OMB Control No. 1024-0018
expiration date 03/31/2026

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: Belle Isle (Additional Documentation)
Other names/site number: Belle Isle State Park; DHR ID# 051-0001
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: 1632 Belle Isle Road
City or town: Lancaster State: VA County: Lancaster
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national _X_ statewide _X_ local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B _X_C _X_D

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**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

_____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	X
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	
8	15	buildings
20	13	sites
0	8	structures
0	0	objects
28	36	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
DOMESTIC: secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding
FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COLONIAL: Georgian
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, SLATE, WOOD

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

Belle Isle is an 889-acre former farm in rural Lancaster County on the Rappahannock River that became a Virginia State Park in the mid-1990s. The property includes National Register-eligible historic resources dating back to ca. 1690 and unevaluated pre-contact resources dating back much further. The Belle Isle Manor House was first listed on the National Register in 1973, when it was still privately owned, along with approximately 1000 acres. The mapped boundaries of the current nominated property are the same as the mapped boundaries of the property listed in 1973; the difference in acreage is ascribed to, first, imprecise calculations in 1973, and, second, shoreline erosion of the extensive shoreline at Belle Isle (predicted to currently account for a loss of 2-7 feet every year). As was typical of the time, the nomination is very brief and only describes the main house and the two brick dependencies and briefly mentions an overseer's house, Bel Air, and the formal gardens. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, who manages the Virginia State Parks, has recently been awarded a semisesquincentennial grant from the National Park Service to restore the Belle Isle manor house and, as part of this project, an update to the National Register nomination is being completed. The goal of the nomination update is to provide a complete inventory of resources within the park boundaries and to expand on the history and significance provided in the original nomination. Extensive historic research on the property has been undertaken since the original

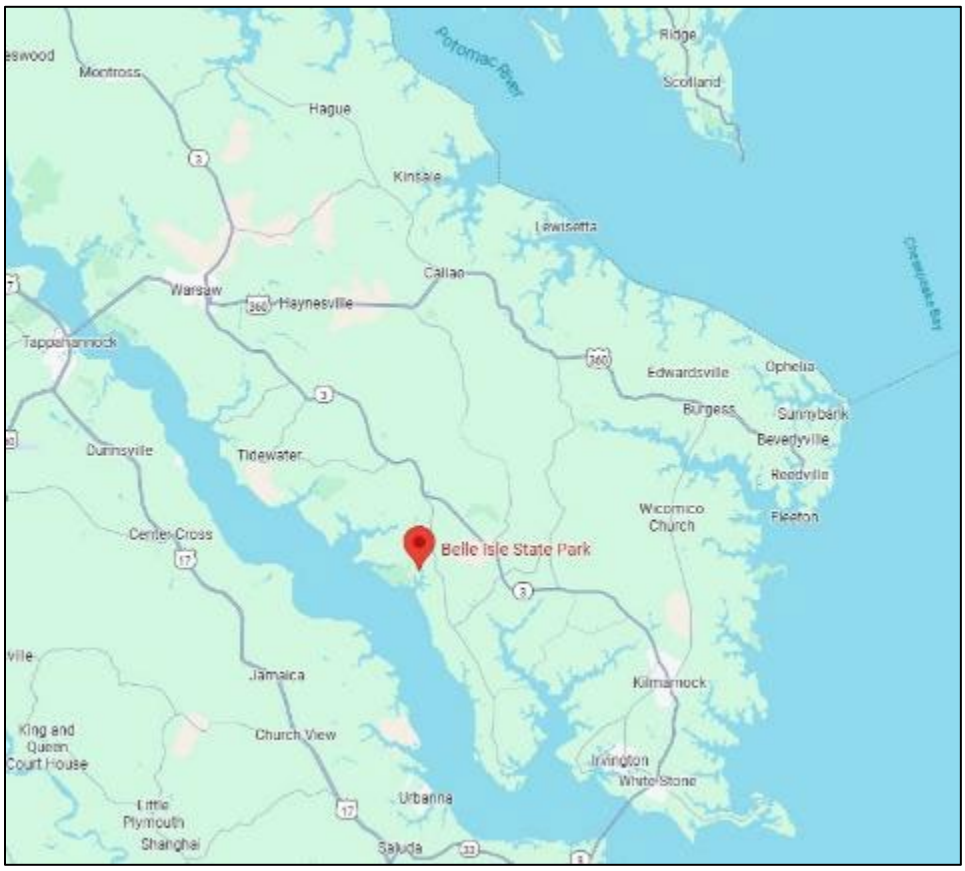
nomination was completed, as have several archaeological investigations, and these efforts provide a deeper understanding of the complex history and evolution of the property.

The Belle Isle Manor House is a substantial Georgian mansion with a two-story center block laid in Flemish bond brick with a tall, hipped roof bracketed by interior end chimneys. Nearly identical one-story brick wings extend from the side elevations creating a tripartite plan. Matching brick dependencies flank the main house creating a forecourt on the east front of the house, while the remnant of earthen terracing on the west front suggests that formal gardens once embellished the property. Dendrochronology has revealed that construction on the central block began in 1767 while the wings were added in 1802. The interior plan of the main block is a three-room plan with a corner stair passage. All of the elegant, floor-to-ceiling paneling, dentiled cornices, and mantles were removed from the first floor of the house in 1927 and subsequently sold to Henry Francis duPont and reinstalled at his Winterthur estate in Delaware. After decades of decline, the manor house was restored by new owners working with restoration architect Thomas Tileston Waterman in 1940. In addition to the previously listed manor house and brick dependencies, the property consists of 25 newly enumerated contributing resources, which include multiple eligible archaeological sites, including one representing a late 17th century landing and warehouse on the Rappahannock River; the 19th century Downman family cemetery; several 19th century agricultural buildings, including a ca. 1820 frame barn or granary; the ca. 1945 Bel Air Mansion; and 36 noncontributing resources, which mostly consist of development associated with the post-1973 subdivision of the property and subsequent creation of the state park and identified archaeological sites that are noncontributing to the district.

Narrative Description

Setting

Belle Isle is located in Lancaster County, a rural county in what is known as Virginia's Northern Neck – a long peninsula between the Potomac River, to the north, the Rappahannock River, to the south, and the Chesapeake Bay, to the east. The landscape and economy of the Northern Neck are dominated by agriculture and the water, much as they have been for centuries. Small towns are located along the major roads that run through the counties of Lancaster, Richmond, Northumberland, and Westmoreland - Virginia Route 3, which runs northwest to southeast along roughly the center of the peninsula and US Route 360, which crosses over the Rappahannock River from the town of Tappahannock and runs southeast to Reedville. Lancaster County boasts 180 miles of shoreline, and the topography is generally flat. The largest town in Lancaster County is Kilmarnock, located about 16 miles southeast of the park, while the county seat is the small town of Lancaster, located about 8 miles due east.



General location of Belle Isle, Lancaster County.

Belle Isle is an 889-acre parcel located along the Rappahannock River on a wide peninsula between Deep Creek and Mulberry Creek (also known as Mud Creek). The entire 889 acres is now within Belle Isle State Park, which was first created in the 1990s, and the boundaries of the park match the boundaries of the original National Register listing as mapped. The landscape is a mix of open cultivated fields, woods, and marsh, with extensive water frontage and sparse construction. The main road from the park entrance, Belle Isle Road, curves north around the historic Belle Isle manor house and then heads southwest towards the river and the picnic area. Creek Landing Road leads southeast off the main road to the Visitor Center and boat ramp on Deep Creek, and northwest to the campground and kayak launch on Mulberry Creek. Bel Air Road leads past several non-historic houses used as ranger residences to the Bel Air Mansion and Guest House along Deep Creek. Park-related construction, which dates to the 1990s and later, is mostly clustered at the ends of these roads. There is a primitive campground, that is walk-in/boat-in only, at the northwest tip of the park and only accessible by trail or authorized State Park vehicle. The 18th century Belle Isle manor house and dependencies are located close to the park entrance. The original straight axial driveway remains and is accessible from Bel Air Road, though currently only open to authorized vehicles. The house and immediate environs are currently accessible to the public on foot. Behind the house are the remains of formal, terraced gardens and an inlet from Deep Creek that may have at one point been dammed to create a pond.

The landscape to the rear of the historic manor is wooded and overgrown in some areas, while the acreage along the historic driveway is open, cultivated fields.

The resources of the park, both historic and non-historic, are scattered across the acreage, though they tend to be grouped in small clusters. The following narrative description describes them by thematic grouping in order to best capture the layers of development represented in the park today. The first grouping described is the Belle Isle Manor House – Curtilage which includes the 18th century manor house and the resources in the immediate vicinity of it that are related to it either functionally or temporally – two early 19th century brick dependencies, a 19th century cemetery, 18th and 20th century gardens, and a 20th century garage. Next is the Belle Isle Manor House Agriculture grouping, which includes those resources associated with the 19th century agricultural operations of the Belle Isle farm – the 19th century Red Barn, a late 19th century two-story barn near the manor house, and a 19th century former tenant house, now camp store. Next is the Bel Air Mansion grouping, which includes Bel Air and the Bel Air guest house, and the gardens in the curtilage around these buildings, all of which date to the period between 1940 and 1950. Next is the Subdivision grouping, which includes three modest single-family houses and associated garages, which all date to the late 1970s or 1980s, the period during which the acreage of the Belle Isle farm was being sold off and subdivided (all are now used for Ranger residences by the Park). Finally, the State Park grouping is discussed. It includes 17 resources constructed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation after Belle Isle State Park was established in 1993. All of the resources are depicted on the associated maps.

There has been no systematic archaeological survey of the entire park, but various smaller surveys have occurred in some areas. This work is summarized under the Archaeological Potential subheading, following the inventory of park resources. A table lists all of the archaeological resources identified in the park to date and assigns them a district status of either contributing or noncontributing based on currently available information and the recommendation of the archaeologists at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Several archaeological sites within the park boundaries have been investigated at the Phase II level and recommended eligible for listing on the National Register – 44LA0147, 44LA0157, and 44LA0167 – and they are described in detail at the end of Section 7.

Table 1. Historic Resources identified at Belle Isle, organized by thematic grouping and in the order they are discussed in the text below. Archaeological resources are not included here but are listed in a separate table below.

DHR #	Thematic Grouping	Resource Name	Date of Construction	Street Address	C/NC
051-0001	Belle Isle Manor House - Curtilage	Belle Isle Manor House	1767	1029 Belle Isle Road	C
051-0001-0002		Kitchen, South Dependency	1802		C

051-0001-0003		Schoolhouse, North Dependency	1802		C
051-0001-0004		Downman cemetery	19th century		C
051-0001-0007		Garage	1945		C
051-0001-0005		Belle Isle Curtilage site	1767, 1945		C
051-0001-0006	Belle Isle Manor House – Agriculture	Two-story Barn/Grain Barn	ca. 1890		C
051-0001-0009		Red Barn	ca. 1820	Belle Isle Road	C
051-0001-0008		Camp Store/Tenant house	ca. 1840	1632 Belle Isle Road	C
051-0001-0001	Bel Air Mansion	Bel Air	1940-1944	537 Bel Air Road	C
051-0001-0010		Bel Air Cottage	1940-1944	557 Bel Air Road	NC
051-0001-0011	Subdivision	Ranger Residence (79)	1987	79 Bel Air Road	NC
051-0001-0012		Garage (79)	1987		NC
051-0001-0013		Ranger Residence (131)	1981	131 Bel Air Road	NC
051-0001-0014		Ranger Residence (133)	1977	133 Bel Air Road	NC
051-0001-0015		Garage (133)	1977		NC
051-0001-0016	State Park	Contact Station	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0017		Campground bathhouse	2006	583 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0018		Bunk house	2005	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0019		Campground	2006	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0020		Amphitheater	ca. 2010	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0021		Vault toilet @ Kayak/canoe launch	2017	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0022		Mulberry Creek Boardwalk	ca. 2010	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0023		Maintenance Shop complex	2009	767 Creek Landing Road	NC

051-0001-0024		Well Pump House	1998	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0025		Belle Isle State Park Visitor Center	2007	1170 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0026		Concession/Restroom	1998	1166 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0027		Shelter 3 - Deep Creek	2000	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0028		Boat Ramp	1998	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0029		Shelter 1 - Humphreys	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0030		Shelter 2 - Rappahannock	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0031		Picnic Area Restroom	1998	2315 Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0032		Brewer's Point Primitive Camp	ca. 2010	Brewer's Point	NC

Belle Isle Manor House – Curtilage Group

Belle Isle Manor House, 1029 Belle Isle Road, 1767, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001

Exterior

The Belle Isle Manor House is a two-story Georgian-style dwelling laid in Flemish bond brick and topped with a high hipped roof. The two-story, three-bay, double-pile center block, with a hipped roof and two interior end chimneys, was constructed in 1767, per dendrochronology. Two identical one-story, four-bay, single-pile brick wings, with side gabled roofs and interior end chimneys, were added onto the side elevations of the center block in 1802, also per dendrochronology, creating a highly symmetrical three-part arrangement. The two-story center block was originally designed with identical east and west elevations, also called the river (west) and land (east) sides of the dwelling. In the 18th century, the rivers were the primary method of transportation; consequently, many arriving guests probably first viewed the west or river side of the house. But by the late 18th century, interior roadways were improving and visitors might approach from either side of the house. The siting of the house slightly away from the river and the arrangement of the floorplan (discussed below) suggests that original owner, Thomas Bertrand Griffin, viewed the east elevation, or land side, of his house as the actual front. The house was "restored" in 1940 by architect Thomas Tileston Waterman working for new owners, the Boatwrights, and the house today is very much a representation of Waterman's view of what an 18th century manor house should be. The house is described here, as it sits today, and an analysis of the architectural evolution of the house can be found in Section 8, along with a discussion of Waterman and his restoration approach. It is believed that none of the window sash in place today date to the 18th century; all of the window sash on the east elevation of the house date to the 1940 restoration and include pegged construction and some wavy window

glass. The window sash on the west elevation of the house in the wings are all relatively recent replacements.



Belle Isle, east elevation, April 2025. Photo by the author.

The front (east) elevation of the house features a central entrance flanked by a 9/9 double-hung window on each side with three more windows, these shorter and with a 6/6 arrangement, vertically aligned above the first story openings. The center window on the second story is wider than those in the end bays and has an 8/8 arrangement. There are barred wooden vents in the foundation vertically aligned below the first story windows. The centered door is a large, 9-panel wooden door topped by a 4-light transom. There is no porch, but the front door is accessed by semicircular stone steps. (A gabled portico that dated to the 1930s was removed by Waterman; the steps appear in a 1928 photo, which shows the remnants of an earlier gabled portico.) Both windows and doors are surrounded by molded double architrave trim. Windows have thin molded sills that lack molded returns. The fine brickwork is Flemish bond throughout with Queen's closers around door and window openings and segmental brick arches above them. Bricks are deep red in color and uniform throughout, while mortar joints are thin and straight with evidence of tooling. A molded brick water table underscores the first-floor level while a projecting brick beltcourse divides the first and second stories. Both water table and beltcourse are carried all the way around the house on all four elevations, as is the modillioned wooden cornice that adorns the roof/wall junction. The tall, hipped roof is covered with large slate shingles. The roof is bracketed by tall brick chimneys with corbeled caps. The south chimney is just slightly wider than the north chimney, which is probably due to the fact that it originally accommodated two fireplaces on each floor, while the north chimney vents only one on each floor.

The east elevation of the north wing is one story tall and four bays wide with an entrance in the bay closest to the main block and three 9/9 double-hung windows beside it. The windows are not quite evenly spaced along the wall. Below the windows in the end bay and the bay beside the door are a barred foundation vent (below the window beside the door) and a three-light window (below the window in the end bay). There is evidence of a closed opening in the foundation beneath the other window. Although the wings were added about 35 years after the main block was constructed, they use an identical architectural vocabulary. The fine brickwork is laid in Flemish bond with Queen's closers around the door and window openings and segmental brick aches above them. Uniform red bricks are underscored by thin, straight mortar joints with evidence of tooling. Windows are outlined with double architrave moldings and have thick, molded sills (these window sills seem likely to be original to the 1802 period, while the thinner ones on the main block seem more likely to date to the 1940s restoration). The doorway has matching moldings; the door itself is a 9-panel wooden door with a 4-light transom, matching the door in the central block and dating to the 1940s. Accessing the door is a set of brick steps and a brick stoop. A molded brick water table supports the wall, while a modillioned wooden cornice caps it off. The side-gabled roof of the wing is covered with slate shingles and there is an interior brick chimney on the north end. This north end of the north wing obviously endured some significant trauma during the late 19th or early 20th century, as evidenced by the brickwork of the northernmost three feet of this wing. The reconstructed section is laid in 6:1 common bond with brick of an obviously different color and consistency. The chimney is also believed to have been reconstructed at the same time. This reconstruction is visible in historic photographs from the late 1920s, but research has not yet revealed what catastrophe necessitated the repairs. A shed roofed wooden porch is located off the north end of the north wing (the porch dates to the 1940s period).



Belle Isle, junction of main block and north wing showing closed basement door, April 2025. Photo by the author.

The east elevation of the south wing is a mirror image of the north wing in all but a couple of ways. The south wing has two barred vents in the foundation (as compared to a window and a vent in the north wing), and the south wing has not undergone the reconstruction visible on the north wing. The chimney on the south wing also appears to be original. In every other way, the south wing mirrors the north wing.

Because the wings are single pile, compared to the double-pile depth of the central block, they are set in from both the front and rear elevations. On the side elevations, this means there is room for openings on the first story of the central block. The south side elevation of the central block features a tall, narrow 6/6 double-hung window on the first story in front of the wing and a wider 6/6 window vertically aligned above it on the second story. The locations of these windows and the lack of alteration in the brickwork is part of the evidence for the argument that Thomas Bertrand Griffin always planned for the house to have one-story wings, even though they weren't added during his ownership. Behind the south wing, the south side elevation of the main block features a one-story, one-bay shed roofed addition that covers a single bay of the south wing. This small brick addition is today a bathroom. It has a door (9-panel, matching the

doors on the front of the house) with a 4-light transom on the south elevation of the addition. There is also a bulkhead entrance to the basement right below this door. The brick bathroom addition is laid in mostly 6:1 common bond. This small addition appears in the earliest known photographs showing this elevation of the house from 1937 but probably dates to between 1877 and 1912 (see discussion of architectural evolution in Section 8). There is another 6/6 double-hung window on the second story of the south side of the central block above this addition. On the south elevation of the south wing, two round brick vents in the gable flanking the chimney are now bricked in. The only other opening on this side of the wing is a doorway located towards the rear of the house (to the west of the chimney). This 9-panel door matches the ones on the front of the house, but it has no transom. There is a shed roofed wooden porch that covers the entire south side elevation of the south wing. It has chamfered wooden posts on a brick foundation supporting the shed roof. The balustrade has square balusters set on the diagonal. There are the remnants of framing to screen the porch in, though the screen itself is now gone. Wide brick steps on the south side lead up to the porch and the framing for a double-leaf screen door, which is now gone. This porch matches the one on the north side of the north wing and both date to the 1940 restoration.

The rear (west) elevation of the house is a mirror image of the front with one significant exception. The brickwork, fenestration, and decorative details are all the same, except that there is a gabled entry portico centered on the west elevation over the door. This large porch only covers the central bay of the house, but it is exceptionally deep. It has a solid brick foundation beneath round Tuscan columns supporting the front gabled metal roof. The balustrade features square balusters, and the porch has been screened in. A modillioned cornice wraps around the porch roof. This porch probably dates to the 1930s; it appears in the HABS photographs from 1937 and 1940, prior to the restoration by Waterman. In those photos, it matches the slightly smaller portico that was then in place on the front elevation, and which is not shown in a ca. 1927 or 1928 photo of the house (the earliest known image).



Belle Isle, west elevation, April 2025. Photo by the author.

The west elevations of the north and south wings are also mirror images of their east elevations with a couple exceptions. The bathroom addition on the rear of the south wing is described above; it covers the bay of the south wing closest to the central block. On the west elevation of the north wing, a doorway in the bay closest to the central block holds one of the oldest exterior doors currently in the house. The finely crafted door has six raised, molded panels and it is mounted in an early 19th century doorframe with a double architrave molding and a four-light transom. Evident 20th century repairs to the door frame include the careful replacement of the bottom 6-12" on both the right and left sides. As on the east elevation, the substantial reconstruction of the north end of the north wing is evident in the brickwork on the west elevation as well.



Belle Isle, west door on the north wing, April 2025. Photo by the author.

In this highly symmetrical house, the north side elevation of the house is almost identical to the south side. The central block has tall, narrow 6/6 windows on the first story flanking the north wing and two wider 6/6 windows on the second story. The north elevation of the north wing is largely late 19th or early 20th century brickwork and, as a result, the wing lacks the round vent openings flanking the chimney in the gable that are evident on the south wing. There is a shed-roofed screened-in porch on the north elevation of the north wing that is almost identical to the porch on the south elevation, except that this porch still retains its screening. The single door on the north elevation of the north wing is a six-panel door with a four-light transom. The door surround has a double architrave molding similar to the early 19th century doorframe found on the east elevation of the north wing described above, but this door and surround date to the 1940 restoration and are not shown in the HABS photos from 1937.

Interior

Unfortunately, the detailed estate inventory of Rawleigh Downman from 1839 is not a room-by-room inventory in that it does not give the name of the room before delineating its contents.

Consequently, we don't know for sure how the Downmans in the early 19th century or the Griffins before them in the 18th century used the rooms at Belle Isle or the names that they used to refer to them. We do have a good idea of how the rooms were used after the 1940s restoration and in the interest of clarity, the rooms will be organized and described below by their 20th century usages (as described in a ca. 1980 real estate brochure) with notes about how those usages changed over time.

Around 1928, an antiques dealer bought much of the interior trim and paneling from the first floor of Belle Isle from the then-owners, David and Al Somers, and sold it to Henry Francis duPont, who reinstalled it at his house in Delaware known as Winterthur (now the Winterthur Museum). There are a couple of photographs of the stair hall, the current living room (probably originally an entertaining space, either dining room or drawing room), the current dining room (probably originally the drawing room), and the current library (probably originally the dining room) from ca. 1927 before the trim was removed. When HABS documented the house in the late 1930s and 1940, they did not photograph these first floor spaces, so it is unclear what condition they were in at that time. Thomas Tileston Waterman, a well-regarded historic restoration specialist, was hired by the Boatwrights, who acquired the house and farm in 1939, to restore the house in 1940. The house, as it appears today, is not an actual restoration of what was there in the mid-1920s or even when Waterman was hired. Instead, it is Waterman's interpretation of an 18th century manor house. Waterman discussed the house and its pre-1928 interior detailing in his book, *The Mansions of Virginia*, but used photographs of the paneling and trim as reinstalled at Winterthur, which is confusing to the reader. duPont is known to have made alterations during the installation process at Winterthur, combining elements from different houses (say, paneling from one house and a mantel from another), and trimmed or altered individual pieces to fit around the door and window openings in his space, so these photographs in Waterman's 1945 book cannot be relied on as a completely accurate representation of how the trim looked in situ at Belle Isle. In the description below, all of the interior trim on the first floor and the stair is believed to date to Waterman's 1940 restoration. Some of the trim on the second floor is believed to be original to the 18th century and is noted below.

Entrance Hall

The front (east) entrance opens into a corner stair hall that occupies the northeast corner of the first floor of the central block. The dog-leg stair rises three steps to a landing along the north wall and then turns and runs along the front (east) wall of the house to the second floor, crossing in front of a front window. The open-stringer stair has square newels with molded caps, a Chinese Chippendale balustrade, and scroll details on the stair ends. Both the window on the north wall that lights the landing and the front window that the stair crosses are located in splayed, paneled recesses. The hall features crown molding and simple molded baseboards with double architrave trim around the front door, the door to the library, and the double door to the dining room. Wood flooring ranges from 5-7.5" in width and is face-nailed, tongue-and-groove. A hatch in the flooring beneath the front window opens to reveal the stairs to the basement. Based on the HABS drawings from 1940 and the floorplan sketch from Thomas Waterman's book, *The Mansions of Virginia*, the entrance hall was originally half its current size; there was a small room or closet in the north corner of the space behind the stair, accessible by a doorway

from the current dining room. The stair had the same general form – it was a dog-leg stair with an upper run that ascended along the front (east) wall, but the lower run of stairs rose 10 steps before turning at the landing and the stair does not seem to have crossed in front of the front window, as a result.



