Nelson, Chief Otho S., and Susie P., House

Virginia

100004262

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

4262

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: Nelson, Chief Otho S. and Susie P., House
Other names/site number: Hutchinson House; DHR # 049-5132
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: [redacted]
City or town: [redacted] State: VA County: King and Queen County and Essex County
Not For Publication: [X] ***see redactions*** Vicinity: [X]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national X statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B ___C ___D

Julie V. Langan 6-25-19

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

Nelson, Chief Otho S. and Susie P., House
Name of Property

King & Queen County and Essex County, VA
County and State

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

8.8.2019
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	
District	X
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
3	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling = House
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/Animal Facility = Barn

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
VACANT/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER: Hall-Parlor with Additions

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; METAL: Tin; WOOD: Weatherboard

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

Summary Paragraph

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House is located [redacted] Virginia. The property was once home to two chiefs of the Rappahannock Indian Tribe of Virginia and the childhood home of a third. Now vacant, the house was built in three campaigns beginning sometime in the late 19th century. In its present form, the Chief Nelson House is a frame two-level "T"-shaped vernacular building with a metal roof. The house exhibits a blend of conservative construction techniques, traditional planning, and old-fashioned technology with newer architectural construction methods. The ruins of two barns are located in the dwelling's rear yard (south side). Additional outbuildings (perhaps as many as five), including a smokehouse, chicken shed, and outhouse, are visible in old photographs of the property but no longer survive aboveground. A cistern and well are located directly behind the house in the rear yard. A small stream ([redacted]) is located approximately 1700 ft. south of the dwelling. The Chief Nelson House has been vacant since the 1980s and has suffered deterioration. Nonetheless, the house remains in its original location in a setting little changed from the early- to mid-20th century. The building's form, materials, and architectural features for its period of significance (1910s-1967) are

unchanged if deteriorated. The United Rappahannock Tribe, Inc. purchased the house and property in 1998 with the goal of stabilizing and ultimately restoring the dwelling. With restoration and reuse of the property will come a greater degree of integrity of feeling and association with the lives of the Nelson family's occupation. The property includes the following contributing resources: the dwelling (contributing building), two wells and a cistern (3 contributing structures), and archaeological site 44KQ0137 (contributing site), [redacted] *There are no noncontributing resources on the property.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House is located on a 75.8-acre parcel [redacted] The dwelling's vicinity has changed little since the early 20th century, as it remains very rural with agricultural activity the predominant local land use. The broad agricultural fields are broken up by managed woodlots and an occasional modestly-scaled housing development composed of residences on small lots alongside road frontages. The acreage associated with the Nelson dwelling today is about 50 percent in woodlands and 50 percent in cultivated fields. [redacted] The dwelling and its associated agricultural and domestic complex are located [redacted] with a dense tree line surrounding the complex and screening it from roadside view.

Dwelling (Contributing Building)

In its present form, the Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House is a two-level "T"-shaped building with two attics accessible by stairs on the eastern and western portions of the house. A blend of conservative construction techniques, traditional planning, and old-fashioned technology with newer architectural construction methods makes the dating of the house challenging. Architectural clues suggest that the first two-room section was erected in the 1880s and immediately or soon thereafter a detached kitchen was built. In short succession the kitchen building was expanded into a two-room building, with the old kitchen converted to a dining room and the addition room serving as the replacement kitchen. This expansion may have occurred after the property sold in May 1896. Finally, around 1920, the house was expanded with an addition that linked the original house to the dining room and contained a pair of bedrooms, a hallway, and a porch. The porch acted as a breezeway to connect the dining room/kitchen wing to the main block.

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House was initially built sometime in the last two decades of the 19th century. The initial builder was either Edward L. and Ida M. Hutchinson or

their nephew, John D. Hutchinson. The land on which the house was built had been in the Hutchinson family since the mid-19th century and included [redacted] Hutchinson family remained in the Chief Nelson House until sometime between 1910 and 1919, when Otho Nelson and his wife, Susie Nelson, moved into the house. John D. Hutchinson and his family may have relocated [redacted]. Hutchinson died in 1924. The Nelsons lived in the house until 1967, when they moved to Susie Nelson's childhood home, also in Indian Neck, and new tenants moved into their former residence. The house was vacant when it was acquired by the United Rappahannock Tribe, Inc. in 1998 from the Virginia Land Bank Company. The house remains vacant.

The original house was fronted with a gable and built on a hall-and-parlor plan (to use traditional terms for these spaces), with the front room or hall intended as the primary entertaining space and the back room (nearest the kitchen) possibly used as a bedroom. The two rooms held those functions when the Nelson family lived there. The upstairs is set up as additional chambers, although access to the room over the hall required moving through the room over the parlor, making the parlor chamber inconvenient. The detached kitchen stood ten feet away and at a right angle to the original gable fronted portion of the house. Even when the kitchen was expanded and became the dining room, the family still had to go outside to enter this space.

Around 1920, the house was enlarged to make for a more comfortable house. A wing was built on the rear of the main block in line with the dining room/kitchen. It included two bedchambers and a hallway, with the hallway isolating these spaces from the "parlor" of the main block. The hallway also led to a porch (or what informants referred to as a breezeway) connecting the house to the dining room/kitchen wing, now providing a covered way to the cooking and eating area of the house. These changes constituted the last major alterations to the house other than the decay it has experienced since last occupied.

While all sections of the house are of frame construction, the original section was skinned with vertical board-and-batten siding and the rest clad in horizontal weatherboards. Currently the roof is covered in standing-seam terne metal, but the use of small dimension-spaced lath over the original block suggests that it likely was originally covered with wood shingles and later replaced with a standing-seam roof. Carpenters fitted the kitchen and its later expansion with wider boards more common to metal roofing and thus they likely were built with standing seam terne metal from the outset.

While the builder had the kitchen covered in weatherboards, the main block was finished with board-and-batten siding. Framing in the main block is less substantial than that in the original kitchen, having widely spaced studs with blocking to carry its vertical cladding. In contrast, the kitchen was more conventionally treated with a timber frame of studs, posts, and braces more tightly spaced to carry its horizontal weatherboards. While the vertical board treatment is a more recent innovation, the savings in materials and labor it afforded contrasts with the kitchen treatment. It appears that the builder chose the vertical board arrangement for reasons of fashion,

but one that he could erect efficiently. Construction of the kitchen, which may have been simultaneous to the main block, was built in a conservative, old-fashioned manner appropriate to its function. Its more vernacular framing was likely the result of its inferior function and a statement of its hierarchical relationship to the living spaces despite its less economical construction method.

The original construction date of the house is unclear. John D. Hutchinson purchased a 5-acre parcel on which the house sits from his uncle, Edward L. Hutchinson, and his wife, Ida, in 1895. The tax assessor for King and Queen County assigned no value for improvements on this parcel in 1897 but did assess improvements in the amount of $300 in 1898, suggesting a construction date in 1897 or 1898. The early sections of the house, however, are traditionally framed with steeply-pitched roofs, features that could place them before the Civil War. Since the builder had the framing, plaster lath, and roof sheathing prepared at a circular-saw mill, the manufacturing technology indicates that the first phase could date no earlier than the 1850s. A board-and-batten door divides the two upstairs rooms in the main block and the staircase was enclosed with wide, beaded, vertical board sheathing more common to the first half of the 19th century than after the Civil War. Oddly, the staircase enclosure was secured with mature cut nails finished with hand-forged, traditional T-heads, again an earlier conceit even if made with more modern nails. Yet the trim and hardware suggest a postbellum date, including factory-produced doors and hinges. The framing lumber (at least that which is visible in the attic) is of dimensional stock, which was more readily available after 1865. The mix, then, of antique forms and post-Civil War technology could mean the first phase was built not long after the war, perhaps in the 1880s.

