

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Bel Air
Other names/site number: VDHR ID #112-0007
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 269 Happy Creek Road
City or town: Front Royal State: VA County: Warren
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

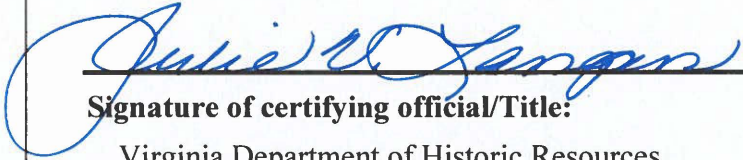
I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

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 statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B XC D

		<u>8/7/2024</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> 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	
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	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; secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agriculture outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling; secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agriculture outbuilding

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

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

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

Bel Air, including its house and outbuildings, occupies a 7.04-acre parcel situated at 269 Happy Creek Road in Front Royal. The property also includes an additional 4.02-acre open lot south of the house, which holds historical significance as the site of military encampments during the Civil War. While Bel Air was once the focal point of a larger estate, the surrounding area has since seen significant residential and industrial development. The property is positioned west of Happy Creek Road and east of the gently flowing Happy Creek itself. Perched atop a hill, Bel Air commands panoramic southern views that encompass Happy Creek, Front Royal, and the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains. Bel Air seamlessly blends a landscaped yard, open pastures, and pockets of pristine woodlands, creating a rural oasis that stands in striking contrast to the mid-twentieth-century residential developments surrounding it. The oldest part of the current Bel Air house was erected in 1795 as a five-bay, two-story, Federal-style brick dwelling, that, according to historic accounts, had side one-story wings that were log and were reputed to have been the original components of the estate. In 1905/1906, the house was remodeled in the Classical Revival style by local builder Gustave A. Boyer. During this renovation, the log wings were removed, the one-story front porch was replaced with a monumental portico, a front dormer was removed, a two-story wing was added to the east end, a rear ell was constructed, windows were replaced, all exterior walls received a stucco finish, and the interior layout and trim were updated. In the mid-1970s, minor additions were made to the rear of the house. Although no historic buildings from Bel Air's original construction survive, the ruins of a stone chimney, presumably from a small, nineteenth-century dwelling, is a contributing structure. A multi-car frame garage from the 1940s with modern extensions is located north of the main house. In 1974,

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a large barn/stable, and a smaller barn were erected, while an in-ground pool and a pool house were added in 2002. These new elements have been thoughtfully integrated into the historic estate, enhancing its overall functionality. The property retains a remarkable degree of integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, and association. Bel Air, with its rich history and seamless integration of historical and contemporary elements, stands as a testament to architectural evolution and enduring appeal.

Narrative Description

Location/Setting:

Bel Air, originally constructed in the late-eighteenth century, maintains its rural setting despite being surrounded by modern residential and commercial development within the town limits of Front Royal. The estate spans seven acres, featuring a picturesque landscape adorned with mature trees and shrubs. A prominent open yard, enclosed by a wooden rail fence, serves as the focal point. Accessible via a paved driveway from Happy Creek Road, the drive meanders south of the house, skirting Happy Creek, then turns northward, passing by the pool and garage before reaching another entrance at the property's northern end. A secondary branch off the main driveway leads to the barn and stable west of the main house, as well as a stone ruin farther north. Additionally, a four-acre parcel south of the main house, though devoid of any outbuildings, holds historical significance as the site of Civil War encampments. Painted white with a red metal roof, Bel Air is one of the most visually prominent and striking buildings in Front Royal. It occupies one of the largest lots within the town and graces a promontory facing downtown Front Royal and the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. It is noteworthy that Bel Air lies within the boundary of the 23 May 1862, Battle of Front Royal boundary (VDHR #093-0160), which DHR determined as being "Not Eligible" for the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Inventory:

1. Main House, ca. 1795, 1905/1906 alterations and additions, Contributing Building.
2. Stone chimney ruin: Early to mid-nineteenth century, Contributing Structure.
3. Garage, ca. 1940, 1990s additions, Non-contributing Building.
4. Stable/Barn: 1974, Non-contributing Building.
5. Barn 1974, Non-contributing Building.
6. Pool House, ca. 2002, Non-contributing Building.
7. Swimming Pool, ca. 2002, Non-contributing Structure.

Main House:

The oldest segment of Bel Air, dating back to approximately 1795, is a five-bay, two-story brick structure resting on a stone foundation. In 1905/1906 it underwent a transformation into the Classical Revival style. This alteration involved the removal of original log side wings, the replacement of the one-story front porch with a grand two-story portico, the removal of a front dormer, the addition of a two-story wing to the east end, the construction of a rear ell, the replacement of multi-light windows with one-over-one wooden sash, the stuccoing of the entire

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dwelling's exterior, and updates to the interior layout and trim. An 1860 rendering of the house shows its configuration before these changes were made.

The original five-bay, south-facing façade of Bel Air is fronted by a three-bay, full-height, monumental pedimented portico, a significant addition from 1905/1906. Stuccoed columns, resting on stuccoed plinths, feature Modern Ionic capitals that support a three-part frieze with a denticulated cornice. Above, the denticulated pediment is graced by a semi-circular attic window with tracery. A concrete walkway and steps, some of which are bordered by stepped parapeted walls, lead from the driveway up to the portico. The portico has a scored concrete floor and a narrow-beaded wooden ceiling. Although the two-bay, two-story east extension of the house also dates to 1905/1906, it is not fronted by the portico. The east end of this wing, which houses the dining room, features a two-story polygonal bay with a bell-shaped roof with a round-arched attic dormer and a circular metal finial. The window openings in this section are segmentally arched, adorned with louvered wooden shutters, and contain the same one-over-one sash as in the main block. The one-story, pedimented porte cochere with Doric columns along the west side of the main block is also a 1905/1906 addition. The two rectangular attic windows in the west end of the main block are original.

The main south façade entrance features a double-leaf, vertical five-paneled front door accompanied by a Queen Anne-style, multi-light, stained-glass transom. Above this entrance, a second-story round-arched door, framed by fluted Doric pilaster and round-arched trim with a keystone, is enriched with a fanlight with delicate tracery. This trim appears to have been reused from the original dormer that was removed during the 1905/1906 remodeling. It resembles the round-arched window that appears in that location in the historic photograph and is in keeping with Federal-style trim. This second-floor door is complemented by a small balcony with metal railing and iron bracket supports. The gabled standing-seam metal roof on Bel Air has a narrow platform at the ridge and two interior-end brick chimneys. The 1905/1906 two-story, two-bay rear ell contains an exterior, gabled basement entry on the east side and an interior-end chimney. The windows, like in the side front extension, are also segmentally arched and have shutters. In 1973-1975, the rear ell was extended to the north by two bays to create a family room. This section contains rectangular windows, and an exterior-end brick chimney on the north end that is flanked on the first floor by Gothic-arched, stained-glass windows, which were originally part of the Front Royal Presbyterian Church. A two-story shed-roofed, stuccoed wing extending from the rear of the main block, was added in 1973-1975, merging with the rear ell via a shed extension. Projecting at the second and attic floors and cutting through the rear roof line, this rear wing is supported by a six-bay wraparound integral porch supported with Tuscan columns. The porch floor is flagstone and is fronted by flagstone patio.

Bel Air's interior combines elements of the Queen Anne and Classical Revival styles. The primary first-floor rooms are adorned with ornate unpainted oak trim, characteristic of mass-produced woodwork from the early-twentieth century. Historical accounts confirm that in 1905/1906, a local builder, Gustave A. Beyer, undertook the transformation of the house for the owner, S. Byrne Downing.¹ No mention of an architect was found in the records, suggesting that Beyer likely collaborated with Downing to develop the plan. Nineteenth-century historical

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records, including multiple newspaper advertisements in the *Warren Sentinel*, identify Beyer as a lumber dealer and a partner in a lumber and planing mill, responsible for producing various woodwork components such as doors, sash, newels, molding, and flooring. The only 1795 woodwork that remains in Bel Air is the painted Federal-style mantel and overmantel in the parlor, the stair trim from the second floor to the attic, the second-floor exterior-door transom and trim, and some of the trim in the garret and basement. The rest, excluding the 1973/1974 additions, date back to 1905/1906, including the plaster walls and ceilings, plain baseboard, and mostly natural wood-toned Classical and Queen Anne-style stock trim. Wooden floors throughout consist of narrow-width pine boards. The ones in the main block are laid over the original random-width flooring.