Belle Isle, Entrance hall and stair, looking from stair landing into library. Front door is out of view in the back left corner of the hall and door to the dining room is in the far right corner. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Dining Room (probably originally a Drawing Room)

The room referred to in 1980 as a dining room is located directly behind the entrance hall and is also accessible from the rear (west) porch, and the north wing. The doorway from the entrance hall is a double-leaf opening with two three-panel doors hung on H-L hinges. The flooring is continuous with the entrance hall. The space features a large fireplace on the north end wall with a door to the north wing (now the kitchen) to the right of the fireplace and a narrow window in a splayed, paneled recess with a built-in window seat to the left. The fireplace has a crossetted overmantel with a crossetted fireplace surround beneath a molded mantel shelf. A molded chair rail and an elaborate boxed crown molding run around the room. The west wall of the space has another window in a splayed, paneled recess with a built-in window seat and an exterior door to the west porch. This door is a 9-panel door with a four-light transom, matching all of the exterior doors used on the front of the house. Door and window trim in this space is the same double-architrave molding found in the entrance hall.



Belle Isle, Dining room, fireplace on north wall, door shown leads to north wing. April 2025. Photo by the author.

The footprint of this room, along with the fenestration and circulation patterns, remains as documented by HABS in 1940. The trim, as designed by Waterman, is much simpler than what was documented in place in the mid-1920s. The original room was paneled floor-to-ceiling on every wall and had a wide crown molding with dentils. The mantel had a matching row of dentils below the mantel shelf; the pilasters flanking the fireplace opening photographed in the 1920s were clearly a later alteration, however.

Library (also known as "East Room/Parlor", probably originally the dining room)

The room referred to as the "Library" in 1980 is located beside the entrance hall, in the southeast corner of the main block. It has a doorway from the entrance hall on the north wall, a doorway connecting it to the south wing, and a doorway on the west wall leading to a bedroom located behind it. A fireplace is centered on the south wall of the room with a window to the left and a door to the south wing to the right. The fireplace has the same crossetted overmantel and crosseted fireplace surround beneath a molded mantel shelf found in the dining room, though the proportions are slightly different due to differences in the sizes of the chimney breast and fireplace. The window to the left of the fireplace and the window on the front (east) wall of the room also match the window openings in the dining room with splayed, paneled recesses and built-in window seats. The windows themselves are double-hung wood sash with some wavy glass and probably date to the 1940 restoration. Windows and doors are surrounded by the same double-architrave molding found in the entrance hall and dining room. The boxed crown molding and chair rail that encircle the room also match those found in the dining room. The flooring is also the same as what is found in the dining room and entrance hall. The big difference between the two rooms is that in the library Waterman accented the fireplace wall

with matching round arches flanking the chimney breast, one surrounding the door to the south wing and the other the narrow window to the east of the chimney breast. These round arches are supported by fluted Doric pilasters and consist of molded archivolts with keystones. A pair of narrow four-panel doors in the west arch leads to the south wing.



Belle Isle, Library, fireplace on south wall, doorway on the right of frame leads to south wing, on the left of frame, to the entrance hall. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Like the dining room, this room has the same footprint, fenestration, and circulation patterns recorded by HABS in 1940, but exhibits trim dating to Waterman's restoration. A photograph of the space from 1920 shows that it had a fully paneled fireplace wall with paneled, segmental arches flanking the chimney breast, and paneled wainscoting around the room.

Bedroom (first floor)

Behind the library in the southwest corner of the main block is a bedroom. This room is only accessible from the library and from a small bathroom addition off the southwest corner of the house. The flooring in this room matches what is found elsewhere on the first floor in the main block, and the baseboards and crown molding match the simpler style found in the Entrance Hall. The room also has chair rail and double architrave door surrounds that match the library. There is a single window in this room, on the rear (west) wall of the house and, like the other window openings, it is located in a splayed, recessed nook, but unlike the other windows on the first floor, there is no paneling or any trim around this window. There is a built-in window seat. The window sash itself is a fairly recent wood replacement. There was originally a fireplace on the south wall of this room, and the fireplace is still shown on the 1940 HABS drawings, but it is no longer evident. A small, recessed bookshelf and cabinet is tucked into the southeast corner of

the room. A door on the south wall of the room leads to a closet and full bathroom that is located in a small addition. An exterior door, cut in half to form a Dutch door, leads into this bathroom from outside the house.

It seems likely that this space was always intended to serve as a bedroom (or chamber in 18th century parlance), and the footprint of the room has not changed. Like the dining room and library, the decorative finishes in this room date to the 1940 restoration. Unlike those other spaces, this room has lost its fireplace. Though the bathroom itself is clearly a later addition (though the addition was in place when the house was documented by HABS in 1940), it is unclear if the doorway that now leads to the bathroom was an original feature.

South Wing - hallway and living room

The south wing was added in 1802 and consists of a front-to-back hallway beside the main block and a single large room referred to as the Living Room in the 1980 real estate brochure. The hallway has an entrance from the front of the house and doors into the library and living room, with a closet opposite the door on the front of the house. This space is a combination of restoration period and original details. The flooring in this space is continuous with the flooring from the library with no seam between the two (further evidence that all of the flooring on the first floor in the main block of the house was replaced in 1940). On the north wall in the hallway, there is paneled wainscoting with a built-in drop leaf table. On the south wall of the hallway, wainscoting consists of two wide boards beneath a simple chair rail. The hallway itself appears with the same footprint in the 1940 HABS drawings and this board wainscoting on the south wall is probably original. The door hanging between the hallway and the living room also appears to be an early door (possibly 1802 when the wings were added), though the doorway itself appears to be from the restoration period. The 6-panel door has raised, molded panels on the hallway side but is simply flat-paneled on the room side; it is hand-planed. The door trim around all the doors in this hallway matches the double-architrave style found elsewhere on the first floor, which dates to the 1940s restoration. The closet at the end of the hall is a product of the 1940s restoration; the 1940 HABS drawings suggest that the hall continued into the small rear addition, which is located directly behind it and now contains a bathroom.

The living room is a large room that occupies most of the south wing. It has three windows along each of the east and west walls, arranged opposite each other, and a fireplace centered on the south wall. Beside the fireplace to the right is an exterior door. The only other door into the room is on the north wall from the hallway described above. Like elsewhere on the first floor, the windows on the east elevation of this room appear to date to the 1940s restoration, while new wood windows have been installed on the west elevation. The flooring in the living room is tightly laid tongue-and-groove flooring, face nailed. The space has boxed, molded crown molding and a molded chair rail that runs around the room. Window and door trim is the double-architrave style found elsewhere on the first floor. The only paneling in the room is found on the front of the chimney breast, where a paneled overmantel caps a fireplace surround with a pulvinated frieze beneath a molded mantel shelf.



Belle Isle, Living room, April 2025. Photo by the author.

According to the HABS drawings from 1940, the south wing at that time included two rooms and an L-shaped hallway. The smaller of the two rooms was located on the east wall of the house around the window closest to the exterior door; it is believed that the existing south wall of the existing hallway – the wall with the board wainscoting – represents the hall-facing side of the north wall of this room. The other two walls that enclosed this space no longer exist. The only door into this small room led to the L-shaped hallway. The HABS recorders must have believed that this small room represented an original partition because they chose to draw the profile of the doorway between the small room and the hallway, and the profiles of the baseboard and chair rail in the hallway. Presently, the chair rail on the north wall of the hallway matches the profile drawn by HABS, while the south wall of the hallway seems to retain only the top portion of the chair rail above the board wainscoting. The other room in the south wing was larger, occupying about half of the square footage of the wing, and square in plan, with the fireplace on the end wall. It was richly detailed, with floor to ceiling paneling, crown molding with dentils, and arched and paneled niches flanking the chimney breast. A neoclassical mantel with more dentils was topped with a crossetted overmantel. This arrangement of round arches flanking the chimney breast and a crossetted overmantel was clearly Waterman's inspiration for the trim that he installed in the library during the restoration.

North Wing - butler's pantry, kitchen, servant's room

The north wing is the space that was probably altered most significantly during the 1940 restoration. Today, the space consists of a butler's pantry, which is accessible from the present

dining room in the main block and from the exterior on the front elevation, a 1940's-era kitchen, a laundry room, a maid's room, and a full bathroom. This wing has a utilitarian character with flat window and door trim that has only a narrow inner bead; the limited architectural detail noticeably contrasts with the double architrave molding and paneling found throughout the rest of the house.

The butler's pantry is the walk-through space that connects the north wing with the main block of the house. Cabinets and countertops encircle the space, which has a linoleum floor, and an exterior door enters from the front of the house while an interior door connects to the dining room on the south wall. A swinging 6-panel door leads to the kitchen on the north end of the space. There is a single window in the front wall of the house, located above a double sink with a dishwasher beside it.

The linoleum floor continues through the swinging door into the kitchen, which extends the full depth of the wing. Cabinets and countertops encircle half the space with a range top on a peninsula of cabinets dividing the space roughly in half. Most of the appliances and food prep area is in the east half of the space while the west half includes the refrigerator and open space that probably accommodated a breakfast table. Wooden cabinets and laminate countertops appear to date to the mid-20th century, though the appliances have been updated more recently. Doorways off of the kitchen lead to the laundry room, which is located behind the butler's pantry, and a narrow hallway. The laundry room has a utility sink and a washer and dryer with wood shelving along one wall and the same linoleum flooring found in the kitchen. Interestingly, it also includes the oldest exterior door in the house. The wooden door has 6 raised and molded panels and hangs on butt hinges; it leads to a stoop on the west elevation of the house and probably dates to 1802 when the wing was added. The short hallway off the kitchen also has linoleum flooring and leads to a maid's room and a small full bathroom. The maid's room has a carpeted floor and the encapsulated brick chimney stack on the north wall, which has a stovepipe extending from the chimney across the room near the ceiling height to the south wall of the room where it presumably vents the oven or cooking range in the kitchen. The small bathroom is located in the northwest corner of the wing and includes a sink, toilet, and shower stall. A door at the end of the small hallway leads to the screened porch on the north elevation of the house. This door has six flat panels and a four-light transom.

According the 1940 HABS drawings, the north wing prior to Waterman's restoration was similar to the south wing – it had an L-shaped hall, one small room, and one larger room. The smaller room in the north wing was only half the size of the smaller room in the south wing, however; the north wing room was only the width of a single window and may have been more of a closet than room. The larger room in the north wing was bigger than the larger room in the south wing but even in 1940, it was missing its original chimney and fireplace. Whatever catastrophe befell the north end of the house predated the earliest known photographs of the house from the mid-1920s and resulted in the reconstruction of the entire north wall and the chimney. The chimney was rebuilt, prior to 1940, as an interior narrow brick flue, and this is shown in the HABS drawings. It is unknown how these spaces might have been finished or used in the 18th or 19th centuries.

Second Floor

The stair rises to a hallway that runs front-to-back down the middle of the center section of the house with two bedrooms to the left (south) of the hall and one larger bedroom to the right (north). A bathroom is located at the end of the hall. Another full bathroom is located off of the north bedroom. In the 1940's, the width of the hall was reduced with a row of built-in cedar closets and cabinets along the north wall of the hall. This blocked the door into the north bedroom, so, at the same time, Waterman captured square footage from what was the open well of the dog-leg stair and added a walk-through closet and entrance to the north bedroom. He also added a new partition wall and door between the front of the hall where the stair rose and the rear 2/3 of the hall where the doors to the south bedrooms, hall bath, and new closets were. The top of the stair is illuminated by the large 8/8 double-hung window that is centered on the east elevation. The window is recessed in the wall and the trim around the window frame is simple and flat with a bead around the inner edge. Two narrow horizontal flat panels are located below the window, as is a built-in window seat.

The second floor retains greater integrity to the 18th century than the first floor, because the second-floor trim was left in place in the 1920s when the first floor was stripped. The few alterations to the floorplan are noted above, but the footprints of the bedrooms and even the small rooms now used as bathrooms have not been altered. Many architectural details also survive and are described in detail below, including crown molding, paneling, interior window shutters, chair rails, baseboards, doors, and hardware. The doors found on the second floor are believed to date to the 18th century, making them the oldest in the house. The six-panel doors feature an unusual design with the smaller two panels located in the middle of the door instead of at the top. One of these doors is pictured in situ on the first floor in the photo of the library (original dining room) from the mid-1920s. The door shown is the door between the library and the rear bedroom on the first floor and the smaller panels in the middle of the door align with the panel arrangement on the walls of the room, which may explain the unusual door design. The same door design was used on the second floor as well and, unlike the first floor, all of the original second floor doors survive.




Belle Isle, detail of ca. 1928 image of the library on the first floor and 2025 image of early door on the second floor. Photo on the left from DHR Archives, photo on the right by the author.

North Bedroom

The north bedroom is the largest in the house. A fireplace is centered on the north wall and there is a window immediately to the left of it on the same wall and another centered on the west (rear) wall. The original door and doorway into the room are still in place on the south wall; they now lead into a shallow closet. A new doorway was created from a walk-through closet on the east wall of the room. A full bathroom is located in the northeast corner of the second floor and is only accessible through a doorway in the northeast corner of this room. Hardwood flooring is tongue and groove, random width, with minimal nailing and a non-historic glossy finish. The elevations of this room were drawn by HABS in 1940 and with the exception of the new door added along the east wall, the room looks much as it did then. Crown molding is carried around the room, as is a molded chair rail above paneled wainscoting. The front of the chimney breast is fully paneled, as are the walls above and below the two windows. The paneling is flat, with no molding or beveling, as are the stiles between the panels. The wainscoting appears to be hand-planed. The windows are recessed in their openings and have splayed cheeks covered by paneled interior shutters. The shutters are hung on H-hinges affixed with rose-headed wrought nails. Both windows also have built-in window seats with paneled aprons. The molded mantel shelf is a re-creation (dotted lines on the 1940 drawings indicate the shelf was missing at the time) but the frieze with the curved ends beneath the shelf matches the HABS drawing. Door trim on the door to the bathroom and the original doorway on the south wall also matches the HABS drawing - a double architrave design with an ogee backband and a filet. The profiles of

the chair rail and baseboards were also drawn by HABS in 1940 and the existing are a perfect match. The two historic doors in the room – the one on the south wall and the one to the bathroom on the east wall – are different designs but both date to the 18th or very early 19th century. The door on the south wall is a six-panel door with the smaller two panels in the middle of the door rather than near the top. The side of the door facing into the closet has molding around the panels, while the side facing into the bedroom is flat paneled. This door is hung on H-L hinges that are not historic. The door into the bathroom is a six-panel door with the more typical arrangement of the two smaller panels near the top of the door. This door has molded, raised panels on the bathroom-facing side and plain flat panels on the room side. It is hung on historic H-L hinges affixed with rose-headed wrought nails.



Belle Isle, North bedroom, April 2025. Photo by the author.

The footprint of the en suite bathroom is consistent with the 1940 HABS drawings though it isn't clear from the drawings if the space was already in use as a bathroom at that time or if the bathroom conversion was part of the Waterman restoration. The space has the same baseboards and crown molding found in the attached bedroom and it is dominated by a full-sized window on the north wall that is surrounded by the same arrangement of paneling, interior shutters, and window seat found in the bedroom. The back side of the interior shutters (the side only visible when the shutters are closed) showcases 18th century workmanship in the H-hinges with rose headed wrought nails and the hand-planed finish on the panels.



Belle Isle, detail of interior window shutters in the en suite bathroom off the North bedroom. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Southeast (front) Bedroom

Across the hall from the largest bedroom are two smaller bedrooms that are almost exact mirror images of each other. The bedroom in the southeast (front) corner of the house has a fireplace on the south end wall, located off-center and close to the partition. To the left of the projecting chimney breast is a 6/6 double-hung window in a recessed, splayed niche with full floor-to-ceiling paneling and a built-in paneled window seat below. Another matching window is located on the east wall of the room. Both of these windows, like the ones in the larger bedroom and bathroom, have paneled interior shutters hung on H-hinges with rose-headed wrought nails. The windows themselves are wood sash with some wavy glass and are probably reproductions dating from the 1940 restoration. The door into the room is on the north wall and it is a six-panel door with the unusual arrangement of the smaller panels in the middle of the door. It is hanging on reproduction hardware, but the door itself is an 18th or very early 19th century door. The trim around the door and the windows matches what is shown in the HABS drawings and matches what is used in the larger bedroom. As in the other bedroom, crown molding is carried around the room, as is paneled wainscoting beneath a molded chair rail. The crown molding and chair rail match what is shown in the 1940 drawings, but, interestingly, they are a different design

from what is used in the larger bedroom. In this room, the inside edge of the panels is a quarter round rather than the square corner found in the other room, and the profiles of both the crown molding and the chair rail are slightly different. The chimney breast is fully paneled with matching paneling with the quarter round inner edge. This paneling on the chimney breast seems to have been replaced sometime after 1980, as the arrangement of panels does not match the 1940 HABS photo. There is a brick hearth that projects into the room and the firebox is capped with a molded mantel shelf mounted on the lower rail of a panel. While the 1940 HABS recorders did not draw the elevations of this room, they did draw some of the architectural details, including the mantel, and this mantel shelf is the only detail from this room that does not match the drawing (the chair rail, crown molding, baseboard and panel, and door and window trim are all drawn and all of the existing match the drawing). The flooring in this room is tongue-and-groove, random width wood flooring with boards ranging from 3-8" in width. With the exception of the alterations to the chimney breast and mantel, this room is almost unchanged from 1940 and retains much of its character from the 18th century.



Belle Isle, Southeast (front) bedroom, April 2025. Photo by the author.

Southwest (rear) Bedroom

This bedroom is almost a mirror image of the one in the front corner of the house. The fireplace is located off-center on the south wall, close to the partition between the two rooms. To the right of the projecting chimney breast, there is a 6/6 double hung window in a recessed, splayed niche with full floor-to-ceiling paneling and a built-in paneled window seat below. Another matching window is located on the west wall of the room. Both of these windows, like the ones in the larger bedroom and bathroom, have paneled interior shutters hung on H-hinges with rose-headed wrought nails. The backs of these shutters are unpainted as all the woodwork in this room

appeared to be unpainted in a photo published in the ca. 1980 real estate brochure. The windows themselves are 6/6 double-hung sash that are newer replacements. Like in the other bedrooms, crown molding, chair rail, and paneled wainscoting are carried around the entire room and the chimney breast is fully paneled, floor-to-ceiling.



Belle Isle, Southwest (rear) bedroom, April 2025. Photo by the author.

The profiles of the crown molding, chair rail, baseboards, and panels are different in all three rooms, showcasing an extraordinary amount of craftsmanship. The baseboards in the southeast and southwest bedrooms are very similar but the inner edges of the panels in the wainscoting are different – the panels in the southwest bedroom have a more complex molding around the inner edge. It is interesting and unusual that the largest bedroom (the north bedroom) has the simplest panels, lacking any molding, and baseboards with only a simple ogee curve, while the panels in the other two bedrooms are more ornate. The crown molding in the southwest bedroom is the tallest of all three rooms. Like the southeast bedroom, the paneling on the chimney breast and the mantel shelf have been replaced since 1980. The replacements are in keeping with the originals, though the panel arrangement is not the same and the mantel shelf is not a replica of what was there.



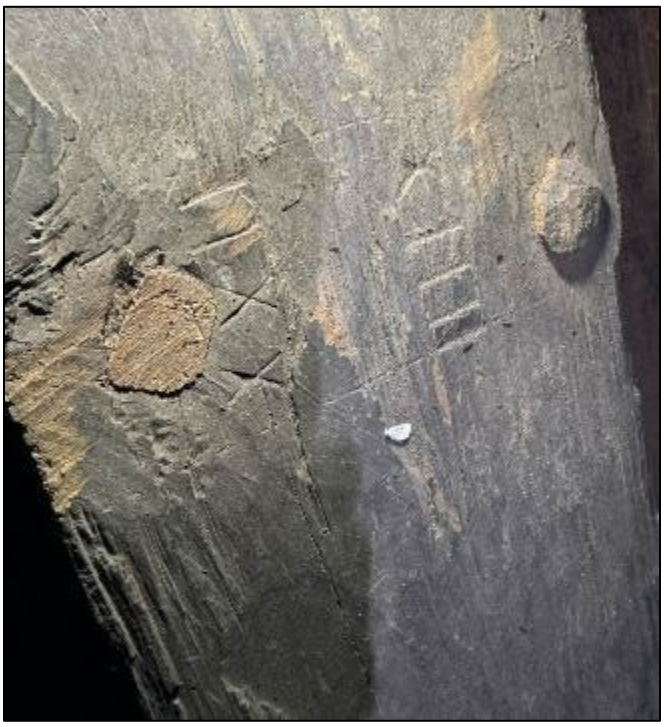
Belle Isle, Panel and chair rail details in second floor bedrooms. Left to right: North bedroom, Southeast (front) bedroom, Southwest (rear) bedroom. April 2025, Photos by the author.

Bathroom

The final space on the second floor is a full bathroom at the end of the center hall. The doorway into this space has the same trim (ogee backband with a fillet and a bead around the inner edge) found on the doorways into the southeast and southwest bedrooms, so it does appear to be an original room. The door is also one of the early 6-panel doors with the two smaller panels in the middle of the door. The space is lit by the large 8/8 (replacement) window in the center bay on the west elevation. This window is finished much more simply than those found in the bedrooms – there is no trim around the window itself, and the recessed opening lacks the splayed jambs found on the bedroom windows. There is paneling below the window and on the apron of the built-in window seat and paneling above the window. Panels are flat with no trim around the inner edge. There are no interior shutters. The space is now a bathroom with tile halfway up the wall. There is no crown molding.

Attic

There are two additional spaces in Belle Isle that are accessible but do not seem to have been finished living spaces. The attic is now accessible from a pull-down attic stair in the upstairs hallway. There is no evidence that the attic was ever finished space – there is no light or ventilation and no evidence of an 18th or 19th century floor. There is no evidence of paint on the exposed framing members. There is a wood floor laid in the middle of the attic presently, but both the stair and the flooring date to the 1940s restoration. The attic showcases the skilled craftsmanship of the 18th century builders. Massive framing members are joined with mortise and tenon joints that are secured with very large wooden pegs. Numerous carpenter's marks of Roman numerals carved into the beams are found throughout the space. All of the framing members are hewn or pit sawn or a combination of the two. The roof sheathing also appears to be pit sawn and a spoon-tipped wrought iron nail protruding through the sheathing probably secured the first-period wooden shingle roof that is no longer present. There is also a first period door (six-panel with the small panels in the middle of the door) discarded in the attic.
The attic spaces above the wings were not accessible at the time of survey.



Belle Isle, Attic, detail of carpenter's marks and wooden pegs. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Basement

The basement is accessible via a door hatch in the flooring of the stair hall that provides access to a straight flight of stairs leading down into the full basement beneath the center section of the house. This entrance dates to the 1940s restoration, and it isn't entirely clear how the basement was accessible between 1802 and 1940. Prior to 1802, when the wings were added, there was an exterior entrance on the north elevation of the main block, near the east corner of the house. Evidence for this is clearly visible on the exterior in the form of a segmental brick arch and a bricked opening. From the basement, this former entrance is visible in the form of a recessed niche with two brick steps built into the foundation and an adjacent joist that features a curved, hewn underside that must have been shaped to allow for adequate headroom for a person to descend the now-missing stairs. The HABS drawings from 1940 document an exterior stair and entrance into the northeast corner of the basement below the south wing. The drawings show that only this corner is excavated and a board partition divides this space from the unexcavated crawlspace under the rest of the south wing. This basement access is no longer present and was probably removed in the early 1940s when the existing stair was installed. There is also an exterior entrance to the basement from a bulkhead stair beneath the small addition on the rear of the south wing. This entrance is not shown on the 1940 drawings.

There is a full basement beneath the center section of the house, a partial basement beneath the south wing, and an unexcavated crawlspace beneath the north wing. The basement of the center section has a concrete floor and has evidence of several generations of mechanical equipment. The space is partitioned by a thick brick wall laid in Flemish bond that runs front to back through the space and aligns with the front-to-back partition on the first floor above. There is an original

opening in the brick partition wall that is framed with a square wooden door frame with pegged corners and a beaded interior edge. A board-and-batten door constructed with clinched wrought nails hangs on rusty H-L hinges in this opening. The remains of an iron hasp are located on the side of the door frame on the south side of the partition wall (beneath the bedroom and library). There is also an old call bell mounted on the wooden door frame on the south side of the partition wall. The framing of the floor above is comprised of massive summer beams that run north-south beneath the locations of the partition walls above on the first floor and floor joists that run east-west. The framing is a combination of hewn and pit sawn lumber but the bottoms of the floorboards are machine planed, indicating that the flooring has been replaced. There is one small area of original flooring remaining beside the current basement hatch; this area is underneath the new stair constructed by Waterman in 1940. The old flooring is pit sawn and includes an open mortise, possibly from framing for the original stair.