All nails observed in the early phases of the house are machine cut formed with machined heads and of varieties known to have been used throughout the second half of the 19th century. This includes the T-head stair nails, which were hand-forged into their final shape from otherwise conventional cut nails. Except for the plaster lath nails used in the main block, all nails are referred to as “Type 8” in the typology developed by fastener experts Jay Edwards and Tom Wells (1993). While Type 8 nails are quite common, the nails used for the plaster lath in the main block are less so. They are identified as Type 7 and are a rarer form. Edwards and Wells do not recognize them after the middle of the 19th century, yet they do show up in Virginia in later contexts especially as small nails such as those used here. The importance of the nail variation between the main block and original kitchen for dating has more to do with sequencing of construction and less about precisely identifying when each took place. Because the two sections of the house have different style lath nails, it is possible that the kitchen was constructed, or at least finished, slightly later than the main block. Perhaps the original kitchen room required no interior finish with the plaster added when the space was converted to a dining room, explaining the differences in plaster lath nail technology. Dendrochronological testing of the two sections of the house, if ever performed, should resolve the question of precisely when each was constructed.

Enlargement of the kitchen wing to create a dining space out of the older cook room and a new kitchen next to it was made using similar framing methods for the two. Indeed, if it were not for

the trapping of original exterior siding between the two spaces, one might have wondered if they were contemporary. Both sections were built using circular sawn timbers fixed with machine-cut nails and both have roofs with 12/12 pitches that use common rafters set on board false plates. However, while the builder of the original section simply butted the rafters at the ridge and added wind braces for stiffening, the carpenters of the expansion used a ridge board and omitted the bracing. These small details affirm that the two rooms were built at different times.

Construction of the bedroom wing and porch are more easily tied to their stylistic features. While they, too, are made from dimensional circular-sawn timbers and plaster was applied to circular-sawn lath, the door construction is of a variety common to the Arts-and-Crafts era, as is the double window used on its rear wall. Technological evidence supports the idea that this final wing is of late construction. Its low shed roof (made possible by covering it with metal instead of wood shingles) and wire nails in its lath point to a later date than the rest of the house.

With regard to the windows, only fragments of sash remain throughout the house, but enough parts survive in most rooms to determine their original treatment. Although size of trim parts varies from one section of the house to another, they are all cased in a similar manner: plain, unadorned head and jamb moldings outside and unmolded boards inside, to which a beaded stop was applied. The interior sills reflect conventional Victorian-era treatments, with a shallow stool, bullnose on its interior edge, doubling as a stop and sitting over an unmolded board. In each construction phase the builder appears to have purchased manufactured window units.

Selection of sash, however, reflects the additive nature of the house and the relative importance of each room. The first-phase building and its kitchen were fitted with narrow muntin, six-over-six sash. This was an old-fashioned choice, but one that matched with the house's general conservative treatment. More style was afforded the dining room when it was constructed a few years later; its windows were filled with modern, wide-muntin, two-over two sash, including in the attic. Yet, when the house was expanded to include the present kitchen, it was treated more modestly with the same six-over-six arrangement used in the original house. Finally, the added bedroom suite not only received two-over-two sash, but Otho and Susie Nelson's bedroom was fitted with a double window—an arrangement that became common in the region during the first quarter of the 20th century. While the variation in window forms and sash treatments was not great, they do track with changes to the house and were used in subtle ways to reflect the hierarchical assignment of room uses.

Selection of flooring material and the way it was installed differs throughout the house. Not surprisingly, all boards are made of yellow pine. It is generally the selection of board widths and the quality of the material that changes. The original house was laid with typical Victorian-era flooring made of narrow boards joined with tongue and grooves and blind-nailed. These boards generally measure 3 ½ inches in width, but a few are as narrow as 2 ¼ inches. A poor quality of pine was selected, one that was fast grown (common after the Civil War) and of a secondary grade showing a large amount of flat grain. In the dining room, boards are even rougher, with occasional circular-saw marks showing through where they were not sufficiently planed. They

are wider than in the main house (consistently five inches), which is not surprising for a secondary location. The kitchen was laid with finer boards in terms of the tightness of their grain and the limits of the flat sawing, but the boards are random width and range from about five to seven inches across. The widths and variability speak to the service nature of the room. Common, unplaned boards were selected for the attic over the dining room and kitchen. These show the circular-saw marks from their manufacture and were face-nailed. Perhaps most surprising was the variation selected for the bedroom addition. While fashionably narrow boards were used in both, those in Otho and Susie Nelson's room are consistently 4 ½ inches in width, while those in Captain and Gladys Nelson's room were consistently 3 inches wide (Captain Nelson succeeded his father, Otho Nelson, as chief). Whether the choice of board widths in the wing was a matter of material availability or intended as social cue is unknown. Finally, good quality boards were used to floor the breezeway—selected for durability in an area exposed to the weather. These boards consistently measure 6 ½ inches wide, are tongue and grooved, and have an interesting nail pattern: each board was blind nailed on one side and face nailed on the other. While the differences in floor treatments was understated, they did blend with other variations, such as siding and sash selection, to create the distinctiveness of the place.

Finishes in the house affirm the roles that were intended for each space. Plaster on walls with plain baseboards and trim to doors and windows were used to finish the main block of the house on both floors since this area encompassed both public entertaining space and sleeping rooms. The builder used late Victorian-era doors from a factory for the first floor. The secondary nature of the chambers in the attic meant that an old-fashioned door hung on manufactured cross garnet hinges would suffice. The original kitchen may have been left with bare walls, as its attic and that of its addition remain to this day. These attic spaces served for food preparation and storage space and required no finishes. Plaster on the walls and ceiling of the kitchen as remodeled into a dining room upgraded this space, yet the door that led to the newer kitchen was made as a cheap, old-fashioned board-and-batten leaf to indicate the lower status of the workroom beyond. The new kitchen used horizontal board sheathing as an appropriate cheap substitute for plaster on its walls. Most of the walls and ceilings in the 1920s wing were plastered, as one might expect of this later date, yet the hallway to them was sheathed with vertical boards to nicely finish the circulation route also without the expense of plaster. The final effect was a generous house with nicely finished rooms, but trim and wall surfaces regulated to reflect their relative importance.

The architectural evidence was corroborated by an oral history with granddaughters of Chief Otho and Susie P. Nelson. In the 2018 interview, the granddaughters indicated that the front of the house faced the street, with the leg of the "T," or the first build, housing the living room and later one of the grandchildren's bedrooms. This part of the building formed the approach side of the house.

