



**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

*Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.*

**DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff)** 0 078-0010

**1. General Property Information**

Property name: Clover Hill

Property address: 4432 Sperryville Pike

City or Town: Woodville, VA

Zip code: 22749

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

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

Building ☒

Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 782.59

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Town ☐ Village ☐ Hamlet ☐ Rural: ☒

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

Clover Hill is a ca. 1785 stone home with several frame modifications reflecting the structure's evolution during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The home and surrounding historic farmstead are nestled beneath Thornton Gap, where the Blue Ridge Mountains meet the Virginia Piedmont in Rappahannock County and offers commanding views of the surrounding Blue Ridge foothills and nearby Slaughter Mountain. Lane Enterprises LLC purchased Clover Hill in 1962, and the historic property is now a portion of the sprawling 7,100-acre Eldon Farms site, one of the largest undivided landholdings on the eastern seaboard. Clover Hill is located within a 5-minute drive of the quaint historic Villages of Sperryville and Woodville, and just 11-miles from the Thornton Gap Entrance Station on US-211, with close access to Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive. The farm complex is currently the public face of the Eldon Farms property and conveys an intact agrarian setting with rolling hills and pastures, mature trees and shrubs, and a historic farm drive extending from Sperryville Pike. The farmstead includes intact agrarian outbuildings and landscape features dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including an icehouse, spring house, several barns, and a ha-ha wall sited near the main dwelling, as well as a small family graveyard where members of the Slaughter family were buried between 1830-1866.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Late 18<sup>th</sup> century stone structure with 20<sup>th</sup> century modifications including a Classical porch

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here:  
N/A

If the builder is known, please list here: Charlie Hawkins (20<sup>th</sup> century modifications)

Date of construction (can be approximate): Original stone portion ca. 1785, front frame addition added ca. mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Classical porch with columns added ca. 1906; back garage modification added ca. early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):**

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

Clover Hill is the business and events center for Eldon Farms, operating as the public face of the enterprise. The property hosts outdoor public gatherings and events including seasonal nature walks, the Woodville Community Picnic and the John Jackson Piedmont Blues Festival. The farmstead has retained its historic agricultural setting and use for nearly two centuries; the property's extensive pastures presently support cattle grazing and rotation. The Clover Hill dwelling, the primary structure on the property, was historically a family residence and remained so well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the most recent family occupying Clover Hill lived there from 2007-2012. After 2012, Clover Hill remained vacant pending stabilization and preservation of the structure and is currently used for storage.

Clover Hill represents an evolution of architectural styles and features a two-story gabled stone ell dated ca. 1785 with a one-story wood frame extension dated ca. 1850s. An imposing Greek Revival façade and porch was added to the structure by the O'Bannons after their purchase of the property in 1904. The façade measures three bays in width and is marked by a two-story full-width porch with a central gabled portico and Ionic column supports. The dwelling is detailed with a second story center-bay balcony, two gabled dormers, operable louvered wood shutters, a molded wood cornice with returns, Ionic pilasters, a closed portico tympanum with fanlight, and a molded surround with a 30-light transom and three-light and dado panel surrounds with bulls-eye corner blocks. The façade addition was likely added by locally renowned builder Charlie Hawkins.

The addition of the Classical porch re-oriented the entrance of Clover Hill from its original location on the southern side of the house to the eastern facade, the main entry now purposefully oriented toward Sperryville Pike. A stone ha-ha wall likely built contemporaneously with the porch retains grade in front of the residence. The O'Bannon family installed stone stairs up to the top of the ha-ha wall and timber stairs to the porch; both sets of stairs are no longer extant. Sometime during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the O'Bannon family additionally modified the back portion of the house to include a two-door automobile garage.