There are segmental brick relieving arches at the bases of the chimneys above but no evidence of any original basement fireplaces. A square brick flue with two stovepipe holes was inserted into the relieving arch beneath the first-floor bedroom at some point. This portion of the basement beneath the first-floor bedroom is the only part that has evidence of white paint on the brick walls or framing members above. There are also fragments of white paint on the board and batten door in the partition that faces this space. This evidence of a heat source plus white paint on the walls and ceiling, combined with the presence of the call bell on the door frame, suggests that at least part of the basement was used as service space at some point, possibly for enslaved workers.



Belle Isle, Basement, detail of door frame in brick partition with call bell. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Either when the south wing was added or sometime later, an opening was created in the south foundation wall of the main block. This opening isn't framed in any way. The south side of the wall of the central block is visible beneath the south wing and there is clear evidence of the original ground height before the construction of the wing – the brickwork that was above ground level is laid in Flemish bond and has scribed mortar joints; the brickwork that was below ground level is laid in English bond with messier mortar joints. Only a small portion of the space beneath the south wing is excavated, presumably to accommodate the exterior entrance shown on the 1940 HABS drawing, but it isn't clear if this was done at the same time that the wing was constructed or later. There is no opening in the north foundation wall to provide access to the area below the north wing. This space is unexcavated.

Kitchen, South Dependency, ca. 1802, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0002

The brick dependency on the south side of the forecourt was described as a kitchen in the Mutual Assurance Society insurance policy that Rawleigh Downman took out in 1818. It is a one-story, three-bay brick building with a side gabled roof with clipped gables. There was an interior brick chimney on the east end of the building, but the stack has been removed below the roofline due to structural instability. Brick walls are laid in Flemish bond, and the roof is covered with standing seam metal. A boxed cornice is found on the front and rear elevations and features

boxed eaves with a slight kick set atop a bed molding. The front of the building faces north, into the forecourt, and features a central entrance door flanked by a 4/4 double-hung window on either side. The six-panel door is capped with a splayed brick jack arch. The door and windows are surrounded by double-architrave molding that are recent, in-kind replacements. The east side elevation is blank except for a small, narrow, 2-light window set off-center in the gable. The south, or rear, elevation features another door roughly centered on the wall with a window to the right of it. The six-panel door does not have a jack arch or decorative lintel, and the wooden threshold is a modern replacement. The 4/4 double-hung window matches those on the front elevation. The window and door trim on this side of the building also matches the front. The west elevation of the kitchen, which faces the main house, has another 4/4 double-hung window centered on the first story and a four-light casement window vertically aligned above it in the gable. The casement window is capped by a splayed jack arch that is very similar to the one over the front door of the kitchen. The exterior of the kitchen building was restored in recent years to address the poor condition of the original masonry. The brickwork has been extensively repointed, and the woodwork has been repaired, where possible, and replaced in-kind, where necessary. The windows and doors are believed to date to the 1940s or 1950s; when HABS documented the property there were board and batten shutters on the window openings and board and batten doors.



Kitchen, South Dependency, northeast oblique. April 2025. Photo by the author.

The interior of the kitchen has not yet been restored but was extensively renovated in the mid-20th century. The interior has wood flooring that dates to the mid-20th century and modern drywall throughout. It is partitioned into one large room in the east half of the building and two small rooms in the west half. None of this partitioning is historic. The fireplace is closed up with drywall. In small areas where the drywall has been removed, it is possible to see that the

original interior walls consisted of plaster on brick. An open attic hatch appears to show that the entire roof structure has been rebuilt with modern lumber, but white paint on a ceiling joist visible through the hatch suggests that perhaps the original ceiling was not plastered and consisted of exposed joists and the underside of the attic flooring painted white. The careful removal of the non-historic drywall and flooring in this space could reveal important information about how the interior space was originally partitioned, if at all. The presence of the two windows in the gables does suggest that the attic originally served as sleeping space for enslaved workers, probably the cook and her family or other enslaved house workers, which is entirely consistent with evidence from other late 18th and early 19th century plantations.

Schoolhouse, North Dependency, ca. 1802, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0003

Across the forecourt from the kitchen is a very similar brick dependency that Downman referred to as the schoolhouse in the 1818 Mutal Assurance Policy. The one-story, three-bay brick building has a side-gabled roof with clipped gables and an exterior end brick chimney on the east elevation – the most significant difference between this dependency and the kitchen. Brick walls are laid in Flemish bond, and the roof is covered with standing seam metal. The chimney is also Flemish bond with tiled shoulders. The front (south) elevation faces the other dependency on the opposite side of the forecourt. The front has a door in the center bay, though it is located off-center on the wall, with a 4/4 double-hung window on either side of it. The six-panel door is topped by a splayed jack arch, and the door and windows have double architrave surrounds that date to the 1940s restoration (they do not match the HABS documentation exactly, though they are similar). There is a boxed cornice on the front and rear elevations with boxed eaves, with a slight kick set atop a bed molding. Again, the cornice is not an exact match for the molding profiles drawn by HABS, but it is the same general overall design. There is no rake overhang on the side elevations. The east side elevation is dominated by the large brick exterior chimney and has no windows or doors on the first story. There are two narrow 1/1 casement windows in the gable on either side of the chimney stack. The rear (north) elevation has a door and a window. The 6-panel door and the 4/4 double-hung window match those found on the front elevation but neither opening has a jack arch on this side. The west side elevation faces the main house and has a 4/4 double-hung window centered on the first story and a 4-light casement window vertically aligned above it in the gable. The casement window is capped with another splayed jack arch. This dependency has not seen the exterior restoration work that the kitchen has, and there are several generations of repointing exhibiting a variety of materials and skill. The chimney was in poor structural condition and was recently restored, though the top has been permanently capped to render it nonfunctional. Like the kitchen, the window sash and doors are believed to date to the 1940s; when HABS documented the property the dependencies had board and batten shutters and doors.



Schoolhouse, North Dependency, front (left) and east side (right). April 2025. Photos by the author.

The interior of the schoolhouse retains some plaster walls and a fireplace, but it, too, was heavily altered in the mid-20th century when it was turned into a small apartment or bachelor's quarters. The interior is partitioned into a large room on the east side of the building, where the fireplace is located, and a smaller bedroom and a full bathroom in the other half of the building. A small kitchenette or wet bar is tucked into a corner of the larger room along the partition wall. The large room has plaster walls, wood flooring, and a drywall ceiling. The fireplace has a segmental arched top and a brick hearth but lacks any mantel or surround. There are matching niches with board and batten doors flanking the fireplace. Each plastered niche appears to be an original part of the brick construction and is documented in the HABS drawings. This room also has a simple beaded crown molding and baseboards. The trim and flooring are all believed to date to the mid-20th century, as does a beadboard partition that divides the large room from a bedroom and bathroom. When HABS documented the building in 1940, they did not document any partitions on the first floor, or any stair to the attic. Today, a steep ladder-style stair with no handrails ascends along the partition wall to a hatch to the attic. The bedroom walls are all clad with beadboard and there are built-in shelves along the partition wall in the bedroom. A closet and full bathroom complete the space. In the attic, the end walls remain plaster on brick, but the floor and roof framing were replaced in the mid-20th century. Like the kitchen, this building probably had sleeping space for enslaved people in the attic, based on the presence of small windows for light and ventilation, and the white plaster finish on the end walls.



Schoolhouse, North Dependency, main room interior. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Downman Cemetery, early to mid 19th century or earlier, Contributing, DHR #051-0001-0004

The only known cemetery on the Belle Isle property today is a small plot located to the northeast of the manor house in the midst of a cultivated field north of the driveway. This small parcel is not technically owned by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The cemetery is surrounded by a fence made of round iron pipes set into concrete posts, which lacks any gate or opening for access. The space includes three marked graves with head and footstones and one large memorial stone to the Downman family. The three marked graves are aligned north-south in the northeast corner of the fenced space, and it is assumed that there are other unmarked graves inside the fence as well. The ground surface is uneven and showed extensive evidence of groundhog activity, including backdirt piles with brick fragments, when first visited in the winter, and the Park's staff have since, on the advice of an archaeologist, deposited sterile sand across the site to protect it. The earliest marked grave is for Elizabeth Sophia Jones, who was first the widow of Dr. Joseph Downman, son of Belle Isle owner Rawleigh William Downman, and then Dr. William Jones, and who died in 1851. The other two marked graves are dated 1857 (Williamina Sophia Jones, daughter of Elizabeth Jones and Dr. William Jones who died at the age of 16) and 1864 (W. Y. Downman who died at the age of 34). The large memorial stone centered in the plot is marked "Downman" in large type and states, "Before the War Between the States Belle Isle was the home of the Downman family, many of whose members are buried in this graveyard. This stone was erected in 1929. Usque ad Tubum." The existing fence is believed to date to the same time as this large marker, and it isn't clear how the boundaries for the fenced plot were determined. A deed for the Belle Isle property from 1912 expressly reserves "the old family vault or burying ground" located in the front field "as the

same is defined by the remnants of an old brick wall formerly enclosing the same."[1] It should be assumed that there are numerous unmarked graves within the vicinity of the existing fenced plot and that the cemetery is larger than the area enclosed within the existing fence, possibly substantially larger.



Downman Cemetery, looking west, Belle Isle Manor House and Dependencies in background left. April 2025. Photo by the author.

[1] J.W. Chinn, Jr., Special Commissioner for the sale of Lewis-Lankford-Tull Co. to Allie Somers and David Somers, Deed Book 58, page 260; Lancaster County Circuit Court, Land Records: Deeds and Wills, Lancaster, Virginia.



Downman Cemetery, grave of William Yates Downman, 1864. January 2025. Photo by the author.

Garage, c. 1945, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0007

The 1 ½-story gable-roofed frame garage dates to the period of the Waterman restoration and seems to have been designed as a component of the larger landscape. Based on photos from 1950, it is believed that the landscape work took place around 1945, after the restoration of the main house was complete, and the garage is believed to date to this same period. It is located northwest of the manor house along the edge of the area identified as the remains of formal terraced gardens. A branch of the driveway leads to the north elevation of the building where there are two overhead garage doors. The south elevation of the building faces the former garden terrace and includes a central entrance flanked by two 4/4 double-hung wood windows. The central door is crafted of wood boards set in a chevron pattern. There is another door in the east gable of the building, this one also done in a chevron pattern, which is accessed by a severely deteriorated exterior stair. The garage has beaded flush wood siding and rests on a concrete block foundation. Boxed cornices have decorative cornice end boards. The steeply pitched side-gabled roof is clad with asphalt shingles. Unfortunately, a tree has come down on the building, creating a large hole in the roof and it is in overall poor condition as a result.

Belle Isle Curtilage, c. 1767 and c. 1945, Contributing Site, DHR # 051-0001-0005

The landscape of the curtilage - defined by the visual grouping of the manor house, kitchen, schoolhouse, garage, terraced gardens, forecourt, and axial driveway – is a contributing site with elements that date from the c. 1767 period of construction and from the 1940s Colonial Revival renovation of the property. The curtilage is counted as a single contributing site for the purposes of this nomination, but in the following description, various significant landscape elements are

mentioned. The details of this description are taken from the "Belle Isle Manor Cultural Landscape Report" by Laura Knott (2025).



Belle Isle Curtilage Site, looking west. January 2025. Photo by the author.

The curtilage is marked by several significant topographic modifications – the grading and use of fill to create a building platform for the manor house, the fill used to create the garden terrace directly behind the house, and the grading to construct the axial driveway. The terraced garden behind the house is one of the most significant elements of the historic landscape design surviving at the site today. According to Laura Knott, the size and placement of the upper terrace and the former brick garden wall (the location of which was mapped by HABS when a small surviving section was photographed in 1937) suggest that the "falling gardens" were constructed at the same time as the central block of the manor house. These terraced gardens were common for plantation seats throughout the Tidewater Region - "Most important was the creation of the house terrace, from which owners and visitors could view the surrounding landscape of fields, forests, and rivers. This terrace, sometimes called a "flat" was usually turfed and served as a type of platform from which one could view the landscape."[2] According to the HABS documentation, the brick garden wall enclosed a U-shaped area that enveloped the upper terrace and extended approximately 64 feet to the north and south from the corners of the main block and then approximately 110 feet to the west towards the waters of Deep Creek. The wall itself was three to four feet tall and laid in Flemish bond with a molded water table. Only a fragment of it was standing in 1937 and all above-ground remnants seem to have been removed during the 1940s renovation. Archaeological evidence of the wall may still exist below ground. The upper terrace is still clearly defined; the lower terrace is less obvious but still discernable.

[2] Laura Knott, "Belle Isle Manor Cultural Landscape Report," 2025: 2-3.



Belle Isle Curtilage Site, looking southeast with upper terrace, represented by the slope edged with boxwoods, in the foreground. The west elevation of the manor house is in the center of the photo, while the west elevation of the schoolhouse dependency is on the far left. April 2025. Photo by the author.

Patterns of spatial organization that define the site include the horizontal enclosure of the forecourt with hedges and fencing and the vertical enclosure using shade trees; the use of pecan trees to create an allée along the axial driveway; the symmetrical composition of the house, terrace, kitchen, and schoolhouse; the creation of the upper terrace behind the house as a square viewing platform; and the organization of the gardens into "garden rooms." The enclosure of the forecourt with hedges and fencing and shade trees dates mostly to the 1940s period and is an important character defining feature of the landscape around the main house, as is the axial driveway itself. The allée of pecan trees was planted later in the 1950s or 1960s and does not date to the period of significance. The symmetry of the cultural resources within the curtilage and the use of squares and right angles in the spatial organization, is another important character defining feature of the landscape that dates to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Circulation patterns and features that characterize the space include the axial driveway, the original path of which is still visible from the manor house to well beyond the park boundary; the circular driveway around the forecourt; the road trace to the garage; the brick walkway and terrace at the front entrance; the stone steps at the front entrance; and the brick walkways to the kitchen and schoolhouse dependencies. While oral history has suggested that there are other brick walkways in the terraced garden behind the house, these have not been located. All of these elements, apart from the axial driveway that dates to the late 18th century, date to the 1940s renovation of the property and are emblematic of the Colonial Revival design decisions that characterized that endeavor.



Belle Isle Curtilage Site, looking east down the axial drive from the forecourt of the manor house. April 2025. Photo by the author.

The deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and herbaceous plants that have been introduced into a landscape by cultural activities are often referred to as Cultural Vegetation. Within the curtilage site at Belle Isle, this includes a selection of ornamental trees and shrubs. The allée of pecan trees along the driveway dates to after the end of period of significance, but the shade trees, primarily willow oaks and pecans, within and adjacent to the forecourt, are believed to date to before 1950. The hedge of American holly along the east side of the forecourt, with the central Chinese Chippendale-style gate, is newer but replaces a hedge that was in place by 1950. Several large American boxwoods planted in the late 1940s are located around the house – two large specimens flank the front door while two more flank the steps to the side porch on the south side of the house and two others flank the steps to the back porch on the west side of the house. An entire hedge of boxwoods surrounds the upper garden terrace, and photos suggest that these were all planted during the 1940s renovation. The hedge was renovated again around 10 years ago. A couple of hemlocks on the south side of the garage are the remnants of a hemlock hedge that was also planted in the 1940s. A large bald cypress to the north of the upper terrace appears in photos from the 1930s. Beds of English ivy and periwinkle abound throughout the curtilage site and photos from the mid-20th century suggest that the ivy was intentionally trained to climb the walls of the house and dependencies during the Colonial Revival renovation. As ivy is very damaging to historic brickwork, it is fortunate that it has all been removed from the building at this point in time.

The curtilage site is also defined by views and vistas of the surrounding landscape. The vista of the main house from the approach along the long, straight driveway is an important character defining feature of the property. Likewise, the views from the house and curtilage site into the surrounding agricultural fields are an important visible connection between the agricultural economy that supported the lifestyle of the manor house. Aerial photographs suggest that the landscape between the terrace and the inlet of Deep Creek that comes up behind the house was more open in the mid-20th century, allowing a visual connection from the terrace to the water. It is also possible that a view of the deeper water closer to the confluence of Deep Creek and the Rappahannock River was once possible from the manor house, if the landscape was all in cultivation rather than stands of trees, but to date, no photographs, maps, or other primary source documents have been located to support this theory.

Belle Isle Manor House – Agriculture Group

Two-story Barn/Grain Barn, late 19th century, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0006

A frame barn with a front gabled roof is located just to the north of the garage and the curtilage site, along the edge of a cultivated field but overgrown by the encroaching woods. It is in poor condition with structural failure at the northeast corner, making entry unsafe. This barn is labeled on the 1940 HABS site plan as "Grain Barn" and appears to be 2 ½ or 3 stories tall. There are three vertically aligned doorways on the north elevation of the building. The interior of the first floor appears to have a wooden floor and be partitioned into storage bins by wooden half-walls. The exterior of the building has wooden siding held in place with cut nails. All visible lumber is circular sawn and constructed with nails and basic joinery, rather than more skilled mortise and tenon joinery. The estimated construction date of late 19th century is based on these construction details. This barn is associated with the rich agricultural history of the Belle Isle property, which was a prosperous farm throughout the 19th century and the first three quarters of the 20th century.



Two-story Barn/Grain Barn, north elevation. January 2025. Photo by the author.

Red Barn, Belle Isle Road, ca. 1820, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0009

The only other agricultural outbuilding still standing at Belle Isle is a building known by the Park as the Red Barn. It is located around a half mile west of the Belle Isle Manor House at the modern-day intersection of Belle Isle Road and Creek Landing Road. The building known as the Camp Store (actually a 19th century tenant house) is located just across Creek Landing Road. The Red Barn is a large frame barn with a steeply pitched side gabled roof. The three-bay barn has a Double-Crib form with a drive-through bay between two frame cribs raised up on massive brick piers. The form suggests it was built for crop storage with the drive through bay doubling as both a covered work area and loading/unloading area and wagon storage. The wood siding is circular sawn and wire nailed, suggesting it dates to the early 20th century at the earliest, but the framing is hewn and sawn and joined with mortise and tenon construction and massive wooden pegs. Carpenter's marks carved into the wood are visible at some joints. Each side of the barn is two stories beneath the roof, with a wood floor on both levels. Each has a doorway on the south elevation on the first story and a double-wide opening on the first story opening into the drive-through bay. Each side also has walls of horizontal boards all the way up to the peak of the roof along the drive-through bay. Some gapping between the boards that begins about halfway up the wall at the second-floor level suggests that ventilation was desirable for whatever was being stored up there. Each side of the barn also has a board-and-batten door opening into the drive

through bay at the second-floor level with a small platform extending into the bay to facilitate loading and unloading into the second-floor space.



Red Barn, southeast oblique. April 2025. Photo by the author.



Red Barn, center aisle. April 2025. Photo by the author.

The form of this barn is reminiscent of the Three-Bay Barn that had both English and French origins and persisted in the Lowland South for three centuries.[3] Three-Bay Barns have a central wagon passageway flanked by two storage areas, one side is typically for hay storage and while the other is often utilized for animal stalls. The wagon passageway could serve multiple purposes – covered work area, loading and unloading area, equipment storage, etc. This particular barn is also similar to a Double-Crib Barn. Crib barns are essentially simple forms of pens or cribs of logs notched at the corners and they are found throughout Virginia and west and south throughout Appalachia.[4] Log construction is most common in the western part of the state, while timber frame construction is more common further east. Variants on the Crib Barn include the direction of the roof ridge, the location of doors, and the number of cribs. The Double-Crib Barn, as the name suggests, includes two cribs with a common roof that extends across a central aisle, open space, or threshing platform. In his book, Noble identifies the Double-Crib Barn, Type 1 as having the longer dimension paralleling the ridgeline and having crib doors opening into the center aisle.[5] The Red Barn at Belle Isle has strong similarities to this type of Double-Crib Barn. The feature of the Red Barn that is unusual and atypical for both the Three-Bay Barn and the Double-Crib Barn, however, is the tall brick pier foundation. The elevation of this barn on tall piers would make it impractical for animal husbandry and suggests that crop storage was the original purpose of the barn. Granaries and corncribs are often elevated; granaries to protect the small grains being stored there from vermin, and corncribs to facilitate the drying of the stored corn. But both granaries and corncribs are typically much smaller than the Red Barn and are not often raised as high. The Red Barn is an interesting and unusual form, and a rare survivor. It is an important artifact from the early 19th century agricultural heritage of the Belle Isle property; records indicate that numerous barns and agricultural outbuildings dotted the property while it was a working farm but only two barns remain today. Architecturally, an early 19th century barn is an increasingly rare resource. Countywide, there are very few documented barns or granaries that date to before the Civil War, and none have the same form found at Belle Isle. Even Statewide, barns and agricultural outbuildings dating to before 1860 are becoming increasingly rare.

Camp Store/Tenant House, 1632 Belle Isle Road, ca. 1840, Contributing, DHR #051-0001-0008

Across Creek Landing Road from the Red Barn is a building known by the Park as the Camp Store, though it originally served as a tenant house on the Belle Isle farm. The building has been expanded and renovated several times, but its original form is still discernable. The 1 ½-story three-bay frame house has a side-gabled roof with two exterior end chimneys and two gabled dormers on the front slope. The foundation was brick piers when it was first surveyed in the 1990s; the piers seem to remain but the spaces between them have been closed with panels. The exterior chimney on the south side of the house is a double-shouldered chimney laid in 5:1 common bond, while the one on the north side has a single set of shoulders and is laid in 7:1

[3] John Michael Vlach, *Barns*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company and Washington D.C., Library of Congress, 2003: 39, 132.
[4] Allen G. Noble and Richard K. Cleek, *The Old Barn Book*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995: 62.
[5] Noble, 64.

common bond. The central entrance on the facade is capped with a four-light transom, but the door is a modern replacement. A modern entrance stoop with railings provides access to the door, while regrading around the building has eliminated the need for any front steps. A one-story shed-roofed addition was in place across the rear elevation of the building at least by 1970. The Park constructed a wooden deck and handicap ramp on the south side of the building in recent years.



Camp Store/Tenant House, southwest oblique. May 2025. Photo by the author.

The interior of the building has been renovated several times, and it now serves as the camp store for the park. Original details that remain include the center hall plan; the original dog-leg stair with a plain square newel, square balusters, and a round handrail; some mid-19th century door trim with fluted architrave and plain cornerblocks; and a couple of board-and-batten doors on the second floor.

Earlier surveys suggested that this house had Colonial-period framing and was in fact constructed in the 18th century, but those details were not photographed at the time and were not visible at the time of this survey. The surviving original elements of the house – chimneys, form, and interior trim - point to a construction date in the vicinity of 1840. During the 19th and early 20th century, there were numerous tenant houses dotting the Belle Isle property, so this house is an important reminder of the many workers – both Black and White – who used to labor and live at Belle Isle.

Bel Air Mansion Group
Bel Air, 537 Bel Air Road, 1940-1944, Contributing, DHR # 051-0001-0001

Bel Air was constructed between 1940 and 1944 for John Garland Pollard, Jr. and his family. It was designed by Thomas T. Waterman, supposedly based on the design of the Pollard's ancestral home in King and Queen County, and it was built by Bayse Haynie and his father-in-law,

Richard Savin. It is located on the Rappahannock River to the south of Belle Isle, accessed via Bel Air Road, which leads from the park entry station past the three modern Park Ranger residences to Bel Air. The house faces north; Bel Air Cottage is to the west, past a tree line, and a large parking lot is located to the north, on the opposite side of Bel Air Road from the house. Photos of Bel Air from the early 1950s show that the Bel Air house was originally surrounded with a formal designed landscape of boxwood hedges, ornamental shrubs, and flowering trees, while a wide, open lawn provided views of the water to the south. The remnants of that landscape remain today. The original gravel driveway passes in front of the house parallel to the current paved park road, and branches to the south, towards the water, just to the east of the house. A brick walkway with a round millstone at the end leads from the gravel drive in front of the house to the front steps. A white picket fence runs between the gravel driveway and the front yard area with a double gate at the brick path. Two large, mature shade trees are planted in the front yard on either side of the walkway, and two mature magnolia trees flank the front yard area. Mature boxwoods flank the front gate and the front steps, one on each side. A cluster of shrubs is located at the northeast corner of the house. To the rear of the house, the remnants of two curving planting beds survive, as does a semi-circle of shade trees sheltering the rear yard close to the house. The open rear lawn sloping down to the water is still present, affording water views from the rear patio.



Bel Air, front elevation. May 2025. Photo by the author.