Both granddaughters have clear memories of how the house was used until their family moved out in the mid-1960s. The hall in the main block served as the family's living room. It was here that public events took place, ranging from tribal meetings to church gatherings. The parlor served as the older granddaughter's bedroom and held the piano. It was from this room that the

boys ascended the staircase to their room immediately above it. The other attic-story space—that over the living room—functioned as Susie P. Nelson's office and held her typewriter.

The grandparents slept in the far end of the bedroom wing. Here, too, Susie Nelson taught school from the 1930s through the early 1960s, which, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, included one of the granddaughters and six other children. One of the boys attending school boarded upstairs with Chief and Mrs. Nelson's grandson and his cousin while other children were day students. Susie Nelson was also noted for her medicinal skills and used the top of the dresser and a dresser drawer in her bedroom as an apothecary. The bedroom adjacent to the grandparents was where their son, Captain, and his wife slept. The hallway afforded them more privacy than their children.

The porch not only provided a protected covering as access to the dining room and kitchen, it was also here that Chief Otho Nelson would sit to read his bible. Presumably the porch was a frequent summer sitting space or a place to work under the cover of a roof. The family took their meals in the dining room, prepared in the kitchen just beyond, and used the attic of the kitchen both to process and store food. The family used a second room over the dining room in a similar fashion.

While the granddaughters noted that all rooms in the house were heated by stoves, it appears that the two spaces in the attic of the main block (and the processing attics of the kitchen and dining wing) relied on stoves in the rooms below for their heat. Furthermore, the heat source in the current kitchen is no longer apparent but must have existed.

Secondary Resources

Cistern, Well, and Earlier Well (Contributing Structures [3])

A cistern and two wells are located a short distance south of the dwelling. The cistern is round with a concrete cap on top. It measures approximately 3.3-feet in diameter. The top of the cap measures approximately 1.8-feet above-grade and contains a 1.6-by-1.6-foot square opening at the top. Depth to the top of standing water within the cistern is 13.5 feet from the opening in the cap. The overall depth is unknown.

The more recently constructed well lies 21 feet east of the cistern and is oriented approximately in line with the breezeway of the main house. The well is round and appears to have been filled in to approximately grade level. No remains of a well cap were present. The diameter of the well is approximately 3.4 feet. The well's concrete walls measure approximately 0.25-feet thick. The top of the well extends 2.0-feet above-grade.

An earlier well survives as a pit in the ground that is now filled with vegetation. Its historic use is reported by Rappahannock Chief Anne Richardson, who believes the pit was an earlier well.

These three structures are contributing resources associated with the main dwelling's occupation at a time that well water was the most common source for drinking and washing water in the rural area. A public water system rarely extended to such areas during the early to mid-20th century, and in many places still is not available. Thus the Nelson House's continued occupation required on-site water supplies such as the wells and cistern that were built.

Site 44KQ0137 (Contributing Site)

[redacted] Two above-ground ruins are associated with the site. First, the ruins of a frame building with a metal roof is identified as the west barn, [redacted] The current state of the west barn is a collapsed ruin, though the roof remained mostly intact even after the walls failed. Collapse of the structure was in a southward direction, indicating failure possibly began with the south wall. Dimensions of the surviving roof frame are 21 feet north-south by 20 feet east-west. The ridgeline of the sheet metal roof ran in an east-west direction. Remains of large entry doors are located on the east and west gable ends of the structure.

The second ruin is the east barn, a frame structure with a metal roof [redacted] The current state of the structure is a collapsed ruin that is in a considerably more dilapidated state than the west barn. The primary cause of the structure's collapse appears to have been a large tree fall that landed across the center of the structure. Little recognizable shape remains other than part of the roof's ridgeline. The dimensions of the ruin in-situ are approximately 30 feet north-south by 20 feet east-west. The roof appears to contain at least two and possibly three distinct sections, with a ridgeline running in an east-west direction. The main core of the east barn appears to have measured approximately 20-by-20-feet, with a 10-foot shed addition on the north side. A historic photograph (following page) of the property indicate that there was also a shed of equal size on the south side of the east barn, the remains of which were not visible in the structure's current ruinous state. The same historic photograph, taken in 1919 or 1920, indicate that access to the main core of the building and sheds was on the west gable end. The photographs show two windows on the east gable end of the core structure.

As part of the preparation of this nomination, in 2018, archaeologists from St. Mary's College of Maryland conducted a shovel test pit (STP) survey of the Nelson House property. A total of 181 STPs were systematically excavated at intervals of 10 ft. in a 100-by-100 ft. grid [redacted] The soil was screened through 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth, soil stratigraphy was recorded, and all artifacts collected.

View of the Chief Otho S. Nelson House, 1919 or 1920. Red arrow points to east barn. Facing northeast (deShields Bastow 1975:42).

Surprisingly few artifacts were recovered from the site despite proximity to the presently standing dwelling and the ruins of agricultural buildings. A total of 1,267 artifacts were recovered with an artifact count ranging from 0 to 108 per STP. When certain artifact categories are excluded, including driveway gravel (n=337), tempered glass, and miscellaneous metal, the highest number of artifacts recovered from any one STP was 33.

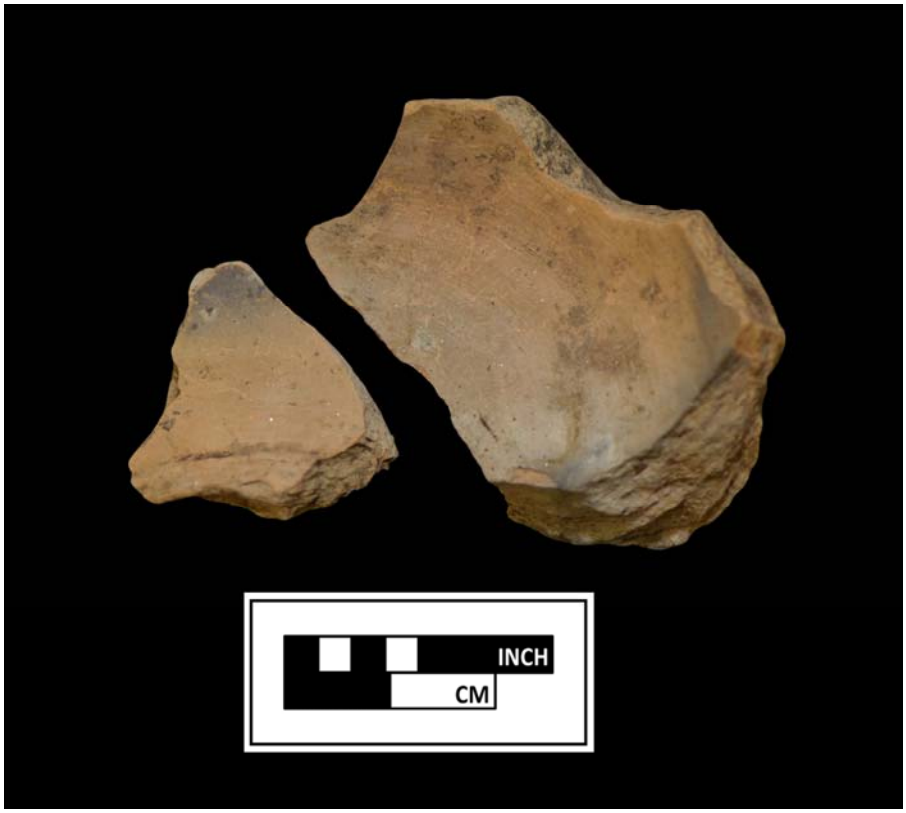
Architectural materials account for 29.28 percent (n=371) of the assemblage. Nails form the next largest category of architectural artifact followed by brick, window glass, iron hinges, cement, and a single screw.