The first-floor layout of Bel Air comprises a parlor at the west end and a spacious entrance hall, featuring a generously proportioned staircase that occupies the remainder of the original single-pile block of the house. A Queen Anne-style wooden mantel, adorned with fluted Tuscan columns supporting projecting end blocks, a denticulated cornice, and swag reliefs, is located along the east wall of the hall. The red tile firebox surround further accentuates the painted mantelpiece. This fireplace location confirms that the house originally followed a center-passage, single-pile plan. A large, cased opening with pocket doors leads to the west parlor, which preserves the original carved and painted mantelpiece and overmantel from the 1790s. The Federal-style mantel boasts delicate fluted columns, a sculpted and paneled frieze, crossettes, reeding, and gaugework. The wooden overmantel echoes these elements, and the entire projecting firebox is crowned with a denticulated cornice. The fireplace opening is framed by green and white rectangular tiles from 1905/1906, complemented by a masonry hearth.

The expansive entrance hall showcases naturally finished paneled wainscot, symmetrically molded trim with bull's eye corner blocks, and egg-and-dart molding. The gracefully designed staircase, rising elegantly at the rear of the hall, is adorned with a paneled spandrel, a square paneled newel post and pier, and delicately turned balusters. The wooden beam supporting the stair opening is enriched with egg-and-dart molding. The stairs gently wind down to the first floor, featuring four rounded stair treads. Beneath the stairs, a round-arched opening leads to the 1970s patio addition. A door beneath the stairs once provided access to the basement. Interestingly, the original staircase, adorned with turned balusters and decorative ends, remains intact from the second floor to the attic level, albeit with its paint removed.

The dining room, an addition from 1905/1906, occupies the east end of the first floor and is tastefully trimmed, matching the entry hall. The wide, paneled door reveals and horizontal five-panel doors maintain their natural finish. The rear ell encompasses a pantry, kitchen, half bath, laundry room, basement stairs, and secondary stair to the second floor. A family room was added to the north in the 1970s, providing additional space off the kitchen.

Bel Air's second floor contains two bedrooms, a dressing room in the front section, a bath and bedroom in the rear ell, and another room in the 1970s extension. The fireplaces in the bedrooms of the original block feature Queen Anne-style painted mantels with overmantels and colored tile surrounds and hearths. The fluted window and door trim with corner blocks, the vertical paneled

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doors with original hardware, and the plain baseboards are finished naturally. A doorway along the north side of the second-floor stair landing provides access to the 1973/1974 addition, which contains a game room with a staircase to an attic level. This stair is nearly identical in design to the main one from the first floor and ascends to another room, complete with a built-in bar, which provides access to part of the attic of the original house. The slanted plastered ceilings in this area are adorned with the autographs of hundreds of visitors to Bel Air, dating back to the early nineteenth century, thoughtfully preserved beneath plexiglass panels.

The rest of Bel Air's attic is reached through the main staircase at the front of the house and contains three rooms with low slanting ceilings that are currently used for storage. The room located above the portico offers a view of the captured original house's metal roof and original wide pine board flooring, and some hand-riven lath beneath the plaster. The batten doors for these rooms feature nineteenth-century hardware.

The original basement entry, which provided access to the main block beneath the staircase, has been sealed, although the wooden stairs in the basement are still intact. Presently, basement access is through the 1905/1906 dining room and via an exterior-doorway on the east side of this wing. The basement batten doors feature hand-wrought strap or H-hinges and the enclosed basement windows maintain their wooden grilles. Two octagonal posts appear to have been relocated from the original front porch and support the ceiling joists in the middle of the basement space. The expansive cooking fireplace on the east end is now connected to the furnace, but its size suggests that the kitchen originally occupied the basement. The concrete floors, most likely added in 1905/1906, align and match the formed concrete foundation beneath the 1905 east wing.

Other Resources:

Garage, ca. 1940 with 1990s additions. The earliest portion of this long building is the southernmost three-car garage with a hipped roof and formed concrete foundation. It appears to have been built in at least two phases, with the earliest in the 1940s. The garage doors are modern. A flat-roofed hyphen connects this section to a larger two-bay garage with a hipped roof of V-crimp metal fronted by a concrete apron. This was added in the 1990s. Because this building was constructed outside of the period of significance it is considered non-contributing.

Barn/Stable: Constructed in 1974, this large gambrel-roofed, two-story, frame and concrete block bank barn is located west of the main house and is built into a banked site. Concrete steps from near the house lead down to an entrance on the east side. The walls are stuccoed and the roof covered in v-crimp metal. A small wooden cupola graces the ridge. A frame deck wraps around the north and west sides of the building. The first floor, accessible to animals on the west and north sides, is used agriculturally while the upper story was used for parties. Because this building was constructed outside of the period of significance it is considered non-contributing.

Swimming Pool: This rectangular in-ground swimming pool, constructed in 2002, has a concrete surround. The pool and pool house are encircled by a wrought iron fence with concrete parged piers on the south and west side, while the areas north and east of the pool have solid parged

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walls. Because this structure was constructed outside of the period of significance it is considered non-contributing.

Pool House: This ca. 2002, one-story, four bay, flat-roofed pool house has a partial Mansard roof of metal and full height openings, some of which are sliding glass doors. Because this building was constructed outside of the period of significance it is considered non-contributing.

Barn: This one-story, two-bay, gambrel-roofed frame barn was constructed in 1974 and is located at the northwest corner of the parcel on which the Bel Air house sits. It has T-111 siding, a corrugated metal roof, overhanging eaves, and two openings on the south end. It is currently used for farm storage. Because this building was constructed outside of the period of significance it is considered non-contributing.

Stone Chimney Ruin: Located northwest of the main house in the middle of the pasture on the northern adjacent parcel, this appears to be the ruins of an end stone chimney and probably dates to the mid-nineteenth century. This could be the location of a tenant house that burned in a 1933 fire that was mentioned in the local newspaper. Contributing Structure.

Integrity Analysis:

Bel Air retains very good overall integrity. The house is in its original location and exemplifies the transformation of a residence from the late-eighteenth century Federal-style into the early-twentieth-century Classical Revival style. Even amidst the encroachment of modern development in what was once an agricultural area on the edge of Front Royal, Bel Air's setting maintains an astonishingly rural ambiance. Open fields to the north and west serve as pasture for horses, a tradition that persists with the addition of a new stable and barn in the 1970s, underscoring its continued agricultural heritage.

While no historic outbuildings survive, the nominated area effectively conveys a sense of the era during which the property developed. The vivid descriptions of Bel Air and its surroundings in a Civil War-era diary persistently evoke a similar ambiance today. The tranquil flow of Happy Creek through the property coupled with the breathtaking views to the south featuring the historic core of Front Royal and the majestic Blue Ridge mountains remain unique qualities of Bel Air. Its connections to the historical developments that initially shaped and its subsequent evolution make Bel Air a remarkable testament to the past, and one of the most significant residential properties in Front Royal. It is one of the few surviving antebellum houses in Front Royal and possibly the earliest that was of brick construction.

¹ *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 38, Number 20, 31 August 1906.

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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

1795-1906

Significant Dates

1905/1906

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Beyer, Gustave A., Builder 1905/1906 alterations and additions

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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.)

Bel Air is located in the town of Front Royal, Virginia, once a major thoroughfare of economic and agricultural activity in the Shenandoah Valley. Although at one time Bel Air encompassed a much larger tract of land in what was Warren County, the farm has been split, and the land developed as part of the town of Front Royal. Originally constructed by Captain Thomas Buck, one of the founders of Front Royal, Bel Air remained in Buck family ownership for more than 125 years, during which it bore witness to numerous significant historical events, including the Civil War's Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862. Lucy Rebecca Buck, a young resident of Bel Air at the time, chronicled her experiences during the war and the occupation of the house by Union forces in her diary. Notably, the estate hosted famous visitors during Lucy's tenure, including Confederate spy Belle Boyd and Confederate General Robert E. Lee.² In 1905, the property sold to the Downing family, who resided there until 1973 when the LeHew family took ownership; the LeHews still own Bel Air today. Although the present estate has changed significantly from its eighteenth-century size and form, Bel Air is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an example of an evolved Federal-style Shenandoah Valley dwelling. The period of significance begins in 1795, the time around with the development of the property commenced and ends in 1906 with its transformation into the Classical Revival style. Bel Air is eligible at the local level of significance.

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

Historic Context:

According to family lore, the central brick portion of Bel Air was constructed by Thomas Buck around 1795, with the log wings on the east and west side predating it.³ Land tax records from that year show that Thomas Buck owned 99 acres of land valued at £59.8.⁴ The precise construction dates of the log wings are uncertain, although the purchase of land from Allen and Eve Wiley by Thomas Buck in 1778 suggests that they may have been built shortly thereafter.⁵ The acreage and value of the land remained the same until 1798, when the acreage increased to 100, with a value of £200. This dramatic property value increase suggests that there were buildings on the property by that time.