The frame Colonial Revival dwelling has a center section that is five bays wide and two stories tall with a gambrel roof flanked by exterior end brick chimneys. One-story wings with hipped roofs flank the main block. The entire house rests on a raised brick foundation laid in Flemish

bond and has beaded wooden weatherboard siding. The shingle roof is cement shingle, and the brick chimneys are laid in Flemish bond with corbelled caps. The main block has a double-leaf entrance in the center bay with two four-panel doors topped by a five-light transom. Double-architrave molding surrounds the whole. The entrance is accessed via a brick stoop and a set of five brick and slate steps bracketed by white wooden handrails with square balusters and newels. First story windows on the façade are 9/9 double-hung wooden sash and are flanked by louvered wooden shutters. Second story windows are vertically aligned above the first story openings and are shed dormers on the bottom slope of the gambrel roof. Window sash are 6/9 double-hung wood. There are two three-light windows in the foundation, each located towards the outer corner of the main block. The west wing is three bays wide with a secondary entrance located in the center bay with a window on either side. The door is a six-panel door topped by a three-light transom and accessed via another brick stoop and steps with white wooden handrails. Windows in the west wing are 6/9 double-hung wooden sash with louvered shutters. There are two three-light windows in the raised foundation, one on either side of the brick stoop. The east wing is four bays wide; it has three 6/9 double-hung wooden windows with shutters that match the others on the façade, and it has a small 4/4 window in the second bay from the left. There are also two three-light windows in the foundation of this wing.

Side elevations are two bays deep with two 6/9 double-hung windows on the first story of the side wings, with no shutters, and two small 4/4 windows flanking the chimney on the second story of the main block.

The rear elevation is almost a mirror image of the front elevation. The main block is five bays wide with a double-leaf central entrance topped by transom. Steps lead from this rear entrance down to a cobblestone and flagstone patio. First-floor windows are 9/9 double-hung sash while second story shed dormers are vertically aligned above the first-story openings and have 6/9 double-hung sash. None of the windows on the rear elevation have shutters. There are four three-light windows in the foundation. The rear elevation of the east wing features two pairs of French doors that open onto a raised brick patio that extends 2/3 the length of the wing.
Based on a comparison with Waterman's original drawings for Bel Air, the exterior of the house today is virtually identical to Waterman's design. The siding, brickwork, windows, and doors are all believed to be original to the house.

The interior of the house features a center-hall plan and much of the interior trim is reportedly historic trim salvaged from the Pollard's ancestral home in King and Queen County, also called Bel Air.[6] A newspaper article suggests that the trim may have been salvaged from as many as three historic houses on the Northern Neck.[7] The stair, the mantels, paneling, cornices, and possibly window and door trim and flooring were all carefully removed from the historic house (or houses) by Haynie and Savin and reinstalled at Bel Air. Waterman is a master at blending historic trim and modern trim made to look historic, so it is not obvious at first glance what is 18th or 19th century and what dates to 1940. The paneling in the hall is noted on Waterman's

[6] Donald Haynie, personal communication.
[7] Dallas Long, "Bel Air and Belle Isle Offer Happy Combination," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, April 18, 1962. Clipping in the collection of Belle Isle State Park archives.

drawings as being "antique;" the drawings also include a note about the stair: "Owner has 30 antique balusters. All antique balusters to be used on this run [indicating lower run of stairs]. New balusters to follow old turning in all respects."[8] The closed-stringer stair is located in the center hall and has elaborate turned balusters and square newels. The wall below the stringer is paneled with molded, raised panels, while paneled wainscoting envelopes the hall and rises up the wall along with the stair. The living room, to the east of the hall, features a paneled fireplace surround and a molded mantel shelf, molded chair rail, and elaborate crown molding. The dining room to the west of the hall features paneled wainscoting, a fully paneled fireplace surround, including a paneled overmantel, and elaborate crown molding. There is also a built-in cupboard and shelves beside the fireplace. The library in the east wing also features a fully paneled chimney around the fireplace and paneled wainscoting and elaborate crown molding. Flooring in the primary spaces of the house is random-width wooden flooring. The second floor consists of three bedrooms and two bathrooms. A comparison with Waterman's original drawings suggests that the floorplan at Bel Air has changed only slightly: a small bedroom on the first story in the east wing of the house has been converted into a bathroom and, on the second floor, a dressing room and bathroom off the master bedroom have been combined to create a large bathroom. Otherwise, the floorplan is intact, as are most of the original finishes.

Bel Air Cottage, 557 Bel Air Road, 1940-1944, Noncontributing, DHR #051-0001-0010

The Bel Air Cottage is located just to the west of the Bel Air Mansion, through a line of trees that limits the visibility between the two. The cottage sits on the water, to the south and west of the house, and is accessed by a gravel driveway that approaches from the north. A brick path leads from the driveway to the north-facing front of the house. A wooden pier extends into the creek behind the house. The area in front of the cottage is open grassy lawn, which is surrounded by mature shade trees. A crepe myrtle, a dogwood, and a couple of shrubs are planted along the front of the house.

[8] Thomas T. Waterman, "House for Mr. and Mrs. J.G. Pollard, Jr., Somers, VA," 1941: Sheets 2 and 13. In the collection of Belle Isle State Park archives.



Bel Air Cottage, northwest oblique. May 2025. Photo by the author.

The cottage is a one-story dwelling with a low-pitched side-gabled roof over a rectangular footprint. It lacks the Colonial Revival styling of the Bel Air Mansion but was reportedly built at the same time as a guest house. It sits very low to the ground with a concrete foundation that is mostly not visible. The weatherboard siding is Hardi-plank, or cementitious wood-look siding, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. There is one interior brick chimney at the ridge of the roof. The west end of the house appears to be an enclosed porch. The front elevation is five bays wide, and the front entrance is located in the second bay from the right in a recessed porch. A wooden ramp leads to the front door from the brick path. The door is a glazed and paneled door and the four windows on the front elevation are 1/1 vinyl windows in different sizes. The west side elevation is mostly an enclosed porch, and it features a pair of French doors flanked by two more 1/1 vinyl windows. The rear elevation looks out over the water and has a large picture window, a bay window, and a door, plus a 1/1 window.

Although the cottage was reputed to have been built at the same time as Bel Air or shortly thereafter, it has undergone multiple expansions and alterations and has poor integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It is therefore non-contributing to the significance of Belle Isle.

Subdivision Grouping

A small cluster of three single-family houses and garages is located along Deep Creek and Bel Air Road along the eastern edge of the park boundary. These houses were all constructed by private owners after small parcels of the Belle Isle property were sold off in the 1970s and 1980s; they have all since been acquired by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and are part of the State Park.

Ranger Residence (79), 79 Bel Air Road, 1987, Noncontributing, DHR # 051-0001-0011
This house is surrounded by a large, level, grassy lawn but thick stands of trees shield it from view to the north, east, and west. This 1 ½-story Cape Cod dwelling shows Colonial Revival influences in the dentiled cornice, brick construction, and balanced facade. The brick dwelling consists of three primary building blocks - a center section and flanking wings - all of which have side-gabled roofs. The center section has two gabled dormers with 1/1 double-hung windows on the front slope of the roof. This house was constructed by a private owner in 1987; it is now used as housing for the park rangers.

Garage (79), 79 Bel Air Road, 1987, Noncontributing, DHR # 051-0001-0012
The detached garage for the dwelling at 79 Bel Air Road is located just to the southeast of the main house. The two-car garage is 1 ½ stories tall and is of frame construction with vinyl siding. The gabled roof runs perpendicular to the main house, and the street-facing elevation features two 6/6 double hung windows on the first story and one in the gable; all are accented by shutters. The garage doors are located on the north side of the building and are not visible from the road.

Ranger Residence (131), 131 Bel Air Road, 1981, Noncontributing, DHR # 051-0001-0013
This house is located along Deep Creek and accessed via a long gravel driveway from Bel Air Road. It is not visible from the road. The one-story frame dwelling is reported to be a modular home constructed in 1981. It has a rectangular footprint with a side gabled roof and a brick foundation. The five-bay asymmetrical facade includes windows of three different sizes and a door accessed via a brick stoop with wooden handrails. The exterior of the house is clad with vinyl siding. It was a private single-family house until it was purchased by the Department of Conservation and Recreation in 2015 and it has served as housing for park rangers ever since.

Ranger Residence (133), 133 Bel Air Road, 1977, Noncontributing, DHR # 051-0001-0014
The house at 133 Bel Air Road was built around 1977 as a private single-family dwelling. It is located along Deep Creek and is set back from the road, facing north. The driveway terminates in a gravel parking area between the house and the detached garage (051-0001-0015). The 1 ½ - story frame dwelling has a telescoping three-part plan with three building blocks, each with a separate, steeply pitched, side-gabled roof. The north-facing facade is six bays wide with three bays in the main block, two bays in the next, and one bay on the end. There is a large interior brick chimney at the ridge of the roof. The house appears to have a low brick foundation and vinyl siding. It was purchased by the Department of Conservation and Recreation in 1994, and it has served as housing for park rangers ever since.

Garage (133), 133 Bel Air Road, 1977, Noncontributing, DHR # 051-0001-0015
There is a detached garage located just to the east of the house at 133 Bel Air Road. A gravel parking area is located between the two. The single-car frame garage faces west towards the house and has a front-gabled roof. A pair of barn doors is located on the west elevation with a window above, in the gable. Two 6/6 double-hung windows are on the north side elevation. The building sits on a very low foundation and is clad with vinyl siding.

State Park Grouping

Belle Isle State Park was formed in 1993 when the Department of Conservation and Recreation bought 675 acres of Belle Isle Farm. The following resources were built specifically for the park between 1998 and 2017. All are noncontributing due to their date of construction being outside the Period of Significance for Belle Isle.

DHR ID #	Resource Name	Date of Construction	Address	District Status
051-0001-0016	Contact Station	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0017	Campground bathhouse	2006	583 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0018	Bunk house	2005	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0019	Campground	2006	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0020	Amphitheater	ca. 2010	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0021	Vault toilet @ Kayak/canoe launch	2017	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0022	Mulberry Creek Boardwalk	ca. 2010	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0023	Maintenance Shop complex	2009	767 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0024	Well Pump House	1998	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0025	Belle Isle State Park Visitor Center	2007	1170 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0026	Concession/Restroom	1998	1166 Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0027	Shelter 3 - Deep Creek	2000	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0028	Boat Ramp	1998	Creek Landing Road	NC
051-0001-0029	Shelter 1 - Humphreys	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0030	Shelter 2 - Rappahannock	2000	Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0031	Picnic Area Restroom	1998	2315 Belle Isle Road	NC
051-0001-0032	Brewer's Point Primitive Camp	ca. 2010	Brewer's Point	NC



Belle Isle State Park sign and contact station (051-0001-0016), looking west. May 2025. Photo by the author.



Belle Isle State Park Concession/Restroom (051-0001-0026), Shelter 3 – Deep Creek (051-0001-0027) and Visitor Center (051-0001-0025) in the background. Looking west from the boat ramp. January 2025. Photo by the author.



Belle Isle State Park picnic area, looking west along shoreline, Shelters 1 and 2 in the background. January 2025. Photo by the author.



Belle Isle State Park, Mulberry Creek Boardwalk (051-0001-0022). January 2025. Photo by the author.



Belle Isle State Park, agricultural fields. May 2025. Photo by the author.

Archaeology

Archaeological Potential

As a property totaling hundreds of acres, bounded by water on three sides, with known historic occupations going back to the 17th century and known pre-European contact occupation before that, Belle Isle is a property steeped in archaeological potential. Multiple archaeological surveys have been undertaken on the property, though none have been systematic. To date, 31 archaeological sites, both pre-contact and historic, have been identified across the park. Most of these sites have not been subjected to formal systematic surveys so their exact boundaries are unknown. A 1993 Cultural Resources Needs Assessment took place shortly after the State acquired the property and was intended to be a preliminary review of the types of sites located within the proposed park's boundaries. It involved literature review and field reconnaissance that was limited to surface observation and was intended to determine the need for further cultural resource investigations. A number of sites were found and recorded but not field collected or evaluated. As a result of that survey, 18 sites were identified and recommended for systematic survey. In the years since, two of the sites have been subjected to Phase I systematic survey and Phase II evaluation, and both have been recommended eligible for listing on the National Register (44LA0147 and 44LA0157). The other 16 sites still await further survey.

Archaeological work done at the park since 1993 has been targeted at areas slated for improvements; a Phase I survey was completed in the area of the proposed road realignment of the entrance road, while another investigated the areas to be impacted by the campground construction and the construction of the visitor's center. These surveys resulted in the identification of six newly identified sites, two of which were recommended for Phase II evaluation. One of those subjected to Phase II testing, 44LA0167, was identified as a multi-component site with intact subsurface remains and was recommended eligible for listing on the

Registers, while the other, 44LA0175, was a pre-contact site for which Phase II testing revealed a low artifact density and no intact features, and it was recommended not eligible for listing. The site that has been investigated most thoroughly at Belle Isle, 44LA0147, has been tested numerous times due to possible impacts from the visitor's center construction and, later, a shoreline stabilization project. It has been formally evaluated at the Phase II level for National Register eligibility and recommended eligible; that site is discussed in detail below.

It is important to note that the 1993 Cultural Needs Assessment for the Park did not include the 150 acres around the Belle Isle Manor House because that area remained under private ownership until 2015. Consequently, there has been no archaeological survey in an area of the park that is known to be archaeologically sensitive simply by virtue of the historic record and the secondary resources that are known to have existed on the property within the vicinity of the main house in the 19th century. (An archaeological survey to explore the 18th century terraced garden area is planned as part of the same grant-funded project that is funding this nomination update, but it has not yet been completed.)

In 2024, the Department of Historic Resources funded a Threatened Sites Survey project in the counties of Northumberland, Lancaster, Middlesex, and Matthews that resulted in the re-examination of some of the previously recorded sites at Belle Isle. The Threatened Sites project was geared towards evaluating those shoreline sites in danger of being impacted by erosion, sea level rise, and other environmental challenges, so previously recorded sites in the interior of Belle Isle State Park were not included. The objective of the project was to document the current condition of the 100 most threatened sites identified during a 2017 study of the region, though, in reality, the archaeologists were constrained by issues obtaining landowner permission and were limited to investigating 37 sites on 6 separate parcels that they were able to obtain landowner permission to access. As the goal was documenting condition and not evaluating eligibility, subsurface investigations were not always undertaken. The resulting survey report summarized previous recommendations about the individual sites and the outcomes of the 2024 visual examination, which, in some cases, did include shovel testing, to make recommendations about preservation priorities. The 2024 survey found that some of the previously recorded sites along the shoreline, here and elsewhere, were now completely submerged and assumed destroyed. The following table lists all of the recorded archaeological sites within the boundaries of Belle Isle. Sites are in numerical order and the table indicates the time period they are associated with, recommendations about individual eligibility and whether or not they contribute to the Belle Isle State Park Historic District and the associated Period of Significance (for contributing sites), their current condition (if assessed in 2024), and recommendations for future work, as taken from either the Phase I report that included the site or from the Threatened Sites report. Decisions about contributing/noncontributing status were made in consultation with the archaeologists at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and were based on an evaluation of both archaeological data and historic documentation. A detailed description of the archaeological sites already recommended eligible for listing on the National Register (44LA0147, 44LA0157, and 44LA0167) follows the table. The data gathered from an examination of previously recorded sites suggests that Belle Isle has high archaeological potential across the property for both pre-contact and historic sites, while the historic documentation about the occupation of the site

(detailed in Section 8) affirms that the area around the Belle Isle Manor House, that has not previously been subjected to Phase I archaeological survey, should be considered highly archaeologically sensitive as it has strong potential to contain below-ground evidence of buildings and structures associated with the manor house that are no longer standing, including a shoemaker's shop, a nurse's house, and five dwellings for enslaved people. Moreover, the area around the marked cemetery should be assumed to contain unmarked graves, even outside of the currently fenced area, as the 18th century graves of Thomas Bertrand Griffin, his wife, Judith, and their young children are all known to be located somewhere on the property. Finally, given the large number of people enslaved at Belle Isle over more than 150 years, it must be assumed that a cemetery for enslaved people also exists somewhere on the property. The oral history from a former farm manager states that a lower field near Watch House Point has a group of trees that has been called a burying ground.[9]

Table 2. Archaeological Sites identified at Belle Isle.

Site Number	Pre-contact or Historic	Individually Eligible?	District Status	Recommendations	Associated POS
44LA0014	Historic - 18th/19th c.		C	Systematic survey recommended.	1690-1730
44LA0015	Historic - 18th c.		C	Tidal marsh, low likelihood of containing intact deposits. No subsurface investigations undertaken to date.	1690-1730
44LA0016	Both		C	Systematic survey recommended.	1690-1730
44LA0050	Both	Yes	C	Historic component now fully submerged. Pre-contact component: intact subsurface features documented in 1990, interpreted as medium to large Late Woodland basecamp or village and recommended potentially eligible for NR; high preservation priority designation in TS report. Contributing due to individual eligibility but does not fall within the POS of this nomination. Needs further study.	
44LA0144	Pre-contact		NC	Significant shoreline erosion since 1990 indicates very low expectation for intact cultural deposits, almost completely eroded, no further work.	
44LA0145	Pre-contact		NC	Significant subsurface disturbance by plowing, low artifact density, recommended no further work/not eligible	

[9] Betty Hall Beane, Letter, May 1978. In the collection of Belle Isle State Park archives.

44LA0146	Pre-contact		NC	Recommended not eligible in 1990 due to lack of evidence of intact cultural deposits, no further work.	
44LA0147	Both	Yes	C	Historic component recommended eligible; remains of Deep Creek plantation and landing, see description below.	1690-1730
44LA0148	Historic		C	In subsequent surveys/testing, this site was identified as extension of 44LA0147.	1690-1730
44LA0149	Pre-contact	Yes	C	Identified as possible remains of Late Woodland/Contact period village of Oquomock recorded by John Smith in 1607 and recommended for further work in 1993. TS survey work identified eroding shell in bluff, subsurface testing in wooded area revealed more intact stratigraphy, including intact shell midden, site boundaries revised. "This site contains by far the largest and densest concentration of cultural materials" in comparison to other Native American sites within Belle Isle. High preservation priority. Contributing due to individual eligibility but, based on research to date, the site does not relate to the POS of the district as written,.	
44LA0150	Historic		C	Site of a structure shown on 1969 aerial, surface observation of historic ceramics and glass, systematic survey recommended.	1767-1890
44LA0151	Pre-contact		NC	Surface observation only, recommended systematic survey	
44LA0152	Pre-contact		NC	Recommended for further study in 1993 as possible Contact period camp. Potentially individually eligible but non-contributing to the district due to POS.	
44LA0153	Both		C	Recommended for further study in 1993 as possible Contact period camp.	1690-1730
44LA0154	Both		C	Interpreted as remains of Archaic site of unknown function and 18th c. domestic site in 1993 and recommended for further work.	1767-1890

				Construction of picnic area may have impacted it slightly, but historic component is believed to relate to the manor house period. Evidence of erosion.	
44LA0155	Pre-contact		NC	Recommended for further study in 1993 as Archaic/Woodland campsite. Aerial imagery suggests now completely submerged. Destroyed.	
44LA0156	Historic - 18th/19th c.		C	Surface observation only, no artifacts collected, suggested it could be a domestic site related to enslaved workers or an overseer, artifacts are 18th-19th century. Systematic survey recommended.	1767-1890
44LA0157	Both	Yes	C	See description below. Contributing due to individual eligibility but does not fall within the POS of the district as written.	
44LA0158	Both		C	Surface observation only, multicomponent site marked by a large scatter of artifacts on the surface, intensive survey recommended	1767-1890
44LA0159	Historic		C	Surface observation only, described as highest concentration of historic artifacts seen during work, recommended systematic survey	1767-1890
44LA0160	Historic		C	Surface observation only, systematic survey recommended	1767-1890
44LA0161	Pre-contact		NC	Surface observation only, systematic survey recommended	
44LA0162	Pre-contact		NC	Recommended for further study in 1993 as Woodland campsite. Potentially individually eligible but NC to the district due to POS.	
44LA0163	Pre-contact		NC	Recommended for further study in 1993 as Woodland campsite. Potentially individually eligible but NC to the district due to POS.	
44LA0164	Historic		C	Recommended for further study in 1993. No excavation during TS survey. Auger holes identified buried plowzone beneath manicured lawn (this is rear lawn of Bel Air) suggesting possibility of intact	1767-1890

				cultural deposits. Recommended further work.	
44LA0167	Both	-Yes	C	See description below.	1767-1890
44LA0168	Historic		C	Very thin scatter, no further work recommended.	1767-1890
44LA0169	Historic		NC	Very thin scatter, no further work recommended.	
44LA0173	Historic		NC	Thin scatter in plowzone, no further work recommended.	
44LA0174	Pre-contact		NC	Thin artifact scatter, all from plowzone, no features identified, no further work recommended.	
44LA0175	Pre-contact	No	NC	Phase I recommended potentially eligible. In 2005, Phase II done: no features identified, low artifact density, recommended not eligible, DHR concurred.	

Archaeological Site 44LA0147, c. 1690-1730, Contributing

Site 44LA0147 is located on the banks of the Rappahannock River at the confluence of the Rappahannock and Deep Creek, just south of the existing Visitor Center. The site is not large and measures approximately 1,214 x 820 feet and extends into the river. It was first identified during an archaeological survey in 1993 and identified as a multicomponent pre-contact site. In 2004, the William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research (W&MCAR) investigated the site as part of a Section 106 project related to the proposed construction of the new Visitor's Center. The Phase I survey resulted in the discovery of multiple positive shovel tests which yielded both pre-contact and historic artifacts. As the Fry-Jefferson map of 1751 showed the Ball family plantation in roughly the same location as the identified site and the history of the area suggests that a Native American village, Oquomock, was mapped by Captain John Smith in the immediate area in 1612, the site was recommended potentially eligible.[10] The projected boundaries of the site at the time extended north into the area of potential effect (APE) for the proposed Visitor's Center and the topography was such that it could not be avoided entirely, so the site was investigated further at the Phase II level in 2005, also by W&MCAR, to determine its eligibility for listing on the National Register. The Phase II work included a controlled surface collection, hand excavation of five test units, and machine excavation of five trenches. Five artifact concentrations were identified as a result of the surface collection, and the test units and trench excavations revealed three cultural features. All three features represented the remains of a historic structure and an associated enclosure; no intact Native American features or deposits were identified. It was determined that only the southern half of the site retained integrity, as indicated by intact 18th century features; across the rest of the site cultural artifacts

[10] John Mark Joseph, Thomas F. Higgins III, John Underwood, and Joe B. Jones, *Archaeological Survey for the Proposed Campground and Visitor Center Development Project at Belle Isle State Park, Lancaster County, Virginia,* William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, Williamsburg, VA, 2004: ii.

were only found in the plowzone. Because there were no features identified that were associated with a Native American occupation and because the overall artifact density for pre-contact artifacts was low, the Native American components of Site 44LA147 were determined to lack integrity and research potential. But due to the presence of intact historic features and plentiful documentary records related to the property, the historic component of the site was recommended eligible for the National Register under Criterion D.[11] Historic artifacts recovered from the site were datable to the first half of the 18th century and included sherds of Buckley coarse earthenware, white saltglaze stoneware, Staffordshire slipware, and Colonware, as well as fragments of white clay tobacco pipes. A generous assortment of handmade brick was also recovered. Identified features revealed by the test units and trenching included the remains of a historic structure, represented by a remnant brick pier or footing and a large anomaly of heat-altered soil, and a fence post feature.[12] The archaeologists concluded that the site had the potential to contribute significant information about the ownership of the property by William Bertrand during a time when he rose to prominence as a respected member of the local gentry. They believed that the site did not represent Bertrand's plantation house, but could represent a tenant house, slave quarter, or tobacco warehouse, all buildings that the historic research suggested had existed on the property during Bertrand's ownership.[13]

The Phase II investigations also allowed the archaeologists to refine the boundaries of the site based on the presence of intact features, and they determined that the intact remains of the site were limited to the southern portion of the landform, close to the banks of the river. The Department of Conservation and Recreation was able to avoid the site during the construction of the Visitor's Center and no further work on the site was undertaken for another 15 years. In 2020, VDOT and DCR partnered to install riprap along the shoreline of the Rappahannock River within the park boundaries to address significant shoreline erosion and it was discovered that cultural features associated with Site 44LA0147 were actively eroding out of the bank. The following summary of that work, also undertaken by W&MCAR, is taken from the final archaeological report.

