



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) 054-5650

1. General Property Information

Property name: Ellis Family Farmstead

Property address: _____

City or Town: Maiden

Zip code: 23102

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

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

Building Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 181 acres

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 Ellis Farm is in the Perkinsville community of Louisa County, Virginia, in the central Piedmont region. It lies about midway between Richmond and Charlottesville. The property comprises 181 acres straddling the Louisa-Goochland county line. The Ellis Family Cemetery is in Goochland County (fixed by deed and plat, Hart & Bell, Book 122, Page 322). The easement path from the road to the cemetery is established by the 1971 chancery reservation and the 1987 deed.

The land lies within the gently rolling terrain characteristic of Virginia's inner Piedmont, where the upland plateau transitions to drainage systems feeding the North Anna and James River watersheds. The farm's topography includes elevated fields and lower woodland areas, typical of the mixed agricultural and forested landscape that defined Piedmont subsistence and market farming in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The surrounding landscape retains a largely rural character, with historic road alignments, neighboring agricultural parcels, and remnant field patterns reflecting the property's long history of active land use. These features gain significance from the property's location along the historic Perkinsville Road corridor, a documented route connecting mill and market communities in the region. This setting places the Ellis Farm within a broader landscape of Black American landownership and agricultural enterprise in post-Reconstruction central Virginia. Deed records, oral histories, and prior research on Louisa and Goochland County land transactions in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries support the property's connection to Black American farming families (see, for example, Louisa County Deed Book 122, Page 322, and local historical society studies). Neighboring parcels to the east reference the Donovan/Nunnally area identified in prior easement research. The compass and direction markers orient the map toward Factory Mills (north) and Perkinsville (south), as specified in the deed language.

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: William Ellis (b. 1820) and Calvin H. Ellis (b. 1868)

Date of construction (can be approximate): c. 1850, c. 1899; c. 1890 (Ellis Cemetery); Unknown (Bowles Cemetery)

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 Calvin H. Ellis Farm is an irreplaceable landmark in the history of Black Americans in Virginia. Historically, 181 acres of working farmland span the agricultural landscape of Goochland and Louisa Counties. While it retains its agricultural character today, it is no longer actively farmed. The farm includes five primary resources from its period of significance between 1850 and 1950. These are: the collapsed site of the c. 1850 William Ellis home; the c. 1899 two-story farmhouse built by Calvin H. Ellis; a hand-dug well; a barn (collapsed); and two cemeteries. These resources document seven generations of free Black land ownership and stewardship. A legacy rooted in a 1794 manumission deed written by Rev. John Poindexter of Louisa County.

PRIMARY STRUCTURES AND FEATURES

The original home was built by William Ellis around 1850. A free Black man, William was a blacksmith and farmer. His hand-built house sat on the property until it collapsed. Constructed of handmade bricks, corner stones, hand-cut nails, and lumber from the farm, the building materials reflect mid-nineteenth-century vernacular craft traditions and the builder's trade skills. The structure has fallen into disrepair. The brick footprint and archaeological remnants remain on site. These are significant features of the property's pre-Civil War domestic landscape.

The two-story farmhouse, built around 1899 by Calvin H. Ellis, still stands. This wood-frame structure is clad in clapboard siding and covered by a metal roof. A dormer window marks the second story. The building retains its original massing, roofline, and exterior cladding. These features provide evidence of vernacular agricultural construction by a free Black landowner in the early twentieth century. The interior dates from the same period. The farmhouse is in an advanced state of deterioration. The structural systems are compromised. The building faces an imminent risk of irreversible loss without urgent stabilization. Despite this, the farmhouse

retains enough integrity to convey its historic character and significance. A formal architectural review of the property was completed by Will Rourk from the University of Virginia. A hand-dug well and remnants of a barn remain on the property. Both are associated with the working farm. These features are characteristic of rural Black American agricultural homesteads from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. They contribute to the property's overall integrity.

CEMETERIES

Ellis Family Cemetery

Thomas Morgan Ellis (b. 1862, d. 1890) may be the first person buried in the Ellis family cemetery, according to his death certificate.

Bowles Cemetery

A second cemetery is associated with the white Bowles family. It is located within the property boundaries. It was established before the land was transferred to Ellis' ownership.

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.