Thomas Buck, often referred to as Captain Buck, was born in 1756 to Charles Buck I and Lettice Sorrell in Shenandoah County, Virginia. He held various significant roles in his lifetime, including as a "Lieutenant of Virginia Militia, [C]ounty Magistrate at the age of 21, Captain in the 8th Virginia Regiment during the Revolution, one of the original trustees of the town of Front Royal, and a leading citizen for a number of years."⁶ He married Anne Nancy Richardson in 1774, and their first child William R. Buck was born in 1776 in Frederick County, Virginia.⁷ Thomas Buck and Anne Richardson had 13 surviving children between 1776 and 1803. Numerous sources claim that Bel Air was named after Anne's childhood home in Bel Air,

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Maryland.⁸ Anne died in 1823, and Thomas subsequently married Ruhama Heath later that year. They had no surviving children together.⁹

The Buck family established a firm presence on the Bel Air property by 1803. Personal property records from that year list Thomas Buck as owning 15 slaves, one chair, two clocks, and 16 horses on his 100 acres of land.¹⁰ This information aligns with what is known about the property in 1795. Thomas seems to have been a horse breeder, as he is taxed for several horses; as many as 20 by 1807.¹¹ This is a far greater number than the average person could afford to own, and by the early nineteenth century, the Shenandoah Valley was already a well-known location for breeding thoroughbred horses intended for racing.¹² In 1822, Buck is taxed for one stud valued at three dollars; although he was not taxed in earlier years for his studs, the amount of horse-related paraphernalia recorded in other documents suggests he was breeding horses prior to 1822.¹³ Personal Property Taxes record the increase in the amount of horse-related items owned by Thomas: in 1806 he is taxed for a stagecoach; in 1809 a carriage is added; in 1810 a wagon; in 1811 he owns a four-wheel carriage and a two-wheel carriage; and by 1813 he owns harnesses worth 60 dollars.¹⁴ In 1815, 21 cattle are recorded, but they do not reappear in any subsequent tax years.¹⁵

The acreage and building values of Bel Air evolved over the years, with the most significant adjustment occurring around 1820 when the property expanded to 568 acres with buildings valued at \$7,000.¹⁶ There are no specific mentions of buildings this early in the record beyond values, yet according to Lucy R. Buck writing in 1936, a brass knocker on the door dated the house itself to 1800.¹⁷ The Bucks owned several slaves, horses, and cattle, and so it is not unreasonable to assume the standard types and amounts of outbuildings existed on the Bel Air tract. These would have included the main house, barns, slave quarters, a kitchen, and a smoke house. The acreage and therefore value of Bel Air dropped in the 1820s and 1830s, as outer edges of the farm were subdivided and sold off. By 1836, it encompassed only 91 acres and remained so until 1840 when the total acreage bumped to 94 with a note in the land tax that "G. N. Blakemore and others by deed in 1840; 3 acres added." The building values that had decreased to \$4,000 remained so until 1839 when they dropped further to \$1,500 and remained that until 1851.¹⁸

In 1834, Thomas Buck sold "Belle Air" to Mandley Taylor for \$4,000.¹⁹ It is speculated the house was rented out, as Mandley and his wife Catherine permanently resided elsewhere. Taylor was a relative of the Bucks through marriage. In 1837, Mandley sold "Bell Air" to George N. Blakemore, Isaac N. Buck, William R. Ashby, William M. Buck, Thomas Buck, all of Warren County, Virginia, and Marcus Buck of Washington D.C. for \$3,811.²⁰ These grantees were either children of Thomas Buck or their spouses. In 1839, the children and their spouses of Thomas Buck sold "Belle Air" to John M. Blakemore, the husband of Letitia Buck, youngest daughter of Thomas Buck, for \$4,000.²¹

In 1841, John M. Blakemore, husband of Letitia Buck, the youngest daughter of Thomas Buck, sold "Belle Air" to William M. Buck for \$6,500. The property still contained 94 acres, with the buildings valued at \$1,500. William M. Buck, son of William Richardson Buck and Lucy Neville

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Blakemore, became the next long-term owner and resident of Bel Air. He and his daughter Lucy R. Buck, famous for her Civil War diary, were responsible for documenting the history of the house during their time there. Land tax records show the acreage and building values of Bel Air remained relatively stable from 1841 to 1851.

According to the 1850 census, Buck farmed his land that was valued at \$7,500. He owned four horses, five cows, and eight pigs and in that year, produced 700 bushels of wheat, 30 bushels of potatoes, 15 tons of hay, and 350 pounds of butter.²² The 1850 slave schedule of the census records William as owning 12 slaves, dropping by one in 1860.²³ Buck's farm in 1860 was worth \$10,000 with 106 acres of improved land and 30 acres of unimproved land. Livestock included five horses, five milk cows, and 10 swine for a total value of \$565. That year, the farm produced 500 bushels of wheat, 1,000 bushels of Indian corn, 10 bushels of peas and beans, 20 bushels of potatoes, five tons of hay, and 200 pounds of butter.²⁴

William Buck is also listed in the 1870 industrial census with a grist mill.²⁵ There are several references to a mill on the Bel Air property, but little is known about it and a location has not been identified.²⁶ In her diary, Lucy mentions "Aunt Black Betty," an enslaved woman who lived in the mill, but provides no other information about Betty or her living circumstances. Lucy also mentions several instances of the mill being used as a social gathering space, suggesting that it was close in proximity to Bel Air and quite prominent in daily life.²⁷ It appears that milling was a major source of income in 1870.

William Mason Buck was the son of William Richardson Buck and Lucy Neville Blakemore and the grandson of Thomas Buck. William M. Buck married Elizabeth Ann Ashby in 1838, a few years before he acquired Bel Air. The couple had 13 children in the home, adding to an already extensive Buck family tree. Their oldest daughter, Lucy Rebecca Buck, turned 20 in September 1862 while surrounded by Union and Confederate soldiers.²⁸ She has been remembered as "the diarist," famous for the recollections she kept of her life at Bel Air during the Civil War.²⁹ Lucy gave information on the numerous skirmishes and troop movements that occurred in the area, which was strategically located along major throughfares including the Shenandoah River and the Manassas Gap Railroad. She described the destruction of fencing and the taking of food and field products. Union troops camped in the field south of the house, especially in 1862.³⁰ Lucy also provided insight into the daily routines of the household, including the 1863 escape of some of the family's enslaved. Her diary has been published three times: first in 1940 as *Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck*, then in 1973 as *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven: The Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck During the War Between the States*, and most recently in 1997 as *Shadows on my Heart: The Civil War Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck of Virginia*. Lucy Buck's experiences remain widely accessible and of interest to the public and researchers alike.³¹

Lucy would often mention the military movements of both sides. Family members served in the Confederate army. One of her most famous entries is from 22 July 1863, when General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, which included the Warren Rifles under General Longstreet, stopped at Bel Air following their defeat at Gettysburg. In her diary, Lucy detailed this visit, and four decades later, wrote about it for a Baltimore newspaper, which was reprinted in the local

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newspaper. The encounter between Buck and General Lee is well known in the local community, with its memory perpetuated through paintings and a Civil War Trails wayfinding sign. It is widely acknowledged that during this visit, General Lee enjoyed a glass of buttermilk on the front porch, engaged in social interaction with Lucy and the family, and even bestowed his autograph.³² Notably, Lucy's diary entry omits certain details that were later included in a newspaper article written in 1903, including the mention of General Lee savoring buttermilk on the front porch. Regardless of the veracity of this specific event, which has since become a cherished piece of local folklore, the fact that General Lee and other prominent Civil War generals visited Bel Air is a well-documented part of history.

Through the lens of her Civil War experience, Lucy's diary provides a wealth of information about the Buck family and the house in which they lived: Bel Air. She wrote that she "[went] into the parlor to practice after finishing [her] sewing" and makes frequent references to "Grandma's cozy room."³³ On 23 May 1862, Lucy described the house as being stuck in the crossfire: "We descended all of us to the basement where we found some frightened contrabands assembled. The house was exposed to a cross fire and we were all in really much more danger than we were at the time aware of..." She further wrote, "And all that time the cannon on both sides were carrying on a most animated dialogue—one shell whistling over the house and cutting the twigs off the aspen in front of the porch where we stood, another exploding in the yard—a third striking the mill—another falling in the meadow below..."³⁴ Her off-hand comments about her day-to-day activities, and how those actions were impacted by military activity, help researchers build an image of what the house looked like and how it was used and arranged.