The primary residence at Clover Hill has maintained integrity and is in fair physical condition pending stabilization of the Classical porch and renovation of flooring, HVAC, electrical and mechanical systems.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- **Slaughter Cemetery** (ca. 1785), fair condition
- **Springhouse** (ca. 1785), good condition
- **Icehouse** (ca. 1785 with 1900s frame modification and standing seam metal roof), good condition
- **Entry Drive** (ca. 1850s), good condition
- **Constructed ponds** (ca. 1920s), good condition
- **Stable** (ca. 1920s, recently renovated), good condition – wood-frame, two-and-a-half story structure featuring a cross-gabled standing-seam metal roof, weatherboard cladding, and overhanging eaves. Some of the interior timber pieces may have been recycled from older structures. Other detailing includes a decorative scalloped wood cornice, shed and gable-peak overhangs, double-hung and louvered windows, a rear shed animal pen, and a central porte- cochere with three rounded-arch openings.
- **Concrete Silo** (ca. 1930s), good condition - cylindrical structure with conical roof
- **Garage/Barn** (ca.1930s), poor condition
- **Bull Barn** (ca. 1930s), fair condition
- **Mountain Orchard Apple Packing Barn** (ca.1930s), fair condition
- **\*Farm Shed** (ca. 1950s), poor condition
- **\*Tenant House** (ca. 1950s), excellent condition
- **\*Farm Office** – former chicken coop, converted for farm staff / office use ca. 2000s
- **\*Smokehouse** - renovated / converted for staff use ca. 2000s

**Estimated Period of Significance: ca. 1785-1930**

*\* = denotes Non-Contributing Feature*

#### 4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

On May 20, 1782, William Brown and John Slaughter of Culpeper County gifted their children, Colonel John Suggett Slaughter and Susannah Brown 200 acres of land at Davids Mountain (later called Slaughter Mountain) in what was then Culpeper County, VA. On May 20, 1786, John Slaughter deeded John Suggett Slaughter an additional 200 acres. On this land, Colonel Slaughter built a stone house in 1785, following service in the Culpeper Minute Men during the Revolutionary War. After the war, Thomas Jefferson appointed Colonel Slaughter to guard the British prisoners at the Barracks near Charlottesville. He was an active magistrate in the Woodville area and served as High Sheriff. After his death aged 71 in 1830, his son Philip inherited the property. Philip Slaughter resided at Clover Hill with his wife, Anne Mercer Slaughter, and their children Philip, Thomas, Bessie, and Mercer. Phillip Slaughter built a frame addition to the original stone house ca. 1830s and grew the property's holdings to 743 acres. The 1860 Rappahannock County slave schedule recorded that Philip Slaughter enslaved 28 men and women on the large property. Though he was a major property owner in the region, he was deeply in debt. When he died in 1866 at Clover Hill, the estate was sold off, the lands divided, and the family relocated.

Clover Hill passed through several hands at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century before it was purchased by J. Hill O'Bannon and his wife Rena Armstrong, who was a Slaughter descendant, ca. 1904. The O'Bannons purchased several of the formerly divided Slaughter lands, re-establishing the historic extents of the historic farm. The O'Bannons added the Greek Revival façade along the structure's east elevation, where it would be highly visible from the turnpike, reflecting changing architectural tastes common in Rappahannock County around the turn of the century. Several similar Classical style structures were built in Rappahannock County during the early 1900s, including the Miller House and Hampden Hall. Both Miller House and Hampden Hall were designed and constructed by Charlie Hawkins, a prominent Rappahannock County builder who made significant contributions to regional architectural and building practices; Hawkins likely built the O'Bannon modifications to the front façade.

In addition to changes made to Clover Hill, the O'Bannons made landscape modifications and constructed outbuildings on the property, including an apple packing barn, livestock barns and sheds, a stable, silo, tenant housing and several man-made fire ponds. The family managed orchards on their land and sold apples at a family fruit stand near Skyline Drive. J. Hill O'Bannon died in 1955, and passed the property to his son, Maurice O'Bannon, who had grown up at Clover Hill, and his wife Louise Rudasill O'Bannon. The O'Bannons continued to live at Clover Hill, raising their children in the house, until the early 1960s.

