



**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) 050-5120

**1. General Property Information**

Property name: Pamunkey Pottery School

Property address: 195 Lay Landing Road, Pamunkey Indian Reservation

City or Town: King William

Zip code: 23086

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

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

Building  Site  Structure  Object

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 0.25

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:

The Pamunkey Pottery School is located at 195 Lay Landing Road on the Pamunkey Indian Reservation adjacent to King William County, Virginia. Set back significantly from the road, the Pottery School building is located some distance to the north/rear of the Pamunkey School/Trading post. It is immediately bordered by a wooden area with densely packed mature trees to the north. It is surrounded by an open grass lawn to the east, south, and west with three additional mature trees located directly in front of the building to the south. There are no walkways or paths leading to the building. A concrete basketball court is situated several yards away from the building to the west, and a line of mature trees is situated several yards from the building to the east.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Vernacular

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

If the builder is known, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1932

#### **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.

The Pottery School was established in 1932 by Dr. B.N Van Oot. The school was state funded with the purpose to teach the Pamunkey Tribe to mass produce pottery to increase Tribal revenue. The Pamunkey Pottery Guild continues to utilize the building for its original purpose.

The Pamunkey Pottery School is constructed with isolated concrete piers supporting timber beams and rough sawn joists. This area houses work benches and shelving. Also in the original footprint is a section built on a slab on grade containing the kiln and associated work area. An addition to the rear of the building, present in 1937 photographs in the Library of Virginia's collection, houses additional storage area and work area. This area is also a slab on grade with light frame wood walls and roof. The exterior siding varies around the building. Traditional wood clapboard is used on the original building and some transition to the addition. The addition uses what appears to be asbestos siding on the sides and thin metal siding on the rear.

The floor framing in the elevated section of the building is comprised of 2"x5 3/4" joists at 24" on center spanning approximately 7 feet supported on 4"x5 3/4" girders spanning approximately 8 feet. The gable roof framing of the original building is comprised of 2"x6" rafters at 32" on center. The rafters of the shed roof over the addition are 1 5/8"x5 1/2" and vary from 24" to 32" on center. The original roof deck is 3/4" planks with modern OSB overlaid.

The Pottery Workshop has two chimneys. There is an abandoned brick chimney on east side of the building and a CMU chimney with clay flue tiles that was enclosed by the rear addition.

Alterations include the addition of an electric kiln, replacing the oil furnace with an electric furnace, replacing the original standing seam metal roof with a three-tab asphalt shingle roofing system, and removal of the front door awning and planting boxes on the south face of the building.

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.

- Brick lined firing pit, located a few yards west of the building. Fair condition, construction date unknown.
- Abandoned oil tank for furnace heat, located adjacent to the west elevation, toward the rear of the building. Fair to poor condition, construction date unknown.
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#### **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.

The Pamunkey Pottery School was established in 1932 by the Pamunkey and Dr. B.N. Van Oot, supervisor of Trade and Industrial Education on the Virginia State Board of Education. The state funded school taught Pamunkey potters to mass-produce pottery as a commercial venture, representing a departure from past pottery production practices. At the time the Pottery School was established, the Great Depression was at its lowest point. The Pamunkey who lived on the Reservation generally subsisted on a combination of hunting, fishing, and farming. Although these traditional activities were ingrained in Pamunkey culture, they were not at a scale to allow tribal members to participate in the larger commercial economy. Instead, Pamunkey potters long had sold their utilitarian plates, bowls, cups, and other vessels locally to farming families and other nearby residents. The Pottery School was proposed as an aid in generating internal revenue by participating in the growing tourism industry through selling tribal-produced pottery to visitors from beyond King William County. Its original mission, therefore, primarily was focused on commercial success; over time, the school's importance in cultural preservation also became a major feature of the program.

Although methods of mass production were taught at the Pottery School, in a Pottery Guild Ledger from 1939-1942, the Guild recorded its requirement that members also learn to and produce hand-built pottery using coiled clay in the Pamunkey tradition so that the practice would remain in the Tribe's living memory. Although the Pottery Guild embraced the commercial opportunities represented by adoption of alternative methods for making pottery for the tourist trade, the membership's commitment to traditional methods demonstrates the pragmatism and expediency needed to accomplish multiple goals: first, to provide for their families and the Reservation's economy through sale of pottery, and second, to preserve cultural traditions.

Overall, the 1932 Pottery School continuous activity up to the present day is demonstrable of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe's tenacity and grit through decades of difficult relationships with Virginia officials. The number of Pottery Guild members had declined in recent decades and was a topic of great concern among tribal elders who feared loss of the centuries-long cultural traditions associated with Pamunkey pottery production. Today, the Pamunkey Indian Museum operates a public gift shop that includes contemporary Pamunkey pottery created by Guild members. Additionally, the Virginia Native Arts Alliance has been formed to support and promote Native artists and their works on and off the Reservation, which has led to Pamunkey potters joining in the organization.

The Pottery School building is recommended as potentially eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C at the local level of significance. The Pottery School is significant under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Native American and Criterion A for Education. In addition to its function as a school, the building represents State sponsored activities and support on the reservation, as well as European and American influences on traditional trades of the Pamunkey Tribe. Additionally, the building highlights the shift from reliance on the land to commercial activities to generate revenue. The building is also significant under Criterion C as a well-preserved surviving example of an early-twentieth century pottery studio in the region and in association with state-sponsored commerce on one of the oldest inhabited Native American reservations in North America.