A 1918 letter written by Lucy Buck to Mrs. Worcester Reed Warner, a distant relative, sheds some light on Bel Air's history and connection to the Buck family:

Thomas Buck built the house about 1797. The two wings were erected several years before the main brick one was made and I have heard our old aunt Calmes, who died in her ninety-second year, say that as a little girl she had played in the space between the wings. The brass knocker on the front door, one of my earliest recollections of the house, bears the inscription, "Thomas Buck, 1800". When our great grandfather died, your grandmother Blakemore (that was Letitia Buck who married John Mauzy Blakemore), being the youngest daughter and favorite child, inherited it and lived there with her husband and children till they removed to Tennessee when my father, William Mason Buck, bought the homestead and I was the first child of his family born there, in 1842, and lived there until my fifty-sixth year. It then belonged to my second brother, Irving Ashby Buck, who bought it from the creditors when my father failed in business and held it while we remained there till my father's death. After several years Irving sold the home to the present owner who converted it into what he considered a Colonial mansion.³⁵

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Surprisingly, neither William M. Buck nor land tax records recorded any damage to Bel Air on account of the war, although Lucy Buck documents that fences and crops in the field around the house were destroyed. The land tax building values for 1861 through 1865 remain the same as they were in 1860: 105.75 acres of land and buildings valued at \$3,000.³⁶ In many instances, particularly in areas that saw military action, land tax records will reflect losses for damage incurred during the war. This does not appear to be the case for Bel Air. Nor did Buck file any claim with the Southern Claims Commission. In 1870, William Buck's personal estate was valued at \$7,000 and his real estate was valued at \$25,000, and he was still recorded as a farmer and miller.³⁷ This implies that despite the heavy military occupation, the Bel Air house suffered little or no damage.

However, due to the failed business venture Lucy mentions in her letter, in 1875 William M. Buck conveys the title of Bel Air to James H Williams, E. Holmes Boyd, and S. S. Turner, Trustees.³⁸ In 1878, the trustees sold "Bel Air" to Irving A. Buck of Baltimore as a result of a chancery case against William M Buck.³⁹ Despite his later financial troubles, a newspaper article published in the *Shenandoah Herald* on 4 October 1895, a week after his death describes William Buck as "one of the oldest and most highly respected citizens of Warren County."⁴⁰

It is unknown if Irving Buck ever lived on the property after he purchased it, or if he rented it out. Information for the 1890 census is lost, but the 1900 census records both Irving and his wife Fannie living as boarders in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.⁴¹ Correspondingly, the 1883 land tax entry for Bel Air records Irving as living in Baltimore.⁴² In 1891, Bel Air dropped in size to 20 acres and the value of buildings dropped to \$2,000, suggesting that the land that was sold off included buildings.⁴³

In 1905, Irving A. Buck sold the "Bel Air Reservation" to Sydner Byrne Downing for \$5,200.⁴⁴ This was the first time Bel Air had passed out of Buck hands (excluding the brief trustee intervention in the 1870s). Sydner B. Downing almost immediately hired prominent local builder G. A. Beyer to complete major renovations to Bel Air, which were completed in 1906.⁴⁵ Lucy Buck had much to say about the renovations completed by Beyer and Downing:

"[Downing] destroyed the old time features by tearing out the old wainscoting and cornices, demolishing the west end and old portico with its Mount Vernon pillars and, having erected an ostentatious porch at the front and allowing the lawn and grounds to be wrecked, he sat down to enjoy the nondescript result of his work."⁴⁶

Altogether, the renovations added \$1,400 worth of improvements to the property.⁴⁷ The values for Bel Air remained at 26 acres and \$2,600 for buildings up through 1919, after which records were not examined.⁴⁸ S. B. Downing married Kathleen Cook from Woodstock on 9 October 1905. A wedding announcement published that year stated that S. B. Downing "had recently purchased 'Bel Air,' a handsome residence just south of Front Royal, where the young couple will make their home."⁴⁹ By 1910, the couple was living there with their three-year-old son, Sydnor Jr, and Julia Berryman, a 50-year-old mulatto servant. The 1920 census lists Downing as

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a postmaster living at Bel Air with his wife and four children: Sydnor Jr, Henry, Giles, and Virginia.

In the midst of raising a family, a fire broke out at Bel Air Farm. An article from the *Warren Sentinel* published 26 July 1918 relates that two large outbuildings were consumed by fire, destroying “two corn planters, two drills and a mower” among many other farming implements stored within. The farm hands were off in the fields when the fire started, and the blaze was not discovered until a whistle from the silk mill sounded the alarm. The origin of the fire was unknown.⁵⁰

In 1930, William R. Buck, of a different generation than the earlier William R., wrote his remembrances of Bel Air:

The large entrance hall was very beautiful...The walls were wainscoted [*sic*] half way up, and panelled [*sic*] from floor to ceiling with fluted pilasters, or half-columns, all finished in oak. One whole side of this room was covered with numerous closets and cubby holes from floor to ceiling and extending on up into the room above. These were used for bed and table linens, clothes, etc. in one small one were kept lemon drops...for the little boys who flocked to see him from the town. I still have the old Franklin stove made to fit in the fire place at Bel Air. I believe it must have been the first one brought to Warren county [*sic*], since it was probably built in the house when it was first built.⁵¹

A few years later, another fire broke out at the tenant house on the property. An article published 19 October 1933 reports the house was occupied by “a colored family named Drummond.” The cause of the fire was unknown, and damages totaled \$600.⁵²

The Downings remodeled much of Bel Air after acquiring it from the Bucks, yet Gene Williams, who wrote an article for the *Northern Virginia Daily* in 1963, considered Bel Air to be “one of the most historic residences in Front Royal.”⁵³ In the 1960s, Kathleen Cook Downing subdivided what remained of Bel Air into three lots: 1, 1B, and 1C.⁵⁴ Lot 1 contained the house, outbuildings, and approximately seven acres. Lot 1B is 4.02 acres of open space south of Happy Creek and the 5.53-acre Lot 1C to the north contains a modern hay barn well to the north.⁵⁵ Kathleen continued to live in the house and in 1973 the property conveyed to Larry L. LeHew, a descendent of William LeHew, from whom Thomas Buck purchased land in 1778.⁵⁶ LeHew made some minor additions to the rear of the house and constructed the outbuildings and swimming pool between 1974 and 2002. In 2021, Bel Air passed to Larry LeHew’s son Jeffery LeHew, who remains the present owner of the parcels.⁵⁷

Architecture Context:

The earliest part of the current Bel Air is the two-story, five-bay main block, a brick Federal-style dwelling that was constructed in 1795 and originally had side log wings. A nineteenth-century photo of the house shows it before the 1905/1906 remodeling in that configuration along with a one-story front porch and a central front dormer that featured a Palladian-style sash. In

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1905, the property was purchased by Sydner B. Downing who worked with local builder Gustave A. Beyer to update the house and feature a showy, full-height, classical, pedimented front portico. The porch was expanded, the wings and dormer were removed, the multi-light windows were changed to one-over-one-sash, and the exterior walls were stuccoed. Downing also added an eastern two-story wing with a projecting end bay topped by a bell-shaped roof and with a short rear ell. The west end was outfitted with a one-story, columned and pedimented porte cochere. The interior remodeling of Bel Air in 1905/1906 was also extensive and included removing an eastern partition wall and stair in the original block of the house and creating a dramatic entry hall with elaborate classical and Queen Anne-style trim and a new stair. Despite these changes and additions, Bel Air maintains some of its original woodwork in the west parlor and the upper staircase. Original finishes are also found in the basement and attic. A section of the garret space along the north side of the main block is unique for its unpainted plaster walls that contain generations of signatures of visitors to Bel Air, some dating back to the late eighteenth century.

Bel Air stands out as possibly the oldest brick dwelling in Front Royal and its environs, showcasing a remarkable historical presence.⁵⁸ It boasts as one of the most expansive residential properties in town, spanning to parcels totaling 11.06 acres. The main house and outbuildings are situated on a seven-acre parcel, while the remaining four-acre parcel to the south consists of an open field, historically used as a campsite during the Civil War.⁵⁹ Another parcel well north of the house contains a modern barn and is excluded.

Gustave A. Beyer, the builder who completed the 1905/1906 alterations at Bel Air, was well known in the Front Royal area, working on several houses and churches. Frequent advertisements in the *Warren Sentinel* newspaper from mid-1878 to the end of 1880 reference his earlier partnership with C.A. Macatee, known as the Macatee, Beyer and Co. Planing Mill. This company was superseded by the Warren Manufacturing Company, Ltd., which formed in 1881 and included Macatee but not Beyer.⁶⁰ It appears that at this point Beyer went out on his own and it is reported in 1906 that he completed the work at Bel Air as well as numerous other projects. A newspaper article stated, "G.A. Beyer, the well-known builder, has finished remodeling and enlarging Bel Air, the residence of S. Byrne Downing, and will soon get to work on a wing to be built [on] the west side of the main building."⁶¹ Interestingly, C.A. Macatee was Mrs. S. Byrne Downing's uncle through marriage and he may have designed the alterations to Bel Air although his name is not mentioned in the 1906 article. His obituary recalls that he was an architect, amongst other things, and designed and built three of Front Royal's churches, civic buildings, and numerous local residences.⁶²

Originating nationally in the 1880s, the Colonial Revival style emerged as a reflection of renewed fascination with America's colonial history, spurred by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876-1877.⁶³ While drawing inspiration from colonial architecture, it diverged from mere replication. Instead, the style artfully combined embellishments from Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival designs, applying Classical ornamentation in innovative ways.