2020 Phase II Archaeological Investigations
This entire section was copied from the report, An Archaeological Evaluation of Site 44LA0147 Associated with the Proposed Belle Isle Shoreline Stabilization Project, Lancaster County, Virginia, by Thomas F. Higgins III and David W. Lewes for William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (2020) and edited by the nomination author for clarity and brevity.

The W&MCAR conducted an archaeological evaluation of Site 44LA0147 within the proposed Belle Isle State Park Shoreline Stabilization Project in Lancaster County, Virginia, from August 10, 2020, through September 3, 2020. The evaluation was conducted under an agreement with the VDOT. The intent of the investigation was to provide specific information concerning the

[11] William H. Moore, David W. Lewes, and Joe B. Jones, *Archaeological Evaluation of Sites 44LA147 and 44LA175, Belle Isle State Park, Lancaster County, Virginia,* William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, Williamsburg, VA, 2005: ii.
[12] Moore et al.: 53.
[13] Moore et al.: 55.

nature of a brick-lined well, a cellar, and unidentified features, which were recently exposed in the face of the bluff due to ongoing tidal erosion, and to identify any other potential cultural features that may be affected by the proposed project and determine whether or not these resources are significant and contribute to the NRHP eligibility of Site 44LA0147.

The archaeological evaluation involved cleaning and documenting the well, cellar, and unidentified features that were exposed in the face of the bluff. This was followed by the mechanical stripping of the plowzone on top of the landform above each of the features to determine their horizontal limits and to identify the potential for associated features, and limited sampling of features. At the request of the VDOT, W&MCAR undertook additional mechanical stripping of the plowzone on top of the landform above the cellar feature beyond the limits of the initial stripping to identify the presence of any cultural features that might be part of a building associated with the cellar. The investigation identified 30 features and yielded 1,996 artifacts.



Archaeological Site 44LA0147, work in progress, east view. August 2020. Photo by Thomas Higgins and courtesy of William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

The artifact assemblage dates the portion of Site 44LA0147 exposed in the bluff face to the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The portion of the brick well exposed by tidal erosion extended 5.24 ft. (1.60 m) above the beach surface. A careful examination of the well profile in the face of the bluff revealed distinctive well abandonment deposits. These began approximately 0.45 ft. (14 cm) below ground surface and extended into the exposed brick-lined well shaft at least to the depth of a VDOT elevation stake [4.94 (1.50 m) amsl] that marked the bottom depth of the bank cut for the proposed project. Limited mechanical stripping of the plowzone at the location of the well exposed an area of approximately 121 ft.2 (11.25 m2). This work revealed the top of the well feature. No other cultural features were identified within the stripped area adjacent to the well, however. The southwest quarter of the well was sampled beginning at the top of the feature down to the VDOT elevation stake, which was 0.95 ft. (29 cm) below the exposed top of the brick lining. The deposits included variations of brown and yellow sand. Stratum I was mixed with dense brick rubble and a small quantity (n=15) of eighteenth-century domestic artifacts.

Recovered items include wrought nails, window glass, animal bone, tin-enameled earthenware, and Staffordshire slipware. Stratum I extended to approximately 1.80 ft. (55 cm) below ground surface. Stratum II consisted of brick rubble and little else. Stratum III was represented by a culturally sterile reddish yellow silty fill, and Stratum IV, a dark grayish brown sandy loam. Stratum IV was excavated no deeper than the VDOT elevation stake. It contained a wrought nail and a piece of eighteenth-century window glass. An inspection of the brick lining in Stratum IV indicated that the well was constructed of compass (well) bricks, a type that was more expensive than regular bricks. The exterior of many of the compass bricks had shell mortar attached to them, which suggests that the bricks were salvaged and recycled—perhaps for a second time—from a feature other than a well. Archaeologists attempted to auger Stratum IV to identify the nature of underlying deposits and to determine the depth of the well, but the high density of brick rubble thwarted this effort. The data suggests that Strata I–III represent redeposited fill from post-occupation robbing of the brick lining and Stratum IV, an original abandonment deposit.



Archaeological site 44LA0147, Feature 1, north profile. August 2020. Photo by Thomas Higgins and courtesy of William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

The cellar feature was fully exposed in the face of the bluff and in plan. This work indicated that most of the cellar (including portion of a brick wall on the east) had eroded away, except for a small portion at the north end. The cellar deposits consisted of variations of brown

sandy clay fill. These totaled approximately 2.82 ft. (86 cm) thick and were over remnants of a brick floor. The data indicates the cellar was modified sometime after its initial construction. This modification included the construction of a brick retaining wall against the east side of the cellar cut to stabilize the sandy soil. The cellar fill deposits yielded 1,798 early eighteenth-century artifacts. The assemblage includes ceramics, bone-handled knives, wine bottle glass, tobacco pipes, straight pins, animal bones, and wrought nails, among other items. More specifically, the ceramic tableware group includes sherds of white saltglaze and Nottingham stoneware mugs; Rhenish blue and gray stoneware jugs; Staffordshire slipware dishes and a cup; tin-enameled earthenware tea bowls, a punch bowl, and a plate; and a fragment of an unidentified Chinese porcelain vessel. The presence of the tea bowls and punch bowl and the unidentified Chinese porcelain vessel (which could represent part of a tea bowl) may reflect a trend during the period toward individualized servings and status differentiation; in fact, the tea ware may be part of a matched set. The assemblage also includes utilitarian wares such as fragments of coarse earthenware bowls, pots, and pans. Archaeologists also found a Georgius Rex (GR) ceramic medallion that may represent the cipher of King George I (1714–1727). The medallion was most likely once part of a stoneware jug.

Much like the ceramics, the faunal assemblage and other artifact groups show a high degree of diversity. The faunal material constitutes nearly three quarters of the cellar artifact assemblage. A cursory study of this assemblage indicates the presence of both domesticated and wild animals, including cow, pig, sheep/goat, chicken, fish, bird, and turtle. Some of the bones have been burned and other specimens show signs of butchering. Archaeologists recovered 42 burned crab claws, 25 fish scales, and documented an extensive deposit of oyster shells in the cellar deposits. In addition to the large quantity of faunal material, the cellar yielded pieces of bird shot, gun flints, more than two dozen straight pins, and an early eighteenth-century snaffle or watering bit.

The architectural artifacts recovered from the deposits provide important clues about the structure that once stood over the cellar. Archaeologists retrieved pieces of window glass, brick, plaster, and large chunks of shell mortar. The latter include examples that have smoothed surfaces, indicating that they may have been used for exterior ornamentation in brickwork. The artifact-rich cellar deposits, the cellar wall, and the brick floor were the focus of the investigation of the cellar feature. However, archaeologists identified more subtle features that helped in the interpretation of the structure. One of these was a narrow builder's trench (Feature 11) for the cellar wall. Feature 11was 2.09 ft. (64 cm) deep and consisted of mottled yellowish brown sandy fill. The fill yielded 60 small animal bones and two tobacco pipe stems. The presence of these items in the builder's trench for the cellar wall, coupled with other data, indicates that the wall had been added sometime after the structure had been occupied for a while. The mechanical stripping of the plowzone exposed the horizontal extent of the cellar on the north and several other associated features that were part of an earthfast structure. This group of features includes the northern portion of a large brick chimney base (Feature 7), chimney/scaffolding and structural postholes (Features 8–10, 13, 14, and 16–19), the cellar (Feature 2), and a distinctive trench (2.46 ft. [0.75 m] wide and 10.17 ft. [3.10 m] long) (Feature 5) parallel to the cellar on the north. The postholes were mapped and photographed but were not excavated. A small portion of

Feature 5 was sampled to better interpret the feature. The excavation of a small section from the center of the feature revealed a dark yellowish brown sandy loam deposit and additional features. The deposit contained early eighteenth-century artifacts (n=62), including tobacco pipes, wine bottle glass, and ceramics, and possible remnants of a wood sill (Feature 29) approximately 0.49 ft. (15 cm) below ground surface. Subsequent augering the surface of the feature to the east and west of the excavated section confirmed the presence of the wood across the entire length of the feature and indicates that trench most likely seated a buried wooden sill that served as a footing for the wooden wall of a shed off the north side of the house. A narrow trench (Feature 30), identified along the inside edge of Feature 5 on the south, may have contained a support sill as well, but was less obvious because it lacked any evidence of wood. The width of Feature 5, along with other data, suggests that sill Features 29 and 30 were probably contemporary and were structural components of a shed that was not original to the house. The significant concentration of artifacts in the fill of Feature 5 suggests that the yard area on the north side of the house where this feature is located had been used for refuse disposal prior to the construction of the shed and thus supports the interpretation that the shed was probably a later addition to the house.

In addition to the cellar deposits, postholes and the trench features, archaeologists identified traces of a possible barrel feature (Feature 22) adjacent to Feature 5 on the east. Feature 22 was represented by a distinctive, circular deposit of dark yellowish-brown soil that contained large chunks of shell mortar and other artifacts on the surface. An auger test in the feature indicated that it was about 0.29 ft. (9 cm) deep. If indeed the remains of a barrel, Feature 22 may have been used by the occupants to mix mortar for construction of the chimney and the cellar wall in the structure. The data indicates that the unusual barrel-like feature, coupled with the cellar and the features exposed adjacent to it were associated with a late seventeenth-/early eighteenth-century earthfast dwelling of post-in-ground and buried sill construction, and within a yard that included the brick-lined well (Feature 1) just off the northwest corner of the structure.

Archaeological Site 44LA0157, Middle Woodland, Contributing

Archaeological Site 44LA0157 was identified in 1993 as part of the Cultural Needs Assessment and then surveyed in 1995 as part of a Phase I survey on areas to be impacted by a proposed road alignment project, and, because the site was partially within the project right-of-way, Phase II testing on the site was completed the same year. The site contains both pre-contact and historic artifacts, but the Phase II testing revealed that only the pre-contact component of the site had intact subsurface features. The historic artifacts were limited to the plowzone and no intact historic features were located during test unit excavation. Archaeologists determined that the pre-contact component of the site likely represented a seasonal base camp dating to the Middle Woodland period. Features identified included four possible post molds, several small storage pits or large post molds, and one storage pit. The storage pit contained ceramics datable to the Middle Woodland Period (ca. A.D. 200 to A.D. 900), while projectile points dating to the Early Archaic, Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, Early Woodland, and Middle Woodland periods were also found. Due to the presence of intact cultural features datable to the Middle Woodland period, the site was recommended eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion D. It was avoided during the construction of the road alignment project and remains intact. Per the

guidance of National Register Bulletin 16A, this site is a contributing resource in the Belle Isle State Park Historic District because it has been recommended individually eligible, even though it falls outside of the Period of Significance for the district. The 1995 recommendation about the individual significance and eligibility of the site is unchanged.

Archaeological Site 44LA0167, Late Archaic, Middle Woodland, early 18th century, Contributing

Archaeological Site 44LA0167 was identified in 1995 as part of the Phase I survey for the road alignment project and subjected to Phase II testing that same year. The site was found to contain both pre-contact and historic components and included intact cultural features from different time periods. The pre-contact component of the site is represented by an intact rock hearth that is believed to predate the Middle Woodland period, and various Middle Woodland ceramics. The archaeologists concluded that the Middle Woodland component of the site may be associated with the seasonal base camp represented by site 44LA0157 but that the hearth represented an earlier period (based on vertical placement) and demonstrated that intact subsurface remains were present. They concluded that the site had the potential to contribute important information about the prehistory of the Northern Neck. The historic component of the site is represented by two intact features, a borrow pit and a large ditch, both of which contain domestic artifacts dating to the first quarter of the 18th century. The ceramics recovered from within these two features are utilitarian in nature, leading the archaeologists to hypothesize that the site was more likely to be a domestic site associated with enslaved workers rather than the main Bertrand plantation house. Due to the potential of the site to contribute to our understanding of the living conditions of the enslaved people in the early 18th century, the archaeologists recommended it eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion D. Because the site dates to the same early 18th century time period represented by site 44LA0147 and is associated with the early 18th century occupation of the property by the Bertrand family and the indentured and enslaved laborers that worked for them, this site is recommended to be contributing to the Belle Isle State Park Historic District.

Integrity Statement

Belle Isle has excellent integrity to the period of significance. The property has excellent integrity of location and setting because the primary resources remain in their original locations and retain their original spatial relationship to each other. The boundaries of the property are the same as the boundaries that existed in the late 18th century and the setting of the property – on a neck of land surrounded on three sides by water with a mix of agricultural fields and marsh – is the same as it has been for more than 200 years. The Belle Isle Manor House has good integrity of design to the 18th and 19th century period of significance and excellent integrity of design to the 1927-1950 period of significance. The exterior appearance of the house, the floorplan, and the design of the interior trim on the second floor all convey the significance of 18th and early 19th century gentry architecture, while the interior trim on the first floor, the stair, and the overall exterior appearance convey the significance of the Waterman-era restoration of the house. The curtilage site retains good integrity of design to the 18th and 19th century period in the

preservation of the remnants of the terraced gardens, the relationship of the dependencies to the main house, and the axial drive. The Belle Isle Manor House has good integrity of materials to the 18th and 19th century and excellent integrity of materials to the 1927-1950 period of significance. The brickwork, cornice, and second floor trim all date to the 18th and early 19th century, while half of the windows, the exterior doors, the stair, the porches, and the first-floor trim all date to the Waterman period. Belle Isle Manor House showcases meticulous craftsmanship in the 18th century brickwork and timber framing, and the 18th century woodwork on the second floor, and in the 20th century restoration of the property that blended new trim on the first floor and modest floorplan alterations with the surviving 18th century materials; the house has excellent integrity of workmanship as a result. Over the more than 300 years of its documented European occupation, Belle Isle has been associated with most of the important trends that shaped Lancaster County history – from early European settlement and the establishment of landings on the river, to large agricultural operations sustained by enslaved labor, to the lavish dwellings of the gentry class, to the downturns of the post-Civil War period, to the rise in truck farming and oystering and to the subsequent Colonial Revivalization of Tidewater gentry dwellings during the early to mid-20th century, Belle Isle has witnessed it all. Due to its excellent integrity of materials, design, setting, workmanship, and association, Belle Isle evocatively exhibits integrity of feeling. Beyond the main house, it is important to note that Bel Air also has excellent integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association as it has changed very little from its original design by Thomas T. Waterman and construction by Bayse Haynie and Richard Savin. The property, as a whole, retains excellent integrity of setting, design, and association because the visual relationships between the historic resources have been preserved and very little modern construction has taken place in the immediate vicinity of the contributing resources. The Park effectively preserves the feeling of an historic riverfront farm while still facilitating public recreation and access to the river.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] 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.
- [X] 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.)
_ARCHITECTURE_____
_ARCHAEOLOGY: Historic/Non-Aboriginal
_____
_____
_____
_____

Period of Significance
_1690-1950_____
_____
_____

Significant Dates
_1767 – construction of Belle Isle Manor House begins based on dendrochronology _
_1802 – wings added to Belle Isle Manor House, construction of kitchen and schoolhouse
_1927 – first floor interior trim of Belle Isle removed and sold to H.F. duPont at Winterthur
_1939 – Purchase of Belle Isle by Boatwrights and Pollards and restoration of Belle Isle by Waterman begins; new construction of Bel Air Mansion begins

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
_N/A_____
_____
_____

Cultural Affiliation
_Euro-American_____
_____
_____

Architect/Builder
_Waterman, Thomas Tileston, architect for Bel Air and restoration of Belle Isle _
Haynie, Bayse, builder for Bel Air
Savin, Richard, builder for Bel Air
_____

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.)

Belle Isle is significant at the Statewide level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture and the Local level under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology: Historic/Non-aboriginal with a period of significance from 1690-1950, beginning with the archaeological remains of the late 17th and early 18th century landing and tobacco warehouse on the property; encompassing the mid-to-late 18th and 19th century construction and evolution of the Belle Isle Manor House, its terraced garden, and the surviving dependencies and agricultural outbuildings; and concluding with the Thomas T. Waterman restoration of the Belle Isle Manor House and construction of Bel Air between 1940 and 1950.

The history and significance of Belle Isle go back hundreds of years and spreads out like ink in water, with tendrils of stories that touch upon numerous themes and events that shaped Virginia history. For the purposes of this National Register nomination update, the focus is on the architectural and archaeological significance of the property, but there are many other stories that it can tell. The property that became Belle Isle was first patented by a European in 1650 and was the plantation of John and Charlotte Bertrand by 1692. In addition to farming the acreage, the Bertrands established and operated a tobacco warehouse and landing at the confluence of Deep Creek and the Rappahannock River between 1692 and 1730; archaeological site 44LA0147 is believed to represent the remains of this operation and archaeological investigations have determined that it has the potential to yield significant information about this period of history. The Belle Isle Manor House was constructed by Thomas Bertrand Griffin in 1767 and later expanded by Rawleigh William Downman in 1802. The Bertrands, Griffins, and Downmans were members of the elite gentry class of enslavers in Virginia, and Belle Isle is representative of the largest and most architecturally elaborate dwelling houses constructed in Virginia during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Belle Isle is significant within the context of 18th century gentry housing in Tidewater Virginia as a Georgian-style plantation complex designed to visually convey the mastery of the planter over both the natural world and the social order, and as a showcase for the way that evolving ideas about hospitality and privacy were expressed in the architecture of the gentry class. It also exhibits exceptional 18th century workmanship in its exterior brickwork and interior woodwork, and in the remains of 18th century terraced gardens. The property also includes important surviving 19th century outbuildings associated with both the domestic and agricultural contexts of the property, including a ca. 1820 timber frame barn. After a long period of decline, all of the 18th and 19th century woodwork from the first floor of the main house was sold and removed from the house by an antiques dealer in 1927 and then sold to Henry Francis duPont and reinstalled in his Delaware estate, Winterthur (now the Winterthur Museum). In 1939, H. Lee Boatwright and his wife, Suzanne Pollard Boatwright, and Suzanne's brother, John Garland Pollard Jr. and his wife, Margaret ("Peggy"), purchased Belle Isle Farm and the Boatwrights set about restoring the Belle Isle Manor House while the Pollards constructed a new house, the Bel Air Mansion, using the design and materials of the Pollard's historic family home in King and Queen County. Thomas Tileston Waterman, noted restoration architect and author, designed the new Bel Air and the restored Belle Isle; Bel Air was built by

local restoration carpenter Bayse Haynie and his father-in-law, Richard Savin. The 20th century evolution of Belle Isle is significant within the context of the Colonial Revival movement, the historic preservation movement, and the Colonial Revivalization of Virginia's gentry houses and as an example of the work of Waterman, whose restoration work with Colonial Williamsburg, the Historic American Buildings Survey, Winterthur, and his private practice, combined with his influential books on the historic architecture of Virginia and North Carolina, significantly impacted how historic architecture was experienced by the public for decades.

Much of the original acreage of Belle Isle became a State Park in the mid-1990s and in 2015, the total acreage and remaining historic buildings were reunited under the State Park umbrella. Since then, the State Parks department has constructed various amenities for public use. The original National Register nomination for Belle Isle was completed in 1973 before the State Park was established; this nomination update expands the property type to a historic district to appropriately catalog all of the resources on the property. The district encompasses 889 acres and 64 buildings, sites, and structures, 28 of which are considered Contributing to the significance of the district (25 newly enumerated resources plus the 3 previously listed resources). There are three archaeological sites – 44LA0050, 44LA0149, and 44LA0157 – that date to the pre-contact period - outside of the period of significance for the district - but, because they have been recommended individually eligible for listing on the National Register, they are therefore listed as Contributing to the district. These sites represent the extensive settlement of the land that would become Belle Isle by Native Americans prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, and archaeologists believe that all three are likely to yield significant information. The pre-contact archaeology of Belle Isle would be an important area for future research.

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

Statement of Significance quoted from original (1973) nomination

"It is believed that the center or main portion of the Belle Isle residence was built prior to 1759 by William Bertrand, son of John Bertrand, a Huguenot who acquired the Belle Isle tract in 1692. In William Bertrand's will of 1759, the rooms mentioned conform to the plan of the center of the present house. Upon Bertrand's death, Belle Isle was inherited by his grandson, Thomas Bertrand Griffin. The property was sold by the Griffin family in 1786 to Rawleigh William Downman. It is probable that Downman added the one-story wings to the house around 1790 and remodeled the parlor. The Downman family owned Belle Isle for several generations and made it a noted center of hospitality. In 1918, Belle Isle was acquired by the Somers family, who in 1922 stripped the first floor of the house of its fine paneled woodwork. The woodwork was later purchased by and installed in the Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. In 1940, Belle Isle was bought by the present owners, who commissioned the late Thomas T. Waterman to restore the house and design appropriate woodwork to replace that which had been removed. Beautifully restored and maintained, Belle Isle, with its residence, outbuildings, terraced gardens and axial avenue is an excellent example of a small but formal

Tidewater plantation complex. The residence itself is a classic essay in Virginia Georgian architecture.

Brief history of Lancaster County

Lancaster County makes up the southeastern quadrant of the area of Virginia known as the Northern Neck – a long peninsula of land extending east between the Potomac River to the north and the Rappahannock River to the south. These major waterways form the southern and eastern boundaries of the county. Captain John Smith was probably the first Englishman to explore what would become Lancaster County when he visited in December 1607 and recorded the presence of three Native American villages on the north banks of the Rappahannock River – the Corrotoman, the Morrattico, and the Rappahannock.[14] Between 1634 and 1642, the entire Northern Neck was reserved for Native Americans and the General Assembly refused to issue any land grants; the area was referred to as the Chicacoan Indian District.[15] The first land grant in the Northern Neck was to John Carter in 1642, though the settlement of the Northern Neck wasn't officially sanctioned until the General Assembly passed an act creating Northumberland County in 1648.[16] The first land grant mentioning Lancaster County by name is dated 1651 (Jett, 39). By 1699, Lancaster County consisted of 243 households with 865 tithables and 1,224 non-tithables.[17] The economy was based almost entirely on tobacco and many of those tithables were servants and enslaved people tasked with all the work required by the labor-intensive crop. The wealthiest and most influential men in the young colony were those with the most land and the most servants to work that land, and they held positions of authority in the County – justices on the court, clerk of the court, County sheriff, attorneys. By the late 17th century, the wealthy were increasingly enslaving Africans to satisfy their need for cheap labor, rather than relying on indentured servants from England. By the late 18th century, on the heels of the Revolutionary War, the farmers in Lancaster County diversified their crops but continued to rely heavily on enslaved labor to work their farms. The earliest land tax records, beginning in 1782, show that there were around 300 landowners in the county at the time, only nine percent of whom owned more than 600 acres.[18] In 1790, the total population in Lancaster County was 5,638 people, 3,236 of whom were enslaved (57 percent of the population).[19]

Even while tobacco was king, Lancaster County's location on the Rappahannock River and the Chesapeake Bay provided residents with an alternative food source, in addition to easy access to water transportation to get their tobacco to market. In the early 19th century, census records show that many men identified themselves as "oysterman" or "waterman," suggesting that the water, and not the land, provided a living for some. The first steamboat route in the United States was established in 1812 from Philadelphia to Baltimore, and in 1828, the Weems Line added a new route from Baltimore down the Bay and up the Rappahannock River to

[14] Carolyn H. Jett, *Lancaster County, Virginia: Where the River Meets the Bay,* Lancaster, Virginia: The Mary Ball Washington Museum and Library, 2003: 30.
[15] Jett: 32.
[16] Jett: 33.
[17] Jett: 77.
[18] Jett: 126-128.
[19] Jett: 129.