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.)

- All information taken from *Pamunkey Indian Tribe & Reservation: Intensive Survey Report and Management Plan* prepared by Commonwealth Preservation Group, May 2024. Report includes numerous citations to original sources of information.
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**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: \_\_\_\_\_ 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: Pamunkey Indian Tribe

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

street & number: 1054 Pocahontas Trail

city or town: King William state: Virginia zip code: 23086

e-mail: pamunkeytribe@pamunkey.org telephone: 804-843-2353

Legal Owner's Signature: 

Date: 4/23/2026

• • *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: Richard Matens, Executive Director

Daytime Telephone: 804-885-3344

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

name/title: Andrew Foster, Director, Pamunkey Indian Museum and Cultural Center

organization: Pamunkey Indian Tribe

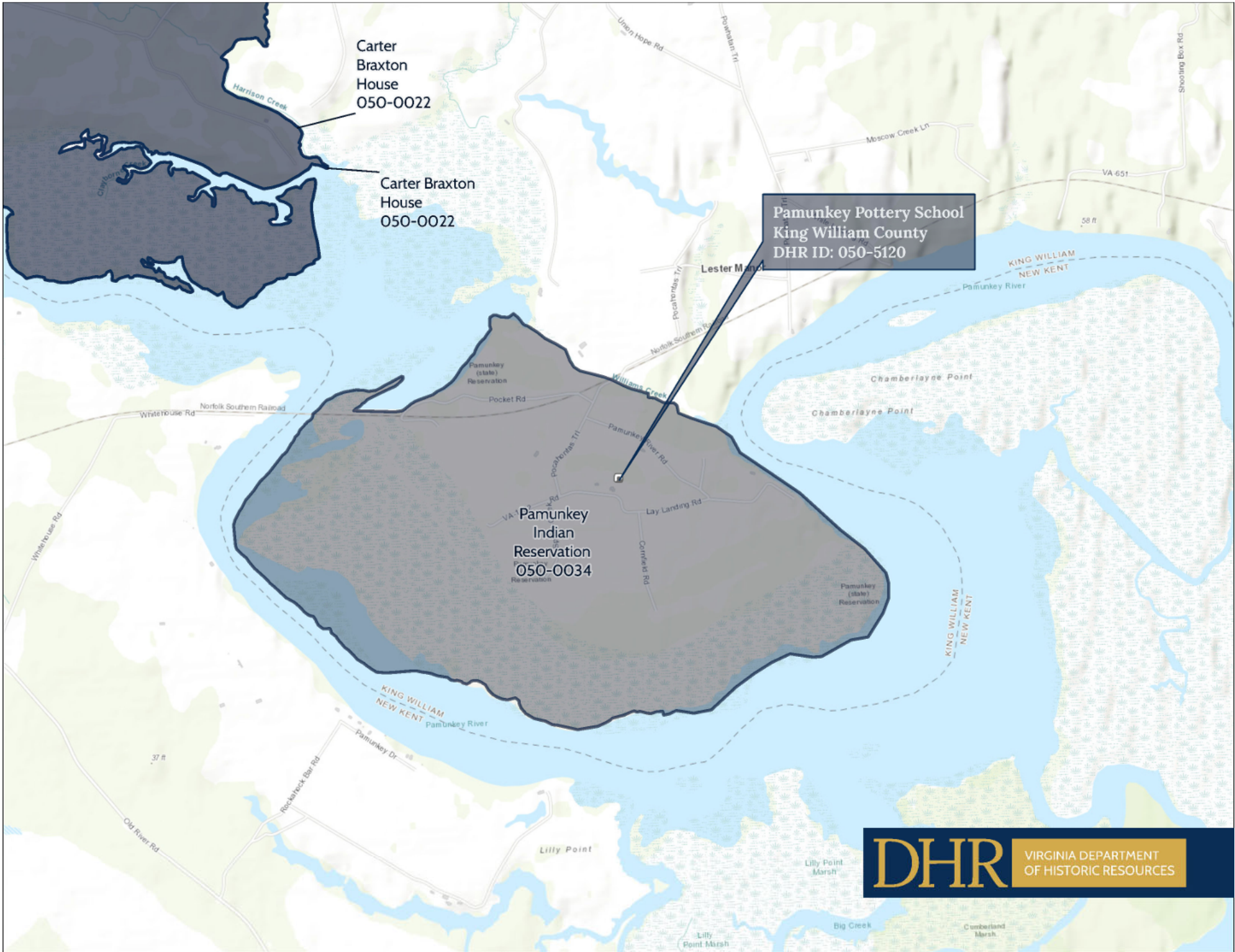
street & number: 175 Lay Landing Road

city or town: King William state: Virginia zip code: 23086

e-mail: Andrew.foster@pamunkey.org telephone: 804-701-2470

Date: April 14, 2026

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



Carter  
Braxton  
House  
050-0022

Carter Braxton  
House  
050-0022

Pamunkey Pottery School  
King William County  
DHR ID: 050-5120

Pamunkey  
Indian  
Reservation  
050-0034

**DHR** VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT  
OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

Pamunkey Pottery School  
King William County  
DHR ID: 050-5120



Lay Landing Rd















The Bakery  
will be closed  
for safety reasons.

SKUTT  
ELECTRIC HEATER

1000  
1500  
2000  
2500  
3000  
3500  
4000  
4500  
5000  
5500  
6000  
6500  
7000  
7500  
8000  
8500  
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