By the 1920s and 1930s, the Colonial Revival style underwent a transformation, evolving into a more academic and less organic form than its earlier iterations. Nowhere is this shift more

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apparent than at Bel Air, where a monumental pedimented portico, embracing Classical elements, was added in 1906 to an otherwise Federal-style dwelling. Concurrently, a projecting two-story polygonal bay was introduced, evoking the earlier Victorian/Queen Anne-style aesthetics that had prevailed in the late nineteenth century.

Several Front Royal residences have full-height monumental front porticos, including ones where the portico was added shortly after work was completed at Bel Air, suggesting a possible influence. Ardham (VDHR# 112-0001), perched on a prominent hill south of Bel Air, is part of a 13-acre property that now includes a vineyard. The ca. 1857, Greek Revival-style, frame Ardham dwelling is fronted by a three-bay pedimented portico with Doric columns that was added ca. 1910 and which resembles the one at Bel Air in many of its details except for the order of the columns. The parallels in its design with Bel Air's portico are evident, reinforcing the notion of Bel Air's influence on Front Royal's architectural landscape.⁶⁴ Druid Hill (VDHR# 0112-0059), an Italianate-style brick dwelling constructed for Samuel E. Macatee ca. 1873, underwent significant renovations in the early 1900s including an addition of a monumental portico similar to Bel Air's in 1910. Rockledge (VDHR# 112-0055-0069), a Colonial Revival-style brick dwelling constructed ca. 1909 for the Gibb family, contains a commanding, full-height, three-bay, pedimented portico with giant Ancient Ionic columns and a denticulated cornice, which strongly echoes the one at Bel Air. The Weaver House (VDHR# 112-0050) at 35 North Royal Avenue was constructed ca. 1912 and has a flat-roofed, two-story, monumental front portico with Doric columns, also evocative of the one at Bel Air.

A few other prominent houses in Front Royal have been listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places including Rose Hill (VDHR# 112-0032) a ca. 1830 frame dwelling, now stuccoed, with a rear brick wing added ca. 1845. Located about a mile northwest of Bel Air, Rose Hill was the home Blakemore/Richardson families, who were relations of the Bucks.⁶⁵ Killahevin (VDHR# 112-0024) was constructed in 1905 for prominent Virginia conservationist William E. Carson. The Washington, D.C. architectural firm of Alfred B. Mullett and Co. designed the elaborate Queen Anne-style brick dwelling.⁶⁶

No other property in Front Royal can claim the same storied heritage as Bel Air. It stands apart, intimately tied to one of the town's founding families, holding the distinction of being the oldest standing brick house, and serving as a vital window into daily life during the Civil War era. Throughout its existence, this historic estate has known only three sets of owners since the late eighteenth century, with the current proprietors maintaining a direct familial connection to the original settlers. Architecturally, Bel Air stands as an iconic representation of Front Royal's historical landscape. It serves as a vivid illustration of the evolution of early Federal-style brick dwellings, spanning from the Civil War era through to the early twentieth century.

Archeological Potential

Although no public archaeological testing has been conducted, the yard and pastures surrounding the main house and outbuildings at Bel Air offer potential archaeological resources. An early-nineteenth-century farm and house likely included several outbuildings for domestic and agricultural purposes. The area around the chimney ruin may reveal insights into a nineteenth-

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century domestic site. Additionally, the property's history includes Civil War activity, making it another area of potential historical interest.

² "'Bel Air' One of the Most Historic Homes in Warren." *Northern Virginia Daily*, 21 February 1963. William P. Buck, editor, *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven: The Diary of Lucy Rebecca Buck During the War Between the States*, (Birmingham: The Cornerstone Publisher, 1973), 216-219. Lucy R. Buck, "A Reminiscence of General Lee," *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 34, Number 46, 20 March 1903, 2.

³ William R. Buck, "A Description of 'Bel Air', Front Royal, Virginia," 1936 in Warren Heritage Society Archives.

⁴ 1795 Land Tax for Front Royal, Virginia. Land taxes in Virginia do not break out the values of buildings until 1820.

⁵ Frederick County Deed Book 25:481.

⁶ "Captain Thomas Buck, Sr.," *geni_family_tree*, September 9, 2022, <https://www.geni.com/people/Captain-Thomas-Buck-Sr/6000000000742090954>.

⁷ Buck Family Group Record, in the collection of author. William's birth date and location *may* suggest the log structures were built before this date, as it would make sense for the house to grow with the family, but this too is unconfirmed.

⁸ "A Description of 'Bel Air'...", 1936.

⁹ Buck Family Group Record, in the collection of author. These materials were collected from VDHR archives and the Warren Heritage Society archives.

¹⁰ 1803 Frederick County Personal Property Tax and 1803 Frederick County Land Tax.

¹¹ 1807 Frederick County Personal Property Tax.

¹² Virginia History Series, "Early History of Thoroughbred Horses in Virginia, 1730-1865," <http://virginiahistoryseries.org/linked/unit%2011.%20early%20history%20of%20horses%20in%20virginia.all%20slides.pdf>

¹³ 1822 Frederick County Personal Property Tax.

¹⁴ 1806, 1809, 1810, 1811, 1813 Frederick County Personal Property Tax.

¹⁵ 1815 Frederick County Personal Property Tax.

¹⁶ 1820 Frederick County Land Tax.

¹⁷ "A Description of 'Bel Air'...", 1936.

¹⁸ 1839, 1840 Warren County Land Tax.

¹⁹ Frederick County Deed Book 63:182.

²⁰ Warren County Deed Book A:188.

²¹ Warren County Deed Book A:388.

²² Ancestry.com. *1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004; 1850 census.

²³ Ancestry.com. *1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

²⁴ Ancestry.com. *1860 U.S. Federal Census Non-Population (Agricultural Schedule)* for Warren County. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

²⁵ Ancestry.com. *1870 U.S. Federal Census Non-Population (Industrial Schedule)* for Warren County. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

²⁶ Bob Jolley, archaeologist with the Northern Regional Office of VDHR, conducted a walkover survey of the property in February 2023 to determine if there were any potential sites of the mill mentioned in the diary. This also included a survey of the 4.02-acre open parcel south of Happy Creek. He did not identify any landscape features that would have been associated with either a mill or a mill race but concurred that the ruins of a stone chimney north of the house were probably from a dwelling.

²⁷ *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven...*, 108, 109, 150, 231.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁹ "William Mason Buck (1809-1895) Find a Grave...", *Find a Grave*, accessed September 21, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9324138/william-mason->

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buck?_gl=1%2Abh6itp%2A_ga%2AMTEyNjkwNDc0OS4xNTk0NTYyMDA1%2A_ga_4QT8FMEX30%2AMTY2MzU5OTY4My44LjEuMTY2MzYwMTM2Mi4wLjAuMA.

³⁰ *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven...*, 92.

³¹ In addition to her diary, Lucy R. Buck wrote "A Reminiscence of General Lee," an article for the *Baltimore Sun* that was reprinted in the *Warren Sentinel*, in 1903 and described her July 1863 encounter with Gen. Robert E. Lee.

³² *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven...*, 216-218. This scene is captured in two paintings by Mort Kuntlser, a well-known contemporary painter of Civil War events. It is also mentioned in a Civil War Trails wayside marker located south of the Bel Air property. It is interesting to note that Buck does not mention General Lee drinking buttermilk in her diary, although she writes about the event years later in a newspaper article entitled "A Reminiscence of General Lee." See also: Megan Sullivan, "Historic Structures Report, Bel Air House," James Madison University (Masters Student), undated, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 48 and 68.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁵ Maurice Neville Blakemore, *The Blakemore Family and Allied Lines* (Privately Published, 1963), 142-143.

³⁶ 1860-1865 Warren County Land Tax.

³⁷ Ancestry.com. *1870 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Buck may not have filed a claim with the Southern Claims Commission because he would have been required to take an oath of allegiance to the Federal government.

³⁸ Warren County Deed Book K:39.

³⁹ Warren County Deed Book M:269.

⁴⁰ *Shenandoah Herald*, 4 October 1895.

⁴¹ Ancestry.com. *1900 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

⁴² 1883 Warren County Land Tax.

⁴³ 1891 Warren County Land Tax.

⁴⁴ Warren County Deed Book 9:25.

⁴⁵ E-mail correspondence to Maral S. Kalbian from Douglas Gleason, 10 November 2022, Front Royal, Virginia. Mr. Gleason informed the author after he found a 1906 notice in the *Warren Sentinel* indicating that Beyer was the builder who worked on Bel Air.

⁴⁶ *The Blakemore Family and Allied Lines*, 143.

⁴⁷ 1906 Warren County Land Tax.