Non-architectural glass comprises 22.34 percent (n=283) of the collection, including 208 container glass fragments, 53 tempered glass fragments, 12 possible lighting glass fragments, 4 curved glass fragments, 3 flat glass fragments, 2 milk glass canning jar lid liner fragments, and 1 table glass fragment. At least 3 of the container glass fragments are from small bottles and may

have once held medicinal remedies created by Susie Nelson. One of these bottles has a crudely broken ring of metal around its neck that could have once served as a homemade cap for the bottle.

Only 1.89 percent (n=24) of the assemblage includes ceramics. In addition to ivory dyed bodied refined earthenware (n=9), flower pot (n=5), porcelain (n=3), white refined earthenware (n=2), hotel china (n=1), white granite stoneware (n=1), and ivory dyed stoneware (n=1), two colonoware fragments were recovered. A single fragment each of oyster shell, shatter, and bone were also collected.

The two colonoware fragments are unglazed and are made from local clay (see below). The uneven burn marks found on these two fragments are similar to those observed on older Native ceramics, suggesting that they were fired in a similar manner. While the fragments could have been hand built initially, they appear to have been modified on a wheel as evidenced by the concentric rings around the vessel fragments. It is unclear who made the vessel(s) these fragments represent, but they may have been produced as a part of a pottery revival tradition among Virginia's Indian groups, including the Pamunkey and the Rappahannock. In the 1930s, the Commonwealth of Virginia provided assistance to Pamunkey potters interested in reviving their ceramic tradition. Wheels were used to produce pots as part of this revival.



Colonoware fragments recovered from the Chief Otho S. Nelson House.

The distribution of artifacts provides some evidence about yard use at the Chief Nelson House. The most notable pattern is the relative absence of artifacts immediately surrounding the house. The topsoil surrounding the house also tends to be thinner. This pattern of a shallow topsoil is seen around all but two of the outbuildings (both those in ruins and those no longer surviving). Only the southwestern outbuilding (no longer surviving) does not show this pattern.

Two mending rim fragments of an ivory-dyed refined earthenware plate with an underglaze-printed cobalt blue floral decoration provides additional evidence about the distributions of materials in the yard. One fragment was recovered just west of the kitchen. The other fragment was recovered nearly 110 feet away on the east side of the house.

The mending plate fragments are probably from the Hutchinson occupation, though they could be from the early Nelson occupation. Their distance from one another suggests movement away from the artifact's original site of deposition. Given that one fragment was recovered adjacent to the kitchen, it is possible that soil was moved and then redeposited during the expansion of the kitchen building or the addition of the two bedrooms, hall, and breezeway. There is no door on the east side of the house to suggest deposition from a waste stream between the house and an exterior midden, although this general area does contain a much higher than average number of artifacts for the site.

This may suggest that the Nelsons (and before them, the Hutchinsons) kept a swept yard around their dwelling and adjacent agricultural buildings. Clearing debris from the surface would have kept the topsoil layer from thickening and kept trash out of the space immediately surrounding the house. It is also possible (although not likely) that the area around the house may have been graded during its construction or expansion. This would have occurred before the Nelsons moved in and would not have affected the post-1920 artifact distribution for the Nelson period. The shallowness may also be a result of lack of plowing after the house was built, erosion, and/or general use of the space.

[redacted] The recovery of canning jar lid liner fragments may be related to the food processing that Susie Nelson did with produce from the farm. The distribution of driveway gravel also reveals that the driveway extended from the extant road leading up to the property along the north and west sides of the house, and possibly around the back (south side) of the house as well.

The recovery of short roofing tacks supports the architectural history findings that the earliest section of the house was once entirely roofed with wooden shingles prior to the construction of the single-level wing. The nails may have been deposited when the shingles were replaced with metal sheeting.

A 1919 photograph (below) of the house in the Frank Gouldsmith Speck Photograph Collection at the National Museum of the American Indian and reproduced below shows an overhang and possibly a porch at the front of the house, where either the Nelsons, the Hutchinsons before them, or unknown tenants after them may have kept flowers that are indicated by the deposit of flowerpot fragments by the front door. Other flowerpot fragments are located northeast and southeast of the house.

View of the Chief Otho S. Nelson House, 1919, by Frank G. Speck. Facing west (Smithsonian Institution).

The ruins of the east barn and west barn, the archaeological materials that provide evidence of several other outbuildings, and [redacted] provide information about the property's use during the Nelson family's occupation. Although archaeological testing is not sufficient to demonstrate the site is significant under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology – Historic – Aboriginal, Site 44KQ0137 has yielded sufficient information to classify the site as contributing to the Nelson House.

Integrity Analysis

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House has retained integrity of location as no indication has been found through either field investigation or documentary research that any of the identified buildings were moved to the property from elsewhere. The property's overall historic setting remains rural and agricultural. The dwelling's immediate setting is different today than

during the historic period, due to loss of the outbuildings shown in historic photographs. Archaeological testing, however, indicates that large-scale ground disturbance has not occurred in the dwelling's environs, allowing [redacted]

The Nelson House itself is deteriorated in terms of its materials, likely due to a lengthy period of vacancy as it has not been occupied since the 1980s. Yet as the architectural analysis above demonstrates, the dwelling's integrity of workmanship and materials is high, providing considerable information about historic uses of the dwelling and its evolution over several decades. Likewise, because the dwelling has not been substantially altered in the past several decades, its integrity of design has been retained. The integrity of design, workmanship, and materials for outbuildings associated with the property are diminished as only two barns remain in a ruinous state.

Overall, the Nelson House retains a high level of integrity of feeling as a rural farmstead. The continued association of historic acreage associated with the Nelson family's conveys the historic feeling, as does the lack of modern intrusions on the property. Even the small-scale electrical transmission line that crosses the northern end of the property likely was established during the property's period of significance.

With regard to its historic associations, the Nelson House has outstanding integrity as the place where significant tribal events occurred during the period of significance and where Otho S. Nelson served as chief of the Rappahannock tribe across four decades, while Susie P. Nelson taught schoolchildren and maintained an apothecary of use to her own family and neighbors. The property's high integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling add to the integrity of association.

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.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [X] 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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

Period of Significance
ca. 1924-1967

Significant Dates
N/A

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
Nelson, Otho Smoot
Nelson, Susie Pearl

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

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

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House is significant at the statewide level under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Native American for its connection to the Rappahannock Indian Tribe of Virginia during the tribe's period of cultural revitalization, the years-long effort by the tribe to secure state and Federal recognition, and the tribe's ongoing struggle to challenge Virginia's racial laws eliminating Indian identity. The Chief Nelson House is also significant at the statewide level under Criterion B in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Native American for its connection to Rappahannock Chief Otho S. Nelson and his wife, Susie Pearl Nelson, who served as the tribal secretary for the Rappahannock tribe. Mrs. Nelson operated a school for Indian children and an apothecary serving both her Indian and white neighbors in the house. The house is significant for the period ca. 1924-1967, the years Otho Nelson served as chief of the Rappahannock Tribe.