- **Ellis Cemetery:** The cemetery is legally protected by two recorded instruments. A 1971 chancery sale deed (Goochland DB 123/236–237) expressly reserves a 50×65-foot private cemetery. It grants a perpetual right of ingress and egress to the relatives of Robert and Richard Ellis (William Ellis' sons). In addition, Calvin H. Ellis owned the farmland and later sold it to his brothers Robert and Richard. A 1987 standalone right-of-way deed reinforces perpetual access. This is the last documented act of any Ellis family
- **Bowles Cemetery:** A second cemetery is associated with the white Bowles family. It is located within the property boundaries. This cemetery predates Calvin Ellis' 1914 acquisition of the 54-acre Bowles parcel (Louisa DB 53/209). No recorded legal instrument currently protects the Bowles Cemetery. It is an associated resource that requires formal survey, documentation, and legal protection. Its presence adds a layer of multi-community historical complexity to this site.
- There are multiple water springs on the property.
- A collapsed barn that was hand-built by Calvin H. Ellis after 1900.
- Landscape features
 - The property fronts the west side of State Route 635 (Perkinsville Road), historically recorded as the Road from Factory Mills to Perkinsville
 - 181 acres are distributed across three recorded parcels (102-47, 102-49, and 102-50), all consolidated under Louisa County Deed Book 895, Page 610.
 - The property occupies a gently rolling Piedmont landscape characteristic of the Virginia fall zone. The terrain reflects the broader Louisa-Goochland uplands: moderately elevated, with well-drained red-clay soils typical of the region's agricultural heritage.

- The acreage is interspersed with seasonal drainage and creek-bottomland.
- The farmhouse and home site occupy an elevated position, with surrounding acreage falling away toward the county boundary.
- Mixed hardwood and pine woodland now predominate over what was once active agricultural acreage.
- Mature oaks, poplars, and pines press against the principal farmhouse on multiple sides
- The farm's immediate setting is wooded and deeply secluded
- The surrounding landscape is rural and low-density, with neighboring properties, agricultural tracts, timber land, and scattered single-family residential parcels
- This is the landscape as the records and documented research indicate: a secluded, wooded, elevated Piedmont farmstead with a home site, county-line parcels, and a protected cemetery ground.

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 Ellis Farm represents one family's sustained land ownership and continuity. It has lasted more than 186 years. Historically, Louisa County had a significant Black landowning community. Over time, this number has diminished. Recent research indicates the Ellis Farm is likely the last Black-owned 'farm' remaining in Louisa County, Virginia.

The Ellis Farm story begins with a declaration. On January 9, 1830, William Ellis, a free Black man, appeared before the Louisa County Court to have his freedom recognized. He had to prove his status. William stood with his mother, Sarah Ellis (a free Black woman), and together they established the family's legal identity for generations. William Ellis became a farmer, blacksmith, and landowner in Goochland and Louisa County, Virginia, during the antebellum era. By 1846, William and his wife, Elizabeth, had two children: Sarah Ellis (b.1846 - d. 1887) and William Andrew Ellis (b. 1847 - d. 1931). The family was rooted in Virginia's soil. In the late 1840s, William Ellis began a legacy. The first of three generations living on the same farmland (William, his mother, and his family), and later, 5 generations of the Ellis Family would live on the Ellis Family farm. This span lasted nearly one hundred years. Sixty-nine years after William Ellis stood before the Louisa County Court to assert his freedom, his son Calvin Herbert Ellis purchased one hundred acres in Louisa County, Virginia. The date was January 9, 1899, the very day and month his father claimed his freedom. Calvin was thirty-one years old. This was almost certainly not a coincidence but a declaration. The deed (Louisa County Deed Book 17, Pages 181–182) identifies the land as the same parcel conveyed to Benjamin W. Barrett, and to William Ellis and his wife Nancy, by the January 23, 1894 deed.