⁴⁸ 1907-1919 Warren County Land Tax.

⁴⁹ *The Times Dispatch*, 24 September 1905, 18.

⁵⁰ *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 50, Number 17, 26 July 1918.

⁵¹ "A Description of 'Bel Air', Front Royal, Virginia," 1936.

⁵² *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 65, Number 29, 19 October 1933.

⁵³ *Northern Virginia Daily*, 21 February 1963.

⁵⁴ Warren County Deed Books 144:249, 149:190, and 203:232.

⁵⁵ Warren County GIS Tax Map, 20A822 1B, 20A822 1, 20A822 1C, <https://www.warrencis.org/#/mw1>.

⁵⁶ Warren County Deed Book 203:232.

⁵⁷ Warren County Instrument Number 210007944. Some of the parcels are under LeHew's name and others as LLCs.

⁵⁸ "Bel Air" One of the Most Historic Homes in Warren," 1963. The statement that Bel Air is the oldest brick house in Front Royal is made in several other newspaper articles and periodicals. See also: Preservation Associates of Virginia, "Town of Front Royal Historic Resources Survey Report." (Richmond, VA: Department of Historic Resources), 30 June 1995.

⁵⁹ *Sad Earth, Sweet Heaven...*, 92.

⁶⁰ "Warren Manufacturing Company, Limited," *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 13, Number 5, 13 May 1881.

⁶¹ *Warren Sentinel*, 31 August 1906, 3.

⁶² "Capt. Macatee, 87, Dies Here." *Warren Sentinel*, Volume 66, Number 26, 27 September 1934. Macatee also served as Clerk of the Warren County Circuit Court for 12 years.

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⁶³ Maral S. Kalbian. *Frederick County, VA: History Through Architecture*. (Winchester, VA: Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society) 1999, pp. 121-126.

⁶⁴ Ardham (VDHR #112-0001) 340 S. Commerce Street was built for Dr. James H. Turner ca. 1857. It was later owned by Margaret Elizabeth Miller, (Mrs. J. W. Easter), a well-known poetess, and later George Washington Rudacille, a local businessman and lumber dealer. Druid Hill (VDHR #112-0059), Rockledge (VDHR #112-0069), and the Weaver House (VDHR #112-0050) are other examples of front full-height porticos. See records for these properties at the Warren Heritage Society and VDHR Archives.

⁶⁵ Rose Hill (VDHR #112-0032) was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. The vernacular Balthis House (VDHR # 112-0009), a late-eighteenth-century vernacular dwelling with nineteenth- and twentieth-century additions, was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

⁶⁶ Killlahevlin (VDHR #112-0024) was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

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Warren County, VA Deed Books, Land Tax Books, Personal Property Tax Books.

Newspapers:

Warren Sentinel

Northern Virginia Daily

Shenandoah Herald

Times Dispatch

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

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Name of repository: Warren Heritage Society Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR #112-0007

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 11.06 acres (2 parcels)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Latitude: 38.923445 | Longitude: -78.189073 |
| B. Latitude: 38.923432 | Longitude: -78.188085 |
| C. Latitude: 38.922252 | Longitude: -78.188098 |
| D. Latitude: 38.922240 | Longitude: -78.187235 |
| E. Latitude: 38.920443 | Longitude: -78.187189 |
| F. Latitude: 38.920341 | Longitude: -78.188765 |
| G. Latitude: 38.921109 | Longitude: -78.189160 |

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.)

Bel Air
Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia
County and State

The boundary incorporates the entire 7.04-acre Bel Air property located in Front Royal, Virginia, at 269 Happy Creek Road, that is designated as Warren County Tax Map # 20A8221. Also included is a 4.02-acre parcel directly contiguous to the south designated by Warren County Tax Map #20A8221B, which contains the field where Civil War troops encamped as well as the vista out the front of the house.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Bel Air's boundary encompasses the 7.04-acre area containing the main dwelling, outbuildings, and surrounding acreage to the west and north. Additionally, a 4.02-acre parcel south of the house, extending across Happy Creek, preserves the view to the south and the field used for Civil War troop encampments. A separate 5.53-acre parcel north of the house, which lacks historical resources, is situated outside this boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Maral S. Kalbian
organization: Maral S. Kalbian, LLC
street & number: P.O. Box 468
city or town: Berryville state: VA zip code: 22611
e-mail: maral@mkalbian.com
telephone: 540-955-1231
date: March 18, 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

Bel Air
Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia
County and State

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.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Bel Air

City or Vicinity: Front Royal

County: Warren

State: Virginia

Photographer: Maral S. Kalbian

Date Photographed: February 2023

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

1 of 21

View of property from entrance at Happy Creek Road, looking northwest

2 of 21

Main House, southwest view

3 of 21

Main house, southeast view.

4 of 21

Main house, northwest view

5 of 21

Main house, detail of front entrance

6 of 21

Main house, entry hall looking northeast

7 of 21

Main house, entry hall looking northwest

8 of 21

Main house, west parlor

9 of 21

Main house, doorway from hall to dining room

10 of 21

Main house, dining room, looking east

Bel Air

Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia

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11 of 21

Main house, second-floor landing

12 of 21

Main house, second-floor west bedroom, looking west

13 of 21

Main house, old stairs to attic

14 of 21

Main house, view of autographs on attic walls

15 of 21

Barn/Stable, northeast view

16 of 21

Barn, southeast view

17 of 21

Garage, east view

18 of 21

Pool and pool house, southwest

19 of 21

Chimney ruin, south view

20 of 21

Driveway north of Happy Creek, looking west

21 of 21

View from front porch of Main house, looking south

List of Figures

1. Ca. 1860 sketch drawing of Bel Air in possession of the owner.
2. 1860s photograph of Bel Air in possession of the owner.
3. First-floor plan of Bel Air showing various building periods. From: Megan Sullivan, "Historic Structures Report, Bel Air House," James Madison University (Masters Student), undated, p. 30.
4. Second-floor plan of Bel Air showing various building periods. From: Megan Sullivan, "Historic Structures Report, Bel Air House," James Madison University (Masters Student), undated, p. 31.

Bel Air
Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia
County and State



Figure 1: Ca. 1860 sketch drawing of Bel Air in possession of the owner.



Figure 2: 1860s photograph of Bel Air in possession of the owner.

Bel Air

Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia

County and State

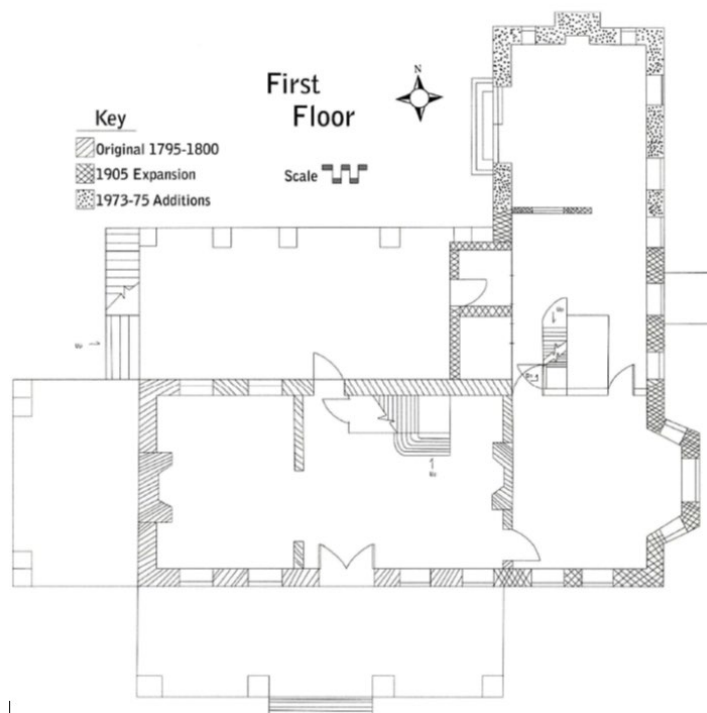


Figure 3: First-floor plan of Bel Air showing various building periods.