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

CRITERION A: Ethnic Heritage: Native American

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House is significant at the statewide level for its significance as a place for tribal deliberations and cultural preservation between the 1920s and 1960s. The tribe's archives were maintained here and important tribal meetings took place in the dwelling, most notably those related to the tribe's quest to retain the right to self-identify and to obtain recognition from the Commonwealth of Virginia and the U.S. government. The tribe's response to government actions, such as the Racial Integrity Act passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1924, classifications of individuals by U.S. census takers, and classification of Rappahannock draftees during World War II, were discussed and decided upon at the Nelson House, which doubled as meeting space during the period of significance.

The Chief Nelson House served as well as a grade school for tribal children between the 1930s and 1950s, after both Federal and state officials refused to provide public funds for a local school at a time that all of Virginia's schoolchildren were segregated on the basis of race and the doctrine of "separate but equal" provided far from equal educational opportunities. Tribal members preferred that their children stay home and attend a nearby school rather than sending them to far-off boarding schools, which historically had been places where school administrations dominated by whites had sought to erase pupils' sense of tribal identity. Another cultural repository at the house, Mrs. Nelson's apothecary, as well as both her and Otho Nelson's medical knowledge, were based on traditional tribal practices handed down from one generation to the next. Throughout this period, tribal members who had moved elsewhere for better job opportunities were welcomed to stay at the Nelson House when they came home to visit.

CRITERION B: Ethnic Heritage: Native American

Both Chief Otho S. Nelson and Susie P. Nelson are significant persons at the statewide level in the history of the Rappahannock Tribe in Virginia. Chief Otho Nelson served as chief from ca. 1924 until 1967. During this time, Chief Nelson implemented the tribe's decisions on civil rights issues, including the right to self-identify, to resist the policies of white supremacists who sought to erase the continuous presence of Indians in Virginia, to be counted correctly in the U.S. census, and to serve in the military according to their own identity. Chief Nelson himself corresponded with state and federal officials on tribal matters and, when necessary, traveled to confront intransigent officials and explain the tribe's position on consequential matters. His service required organizational and diplomatic skills, and an ability to articulate moral principles, and shrewd pragmatism. An early test of his leadership came with the Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924. Anticipating that the law could be used to deny the presence of Indians in Virginia, Chief Nelson wrote to the Chief Statistician for Population for the U.S, Census Bureau, to request that the 218 members of the Rappahannock tribe be recorded as "Indian" in the 1930 census. After receiving inadequate responses from the Census Bureau, the Rappahannock took matters into their own hands by driving to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to persuade Fifth Census District Supervisor John W. Green to change their racial classification in the census to "Indian" (Rountree 1990:227-228; Ragan 2006:2-3). A similar test occurred at the outset of World War II, when military officials refused to recognize the tribal membership of several Rappahannock draftees. With input from anthropologist Frank G. Speck and attorney Charles Edgar Gilliam, the Rappahannock achieved a partial victory when its members were reclassified as conscientious objectors.

During the tribe's fight for state and federal recognition, the support that Susie P. Nelson provided in the form of administrative and financial organization is difficult to calculate, but her legacy is not disputed. From the 1930s through the 1950s, she acted as tribal secretary and kept meticulously organized records of tribal meetings, correspondence, and other actions. She also organized a grade school for the tribe's children after county, state, and federal officials failed to provide any means for these children to attend a local school. The pupils convened at the Nelson House, where Susie Nelson taught for 30 years, and for at least some of that time was on the payroll of the Commonwealth of Virginia as a teacher. Susie Nelson's expertise extended to medicinal plants and she maintained an apothecary in her bedroom. Her reputation as a healer was well known in the local community.

THE RAPPAHANNOCK INDIANS

The Rappahannock Indians are among seven Federally-recognized tribes in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Their ancestors included the many polities on the Rappahannock River greeting the first English colonists to Virginia in the early 17th century. Eventually dispossessed of and displaced from the rich lands along the river, in 1682, colonial authorities assigned

approximately 4,000 acres to the Rappahannock Indians in the vicinity of Indian Neck in today's King and Queen County. Rappahannock families persisted in this vicinity through the 18th and 19th centuries and many tribal members continue in Indian Neck today where the Rappahannock Indian Tribal Center is located and the tribe is headquartered.

Between 1887 and 1933, it became the explicit policy of the U.S. government to promote and compel Indian assimilation to the dominant society. The General Allotment Act (also known as the Dawes Act), key U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and the creation of Indian boarding schools were designed to encourage Native people to abandon traditional forms of culture and adopt western forms. By 1890, resistance to these laws and policies was becoming organized and manifested in religious and cultural revivals, particularly in the American West. Tribal revitalization movements included Virginia Indians who had carefully memorialized their Indian identity through family histories. Among the Rappahannock, George L. Nelson emerged as an important tribal leader who organized and incorporated the Rappahannock Indian Association. Nelson was encouraged by Frank G. Speck, an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork among the Rappahannock in 1919, to preserve tribal identity and establish a framework for cultural revitalization.

In 1921, the Rappahannock formally organized as the Rappahannock Indian Association, establishing a tribal government and policies for the operation of the tribe. George Nelson became the first chief, with Otho S. Nelson as Assistant Chief and George's sister and Otho's wife, Susie P. Nelson, serving as the secretary for the tribe. Soon after incorporation, Chief George Nelson relocated to New Jersey and Otho Nelson assumed the position of Chief. Chief Otho Nelson, supported by Susie Nelson, led the Rappahannock as they revitalized their culture, sought state and Federal recognition, and fought one of the most damaging Jim Crow laws in the country: Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924.

CHIEF OTHO SMOOT AND SUSIE PEARL NELSON

Otho Smoot Nelson was born in 1882 in Caroline County, Virginia, along the old Indian path leading from Indian Neck to Portobago Bay. Otho was the son of Robert and Julia Nelson. While it is unclear if Otho had formal schooling as a child, census records suggest some ability to read and write. Otho moved to King and Queen County sometime between 1900 (when the census places him in Caroline County) and 1910 (when he is living in Newton, King and Queen County). He married Susie Pearl Nelson in 1909. Susie Nelson had been born in 1889 in Newton, King and Queen County, Virginia, the daughter of Samuel and Virginia (Fortune) Nelson. Susie Nelson received formal schooling through the eighth grade during her childhood in King and Queen County.

Otho and Susie Nelson may have lived with Susie's parents after their marriage. Sometime between 1910 and 1919, the Nelsons moved to the nominated property. A photograph taken in 1919 by Frank Speck identifies the house as a "Rappahannock homestead," implying the Nelsons

moved to the property before then. The Nelsons rented the house from John D. Hutchinson and operated a farm on the property.

The Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House served as the center of official tribal business from ca. 1924, when Otho Nelson became chief, until 1967, when Otho passed away and the family moved (Otho's son, Captain, had taken over as chief before his father passed away). Chief Otho Nelson hosted tribal meetings in the living room. Susie Nelson kept minutes for these meetings and, as tribal secretary, prepared administrative records. Her granddaughters recall that her office was the unheated room over the living room. There she kept her Royal typewriter and the onionskin copies of the many letters she would send to the Virginia governor, the U.S. president, and other important officials in the Rappahannocks' struggle for the right to self-identify.

Susie Nelson became diabetic in the 1950s, developing complications that confined her to a wheelchair. Mrs. Nelson died in 1962 at the age of 73. Otho Nelson died in 1967 at the age of 84.

THE RACIAL INTEGRITY ACT OF 1924

The Rappahannock organized in the midst of the Jim Crow-era, during which time whites sought to disempower African Americans under the guise of "separate but equal" policies. Although the focus during this time period was on enforcing inferior political, social, and economic positions on African Americans in the wake of Reconstruction-era policies that ended slavery and granted citizenship and voting rights, other minorities, including Native Americans, did not escape the racist policies imposed by local and state legislatures.

In 1922, just as the Rappahannock were organizing, so too were a group of white supremacists based in Richmond. That year, pianist John Powell, statistician Walter Plecker, and traveler and pseudo-ethnographer Earnest S. Cox formed the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America (ASCOA). The ASCOA had one goal: to preserve the "racial purity" of the white race through the passage of laws preventing interracial or mixed marriages and limiting immigrants to people coming from northern Europe. Members of the ASCOA believed in the biological inferiority of Africans and African Americans and held a near-hysterical fear of the "degeneration" that might ensue through racial mixing (Whisnant 1985).

With the assistance of ASCOA members, John Powell drafted a bill entitled "To preserve the integrity of the white race." In 1924, the Virginia General Assembly passed a revised version of this bill, titled the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. The law defined "colored" persons as those with one-sixteenth or more of Negro blood and Indians as persons with one-sixteenth or more of Indian blood and no Negro blood.[1] The legislation prohibited marriages between white and non-white persons, required racial designations to be included on newly issued birth certificates, and required that race be documented for all Virginians born before 1912 (Wolfe 2015).

[1] The term, "blood," is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the inherited characteristic (later as the vehicle of hereditary characteristics) distinguishing members of a common family, nation, breed, etc., from other groups."

The act established the first legal definition of "white" as a racial category, using now-discredited eugenics as its basis. A "white" person was defined as an individual with "Caucasian" ancestry, no Negro blood, and up to one-sixteenth Indian blood. The allowance for Indian blood was termed the "Pocahontas Exception," included for members of those prominent white Virginian families that claimed ancestry from Pocahontas and John Rolfe (Wolfe 2015). Such revisions demonstrated that these categories were social constructs not based in empirical evidence.

Following continued pressure by the ASCOA, an amendment to the act was passed in 1926 that redefined how much Indian blood one could have and still be considered white. While the ASCOA wanted to eliminate the Pocahontas Exception, their petitions served only to increase concerns for the descendants of Pocahontas. As a result, the law was loosened and the definition of "white" was changed to allow for one-eighth or less of Indian blood (Wolfe 2015).

In 1930, the Virginia General Assembly revisited their definition of "colored" persons. Previously, a person was classified as colored if they had one-sixteenth or more of "Negro" blood, and white persons could have no African ancestry. No racial category existed for those who might be less than one-sixteenth "Negro" and majority white. In response, the General Assembly passed legislation that became known as the "one drop rule," defining a colored person as someone with some ascertainable amount of "Negro" blood or a single African ancestor. While in theory this legislation did not specifically affect the racial designation of Indians, the legislation caused backlash among the Indian community who feared that its phrasing would cause them to be classified as "colored" (Wolfe 2015).

In response to the backlash, a provision was added that allowed those with at least one-fourth Indian blood and less than one-sixteenth "Negro" blood to be classified as Indian so long as they resided on a reservation. Only the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi retained their historically-assigned reservations, with other groups having been systematically forced off of their land during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Rappahannock were among those who faced renewed racial scrutiny under the 1930 amendment, as it reaffirmed the exclusion of African ancestry in the definition of an Indian individual (Wolfe 2015).

As the first registrar of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics, Walter Ashby Plecker possessed a unique power over Virginians that other members of the ASCOA did not have. As registrar, he oversaw the recordation, distribution, and organization of marriage licenses, birth certificates, and death certificates. This power allowed him to police the racial classifications of Virginians and deny marriage certificates to couples his research showed to be interracial.

Plecker created obstacles that made it not only difficult for the Virginian Indians to gain federal recognition, but that went to the core of their right to self-identify. Plecker mistakenly believed that no Virginian Indians remained, buying into the trope of Native disappearance that began in the seventeenth century as an excuse for colonists to seize land. Plecker was convinced that all

remaining Indians were, in reality, "tainted" with "Negro" blood. The Pocahontas Exception was a point of contention for Plecker, who believed he was onto their strategy:

> "[E]ach group [of Indians] is well organized, with the one major thought in mind of escaping from the negro race and securing recognition as white, with the resulting privilege of attending white schools and ultimately attaining the climax of their ambitions, marrying into the white race. […] All of these groups have been following the same procedure for the past fifty years. They first proclaim themselves 'Indians', until the white public begins to believe it, then they jump across this intermediate gap and try to make it as 'white.' […] Under the Virginia law a person with one-sixteenth Indian blood and fifteen-sixteenths white, with no negro, can pass and marry as white. That is the reason for refusing to register them as 'Indians'" (Letter, Walter Plecker to L. G. Moffatt, 1943).

Plecker and his assistant, Eva Kelley, developed lists of surnames associated with individuals he believed were trying to elevate themselves to the status of the white race. Plecker went through and "corrected" official documents he believed were in error. He denied marriage certificates to inter-racial couples based on mostly inaccurate information he and Kelley traced about ancestries. Plecker's alterations of records are what ultimately made it difficult for Virginia Indians to prove their ancestry and gain federal recognition. Plecker's work became so disruptive that, in 1925, Governor Trinkle, who had signed the Racial Integrity Act into law, asked Plecker to show more empathy for the Indians. Plecker nonetheless continued to enforce the law as he saw fit until his retirement in 1946 (Coleman 2013; Fiske 2004; John Powell Papers; Rountree 1990).

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO SELF-IDENTIFY

In the wake of the passage of the Racial Integrity Act, the Rappahannock knew that, if they were to gain state or Federal recognition as a tribe, they needed to fight for the right to self-identify as Indians. In anticipation of the fight ahead, Chief Otho Nelson wrote to Leon E. Truesdell, Chief Statistician for Population for the U.S, Census Bureau, to request that the 218 members of the Rappahannock tribe be recorded as "Indian" in the 1930 census. A couple months later, Chief Nelson again wrote to Truesdell, complaining that the enumerators had written what they felt was correct without regard to the Rappahannock identity (Rountree 1990:227). After continuing to receive inadequate responses from the Census Bureau, the Rappahannock drove to Fredericksburg, confronted the supervisor of Fifth Census District John W. Green, showed him their "papers," and persuaded him to change their racial classification in the census to "Indian" (Rountree 1990:227-228; Ragan 2006:2-3).