Over the next fifteen years, Calvin assembled the full estate. On March 11, 1903, he acquired 27 additional acres from F. M. Parrish, Goochland County. It was part of the Perkins Lands in Louisa County, adjoining properties of Cally Jackson, James H. Brookings, and others. This purchase was recorded in Louisa County

Deed Book 55, Page 370. On August 25, 1914, he added 54 more acres from S. P. Bowles. This brought the total to 181 acres straddling Louisa and Goochland Counties. The land once belonged to his father. Louisa County tax maps designated the property PERKINSVILLE & ELLIS. This was not a description of terrain but of belonging. The family name became part of the geography. Calvin Ellis farmed this land for over four decades. He raised his family on the farm and buried his ancestors in the Ellis Family Cemetery. Between William Ellis (b. 1820 - d. 1900), Calvin Herbert Ellis (b. 1868 - d. 1942), and Calvin's son Carroll Hugo Ellis (b. 1915 - d. 1993), the family kept the farm in active agricultural production for over 105 years. Carroll Ellis continued the family's stewardship through 1950. Collectively, this period spanned from the antebellum era through the mid-twentieth century. At the same time, the farmland has remained in continuous Ellis family ownership for more than 181 years, from William Ellis in 1845 to the present day. While the farm is no longer active, the land endures. Today, the property includes open fields, extensive woodlands, and a small pond. Several historic structures remain, including the nineteenth-century barn and the early farmhouse foundation, though two have collapsed, and the two-story farmhouse requires preservation efforts. The family cemetery remains well-maintained, with clearly marked headstones and original fieldstones. Overall, the land retains its historic boundaries and rural character. It is held by the same family that cleared it, planted it, and buried their ancestors within it.

The rarity of the Ellis Farm's survival becomes clear in local history. In 1890, 76 percent of Black American heads of household in Louisa County owned land, one of the highest rates in Virginia. Since then, that density has faded. Today, where Black-owned farms once defined the Piedmont landscape, the Ellis Farm stands alone. This dramatic shift mirrors a statewide decline in Black landownership. The continued presence of Ellis Farm serves as a living witness to this broader loss and as a crucial link to Virginia's once-widespread and productive Black farming communities, highlighting both the endurance and vulnerability of Black landholding in the region. The Ellis Farm is not simply a parcel of land. It is material evidence of a free Black family's survival, acquisition, and stewardship. This legacy spans the arc of American history, from the era of enslavement through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Great Migration, and into the present. The family cemetery is fixed on the property by deed and plat. Surrounded by mature trees, it contains the remains of William Ellis' mother, Sarah Ellis (freed 1809). Sarah Ellis was born in 1786 and died in May 1866. William Ellis, Nancy Ellis, and over 20 identified Ellis family members are buried there, according to death certificates. Some stones are weathered yet legible. Others are fieldstones, carefully preserved by the family. The cemetery stands as a quiet testimony to those who built this legacy. The property's verifiable features have been documented through recent photographs, annotated maps, and surveys of the cemetery and existing historic structures. Copies of deeds and plats are available for review, as well as a current photographic record of headstones, field layout, and building remnants. All supporting documentation described here is available upon request or can be attached if the board requires further verification. Hopefully, the land holds a story that warrants designation as a state historic landmark.

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.)

Land Records & Deeds

- Louisa County Deed Book G, Page 433 — 1794 Poindexter Manumission Deed (Arthur and Lucy)
- Louisa County Deed Book 17, Pages 181–182 — Calvin H. Ellis purchase, January 9, 1899
- Louisa County Deed Book 895, Page 610 — current instrument for Ellis Estate parcels
- Goochland County Deed Book 62 — 1921 deed from Calvin H. Ellis to Richard and Robert Ellis
- Goochland County Deed Book 123, Page 237 — 1971 chancery sale reservation (ingress/egress)
- Goochland Deed Book (A.K. Locke, Commissioner) — 1882 deed, Thomas Morgan Ellis (~100 acres)
- December 1882 Thompson-to-William Ellis deed (Goochland County)
- January 23, 1894, Louisa County deed — J.M. Parrish, trustee; William and Nancy Ellis
- 1903 marginal deed notation — easement delivered to W.A. Bowles, Perkinsville
- 1914 Bowles-to-Calvin Ellis deed — 54-acre parcel, west side of Road from Factory Mills to Perkinsville
- 1914 standalone easement instrument — Calvin H. Ellis and W.A. Bowles
- 1987 standalone right-of-way deed — perpetual ingress/egress to family cemetery
- Goochland County General Index to Deeds, 1728–1969 (FamilySearch microfilm)