Fredericksburg.[20] The steamboat opened up a new world of possibilities for the farmers and watermen of Lancaster County, as it provided them with ready access to the large market of Baltimore. In turn, the steamboats allowed for the importation of "luxury" goods from the big cities and new general merchants set up shop at steamboat landings and convenient crossroads.[21]

By 1850, the total population of Lancaster County was 4,708 (1,803 White and 2,640 enslaved with 265 Free Blacks). Almost 75% of the White families visited by the census taker that year reported enslaving Blacks – 275 out of 380 White families; the crops they produced included Indian Corn, wheat, oats, cotton, hay, sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, and peas and beans. The four most prevalent occupations listed in the census that year in Lancaster County were farmers (nearly 49 percent), seamen, carpenters, and laborers; nearly 79 percent of the adult White male population identified themselves as one of these occupations.[22] By the 1860 census, the total population of both Whites and enslaved Blacks had increased but only 54% of White families reported enslaving Blacks, suggesting that the number of enslaved owned by the wealthiest citizens had increased. At the same time, the size of the average farm had decreased (61% of farms contained less than 100 acres) and there were only six farms in the County larger than 500 acres.[23]

As was the case across the rural counties of Virginia, the Civil War decimated the economy of Lancaster County, so dependent was it on enslaved Blacks providing free labor. It also decimated the population of White males – 450 volunteered to serve the Confederate cause.[24] On the homefront, the waterfront situation of the county proved a liability. Union ships blockaded the Rappahannock River, and the steamboats discontinued their routes; meanwhile, the Federal gunboats that patrolled the Potomac River would periodically send out raiding parties to confiscate food and livestock and anything else they needed or wanted, or just to enact destruction.[25]

Following the end of the Civil War, industries associated with the waterfront resources of Lancaster County rose to prominence. One was the menhaden fishing industry; menhaden were small fish that was harvested and processed for oil and to be turned into fertilizer. By 1882, 10 companies in Lancaster County received licenses to process menhaden for oil or fertilizer and that number grew into the early 20th century.[26] The oyster packing industry also rose to prominence in the late 19th century. An 1888-1889 business directory listed three oyster packers in Lancaster County and by the 1910 census there were 23;[27] one of the companies incorporated in 1903 was the Lewis-Lankford-Tull Company, which owned Belle Isle between 1903 and 1912. By 1915, there were 38 oyster-shucking houses in the county.[28]

[20] Jett: 159.
[21] Jett: 159.
[22] Jett: 167-169.
[23] Jett: 180-182.
[24] Jett: 189.
[25] Jett: 198.
[26] Jett: 232.
[27] Jett: 261-263.
[28] Jett: 278.

The steamboat industry also reached new heights of significance in the late 19th century and early 20th century. By the late 1880s, one or more steamships stopped at the Rappahannock landings daily and steamship service became the basis of the economy for many in the Northern Neck.[29] In January 1905, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company purchased 17 steamers from the Weems Steamship Line (the first successful steamship line on the Rappahannock dating back to 1828) and maintained a regular schedule between the lower Northern Neck and Baltimore. In the 1920s, there were steamers from the Rappahannock to Baltimore every day of the week, Monday to Friday. Consequently, Lancaster County was much more closely affiliated with Baltimore than it was with Norfolk or Richmond in the early 20th century. The steamers made Lancaster County a center for truck farming for Baltimore and points north, transporting potatoes, cattle, and seafood from the farms of Lancaster to the city residents of Maryland.[30] The rise of the automobile and truck lines and the opening of the Downing Bridge at Tappahannock in 1927 shifted the preferred method of transport for agricultural products from the water to the road and forced the steamship company into bankruptcy. It recovered briefly until a hurricane in August 1933 destroyed all the wharves on the Rappahannock River. As none of the wharves were actually owned by the steamship company (each was owned by the private landowner who received a percentage of the freight that used the wharf), the company was not in a position to rebuild them quickly and the industry never recovered.[31]

Truck farming continued to be an important part of the Lancaster economy into the second quarter of the 20th century. In 1929, tomatoes were the leading cash crop in the Northern Neck; other important crops were string beans, asparagus, white potatoes, and melons. In 1931, there were 86 canneries processing tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.[32] The number of oysters that could be harvested from the river declined markedly in the 1930s and many watermen began farming again to make ends meet. By 1935, there were 993 farms in the county, an increase by nearly 100 over the number in the county in 1930; the primary crops grown in Lancaster at the time were corn, hay, and wheat, with over 1200 each of hogs and cattle.[33] By 1945, the number of farms had declined to 743, and the living conditions for farm families were a source of concern. A local report noted that 80 percent of farm families lacked running water, 74 percent had no electricity, and 90 percent had no telephone.[34]

Road improvements that took place between 1925 and 1950, and the opening of the Norris Bridge over the Rappahannock River between Lancaster and Middlesex Counties in 1957, chipped away at the inaccessibility of Lancaster and the county was increasingly physically connected to neighboring counties. The bridge opened new markets for truck farmers and

[29] Jett: 248.
[30] Ammon G. Dunton, Sr. and C. Jackson Simmons, *Two Memoirs from the Land of Pleasant Living*, Lancaster, VA: Foundation for Historic Christ Church, 1981: 11-12.
[31] Dunton and Simmons: 12-13.
[32] Jett: 296.
[33] Jett: 311.
[34] Jett: 320.

watermen to the south and east, especially to the growing cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News, and Portsmouth, all of which saw exploding population growth in the 1940s and 1950s related to wartime industries.[35] Improved transportation and access also brought more travelers through the county, which bolstered a tourism industry that had started to become an important aspect of the local economy in the second quarter of the 20th century. Visitors to the county increasingly appreciated the positive qualities of waterfront, small-town living and the value of waterfront property soared. Between 1950 and 1956, the real property value in Lancaster County doubled.[36] "Come-heres" were often willing to pay top dollar for waterfront acreage, and local farmers and watermen, who were increasingly struggling to make a living from the land due to rising costs of labor and equipment and reduced oyster hauls, compounded by increased property taxes, sold out to developers in the third and fourth quarters of the 20th century. In 1935, about 55 percent of the county's acreage was being farmed on 993 separate farms; in 1997, there were only 70 farms remaining in Lancaster County, farming less than 20 percent of the county's acreage.[37]

The local oyster industry, which rocketed to prominence in the late 19th century, was negatively impacted by overharvesting and declining water quality in the Chesapeake Bay as the 20th century progressed. The harvests fluctuated from year to year and declined overall, but it wasn't until a parasite-borne disease called MSX killed more than a million bushels of Chesapeake Bay oysters in 1959 that the industry all but collapsed.[38] Research since then has led to an increased appreciation for the complex ecosystem of the Bay and the role that oysters play in it. Efforts to restore the health of the Bay and recolonize the oyster beds have been a hallmark of the last fifty years.

With the increasing interest in waterfront property and the residential development of Lancaster County's extensive shorelines, public access to the water, which for centuries had been abundant and unquestioned, declined dramatically. Belle Isle Farm had been purchased by a developer for residential subdivision in 1987, but the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation was instead able to purchase the acreage to establish Belle Isle State Park and preserve public access to the Rappahannock River, Deep Creek, and Mulberry (also known as Mud) Creek. Today, 97 percent of Lancaster County's waterfront is privately owned; the vast majority of publicly accessible shoreline is in Belle Isle State Park.

Chain of Title and History of Belle Isle

Local researcher, Lonnie H. Lee, has done extensive primary source research on the 17th and 18th century history of Belle Isle and has published a book on the topic: *A Brief History of Belle Isle Plantation: Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650-1782*. This section draws heavily on that work for the early history of the plantation.

[35] Jett: 342.
[36] Jett: 346.
[37] Jett: 348-349.
[38] Jett: 352.

Captain John Smith was the first European to explore the Rappahannock River in 1607-08 and mapped a series of Native American villages on the north shore of the Rappahannock containing around 300 people. A map that he published in 1624 illustrated a "Kings house" and other native buildings along Deep Creek at the site that would become Belle Isle.[39] Thomas Powell patented 500 acres of the future lands of Belle Isle on October 14, 1650; the tract then became known as Powell's Quarter. Powell was part of the migration of colonists who came to the Rappahannock River from the south side of the James River, in the area of Lower Norfolk, Isle of Wight, and Nansemond Counties, shortly after the Northern Neck was opened to English settlers. Powell also purchased a 700-acre plantation on the banks of the Corrotoman River and was a prominent citizen of the local planter class. He commanded a workforce of 16 workers and was selected to be a court justice.[40] A marriage jointure in 1664 (for his second marriage, to Jane Catesby) indicates that Powell was living on "Powell's Quarter" at the time.[41] Archaeological evidence suggests that Powell's dwelling may have been located on the western edge of his 500-acre property, close to Mulberry Creek, where the oldest European artifacts have been found to date.[42]

Thomas Powell died in 1670 and left the 500-acre Powell's Quarter to his four-year-old son, Rawleigh Powell, in his will. Lee documents a series of marriages, early deaths, and legal maneuverings over the next 17 years, and notes that Rawleigh's 1687 will suggests that by that time, there were at least two separate homes on different sections of the plantation – the one on the west end, possibly built by Thomas Powell, and another on the east end near Deep Creek, where Rawleigh was living at the time of his death.[43] All of the 500-acres of Powell's Quarter was sold out of the Powell family by 1692, and came into the ownership of John Bertrand that year.

John Bertrand was a French Huguenot and Anglican clergyman who emigrated first to England to escape persecution and then to America in 1687. He married another French exile while in London, Charlotte Jolly, the daughter of wealthy French merchants, and the two sailed for America together. In Virginia, John Bertrand served as minister in the North Farnham parish (in present day Richmond County) and at Saint Mary's Whitechapel in Lancaster County and served as tutor to the sons of prominent gentleman William Fitzhugh of Stafford County. When Bertrand purchased the 500-acre Powell's Quarter in 1692, he and Charlotte had two children of their own, Mary Ann and William. John and Charlotte Bertrand had a vision for the advantageous waterfront location of Powell's Quarter and planned to use their connections with family and friends back in France to establish a transatlantic mercantile and trading business and set about building a landing where Deep Creek flowed into the Rappahannock (at the time, Deep Creek was deep enough and clear enough to accommodate oceangoing vessels).[44] In order to

[39] Lonnie H. Lee, *A Brief History of Belle Isle Plantation: Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650-1782*, Heritage Books, Inc., 2020: 2.
[40] Lee: 9-10.
[41] Lee: 12.
[42] Lee: 13.
[43] Lee: 19-20.
[44] Lee: 27-33.

realize their vision, the Bertrand's needed more shoreline along Deep Creek and they attempted to acquire the unpatented land to the north of Powell's Quarter. A protracted legal battle (well-documented in Lee's book and in which the Bertrand's leveraged their connections with William Fitzhugh) ultimately resulted in the Bertrand's expanding their Rappahannock River plantation to 924 acres, including all of the western shoreline of Deep Creek, by 1698. This expansion roughly correlates with the modern-day boundaries of Belle Isle State Park. With the expansion of the plantation, Bertrand also increased his labor force to eleven workers in 1700, apparently a mixture of indentured servants and enslaved Africans.[45]

According to Lee, local records indicate that the Bertrands had completed construction of their landing on Deep Creek and were in business as merchants by 1701.[46] John Bertrand, unfortunately, died that same year, leaving the plantation to his 13-year-old son, William, and naming his wife, Charlotte, as the sole executor and administrator of his estate. Lee's extensive research documents the unusual role that Charlotte took on as independent businesswoman in Colonial Virginia, managing a labor force of both indentured and enslaved workers and engaging in business transactions with both merchants in England and wealthy residents of Lancaster County (see Lee, pages 41-54 for an in-depth discussion). Local records indicate that Charlotte Bertrand was operating a "store" at the landing and that she and John Bertrand had reoriented the plantation, referred to by name as Deep Creek Plantation, to the confluence of Deep Creek and the Rapphannock River.[47] Charlotte continued to have a significant role in running the plantation and the mercantile business at the landing until at least 1713, when son William turned 25.[48]

The research in Lee's book suggests that Charlotte was a savvy businesswoman who drew on her French mercantile heritage to build her family's business and bring in new partners through strategic marriages that would ensure the financial security and social standing of both of her children. According to Lee's research, both William, who legally inherited all 925 acres of the Deep Creek plantation, and his sister, Mary Ann, both lived on the property with their respective spouses, and were partners in running the plantation and its mercantile operations. Mary Ann, who married Charles Ewell, a wealthy builder and bricklayer, took the lead with regard to the operation of the store, while William, who married Susannah Foushee, took charge of the planting and the tobacco storage, grading, and shipping operation.[49] Charlotte lived in a house near the confluence of Deep Creek and the Rappahannock River and a 125-acre tract including this house and an orchard were leased to Charles Ewell in 1712; Ewell is believed to have built a large two-story brick addition onto this house and he and Mary Ann lived there following Charlotte's death in 1721.[50] William and Susannah lived in another house on the property, possibly located near the site of the existing Belle Isle Manor House, which was described in his estate inventory as including six rooms: a hall, a chamber, and an entry on the first floor, and

[45] Lee: 34-36.
[46] Lee: 47.
[47] Lee: 52-53.
[48] Lee: 57.
[49] Lee: 63.
[50] Lee: 61-62 and 71.

three additional rooms above the first story rooms on a second floor.[51] William was sworn in as a Tobacco Receiver by the county justices in October 1722, which made him responsible for weighing and inspecting tobacco for the growers who deposited their crop at his landing and suggests that the Lancaster County Court had designated the Deep Creek wharf a public landing and storage area for tobacco, grain, and other merchandise by this time.[52] As the operator of a public landing and the one responsible for grading the quality of his neighbor's tobacco, William Bertrand would have wielded significant power and influence and derived substantial financial advantages. His sister, Mary Ann Bertrand Ewell, would go on to marry two more times following the death of Charles Ewell, with the final marriage in 1742 being to the wealthy court justice and merchant James Ball, cousin to George Washington's mother, Mary Ball Washington.[53] The web of alliances forged through the marriages of both William and Mary Ann illustrates the ways that the gentry class concentrated and expanded their wealth and power. Legal records documenting the transfer of enslaved people as collateral for leases and dowerys indicates that the Deep Creek plantation was increasingly indebted to enslaved labor as the 18th century progressed; Charles Ewell's estate at the time of his death in 1722 included 21 enslaved people, while William Bertrand's estate at his death in 1761 included 28 enslaved people.[54]

At his death in 1761, William Bertrand left his 925-acre plantation to his grandson, Thomas Bertrand Griffin, son of his daughter, Mary Ann Bertrand Griffin. Thomas Bertrand Griffin is responsible for bestowing the name Belle Isle on the plantation and for the construction of the earliest section of the existing Belle Isle Manor House. Griffin married Judith Burwell, daughter of Carter Burwell, builder of Carter's Grove in James City County and grandson of Robert "King" Carter, in 1765 and the two of them commissioned the construction of a fashionable new Georgian mansion on Griffin's inherited plantation in 1767.[55] Unfortunately, after bearing two children who died at birth or soon after, Judith died in 1769; she and both children were buried at Belle Isle.[56] Architectural historian Camille Wells, who has studied the Belle Isle Manor House in depth and was involved with the dendrochronology study that dated the house to 1767 (main block) and 1802 (wings), suggests that the Griffins always intended the house to have a tripartite plan with a center block flanked by matching wings but that Thomas Griffin abandoned that plan following the death of his wife.[57] Griffin never remarried but lived at Belle Isle for the rest of his life and was deeply involved in his community as an influential member of the gentry class, serving as church vestryman, Lieutenant Colonel of the Lancaster militia, and clerk of the Lancaster court.[58] He acquired additional land adjacent to his Belle Isle plantation and reopened an old road that improved access to the old Bertrand tobacco and grain warehouses and landing, in addition to constructing the mile-long axial road that led to his new house.[59] Lee's research

[51] Lee: 75.
[52] Lee: 63-64.
[53] Lee: 70.
[54] Lee: 68 and 76.
[55] Lee: 80.
[56] Thomas Bertrand Griffin, Will, Lancaster County Will book 20, page 129-130.
[57] Camille Wells, "Belle Isle," October 2008: 3. In the collection of the Department of Historic Resources, DHR file no. 051-0001.
[58] Lee: 83.
[59] Lee: 83.

suggests that Thomas's younger brother, Cyrus Griffin, and his wife, Lady Christina Stuart, may have lived with Thomas at Belle Isle for the last several years of his life.[60] When Thomas Bertrand Griffin died in May 1778, his obituary in the Virginia Gazette mentions Belle Isle by name and described Griffin as a "warm patriot, a practical philosopher, and a man of excellent science," and his will and estate inventory illuminate the trappings of a prosperous member of the gentry class.[61] The thorough inventory of his estate was recorded May 23, 1778, and stretches to three closely written pages. It begins with a list of names of 42 enslaved people attributed to his estate and it provides clues to the agricultural production of the plantation – the estate included 10 horses, a herd of almost 80 cattle, herds of sheep, goats, and pigs, 100 pounds of "cotton in the seed," three spinning wheels, a still, numerous hoes, saws, and axes, and three plows. Wheeled conveyances included 1 phaeton and harness, 2 ox carts, 2 "tumblers," and 1 chair and harness, while 2 canoes were also listed, as befits a plantation on the river. Unfortunately, the inventory does not enumerate individual buildings or rooms within the house, but Griffin was clearly equipped to entertain fellow members of the gentry class with 12 wine glasses and two decanters, "29 shallow China plates," and "12 small and 2 large leather bottomed chairs…6 chairs with hair bottoms, 2 [arm flag?] chairs." His house also included six beds, which were differentiated between beds with curtains, low beds, and beds without bedsteads. Hints to the entertainment and leisure activities that must have occurred at Belle Isle include a backgammon table, a fiddle, a card table, a mahogany tea table, and "a library of books." Perhaps not surprisingly, two pairs of money scales were also listed.

Griffin's will (probated May 21, 1778) left Belle Isle to his brother Corbin Griffin and confirms the existence of a family cemetery on the property at that time: "My desire is that my remains be deposited in the vault on the Plantation whereon I live, with my ever remembered dear wife Judith Griffin and children, and my will is that a marble slab be procured to put on the vault." Judith was "snatched away by a violent sudden illness the 20th November 1769…She had a son called LeRoy and a daughter named Lucy who both died soon after they were born, and lye entombed with her." Corbin Griffin apparently had no use for the plantation (he had an established medical practice in Yorktown and was heavily involved with the Revolutionary fight) and he advertised it for sale in the Virginia Gazette in July 1778.[62] The advertisement describes the "valuable plantation" as "abounding with fish, oysters, and waterfowl" and offers "a choice stock of cattle, sheep, and hogs may be had with the above land." About the buildings it notes, "it has, for the accommodation of a family, an elegant new brick house, with all other necessary buildings." The 42 enslaved people owned by Thomas Griffin's estate were divided equally among his five brothers; a record of the division with the names of the enslaved, their value, and which brother they were assigned to survives at the Library of Virginia.

Corbin Griffin did not immediately find a buyer for Belle Isle, and it wasn't until February 1782 that the property changed hands. At that time, Ralph Wormeley, of the plantation known as Rosegill, purchased Belle Isle for 5000 pounds for his daughter, Mary, and her husband,

[60] Lee: 85.
[61] Thomas B.Griffin, Obituary, *Virginia Gazette*, Number 1414, 8 May 1778, page 7, col. 1. https://www.virginiachronicle.com/?a=d&d=VGNG17780508.1.7
[62] Lee: 93.

Nathaniel Burwell. The Burwells were only in residence for a couple years before Mary Burwell died; Wormley reconveyed the property to Nathaniel Burwell alone in January 1785. In February 1786, Burwell sold the property, described as 920 acres more or less, to Rawleigh William Downman for 4000 pounds.[63]

Rawleigh William Downman was 24 years old when he purchased Belle Isle and had been married to Priscilla Chinn for 2 ½ years in 1786. His family had already been members of the gentry class in Lancaster County for over 100 years when Rawleigh William settled at Belle Isle. His grandmother, Margaret Ball, was a cousin of Martha Washington, and in 1781, on the death of his father (also named Rawleigh Downman) Rawleigh William inherited his father's "second best diamond ring."[64] Between 1786 and 1802, Rawleigh William Downman was taxed in Lancaster County only for his 920-acre Belle Isle plantation, suggesting that he and his young family were most certainly living there.[65] Personal property tax records for the same time period indicate that he was taxed on between 22 and 35 enslaved people for those tax years. The personal property tax lists for 1786 and 1787 record the number of cattle owned (40 and 44 respectively), while other years only record horses (Downman fluctuated between 6 and 9 from 1786 to 1799). Downman was also taxed for two wheeled conveyances for most of those years, noted in the "notes" column as a "chariot and chair." Between their marriage in 1783 and her death in 1812, Priscilla Chinn Downman bore Rawleigh 16 children, four of whom died in infancy. By 1802, he and Priscilla had at least seven surviving children and they had possibly started to feel a bit cramped in the Belle Isle mansion. According to a dendrochronology study, that was the year that the lumber used in the construction of the flanking wings at Belle Isle was felled.[66] In addition to expanding the main house, evidence suggests that Downman built the flanking brick dependencies around the same time. Priscilla went on to have four more children between 1802 and her death, at age 45, in 1812. She is reportedly buried in the family cemetery at Belle Isle.[67] The 1810 Federal Census documented 13 White residents of Belle Isle, five of whom were children under the age of 16; there were also 63 enslaved people living on the property at the time. As his family continued to grow, so too did Downman's land holdings; in 1803, he was taxed for both Belle Isle and a 483-acre parcel; in 1806, he added a 20-acre parcel (for which he was described as Rawleigh W. Downman "as sheriff"); in 1812, he added a separate 340-acre parcel; and by 1814, he was being taxed for six separate parcels of land totaling 2,652 acres.[68]

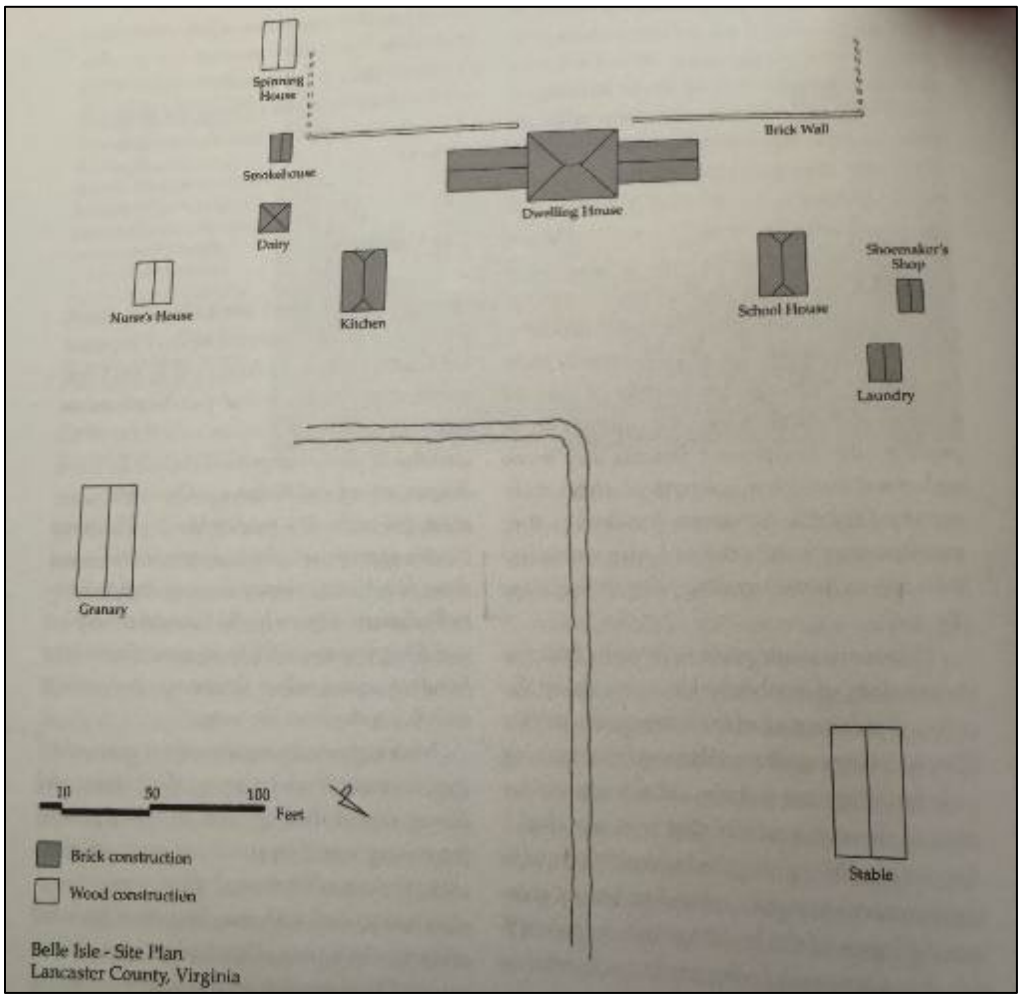
[63] Camille Wells, Letter to Mr. Edward Gruis, September 17, 1987: Belle Isle Chain of Title. In the collection of the Belle Isle State Park archives.
[64] "Downman Family." *The William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1909, pp. 138–41. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1916338. Accessed 11 Apr. 2025.
[65] Land Tax and Personal Property Tax Records. Lancaster County (Va.) Records, 1782-1926. Local government records collection, Lancaster County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia 23219.
[66] Wells, "Dendrochronology."
[67] Clarissa Wallace Fleming, *William Downman of Plymouth, England and Virginia October 1608 and Some of His Descendants*, 1958: 85. In the collection of Belle Isle State Park archives.

[68] Entries for Rawleigh W. Downman, Lancaster County Land tax records, various years.