A review of the 1930 census reveals that, while Chief Nelson was able to have the classifications of 50 additional tribal members corrected (for a total of 69), Green was not willing to change the racial classification of all members of the tribe.

In the 1940 census, the number of recorded Indian individuals in Newtown (King and Queen County) increased from nineteen in the earlier census to twenty-five in 1940. Unfortunately, the Rappahannock did not experience the same success in Caroline and Essex counties, revealing the ongoing struggle the Indians faced in the right to self-identify (United States Census 1930, 1940).

Only one family in total between the two counties is recorded as Indian—Modecia Byrd and his wife, daughters, mother, and niece. Still, one family is more than was originally recorded as Indian in these counties before the Rappahannock went to confront census officials a decade earlier. Despite the decrease in the recorded Indian population, this perhaps indicates progress on the part of the Rappahannock in getting their entire tribe recognized as Indian. Certainly, the continued recognition of the Newtown Rappahannock suggests that the surrounding community accepted their legitimacy as Native Americans.

The same year that the 1940 census was taken, the United States instituted the Selective Training and Service Act, or World War II draft. Men between the ages of 21 and 45 were compelled to register for the draft. At the time, white citizens and "colored" citizens served separately. "Colored" was defined by the one-drop rule, so all persons with even a single African ancestor were separated from the rest of the military. With only two racially recognized groups, all persons without African ancestry were conscripted into the white sections of the military (Murray 1987; Rountree 1990).

While reservation Indians were successful in being classified as Indian for the purposes of the draft, non-reservation Indians had a more difficult time. Virginian Indians, including the Rappahannock, had seen the damage wrought by the Racial Integrity Act and viewed classification as "colored" as yet another denial of their Indian identity. While members of some tribes were able to identify as Indian, members of the Rappahannock did not fare as well (Murray 1987; Rountree 1990).

In protest of the requirement that they register as "colored" and not Indian, four Rappahannock men from Caroline County refused to register for the draft. Three of these men were sentenced to two years in federal prison. Frank Speck enlisted the help of lawyer Charles Edgar Gilliam, who successfully managed to get the Rappahannock men released as conscientious objectors. They served the remainder of the war working in hospitals in Vermont (Murray 1987; Rountree 1990).

Walter Plecker was not thrilled with what he no doubt saw as meddling in Virginia affairs by Frank Speck. He had already attempted to prevent the earlier publication of Speck's research with the Rappahannock (Feller 2009:122-123). Plecker died in 1947 and Speck in 1950, and the Rappahannocks continued their struggle. The success the tribe had, however, can be measured in improved access to education.

EDUCATION

Education was an important strategy for the Rappahannocks from the very beginning of their fight for recognition until they gained access to white schools in 1965. During segregation, there were no public Indian schools in Virginia and Indians were not permitted to attend white schools. There were few options for schooling in rural farming communities like King and Queen County where children were needed to help with the farm. If Indian children were to be educated, they had few options: to move away to a community with Indian schools, to attend colored schools, or to be schooled informally by those who had been educated in one of the other two ways.

With a general lack of education among the older generations, there were few equipped to teach younger members of the community. And, after working so hard to organize as a tribe, going to colored schools felt like a betrayal of everything the Rappahannock were trying to do. As a result, most children either did not attend the public schools or they dropped out fairly young. (Rountree 1990: 200-201; Virginia Humanities 2019).

As early as 1923, when then-Chief George L. Nelson petitioned Congress for civil and sovereign rights for the Rappahannock, he also requested funding for an Indian school. Failing to acquire funding through Congress, in 1924, he appealed to Virginia's Governor Elbert Lee Trinkle for money to fund a school. The proposed school, to be called the Powhatan Academy, would be operated by the Rappahannocks and would accept Indian children from Delaware and Maryland as well as Virginia. This, too, failed, and no Powhatan Academy was established (George L. Nelson Papers).

The Mattaponi, the Pamunkey, the Upper Mattaponi, the two Chickahominy tribes, and the Monacan tribes all established schools that received at least some government funding during their existence. The Nansemonds attended white schools. In the case of the Rappahannocks, because tribal members were spread across three counties, the Rappahannocks could not convince any of the counties to fund a school for their children. As a result, the Rappahannocks found themselves scrambling to figure out how to educate their children without sending them away to school.

In 1922, the Rappahannock Indians established a school in Lloyds, Essex County, a location relatively central to Caroline, Essex, and King and Queen counties where the majority of the Rappahannocks lived (U.S. Congress 2018). This school may have closed shortly after it was established due to lack of funding for the school building. Around this time, probably after this school ceased its operation, Susie Nelson established a grade school that she ran from the house where she and Otho Nelson lived.

According to the 1940 census, Susie Nelson had a seventh grade-level education, which was more than many Rappahannocks had at the time. Chief Anne Richardson recalled that Mrs. Nelson had attended school with white children near Dunbrook, Virginia. To address the lack of education among the Rappahannocks, Susie established a school in the Chief Nelson House with

a curriculum for first through eighth grades. Not having attended high school herself, she could not teach high school level material. Those children who wanted to pursue high school typically moved away so that they could attend Indian schools (Rountree 1990; United States Census 1900b, 1940; Virginia Humanities 2019).

During Otho and Susie Nelson's older granddaughter's (b. 1949) time at the Chief Nelson House, she was taught by her grandmother along with five other children: her two brothers, her cousin, and two neighbors. Her cousin boarded with the Nelsons, sleeping upstairs with her two brothers. Before then, Susie Nelson taught earlier generations of Rappahannock children, beginning in the 1930s and including her son, Captain Otho Nelson, who would succeed his father as chief. Susie taught school for approximately 30 years, using her bedroom as a teaching space. At least part of that time she was paid by the Commonwealth of Virginia for her service; a payroll stub can be found in the Rappahannock archives in Indian Neck.

Following Susie Nelson's retirement in the 1950s due to declining health, another Rappahannock woman, Marion Rollins, took over teaching the children. Mrs. Rollins held school in a building adjacent to the Samuel C. Nelson house, [redacted] miles from the Chief's House and where Susie Nelson had grown up. Like Susie, Mrs. Rollins only taught grade school levels. Not long after she began teaching, Mrs. Rollins too became unable to teach and instead of hiring a new grade school teacher, the Rappahannocks decided they wanted to provide their children with high school level education.

Still unable to secure the public funding necessary to establish their own high school, the Rappahannocks arranged with the School Board and the help of the Governor to bus Rappahannock children to the Sharon school (NRHP 2007) in King William County, which had been established in 1919 for the Upper Mattaponi. Rappahannock children attended this school for two years, taking classes in a new building constructed in 1952. Segregated schools were ruled unconstitutional in 1954 in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision, but the Commonwealth of Virginia resisted integration of any kind until 1959 and did not fully integrate their schools until the early 1970s. In 1965, the Rappahannock were finally granted admission to the Marriot school—a local school for white children (Daugherity 2014; deShields Bastow 1975).

In the 1950s, Susie Nelson encouraged her son Captain Otho Nelson and his wife to work at Jamestown Festival Park (now the Jamestown Settlement). The park was built in 1957 to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. Susie may have seen the job opportunity as a way to educate the public about the Rappahannock tribe and to add further weight to their efforts for state recognition. The younger Nelsons worked at the park for approximately twelve years, interpreting the Powhatan Indian Village for the public.

