5144). This example of the Kentucky model of Aladdin kit houses retains its original wooden casement windows on the original façade (which faces the river, on the opposite side of the house from Ramsey Avenue), but has replacement vinyl windows on the side and rear elevations. March 2019.

The recognition and documentation of the architectural history of DuPont’s Hopewell villages can contribute to local heritage tourism efforts already in place. Heritage tourism draws people from all over the United States to historic sites across the Commonwealth, including to such sites as Hopewell’s Weston Manor and Appomattox Manor. We believe that the story embodied in “A Village” and Hopewell, combined with the outstanding collection of 1910s kit houses, could be capitalized on to draw tourists to the City. Efforts to publicize and promote this history and these resources should be explored.

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