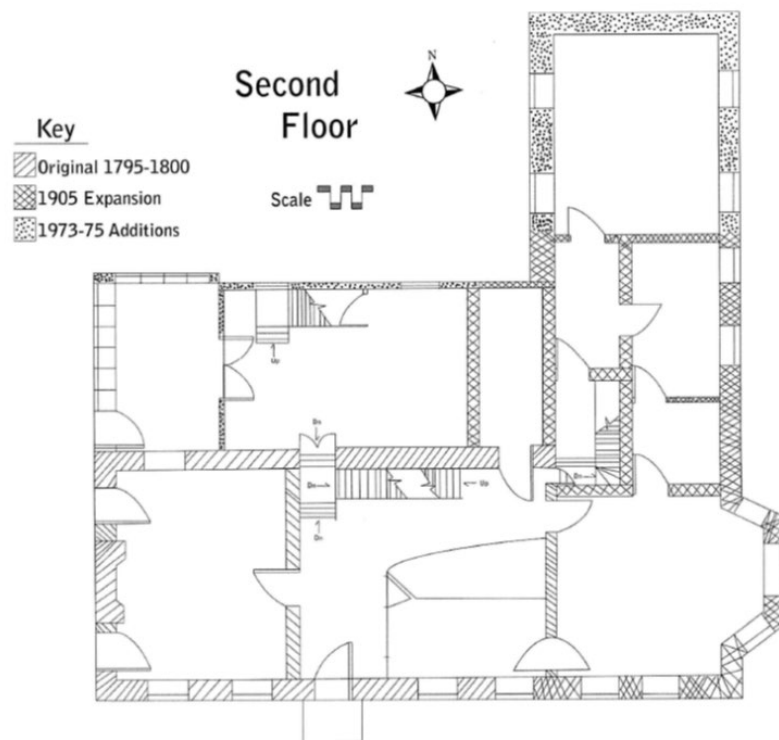


Figure 4: Second-floor plan of Bel Air showing various building periods.

Bel Air

Name of Property

Warren County, Virginia

County and State

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

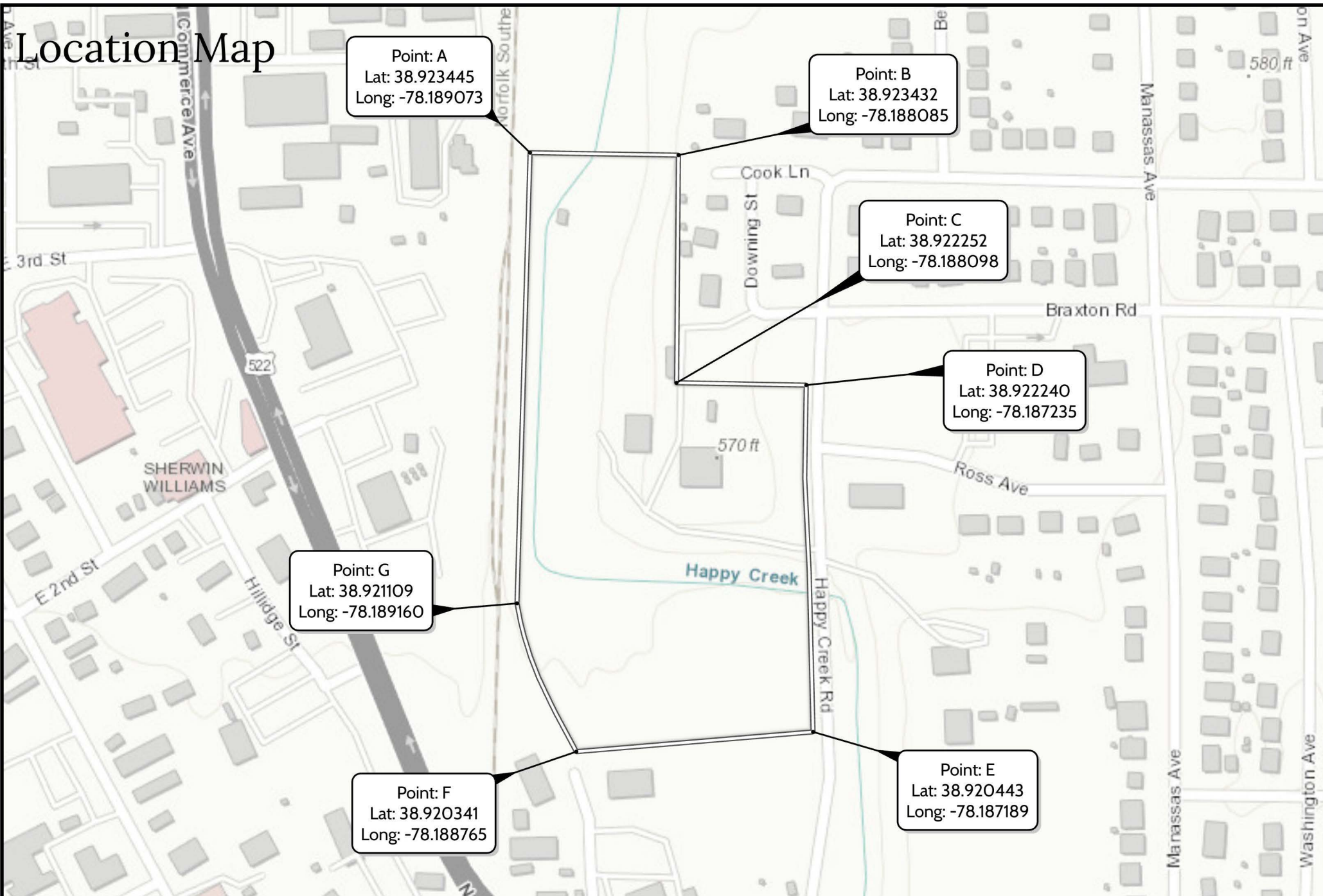
Tier 2 – 120 hours

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.

Location Map



Point: A
Lat: 38.923445
Long: -78.189073

Point: B
Lat: 38.923432
Long: -78.188085

Point: C
Lat: 38.922252
Long: -78.188098

Point: D
Lat: 38.922240
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Point: G
Lat: 38.921109
Long: -78.189160

Point: F
Lat: 38.920341
Long: -78.188765

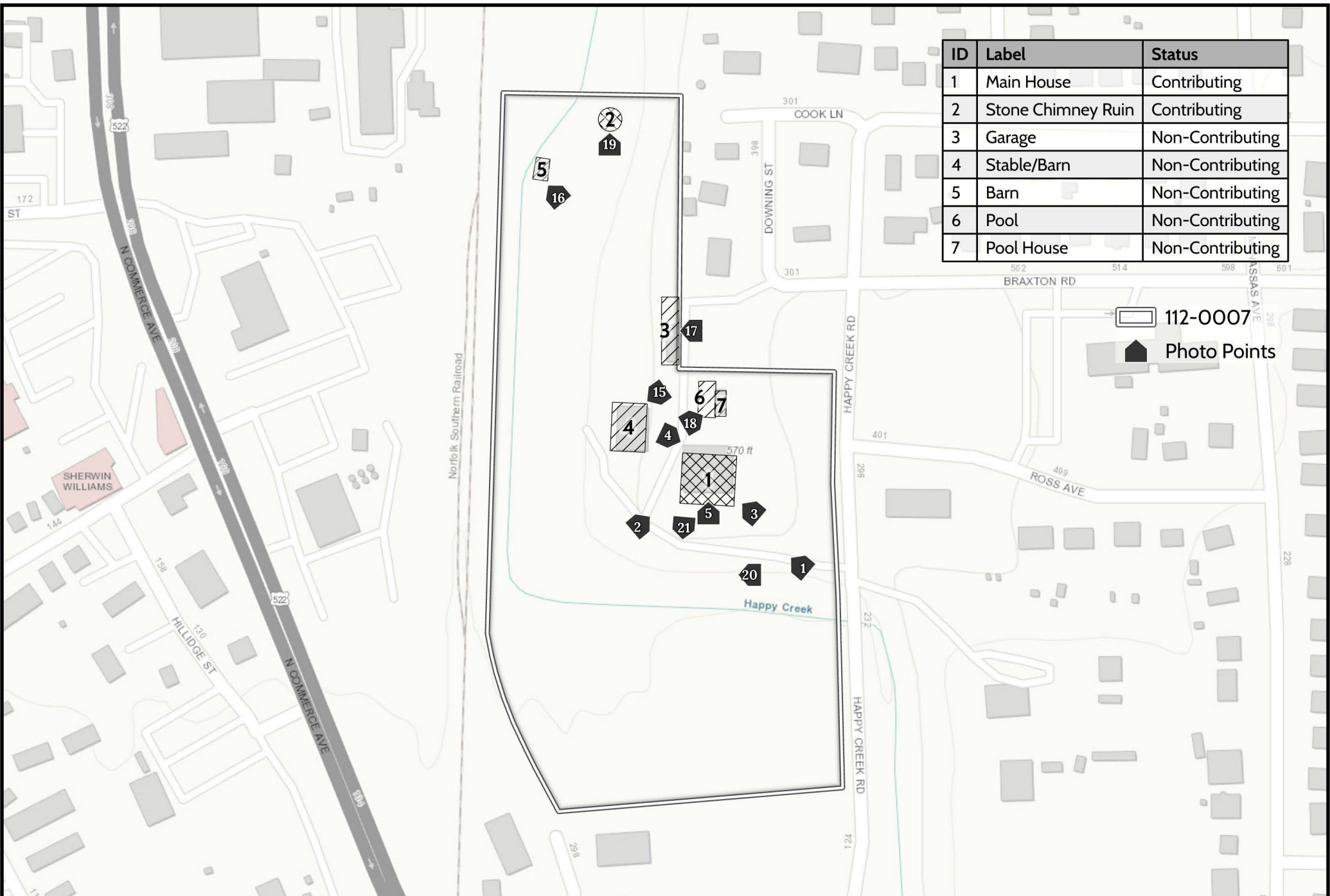
Point: E
Lat: 38.920443
Long: -78.187189