Downman married again in March 1814 to Cordelia Ball Gilmour, but she must have died soon after because he married for a third time on August 15, 1816, to Lucy Steptoe Blackwell Campbell.[69] Lucy Downman died just over a year later in October 1817 at the age of 32.[70]

In 1818, Downman took out an insurance policy on his Belle Isle plantation. At the time, the main house was judged to be worth $10,000, a staggering sum for the period, while the two currently existing brick dependencies were in use as a kitchen and a schoolhouse. Four other one-story brick buildings were described in the policy – a smokehouse, a dairy, a laundry, and a shoemaker's shop, along with four frame buildings – a spinning house, a nurse's house, a "granary (or barn)," and a "stable (or barn)." A "small wood corn house" is mentioned but not insured, suggesting that the 11 buildings that Downman chose to insure were only the most valuable ones on his property and did not represent of a complete list.[71] All told, the value of the buildings was judged at $16,230, but all of the insured buildings were judged to have "decay'd" since they had been built and the reimbursement value was judged at $14,940 (suggesting that none of the buildings were new at the time the policy was written).[72]

[69] Fleming: 78.
[70] *Virginia Herald* (Fredericksburg), October 11, 1817. Death of Lucy S. Dowman.
[71] Camille Wells, *Material Witnesses*, Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2018: 42-43.
[72] Rawleigh W Downman, *Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia Policy Number 574,* 1818. In the archives of Belle Isle State Park.



Belle Isle, site plan ca. 1818 based on Mutual Assurance Policy, drawn by Camille Wells.

In 1822, the Lancaster County Land Tax Records added a column to isolate the value of buildings on the property as separate from the value of the land; the buildings at Belle Isle that year were judged to be worth $5,000, while buildings on the 340-acre parcel that Downman owned, which was described as being "not far from Payne's shop," were valued at $2500, suggesting a second substantial plantation. The 1820 Federal Census shows that while the number of White members of Downman's household had decreased as his children grew up and moved away (there were 8 White residents of Belle Isle in 1820), the number of people that Downman enslaved at Belle Isle that year had increased substantially to 79. Forty-one people on the property were noted as being "engaged in agriculture" and two were noted as "engaged in manufacturing." A scan of other households listed in the census suggests that Downman was one of the largest enslavers in the County by 1820.

An account book belonging to Rawleigh William Downman survives at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, and it offers a wealth of information about Downman's financial dealings with other people. As most plantation owners did, Downman kept careful records of the goods

and cash that he gave to others and of when and how they repaid him. Individuals listed in the account book include other members of the gentry class, his adult children, two of his plantation overseers, his tenants, and numerous people who provided services to Downman. The book begins in 1820 and extends to the early 1830s. The account book confirms that Downman was utilizing the new steamboat lines to ship wheat to Baltimore in the 1820s and bring luxury goods back from the city.[73] His adult children, especially his daughter Priscilla, seemed to go there often to shop, as the account book devotes numerous pages to her accounts, which included things like silk stockings, having a dress dyed in Baltimore, and notes about cash given for trips to the city. The account book also illustrates the extent to which barter was an accepted means of settling a debt in the rural south. In exchange for Downman giving them barrels of corn, brandy, or whiskey, or quarters of beef, several people either worked off their debt or gave him livestock. A man named Simon Veny (also spelled Veney) was a tenant on Downman's land and owed him rent; he repaid him by cutting wheat for him, making him numerous pairs of shoes, and giving him chickens and turkeys. Veny was a shoemaker and may have been a free Black man (the surname Veny is a common one on the lists of Free Blacks in Lancaster County). Others wove cloth, knitted, or provided sewing services. Finally, the account book illuminates the ways that members of the gentry class were able to leverage their existing wealth to become even wealthier. There are numerous references to the hiring out of enslaved people and it is clear that Downman was operating a blacksmiths shop with his enslaved labor as nearly every account in the book owed him money for "blacksmith work" or "blacksmith account last year." A single line underscores his wealth – in 1820, Downman paid Mr. Charles P. Polk $20 for "painting my portrait likeness."[74]

Downman married for the final time on August 19, 1830, to widow Elizabeth F. Jones Currie. The 1830 Federal census recorded five White residents of Downman's household that year and 54 enslaved people. Rawleigh William Downman died on December 24, 1838, at the age of 77 at his home at Belle Isle. His obituary in the Richmond Enquirer commended his "elegant and unbounded hospitality…and the most punctual and honorable deportment in business matters" and referred to him as "a most useful citizen." He was "the best of the old-fashioned gentlemen amongst us…loved and revered by all who knew him."[75] In his will, Downman left "my lands and farm whereon I now live called Belle Isle" to his grandson, William Yates Downman, with the provision that R.W.'s wife Elizabeth F. and his stepson, E.A. Currie, could remain "in my Belle Isle dwelling" for another year "if they think proper" and that William Yates' mother, Elizabeth S. (the widow of R.W. Downman's son, Joseph Downman) "shall have and enjoy a right to a home at and on the said farm during her present widowhood and no longer." Elizabeth S. and her daughter, Williamina Jones, are both buried at Belle Isle beside William Yates, so they may have lived at the plantation for a time. Rawleigh Downman bequeathed other property that he owned to his surviving sons (the Lancaster plantations called Norwood, Cyrus's, and Green Vale, the Fauquier County plantation called Layton Stone, the Middlesex plantation called Weeks, and the Stafford plantation called Windsor Forrest), left bank stock to his surviving

[73] Rawleigh William Downman, *Account Book, 1814-1836*, Manuscript # Mss5:3 D7596:1, E. Claiborne Robins, Jr. Research Library, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, Virginia: plate 40.
[74] Downman, *Account Book*: plate 45.
[75] Rawleigh W. Downman, Obituary, *Richmond Enquirer*, January 10, 1839: page 3, col. 5.

daughters, and requested that the people that he enslaved should be equally divided between his three surviving sons and grandson, William Yates. A document naming the 72 people enslaved by Rawleigh W. Downman at the time of his death to be divided between his heirs survives at the Library of Virginia. In addition, he named three enslaved boys in his will that he bequeathed to other grandsons, so, in all, at least 75 people were enslaved by Downman at the time of his death; none of them were manumitted in his will. William Yates Downman was clearly a favored grandson and, in addition to the Belle Isle plantation and ¼ of the enslaved people, R.W. also left him $885, his gold watch, his seal, his key, and "all the stock, carriages, and riding horses which may belong to Belle Isle at the time of my death."

Rawleigh William Downman's obituary and will clearly indicate the social status and extreme wealth enjoyed by Downman at the time of his death, but the detailed inventory of his estate prepared immediately following his death in January 1839 illuminates the details of life at Belle Isle. The inventory names 66 enslaved people (many of these are the same people also named in the will and inventory of enslaved people) and allows the identification of several family groups: Sally, for example, was the mother of Noah, Henry, and George; Dolly was the mother of Lindsey, William, Polly, Judy, and Emily; and Eve was the mother of Betsey, George, and Lucy. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine from the inventory who fathered the children. When the enslaved people were divided between heirs, Dolly was allowed to remain with Lindsey, William, and Polly, but Emily and Judy were sent to other Downman heirs. Sally was allowed to remain with all of her children, while Eve was allowed to remain with Betsey and Lucy, but George was sent away.

Unfortunately, the inventory does not name the individual buildings and rooms in which the inventoried goods were found but it does seem to proceed in a logical manner such that goods listed beside each other were found in the same building and same room, and it is therefore possible to make some conclusions about the uses of the outbuildings at the plantation and the room uses in the main house. The various agricultural implements listed hint at the agricultural products produced at the plantation: a cider trough and still, a wheat fan and "wheat machine," a corn sheller and corn barrel, brick moulds and a "parcel of new bricks," an "old cotton machine," four bee hives, three grindstones, more than 10 ploughs, nine cultivators, and numerous hand tools including axes, hoes, and saws. The "Seine and Ropes," "Gill net," canoe, oar, and paddle, and the "pair of oyster tongs and pickers" listed suggest that the plantation harvested from the water as well as the land. A list of cooking implements grouped together probably denotes the kitchen building and the contents suggest what the diet of the White residents of Belle Isle might have included: muffin moulds, waffle irons, hominy mortar, biscuit block, bird roaster. Notably, all of the dishware inventoried in this building is of pewter and tin; the china was inventoried in the main house. A small living area is inventoried right after what appears to be the kitchen, it includes two beds, one bolster, and three pillows; one carpet and two pieces (of the same); two window curtains; a pot and basin; a cleaver; and a pair of andirons, shovel, and tongs (for a fireplace). This could indicate that an enslaved cook lived in the kitchen building or another building nearby, possibly the brick dependency that Downman called the schoolhouse in the 1818 insurance policy (by 1838, Downman's children were all grown and gone and there is no cluster of items in the inventory that suggests a schoolhouse was still in operation). This small

living area is inventoried right before a cluster of items that are believed to denote the "nurse's house" insured in 1818 – items inventoried include "physick prep and medicine," small tables, five old chairs, a "close stool," and a medicine chest. Items that would make sense in a shoemaker's shop, a spinning house, and a laundry, all three buildings insured by Downman in 1818, are listed in three clusters on page 8 of the inventory. The shoemaker's shop is indicated by an iron vice, small anvil, barrels with nails, "3 pair new shoes," and a pair of brass scales and weights, while the spinning house contained "1 new and 3 old spinning wheels" and "6 bundles machine cotton." The laundry included two large copper kettles, a parcel of washing tubs, a large clothes basket, a "horse for clothes," an ironing table and blanket and 5 flat irons.

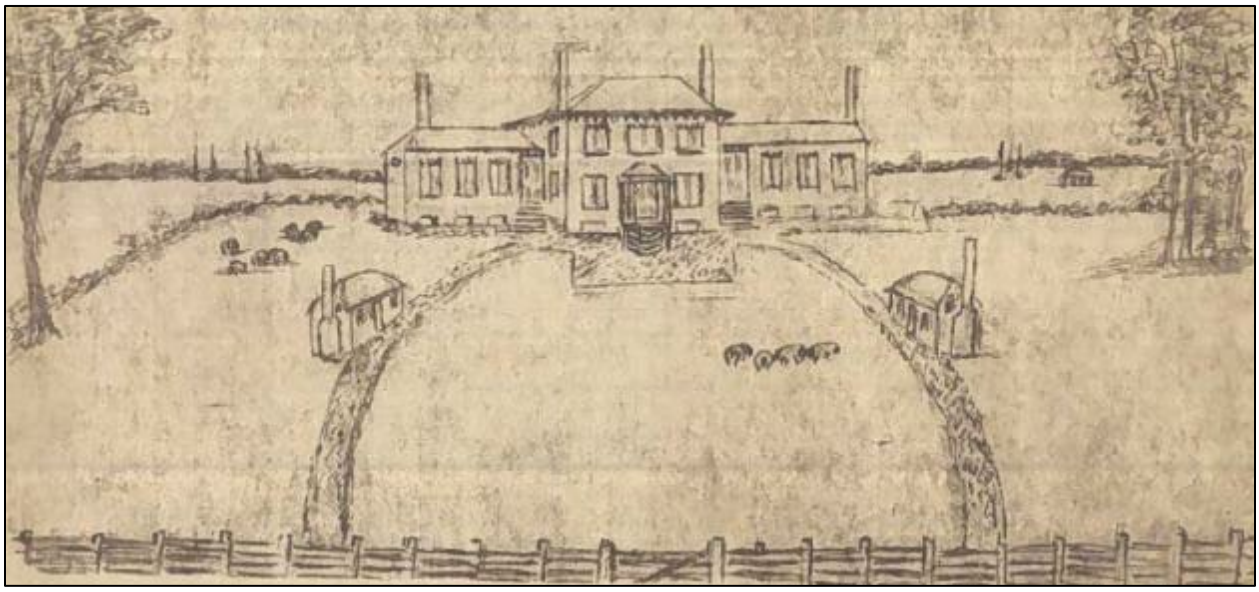
Following the inventory of these three utilitarian buildings, it is clear that the gentlemen assessing the estate entered the main house. The first space inventoried included fireplace furniture (a pair of andirons, fender, shovel, tongs, and poker[?]), "mantel ornaments," 11 framed pictures, white window curtains, two large guilt[sic] mirrors, two card tables, a "magnifying glass and pictures," and 18 hair bottom chairs; this probably represents the drawing room entered directly from the west door. A carpet and rug, an iron strong box, a secretary, a map of North America, and a thermometer, all grouped together, might suggest an office. The dining room was clearly the next room visited and it included mantel ornaments, a dinner bell, a large clock, 14 hair bottom chairs, a "set of dining tables and covers," a carpet and rug, a marble table, and two spoon and knife cases. A large looking glass, a spy glass, two conk[sic] shells, and a bunch of feathers were inventoried together right after the dining table and may indicate adornments in the room. After the feathers, a sideboard is listed followed by large amounts of china, silver, and glassware – 29 wine glasses, a "set of best tea china," and at least 62 silver spoons categorized by their various uses (tea, dessert, mustard, sugar, marrow). The inventory of fine dining equipment extends for nearly two pages, and elsewhere in the inventory, more china, silverware, and glassware keep popping up, as if the assessors kept finding more of it in closets and cabinets and other rooms. Further down, six bottles of port wine and one bottle of bitters are counted beside "8 lots of books." A musket, old rifle, gun, and two pistols were stored alongside a large powder horn. Elsewhere three books are cataloged by name: "5 vols. Scotts family Bible," "Humes England 3 vols.," and "Webster's Dictionary," just before a general listing for "lot of books in back passage." Another entertaining room is denoted by another set of fireplace furniture, mantel ornaments, 15 cane bottom chairs, a tea caddy, a backgammon board, a sofa and pillows, two small tables and covers, and a carpet and rug.

The first bedroom, or chamber, was inventoried immediately after this entertaining room and included a high post bed with a hair mattress and bed curtains, a carpet and rug, a wash stand basin and pitcher, a fireplace with mantel ornaments, window curtains, a large chair, a looking glass, and a dressing table. Immediately after this room, the "stair carpet and brass rods" entry suggests that the assessors moved upstairs. The three sets of fireplace furniture subsequently inventoried correlate with the three upstairs bedrooms, which seemed to contain around seven beds of varying sizes (trunnel [probably trundle] bedstead, high post bedsteads, low post bedsteads), dressing tables, looking glasses, chamber pots, washstands, carpets, and curtains. One bookcase with glass doors was inventoried, along with one mahogany writing table.

Abruptly, the list shifts from beds and chamber pots to horses, suggesting that the assessors have finished in the main house. They went on to inventory all the livestock (horses, mules, oxen, sheep, pigs, milk cows, and cattle), and the contents of various outbuildings that seemed intended for food storage and included barrels of molasses, pots of lard, a barrel of salt herring, and barrels of flour. Other raw agricultural products were inventoried by the pound and bushel – including 298 barrels of corn, 765 bushels of wheat, 163 bushels of oats, and 1,529 pounds of cotton. And someone took a careful inventory of all the linens in the house, which ran to two pages and included 32 pairs of sheets and 14 tablecloths, among other things. All told, the inventory of Rawleigh W. Downman's estate runs to 28 pages and provides remarkable details about the living conditions of one of the most wealthy and prominent families in Lancaster County in the early 19th century.

William Yates Downman was only around nine years old when he inherited Belle Isle in 1839. A codicil to R.W.'s will indicates that he appointed his son John B. Downman guardian for William Yates, though William Yates' mother was alive, so it is unclear why this was necessary. Following the death of Rawleigh William Downman, it isn't entirely clear who took up residence at Belle Isle. The 1840 census includes no entry for Elizabeth F. Downman, R.W.'s widow, though there is an entry for E.A. Currie, her son and stepson of R.W., who headed a household including himself, a female his age, a young male child, and a woman between 60 and 70 years old; his household enslaved 30 people with 12 people engaged in agriculture. It is possible that the woman between 60 and 70 years old was R.W.'s widow, Elizabeth, and the family was still living at Belle Isle. In 1850, William Yates was 20 years old, and he is counted in the federal census that year at college in Princeton, New Jersey. There are no Downmans listed in the 1850 census as residents of Lancaster County, so Belle Isle must have been in the care of an overseer or renter. An 1858 marriage certificate suggests that a man named William N. Walker resided at Belle Isle in Lancaster County and was a farmer; an 1860 birth record for William Walker's daughter records that she was born at Belle Isle and that her father was an overseer. William Walker also recorded the births of three children to enslaved women at Belle Isle immediately following the record of his daughter's birth. The 1860 federal census for Lancaster County lists W.Y. Downman as "out the county" but owning real estate worth $40,000 and a personal estate worth $27,777. Immediately following the entry for William Yates is the entry for William N. Walker, listed as "manager" for his occupation, owning no real estate and $800 in personal property and heading a household with four children and his wife. The birth record for Walker's son, Rawleigh William, in 1862 records the family still living at Belle Isle. It is impossible to know which house Walker's family was occupying but it seems clear that they were living at Belle Isle plantation, which was still being worked with enslaved labor under the management of William Walker. Walker was not the only overseer at Belle Isle, however. The 1860 "Slave Schedule" of the federal census lists W.Y. Downman as enslaving 18 people with the information noted as being "given in by J.H. Davenport." The 18 enslaved are noted as living in 5 slave houses. In addition, an 1860 Lancaster Register of Births records the births of two children to Malinda and Henrietta, women enslaved by W.Y. Downman, that year and records that the person giving the information of the birth was J.H. Davenport, "overseer." The Lancaster County Register of Deaths records that Malinda's baby died the same year and Malinda herself died in 1861. So J.H. Davenport and William N. Walker were both overseeing

the operations at Belle Isle in the late 1850s and early 1860s. At the same time, William Yates Downman was recorded in the 1860 federal census as heading a household in Spotsylvania County, which included his wife, Mary, and three children: Ann, Sophia, and John. He is listed as a farmer with real estate valued at $20,000 and a personal estate of $6000. A family history suggests that he never returned to Belle Isle to live full-time and instead built a house near Fredericksburg that he called Idylwild. He served in the Confederate army where he contracted typhoid fever. He was sent home to Idylwild and died there in 1864. He was buried at Belle Isle beside his half-sister, Williamina Jones, and his mother, Elizabeth Sophia Downman Jones.[76]



Ca. 1865 sketch of Belle Isle, attributed to a member of the Ball Family. From the archives of the Department of Historic Resources.

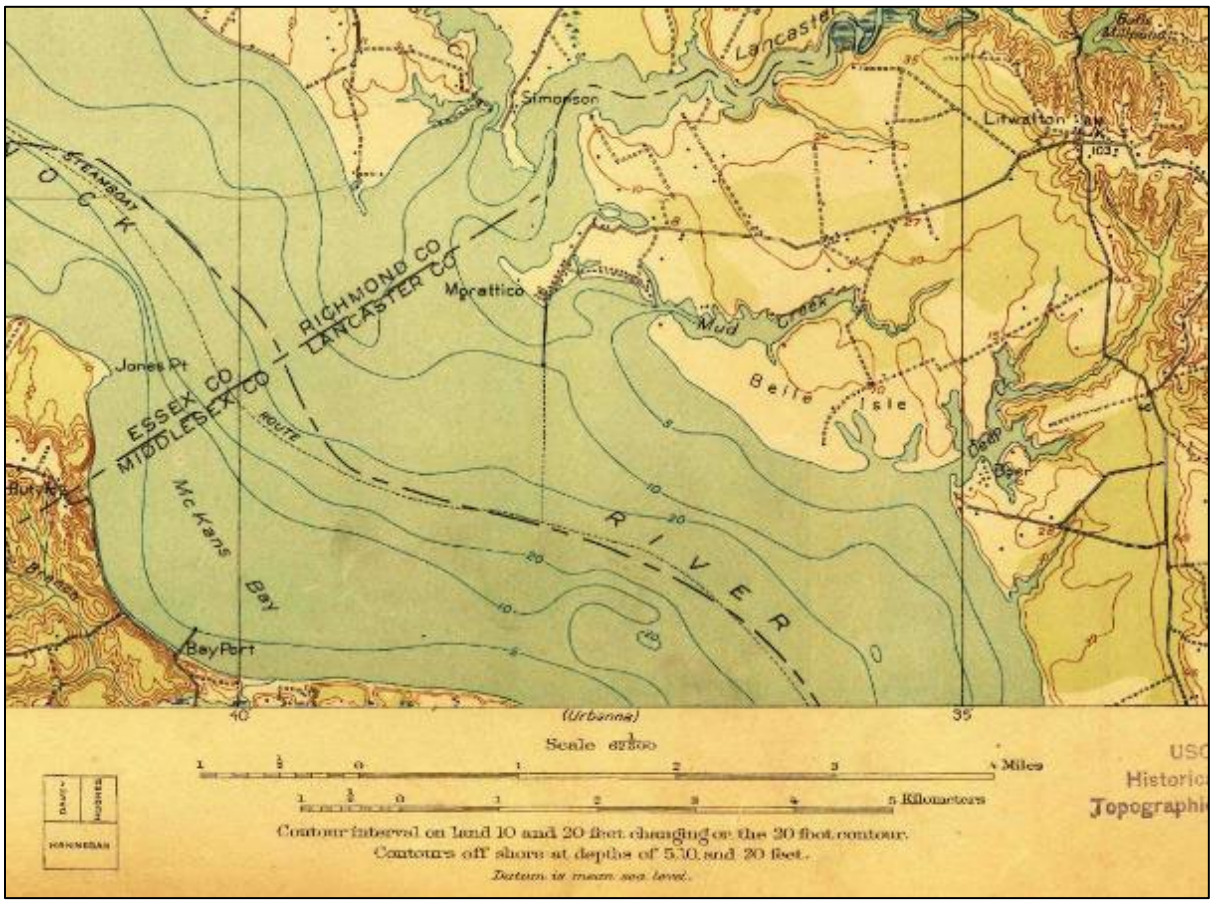
Shortly before his death, in March 1862, W. Y. Downman and his wife deeded Belle Isle to Thomas Knox and James Pleasants as trustees to secure a debt owed to Douglas H. Gordon of Baltimore. When Downman died, he had yet to settle the debt and a lawsuit eventually forced the sale of the property. An advertisement for the public auction of the property to take place on November 20, 1876, describes the property as containing 972 acres and being "extremely desirable and valuable." The land is described as "fine quality and produces all of the usual crops in abundance; and it is highly improved with a large BRICK MANSION and all necessary out-buildings." The advertisement also touted the transportation advantages of the Rappahannock River noting, "The steamboats plying between Fredericksburg and Baltimore, known as the Rappahannock boats, render it easily accessible." In January 1877, a deed was recorded in Lancaster County transferring Belle Isle from Knox and Pleasants to H. Skipwith Gordon of Baltimore (presumably a relation of Douglas H. Gordon) for $12,000. Both Gordon's are listed in the 1880 U.S. Census as residents of Baltimore, Maryland, so they don't seem to have lived at Belle Isle full-time, though the steamboats between Baltimore and the Rappahannock River would have made Belle Isle an easy retreat from Baltimore.

[76] Fleming: 86.

History repeated itself in 1888 when H. Skipwith Gordon mortgaged Belle Isle for $16,000 to Henry I. Nicholas of New York and defaulted on the mortgage. Nicholas demanded that the trustee for the mortgage, Walter Taylor, sell the property and Nicholas then bought it. In June 1893, a deed transferring the 973 acres of Belle Isle, "formerly owned by W.Y. Downman," to Alice M. Nicholas, wife of Henry Nicholas of New York, was recorded in Lancaster County. A short mention in the Northern Neck News in 1894 suggests that Belle Isle was possibly being used as a seasonal retreat at that time: "Mr. William Nicholas with several of his friends from Maryland are enjoying the hunting season at his lovely home, Belle Isle."

The property changed hands again in September 1903, when H.B. Hollins and Walter Hathaway transferred the 973 acres "on behalf of Alice M. Nicholas, who is an insane person in New York State" to F.W. Lewis, F.G. Lankford, and A.E. Tull. Those three gentlemen, along with their wives, transferred the property to the Lewis-Lankford-Tull Company just two months later. The Lewis-Lankford-Tull Company was an oyster packing company in Lancaster County, but they also farmed the land, probably as truck farmers. A short blurb in the Northern Neck News from 1904 notes, "The Lewis-Lankford-Tull Co. are hustling at their handsome farm, Belle Isle, this spring. They are sawing timber, building stables, boring artesian wells, &c, and have planted 40 barrels of potatoes, started tomato plants, and set out 20 acres of strawberry plants." It is possible that no one was really living at Belle Isle full-time for several decades in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the natural and agricultural resources of the property – the oysters, waterfowl, fish, and extensive cash crops that could be produced on the land - were the real value. The first decade of the 20th century in Lancaster County saw the rise in truck farming as an important part of the economy with farmers using the steamboats on the Rappahannock River to transport cash crops and seafood to Baltimore and points north.