MEDICINE/APOTHECARY

Susie Nelson was known among the Rappahannocks and the surrounding community of Indian Neck as a skilled doctor. Neighbors (Rappahannock and others) often came to her for medical help and advice. She was one of the key informants for Frank Speck's 1942 work "Rappahannock Herbals, Folk-Lore and Science of Cures," which he wrote with some of his students. Chief Otho Nelson also contributed his knowledge.

Both of the Nelsons' granddaughters recalled in an oral history that the top of Susie's dresser and one of its drawers were kept stocked with remedies made from local plants. One granddaughter recalled a time when her grandmother treated the young daughter of a neighbor who had stepped on a nail, piercing her entire foot. Susie Nelson's treatment, which consisted of placing the foot on hot coals wrapped in a blanket, prevented the wound from infection and the girl made a full recovery.

In a second example, one of the granddaughters' cousins was bitten by a black widow spider. The cousin's leg had begun to swell and there was no phone to call a doctor. Susie Nelson knew of a plant that her husband, Otho Nelson, had gotten for her (probably butterfly weed) and they wrapped the cousin's foot in that plant. By the time the local doctor, Dr. Lewis, arrived, he was surprised to find the cousin fine and doing well thanks to the treatment administered by Mrs. Nelson.

Speck (1942) notes that, among the Rappahannock Indians, only the remedies proven to be useful were passed on to younger generations. Medical knowledge was collectively remembered, but certain tribal members like Susie Nelson retained the most comprehensive knowledge of medical practices and tr1eatments. Though Speck mentions a number of men who were well regarded for their medical expertise, women like Susie Nelson and the apothecary she kept in the Chief Nelson House should be considered as equally important keepers of that expertise because of their additional knowledge of matters relating to pregnancy and childbirth.

THE RAPPAHANNOCK COMMUNITY AND THE CHIEF NELSON HOUSE

The Chief's House served a multitude of purposes beyond its functions as a school, an apothecary, and the center of tribal business. The basic function of the house was that of a dwelling and the center of a farm. Chief Otho Nelson and his son, Captain O. Nelson (b. 1924), did much of the farm work.

Chief Nelson's granddaughters recalled that their grandparents and parents (who continued to live with Chief Otho and Susie Nelson after their marriage) raised chickens, pigs and cows and butchered and processed the meat themselves. A photograph shows a horse pastured in the backyard. Wheat was also raised on the farm and ground at a local gristmill for household consumption. The Nelsons raised produce and managed fruit trees, with Susie canning the surplus or drying apples in the attic space over the kitchen. Almost everything served on the table was raised or grown on the farm with the exception of sugar and coffee, which the family

would purchase in Tappahannock, located about 10 miles away. Susie Nelson would sell surplus produce, eggs, and cream to her neighbors and a local country store. The granddaughters remember their grandmother saving money from these sales and paying cash for a car free of debt.

The Nelsons also led the communal expedition known as "herring dipping," an event taking place in the spring as herring returned from the ocean to freshwater streams to spawn. Parties of Rappahannock Indians would gather at Occupacia Creek, about 20 miles from Indian Neck, or at other suitable creeks/streams and use nets to "dip" for herring. The roe from pregnant females would be harvested and the fish salted for future meals.

In addition to his work on the farm and as chief of the Rappahannock Indians, Otho Nelson delivered mail by horse and buggy for the post office based in Indian Neck. The Nelsons were important members of the Indian Neck community. They shared their surplus food with those who assisted them with farm work. The granddaughters recalled that they cared for their landlord, John Hutchinson, when he became sick with the flu. When people needed a ride to the post office or country store in Indian Neck, Otho would let them ride in his buggy as he delivered the mail. During the winter, if a neighboring family was snowed in or did not have provisions, Otho and Susie would pack food and deliver it or provide transportation. As noted above, Susie also took care of the community's health needs with the apothecary she maintained in the house.

In order to support tribal efforts, many Rappahannock members would move away from Caroline, Essex, and King and Queen counties seeking better opportunities for work. To survive and to preserve tribal practices and identities, many Native families participated in the wage or market economy in Richmond and elsewhere, sending funds back to Virginia to support their families and the tribe, especially the struggle for the right to self-identify. When these families came back to visit, the Nelsons often hosted them at the Chief Nelson House and the community would gather there to see them.

Before the Rappahannock Baptist Church was founded in 1964, the Chief Nelson House along with other houses in the neighborhood also served as a religious gathering place. The Nelsons held their own church at home, and missionaries would come for services. They would also have large family meals and host Otho and Susie Nelson's daughter, Elsie, who as an adult was living on the Mattaponi Reservation with her large family. The granddaughters remember Sundays as a day when the adults would butcher chickens from the farm and prepare them for a large meal. Some Sundays, the Nelsons would visit the Upper Mattaponi and Mattaponi reservation churches.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

__X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
__X_ Other
Name of repository: _Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA; Rappahannock Tribal Center, Indian Neck, Virginia___

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _DHR#049-5132____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 75.8 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

[redacted]

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.)

[redacted]

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

[redacted]

Therefore, the historic boundary encompasses the historic setting of the Chief Otho S. and Susie P. Nelson House as well as all known historic resources.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Catherine C. Dye, William J. Graham, Scott M. Strickland, and Julia A. King
organization: St. Mary's College of Maryland
street & number: 47645 College Drive
city or town: St. Mary's City state: MD zip code: 20686
e-mail: jking@smcm.edu
telephone: 240-538-3449
date: May 10, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo

date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log (1)

Name of Property: Nelson, Chief Otho S. and Susie P., House

City or Vicinity: [redacted]

County: King and Queen County State: Virginia

Photographer: William J. Graham

Date Photographed: May 21, 2018

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

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0001. View of Chief Otho S. Nelson House, south elevation (camera facing north).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0002. Interior view of living room, where tribal meetings were held, View of Chief Otho S. Nelson House (camera facing north).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0003. Interior view of enclosed staircase with wide, beaded, vertical board sheathing secured with mature cut nails finished with hand-forged, traditional T-heads (camera facing southeast).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0004. Interior view of Mrs. Susie Nelson's bedroom where school was held and an apothecary was kept, Chief Otho S. Nelson House (camera facing west).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0005. Breezeway where Chief Otho Nelson read his Bible (camera facing west).

Photo Log (2)

Name of Property: Nelson, Chief Otho S. and Susie P., House

City or Vicinity: [redacted]

County: King and Queen County State: Virginia

Photographer: Scott M. Strickland

Date Photographed: April 18, 2019

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

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0006. East Barn exterior (camera facing west).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0007. East Barn exterior (camera facing east).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0008. East Barn exterior (camera facing south).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0009. West Barn exterior roof (camera facing southeast).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0010. West Barn exterior gable end (camera facing west).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0011. West Barn interior (camera facing east)

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0012. Concrete cistern (camera facing north)

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0013. Earlier well (camera facing north).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0014. Overview of well and cistern (camera facing west).

VA_KingandQueenCounty_ChiefNelsonHouse_0015. Well (camera facing north).