Bel Air
Warren County, DHR ID: 112-0007

Spatial Reference: WGS 1984 Web
Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.1.0
Date: 3/15/2024
Created By: D. Bascone, VDHR

0 190 380 760 Feet



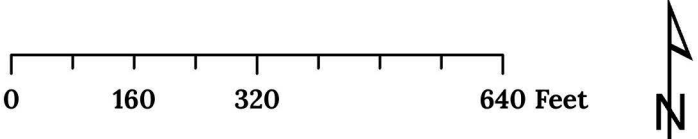


ID	Label	Status
1	Main House	Contributing
2	Stone Chimney Ruin	Contributing
3	Garage	Non-Contributing
4	Stable/Barn	Non-Contributing
5	Barn	Non-Contributing
6	Pool	Non-Contributing
7	Pool House	Non-Contributing

 112-0007
 Photo Points

Bel Air
Warren County, DHR ID: 112-0007

Spatial Reference: WGS 1984 Web
Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.1.0
Date: 2/16/2024
Created By: D. Bascone, VDHR



Tax Parcel Map

This map displays the Virginia Parcels 112-0007 and surrounding areas. The map includes the following information:

- Virginia Parcels:** Indicated by a white box with a black border.
- 112-0007:** The specific parcel being highlighted, shown in a light blue color.
- Other Labels:** Various parcel numbers (e.g., 20A81445, 20A81444, 20A81443, 20A81442, 20A81441, 20A81440, 20A81439, 20A81438, 20A81437, 20A81436, 20A81435, 20A81434, 20A81219, 20A81220, 20A81221, 20A81222, 20A81223, 20A81224, 20A81225, 20A81226, 20A81227, 20A81228, 20A81229, 20A8129A, 20A81128, 20A81129A, 20A8112, 20A8113, 20A8114, 20A8115, 20A8116, 20A8117, 20A8118, 20A8115A, 20A8215A, 20A8215B, 20A8215C, 20A8215D, 20A8215E, 20A8215F, 20A8215G, 20A8215H, 20A8215I, 20A8215J, 20A8215K, 20A8215L, 20A8215M, 20A8215N, 20A8215O, 20A8215P, 20A8215Q, 20A8215R, 20A8215S, 20A8215T, 20A8215U, 20A8215V, 20A8215W, 20A8215X, 20A8215Y, 20A8215Z, 20A8216A, 20A8216B, 20A8216C, 20A8216D, 20A8216E, 20A8216F, 20A8216G, 20A8216H, 20A8216I, 20A8216J, 20A8216K, 20A8216L, 20A8216M, 20A8216N, 20A8216O, 20A8216P, 20A8216Q, 20A8216R, 20A8216S, 20A8216T, 20A8216U, 20A8216V, 20A8216W, 20A8216X, 20A8216Y, 20A8216Z, 20A8217A, 20A8217B, 20A8217C, 20A8217D, 20A8217E, 20A8217F, 20A8217G, 20A8217H, 20A8217I, 20A8217J, 20A8217K, 20A8217L, 20A8217M, 20A8217N, 20A8217O, 20A8217P, 20A8217Q, 20A8217R, 20A8217S, 20A8217T, 20A8217U, 20A8217V, 20A8217W, 20A8217X, 20A8217Y, 20A8217Z, 20A8218A, 20A8218B, 20A8218C, 20A8218D, 20A8218E, 20A8218F, 20A8218G, 20A8218H, 20A8218I, 20A8218J, 20A8218K, 20A8218L, 20A8218M, 20A8218N, 20A8218O, 20A8218P, 20A8218Q, 20A8218R, 20A8218S, 20A8218T, 20A8218U, 20A8218V, 20A8218W, 20A8218X, 20A8218Y, 20A8218Z, 20A8219A, 20A8219B, 20A8219C, 20A8219D, 20A8219E, 20A8219F, 20A8219G, 20A8219H, 20A8219I, 20A8219J, 20A8219K, 20A8219L, 20A8219M, 20A8219N, 20A8219O, 20A8219P, 20A8219Q, 20A8219R, 20A8219S, 20A8219T, 20A8219U, 20A8219V, 20A8219W, 20A8219X, 20A8219Y, 20A8219Z, 20A8220A, 20A8220B, 20A8220C, 20A8220D, 20A8220E, 20A8220F, 20A8220G, 20A8220H, 20A8220I, 20A8220J, 20A8220K, 20A8220L, 20A8220M, 20A8220N, 20A8220O, 20A8220P, 20A8220Q, 20A8220R, 20A8220S, 20A8220T, 20A8220U, 20A8220V, 20A8220W, 20A8220X, 20A8220Y, 20A8220Z, 20A8221A, 20A8221B, 20A8221C, 20A8221D, 20A8221E, 20A8221F, 20A8221G, 20A8221H, 20A8221I, 20A8221J, 20A8221K, 20A8221L, 20A8221M, 20A8221N, 20A8221O, 20A8221P, 20A8221Q, 20A8221R, 20A8221S, 20A8221T, 20A8221U, 20A8221V, 20A8221W, 20A8221X, 20A8221Y, 20A8221Z, 20A8222A, 20A8222B, 20A8222C, 20A8222D, 20A8222E, 20A8222F, 20A8222G, 20A8222H, 20A8222I, 20A8222J, 20A8222K, 20A8222L, 20A8222M, 20A8222N, 20A8222O, 20A8222P, 20A8222Q, 20A8222R, 20A8222S, 20A8222T, 20A8222U, 20A8222V, 20A8222W, 20A8222X, 20A8222Y, 20A8222Z, 20A8223A, 20A8223B, 20A8223C, 20A8223D, 20A8223E, 20A8223F, 20A8223G, 20A8223H, 20A8223I, 20A8223J, 20A8223K, 20A8223L, 20A8223M, 20A8223N, 20A8223O, 20A8223P, 20A8223Q, 20A8223R, 20A8223S, 20A8223T, 20A8223U, 20A8223V, 20A8223W, 20A8223X, 20A8223Y, 20A8223Z, 20A8224A, 20A8224B, 20A8224C, 20A8224D, 20A8224E, 20A8224F, 20A8224G, 20A8224H, 20A8224I, 20A8224J, 20A8224K, 20A8224L, 20A8224M, 20A8224N, 20A8224O, 20A8224P, 20A8224Q, 20A8224R, 20A8224S, 20A8224T, 20A8224U, 20A8224V, 20A8224W, 20A8224X, 20A8224Y, 20A8224Z, 20A8225A, 20A8225B, 20A8225C, 20A8225D, 20A8225E, 20A8225F, 20A8225G, 20A8225H, 20A8225I, 20A8225J, 20A8225K, 20A8225L, 20A8225M, 20A8225N, 20A8225O, 20A8225P, 20A8225Q, 20A8225R, 20A8225S, 20A8225T, 20A8225U, 20A8225V, 20A8225W, 20A8225X, 20A8225Y, 20A8225Z, 20A8226A, 20A8226B, 20A8226C, 20A8226D, 20A8226E, 20A8226F, 20A8226G, 20A8226H, 20A8226I, 20A8226J, 20A8226K, 20A8226L, 20A8226M, 20A8226N, 20A8226O, 20A8226P, 20A8226Q, 20A8226R, 20A8226S, 20A8226T, 20A8226U, 20A8226V, 20A8226W, 20A8226X, 20A8226Y, 20A8226Z, 20A8227A, 20A8227B, 20A8227C, 20A8227D, 20A8227E, 20A8227F, 20A8227G, 20A8227H, 20A8227I, 20A8227J, 20A8227K, 20A8227L, 20A8227M, 20A8227N, 20A8227O, 20A8227P, 20A8227Q, 20A8227R, 20A8227S, 20A8227T, 20A8227U, 20A8227V, 20A8227W, 20A8227X, 20A8227Y, 20A8227Z, 20A8228A, 20A8228B, 20A8228C, 20A8228D, 20A8228E, 20A8228F, 20A8228G, 20A8228H, 20A8228I, 20A8228J, 20A8228K, 20A8228L, 20A8228M, 20A8228N, 20A8228O, 20A8228P, 20A8228Q, 20A8228R, 20A8228S, 20A8228T, 20A8228U, 20A8228V, 2

Bel Air
Warren County, DHR ID: 112-0007

Date of Parcel Data: 2/16/2024
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.1.0
Created By: D. Bascone, VDHR