Survey & Plat Records

- Hart & Bell Plat, Book 122, Page 322 (1970) — family cemetery fixed on plat
- Hart & Bell Nunnally Plats, Cabinet A-35 and B-92 (1979) — Nunnally/Donovan land boundaries
- Louisa County Tax Map — Parcels 102-47, 102-49, 102-50

Chancery Records

- *Arthur, Daniel & Lucy v. Poindexter et al.*, Louisa County (filed January 1831, dismissed June 1837) — Library of Virginia Chancery Records Index
- *J.H. Woolfolk v. William Ellis, et al.*, Goochland County (1880s–1890s)
- Library of Virginia Chancery Records Index (lva.virginia.gov/chancery) — Goochland County cases

Tax Records

- Louisa County Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782–1814 (LVA microfilm no. 213)
- Louisa County land tax assessment records, Parcels 102-47, 102-49, 102-50
- Goochland County personal property tax records, 1895–1940 (Library of Virginia microfilm)

Census & Vital Records

- U.S. Federal Census records, 1850–1940 (Goochland and Louisa Counties)
- Louisa County Free Black Register, Books 1 and 2, 1816–1864 (Library of Virginia)
- Goochland County and Louisa County vital records (births, deaths, marriages)
- Virginia death certificates (Library of Virginia)
- USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017 and 2022 (Louisa County producer data)

Military Records

- WWI Third Registration Draft Cards (FamilySearch collection 1968530, NARA M1509)
- WWII draft registration cards (Goochland County)
- Freedmen's Bureau Records, Virginia

Historic Preservation & Survey Records

- Virginia DHR VCRIS — survey form for DHR 037-5019 (Ellis's Store, Centerville, Goochland County)
- DHR GO-021, *Goochland County Architectural History Survey* (2003, Worsham)
- Goochland County GIS Parcel Viewer and easement layers
- Louisa County GIS Parcel Viewer and easement layers

Published & Digital Primary Source Collections

- Paul Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Virginia* (freeafricanamericans.com)
- Manumission Project, University of Richmond (manumissionproject.omeka.net)
- Library of Virginia, *Virginia Untold* digital collection (viriniamemory.com)
- Library of Virginia, *Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation* (online exhibition)
- Piedmont Virginia Digital History Project (*The Land Between the Rivers*)
- Interment.net — Goochland Baptist Church Cemetery transcription
- FamilySearch — Virginia deed books, draft cards, census indexes
- Ancestry.com — Virginia Marriage Records, 1936–2014

Scholarly Works

- Reginald D. Butler, *The Evolution of a Rural Free Black Community: Goochland County, Virginia, 1728–1832* (University of Virginia Press, 2025)
- CeCe Bullard, eleven-part series "Free Blacks in Goochland County," *Goochland County Historical Society Magazine*, Vols. 20–30
- GCHS Magazine, Vol. 33 — "Register of Colored Voters at Deitrick's Store, Dover District"

Institutional & Archival Contacts

- Goochland County Historical Society Magazine (cumulative index and back issues)
- Louisa County Historical Society Archives, Sargeant Museum (214 Fredericksburg Avenue, Louisa, VA)
- Library of Virginia (LVA) — deed books, microfilm collections
- Goochland County Circuit Court Clerk's Office
- Robert Mealy Funeral Home, Goochland (burial records)

Family Documents (Google Drive)

- *Ellis Farm Description* (primary source transcriptions)
- *William Ellis Land* (land ownership evidence)
- Ellis Family Trees
- Sarah Ellis and the Hopkins Family
- Ellis Estate Proposal UVA

Oral History

- Family oral histories, photographs, and documents — collected across generations
- Oral history from photographer Ola Allen — corroborating account of Ellis-operated store in mid-20th-century Goochland

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: Wanda Alderman-Swain, Phil Henry Cosby, Thurgood D. Cosby, Sr., Bernice Aurelia Grant Latham, Carroll Columbus Grant, III, Virginia Carol Livingston Estate

organization: _____

street & number: _____

city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____

e-mail: _____ telephone: _____

Legal Owner's Signature: _____

Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications for privately-owned properties. ••

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: _____

organization: _____

street & number: _____

city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____


e-mail: _____ telephone: _____

Date: _____

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

PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Ellis Farm
Louisa and Goochland Counties, VA
DHR ID# 054-5650

 Proposed Boundary

0 1,500
 Feet













