At this time, William 'Bill' Lane, an entrepreneur from Lake Forest, Illinois, became enamored with the rolling hills and beautiful vistas of the northern Virginia Piedmont at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. After returning to the U.S. from fighting abroad in WWII, Lane had purchased a small book binding company in Chicago with his brother and another partner. Over a few decades, Lane transformed the company into a global office products brand, the General Binding Corporation, of which he was CEO. Inspired by his childhood visiting his grandfather's ranch in Wyoming, Lane used his wealth to speculate on rural land in several areas across the U.S. During the 1960s, Bill Lane made a significant purchase of more than 3,200 acres in a single day, assimilating seven farms into one contiguous holding. It was the first land acquisition of its kind in the region.

Lane purchased Clover Hill from Maurice O'Bannon in 1962 along with 782.59 acres. His primary agricultural ambition at Eldon Farms centered around Hereford beef cattle production, as well as establishing a genetics-based cattle operation founded in 2001. John Genho, the manager of the genetics-based cattle operation, moved to Clover Hill with his family from 2007-2012. The primary residence has remained vacant since 2012. In 2021, the stewardship of Eldon Farms passed from the Lane family to the Akre family, who currently own Clover Hill and the surrounding 7,100-acre Eldon Farms property.

Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

1860 Slave Schedule, Rappahannock County.

Albemarle County Deed Book. County Deed, dated April 16, 1962, J. Maurice O'Bannon and Louise R. O'Bannon to William N. Lane. Accessed: [here](#).

Clarke, Katherine. "Private Properties: Large Virginia Ranch May Set Record." *Wall Street Journal*, Friday October 25, 2019.

E.H.T. Traceries, Inc., Architectural Survey Report of Rappahannock County, Virginia, May 2003. Accessed: [https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf\\_files/SpecialCollections/RA-016\\_Historic\\_AE\\_Rappahannock\\_County\\_2003\\_Traceries\\_Report.pdf](https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/SpecialCollections/RA-016_Historic_AE_Rappahannock_County_2003_Traceries_Report.pdf)

Frank Massie Map of Albemarle County, 1907.

Green Peyton Map of Albemarle County, 1875.

Green, Raleigh Travers. "Dr. Philip Slaughter's History of St. Mark's Parish," in *Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpeper County, Virginia*. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co. 1964 (originally published 1900), p. 159.

Philip Slaughter, "The Result of Thirty Years' Experience of Draining at Clover Hill, Rappahannock County, VA., Consisting Of 73.5 Acres." *Transactions of The VA State Agricultural Society*. Re-printed in Southern Planter, November 1, 1887.

Rappahannock Women's Club. "Clover Hill" in *Traditions*. Orange: Custom Printing Co., p. 131.

The Historical Marker Database. "Milroy's Camp, Woodville." Accessed: <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=171353>.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources Architectural Survey Form: DHR ID 078-0010.

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

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

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

name/title: \_\_\_\_\_

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

street & number: \_\_\_\_\_

city or town: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

name/title: Jennifer Lauer, Cultural Landscape Historian

organization: Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects

street & number: 310 E Market Street

city or town: Charlottesville state: VA zip code: 22902

e-mail: jlauer@nbwla.com telephone: (332)-330-4022

Date: August 5, 2024

PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH CONTINUATION SHEETS TO THIS FORM. THANK YOU!

ELDON FARM

CLOVER HILL PIF  
'SKETCH MAP'

NELSON BYRD WOLTZ  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
DATE XX , 2024

Key

- 1. Sperryville Pike
- 2. Entry Drive
- 3. Ha ha wall
- 4. Clover Hill Main House
- 5. Stable
- 6. Garage/Barn
- 7. Office
- 8. Smokehouse (converted to Office)
- 9. Icehouse
- 10. Springhouse
- 11. Constructed Ponds
- 12. Tenant House
- 13. Slaughter Cemetery
- 14. Concrete Silo
- 15. Barn
- 16. Mountain Orchard Packing Shed
- 17. Bull Barn

Site Core (see enlargement)



ENLARGEMENT 2x SCALE



































