The Lewis-Lankford-Tull Co. went out of business by 1912 and that year, J.W. Chinn Jr., as special commissioner for the sale of the company, held an auction at Belle Isle to dispose of all the property owned by the company. An announcement for the public sale reveals that the company had a store house, canning house, office building, "and other improvements," along with three dwelling houses at Whealton's Wharf, what is now the village of Morattico, just across Mulberry Creek from Belle Isle. Whealton's Wharf also had a steamboat landing. The earliest USGS topographic map to show the area of Belle Isle in detail is dated 1917 and showed both the large steamboat wharf extending into the river from Morattico and a road extending from the northern edge of the Belle Isle property across a bridge over Mulberry Creek and connecting to Morattico Road, significantly shortening the distance between Belle Isle and the steamboat landing. In addition to the 1000-acre Belle Isle farm (in the deed of transfer it is still identified as 972 acres, so the author of the sale announcement was being generous), the company also owned a 1,237-acre tract called "California" in Richmond and Northumberland Counties. Personal property also offered for sale included horses and mules, cultivators, plows, sowers, and corn planters, a batteaux, oyster tongs and dredges. So, between 1903 and 1912, the land at Belle Isle was clearly being utilized for a truck farming operation.



1917 USGS topographic map, Morattico quad. Showing Belle Isle.

Brothers Allie Somers and David Somers purchased the 973-acre Belle Isle farm from the estate of the Lewis-Lankford-Tull Co. with the deed recorded in August 1912. The Somers brothers farmed the property together for the next 23 years. In the late 1920s, they were producing such large crops of wheat that they were mentioned in the local paper. The Northern Neck News in 1928 notes that, "The largest wheat crop in the Northern Neck was grown on Belle Isle Farm by Mr. David Somers. On 180 acres, he produced over 5000 bushels….Mr. Somers is using a modern combine in cutting and threshing his grain." Around the same time, the Somers brothers sold all the woodwork on the first floor of the house to an antique dealer, Charles MacLellan, of Wilmington, Delaware, for wealthy architectural aficionado Henry Francis du Pont; du Pont purchased the woodwork from MacLellan in January 1928 for $25,000. Photographs of the interior of the house taken around 1927, before the woodwork was removed, suggest that the Somers brothers were living in some rooms in the house but that others, namely the large room in the south wing, were being used for grain storage, and the house overall was in declining condition.



Belle Isle, ca. 1927, east elevation. From the archives of the Department of Historic Resources, believed to be attributed to Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York.



Belle Isle, modern-day dining room (northwest room), ca. 1927. From the archives of the Department of Historic Resources, believed to be attributed to Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York.



Belle Isle, modern-day living room (south wing), ca. 1927. From the collection of the Winterthur Museum, believed to be attributed to Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York.

In December 1935, Al Somers, age 77, died "at his home Belle Isle." His brother, David, died less than two years later in March 1937, also at Belle Isle. An obituary for David Somers states that "'Capt. Dave' followed the water for a number of years in his earlier life. In 1911 [actually 1912] he and his brother, Al Somers,…bought Belle Isle Farm and a few years later came there from Mathews County to make their home. The brothers operated one of the largest and most prosperous farms in the Northern Neck and also engaged extensively in the oyster planting business." Mr. T.T. Jackson came to Belle Isle with his wife to work for David Somers in 1936; it was following the death of Al Somers and David needed help managing the farm. Jackson and his wife lived in the "Brick House" with Somers until he died and then they moved to the existing tenant house on the property (today, the Camp Store). Mr. Jackson recalled that when he came to Belle Isle, the bridge across Mulberry Creek that led to Morattico and the old steamboat wharf was still standing. The wharf appears on the USGS maps produced in 1917 and 1926, but was gone by the next edition in 1944; the road crossing Mulberry Creek from Belle Isle to Morattico Road appears on the 1917 and 1926 maps, but is no longer shown on the 1948 quad map. He also recalled that he was aware of seven house sites on the farm, which he believed to have been built for sharecroppers after the Civil War. The Somers brothers hired workers to come to the farm on a daily basis, instead of living there, and so the old houses were left to decay. He also remembered that a grove of trees near the old watch house was called a burying ground.[77] Mr. Jackson stayed on at Belle Isle following the death of David Somers, living in the tenant house/camp store, and was the farm manager for several decades after the property changed hands.[78]

Following the death of David Somers, Belle Isle was purchased by John Garland Pollard Jr. and his wife, Margaret "Peggy" Clarkson Pollard, and Herbert Lee Boatwright and his wife, Suzanne Pollard Boatwright, in 1939. John Garland Pollard Jr. and Suzanne Pollard were the children of former Virginia Governor John Garland Pollard (1930-1934), who was instrumental in establishing both the Virginia State Parks system and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, among other things. Both the Pollards and the Boatwrights were living in Washington D.C. at the time, but all planned to relocate to Lancaster County and live on the Belle Isle property. In addition to the property, they also bought the farming machinery and crops on the farm and intended to continue the farming operation. A newspaper article about John Garland Pollard Jr. from 1979 notes that he gave up his career as an investment counselor in Washington to become a farmer in Lancaster County because he wanted a less materialistic life closer to nature. Documents from the 1940s indicate that Pollard and Boatwright ran a herd of registered Aberdeen-Angus beef cattle at Belle Isle in addition to growing various crops, operating a tomato cannery, and oystering. Pollard and Boatwright planted oysters in the oyster beds along the shoreline of the property. To deter poachers, they built a watch house, similar to a cross between a light house and a guard house and hired a watchman whose job it was to use a large spotlight mounted in the watch house to scan the oyster beds at night to identify poachers. The watch house is no longer standing; the site is known as Watch House Point and the actual location of the watch house is now in the river. Pollard and Boatwright prospered in the oyster business until Hurricane Hazel and the oyster disease MSX wiped out the oyster beds.

[77] Beane, Letter.
[78] Haynie, Personal Communication.

The Boatwrights elected to restore the Belle Isle Manor House while the Pollards built a new house in the 18th century style overlooking Deep Creek. Architect Thomas Tileston Waterman was responsible for the restoration of Belle Isle and the design of the new dwelling, named Bel Air, for the Pollards. (See below for a detailed discussion of Thomas Waterman and his work at Belle Isle.) For the Pollards, Waterman designed a new house in the Colonial Revival style that was inspired by and used historic materials from the Pollards ancestral family home in King and Queen County, also called Bel Air. Local carpenter Bayse Haynie was hired to bring the new-old house to life. The Haynie family had deep roots in Lancaster County and lived only four miles from Belle Isle at the time. Haynie had worked on historic restorations at Ditchley in Northumberland County and Woodlawn in Essex County, and his meticulous craftsmanship in restoring old houses had become what he was known for. At Bel Air, Haynie was joined by his father-in-law, Richard Savin, who had worked with him for years, and a man named John Wilber, a Black laborer who undertook much of the hard, manual labor. According to family recollection, the basement of Bel Air had to be dug with an ox drag because all heavy machinery was at use for the war effort at the time. Haynie and Savin personally salvaged much of the historic trim from the original Bel Air in King and Queen County to be reused in the new house. (A newspaper article suggests that the trim may have been salvaged from as many as three historic houses on the Northern Neck.)[79] The salvage operation and the painstaking carpentry required to blend old and new took time, and it was four years before Bel Air was complete. According to Haynie's son, Haynie and Savin did some work on the restoration at Belle Isle as well, though their primary focus was Bel Air, which his father saw as the highlight of his career. Savin died in 1946, shortly after Bel Air was complete, but Haynie continued to do additional work at Belle Isle for the Pollards and Boatwrights; accounts in the Belle Isle archives indicate that he worked on the Tenant House/Camp Store and a barn.

[79] Long.



Bel Air, Richard Savin (left) and Bayse Haynie (right) on the steps, ca. 1945. From the archives of Belle Isle State Park.

According to family recollection, the Boatwrights and Pollards hired Robin E. ("Bob") Burson to design the garden renovation around 1945, when the restoration of Belle Isle and construction of Bel Air were complete.[80] Burson was connected to the Pollard family through former Governor Pollard, as it was during his administration in 1930 that Burson was named head of the Division of Landscape Engineering in the Department of Conservation and Development and tasked with planning the creation of a state park system in Virginia. By 1932, Burson had identified six park

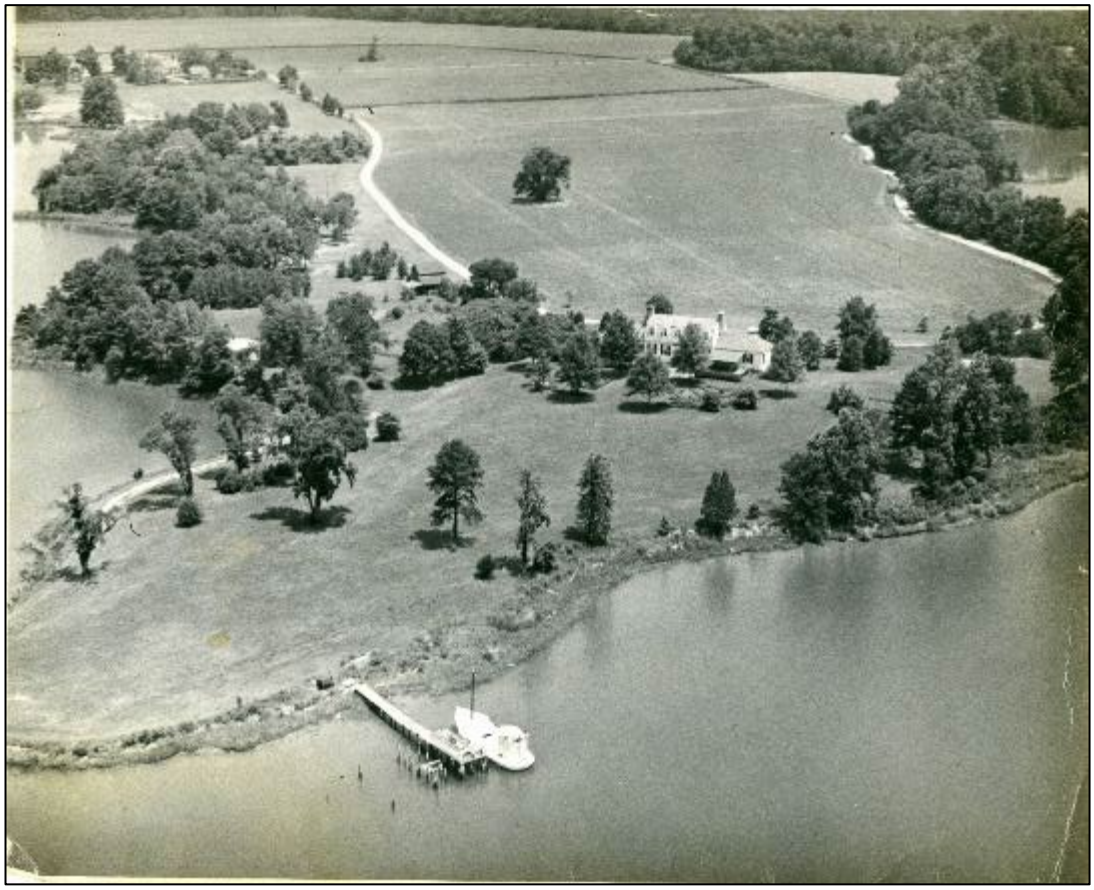
[80] Knott: 2-9.

locations across Virginia that would form the foundation of the Virginia State Parks system.[81] Burson's drawings for the landscape renovation at Belle Isle have not been located, but photographs of both Belle Isle and Bel Air from around 1950 show formal landscaping in the form of boxwood hedges and garden beds that flanked pathways and framed views of the water.



Belle Isle, aerial view looking southwest, date unknown, ca. 1960? Photo from the Belle Isle State Park archives.

[81] Kimble A. David, "Westmoreland State Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Virginia, 2005: 18. https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/096-0089_WestmorelandStatePark_2005_final_nomination.pdf



Bel Air, aerial view, looking northwest, date unknown, ca. 1960. Photo from the Belle Isle State Park archives.

The Pollards and Boatwrights were deeply involved in the Lancaster community and made important contributions to the historic preservation and education systems in the county. In 1984, Margaret Clarkson Pollard was honored for serving on the Lancaster County Historic Landmarks Commission since its inception in 1969 and was thanked for the instrumental role that she played in saving important historic buildings on the Court House Green.[82] John Garland Pollard Jr. served for 20 years on the Lancaster County School Board, was president of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and president of the Virginia Crop Improvement Association. He advocated for equal opportunity for Blacks during Massive Resistance.[83] Herbert Lee Boatwright, Jr. served as Chairman of the Lancaster County Welfare Board and of the Lancaster County Landmarks Commission and was a Board member of the Mary Ball Library Museum.[84] Belle Isle was first listed on the National Register in 1973, while under the ownership of the Pollards and Boatwrights.

[82] "Landmarks Member is Honored," *Rappahannock Record*, May 31, 1984. Clipping in the archives of Belle Isle State Park.
[83] Anne Hazard, "Ex Governors Son Glad He Chose the Rural Live," *Northern Neck News*, February 22, 1979. Clipping in the archives of Belle Isle State Park.
[84] "H. Lee Boatwright, Jr. Dies," Newspaper article from unknown newspaper, no date. Clipping in the archives of Belle Isle State Park.

In 1980, Mr. and Mrs. Edward G. Gruis and Harry G. Gillette purchased 864 acres of Belle Isle Farm, including the Belle Isle Manor House, from the Boatwright's children. At the time, John and Margaret Pollard retained 50 acres around Bel Air. The Gruis' lived in Washinton D.C. and used Belle Isle as a second home; Gillette was in charge of the farming operations at Belle Isle. The Pollards started subdividing their acreage and selling off small lots along Deep Creek in 1981, and by 1986, the Gruis' were taking steps to plan a large-lot residential subdivision for their property. In 1987, the Gruis' sold 675 acres to The Bay Company for development; they retained 152 acres around the Belle Isle Manor House which they continued to use as a residence. Thankfully, the only development that actually occurred on Belle Isle during the 1980s was the construction of several modest single-family dwellings along Bel Air Road and Deep Creek; the larger subdivision never materialized. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation entered into a Bargain Sale Agreement with the Bay Company in 1992 to purchase the property and preserve it undeveloped. Also in 1992, the state began searching for available land along the Rappahannock River where a new state park could be established to preserve public access to the river. The state and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation came to an agreement, and the state began acquiring parcels of Belle Isle Farm in 1993; Belle Isle State Park first opened to visitors in 1999. It wasn't until DCR was finally able to acquire the Belle Isle Manor House and surrounding 152 acres that were still owned by the Gruis' family in 2014 that all of the acreage of Belle Isle was back under a single owner. Today, Belle Isle State Park includes public facilities for boating, fishing, picnicking, hiking, and camping, and allows visitors to rent out the Bel Air Mansion and Guest House for overnight stays and events. The restoration and interpretation of Belle Isle and the dependencies are in the planning stages.

Architectural Evolution of Belle Isle Manor House

Period I (1767)

Dendrochronology has dated the center block of the house to 1767, during the ownership of Thomas Bertrand Griffin. The brickwork, hipped roof, chimneys, cornice, and fenestration pattern of the center block of the house all date to this period. On the interior, the floorplan consisting of three differently sized rooms – a drawing room, a dining room, and a chamber (or bedroom) - and a corner stair passage on the first floor, with three more chambers on the second floor also dates to this period. Most of the interior trim on the second floor of the house – paneling, cornices, chair rails, window and door trim, and some doors - dates to the first period of construction. On the west (or river) side of the house, terraced gardens were enclosed within a brick wall; today, the upper terrace is still clearly defined and the remnants of the brick wall may be located archaeologically. On the east side of the house, a long, straight axial driveway led directly to the front door; it is still in place today.

Period II (1802-1860)

Dendrochronology dates the addition of the wings to 1802, when the house was owned by Rawleigh William Downman. The brickwork, fenestration pattern, cornice, gabled roofs, and

the south chimney of the wings all date to this period. In addition, the exterior door on the west elevation of the north wing also dates to this period. Because of their layout in relation to the wings and the bricks used to construct them, the flanking dependencies around the forecourt – the kitchen and the schoolhouse – were also probably added at this time. The 1818 Mutual Assurance Policy establishes that there were four other brick dependencies and four frame dependencies near the main house, along with several others that were not insured, and that none of them were new in 1818. This idea, of the main house at the center of a village of support buildings, is supported by research at other plantations in Virginia. The Red Barn dates to this time period, as does the tenant house, both certainly connected to the substantial agricultural activities occurring on the property. A sketch dated ca. 1860 is the earliest known representation of the exterior of the house. It shows the house and flanking dependencies much as they appear today with the addition of a gabled portico around the front entrance. The 1860 Slave Schedule of the U.S. Census establishes that there were five slave houses on the property that year.

Period III (after 1865 and before 1928)

Sometime after the Civil War and before 1928, the north end of the house suffered a catastrophic event that necessitated the reconstruction of the entire north wall and the chimney. This reconstructive work is visible in the earliest known exterior photograph from c. 1928. The replacement brickwork is laid in 6:1 common bond, suggesting a construction date after 1865, and the bricks and mortar appear to be late 19th or early 20th century in origin. In addition, the choice to reconstruct a smaller chimney with a single flue and no fireplace suggests that by the time the reconstruction was necessary, the house was no longer relying on fireplaces as a primary source of heat.

The small bathroom addition on the west elevation of the south wing may have occurred at the same time as the north end repairs, based on the fact that the brickwork in the addition and the end wall are similar. The rear addition is visible in photographs taken by HABS in 1937 but does not appear new at that time. The 1940 HABS drawings show the addition not as a separate room or bathroom, but as a rear addition to the hall in the 1802 south wing. The brickwork is laid in 6:1 common bond, like the north wall, but because the interior was heavily altered in the 1940s, there are few other physical clues to help date the addition. In consideration of the history of the property, it seems like the addition was likely made after the property came into the ownership of the Gordons in 1877 since it is unclear who may have been living in the house between W.Y. Downman's death in 1864 and the court-ordered sale of the property in 1877. But the addition could have been made by the Gordons (1877-1888), the Nicholas' (1888-1903), or the Lewis-Lankford-Tull Company (1903-1912). It is also possible that it was made by the Somers', though photos of the house from the 1920s during their ownership suggest that they did not put any money into repairing or maintaining the house, at least during the first 15 years that they owned it.

The Two-Story Barn/Grain Barn was probably added to the property during this period. The property was certainly being intensively farmed during the Lewis-Lankford-Tull Co. ownership and the Somers' ownership and was probably farmed throughout the 19th century.

Period IV (1927-1928)

In 1928, Henry Francis du Pont purchased all the woodwork from the first floor of Belle Isle. Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York was responsible for the documentation and removal of the woodwork. The few photographs of the interior of the house from ca. 1927-28 are believed to be attributed to them, and the ca. 1928 photo of the front of the house was probably taken at the same time. In that photo, the house is clearly in serious decline with boarded and broken windows and the remnants of a front porch – the deck, a single pilaster, and semicircular stone steps, along with the ghost of a gabled portico, are all that is left. On the interior, plaster is falling from the walls and ceilings, firewood is being stored in the former drawing room, the floors of the stair passage are obscured by clutter, and at least a foot of loose grain appears to cover the floor in the large room in the south wing.



Belle Isle, stair passage, ca. 1927. Photo from the archives of the Department of Historic Resources, believed to be attributed to Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York.

Period V (1928-1937)

Between 1928 and 1937, some repairs were evidently made to the exterior of the house, though it isn't clear what happened on the interior after the trim was removed. By 1937, when HABS first photographed the house (they photographed it again in 1940 and also created measured drawings of the main house at that time), the exterior of the house was in noticeably better condition – windows were repaired, a bulkhead entrance to the basement had been added on the east elevation of the south wing, and front and rear porches had been added. Perhaps the Somers'

took the money that they received in exchange for all the interior trim and made some repairs to the house, including constructing new front and rear porches.



Belle Isle, east elevation, ca. 1937, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) photograph. From the archives of the Department of Historic Resources.



Belle Isle, main house and dependencies, ca. 1937. Historic American Building Survey (HABS) photograph. From the archives of the Department of Historic Resources.

Period VI (1939-1950)

The house largely achieved its current appearance during the Thomas Tileston Waterman restoration in the early 1940s. Waterman chose to remove the front porch and moved the semicircular stone steps to directly in front of the front door. He removed the bulkhead basement entrance and constructed a new basement stair in the stair passage. He had to completely replace the trim on the first floor of the house as it had all been removed in 1928 and did so in way that he believed was in keeping with the 18th century but wasn't an exact replica. He retained the original floorplan in the main block of the house for the most part but altered the floorplan in the wings, turning the north wing into a modern kitchen, butler's pantry, laundry, and maid's room, and, in the south wing, removing a small room and turning the south wing into one large room and a hallway. He added matching screened porches on the north and south elevations of the wings. He replaced the windows and the exterior doors in-kind. To the curtilage, he added the garage and renovated the dependencies. The existing doors and windows and exterior trim on the kitchen and schoolhouse date to the 1940s period. Interior alterations to the dependencies were made later. The Bel Air mansion was constructed between 1940 and 1945. Most of the surviving formal landscaping on the property dates to between 1945 and 1950; boxwood hedges were added around the existing 18th century terrace at Belle Isle, and hedges and planting beds that framed the water view were installed around Bel Air.



Belle Isle, east elevation, and schoolhouse dependency, east elevation, ca. 1950. Photo by the Chamber of Commerce, from the archives of the Department of Historic Resources.



Belle Isle, west elevation, showing rear terrace with new boxwoods, ca. 1950. Photo by the Chamber of Commerce, from the archives of the Department of Historic Resources.



Bel Air, rear elevation showing new landscaping, ca. 1950. Photo from the archives of Belle Isle State Park.

Justification of Criterion C: Architecture

Eighteenth Century Gentry Housing in Tidewater Virginia

In the early 17th century in Tidewater Virginia, the economy was driven by tobacco cultivation. Tobacco is a very labor-intensive crop, and it has a voracious appetite for new land; it ate up the resources, both financial and labor, of the colonists engaged in its production. Upon arriving in the colonies, many settlers' first shelter was no more than a "hovel," as they devoted all their time to tobacco cultivation. After a few years, these colonists might progress to building an earthfast dwelling – a one-room house without a masonry foundation.[85] They all aspired to a fully-framed or brick house with a masonry foundation and masonry chimneys, but many of those fully invested in tobacco cultivation were forced to move west to find land not already exhausted by the crop before they were ever able to build this aspirational dwelling. This instability in the tobacco economy didn't encourage investment in more permanent dwellings—it was unlikely that a son would be able to inherit his father's land and continue to grow tobacco.[86] It wasn't until farmers started diversifying their crops and shifting to primarily grain as their cash crop in the late 17th century that brick houses were built with any regularity.[87] Consequently, the architectural record for the 17th century Tidewater is dramatically incomplete, with no

[85] Cary Carson, et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 16, no. 2/3, 1981, pp. 135–96: 147-148. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180773. Accessed 4 Mar. 2024.
[86] Carson et al.: 171.
[87] Carson et al.: 174.

surviving examples of the "hovel" or "first house" to complete the picture.[88] In fact, brick houses were rare enough around 1700 that contemporary observers felt compelled to mention them—in 1687, a Frenchman travelling through the Virginia colony noted that dwellings built entirely of brick were just starting to appear on the landscape, while another account from 1705 notes that several gentlemen had recently "built themselves large Brick Houses."[89] Those planters who owned waterfront property on navigable waterways had the advantage of being able to control their own transport of tobacco to market, and to establish landings and stores to serve their neighbors. These landings and stores provided another source of income allowing the planter to withstand several years of a downturn in the tobacco economy or a poor crop. It also meant that they were often the first to be able to build a grand brick house, diverting their labor force (originally indentured but, by the early 18th century, increasingly enslaved) from the fields to the brickyards for a year or more.[90] It is no accident, then, that in the Northern Neck the oldest grand houses can be found on riverfront property.

As the 18th century began, the gentry class was increasingly concerned about setting themselves apart from those socially beneath them. When the new colonists were sheltering in one-room "hovels" with insufficient food in the early 17th century, there was no effort made by the planter to physically separate himself from his servants, but by the mid-1600s, there was a distinct preference in house construction to segregate the family (who saw themselves as the superior class) from the servants and enslaved workers.[91] This manifested itself on the landscape in the form of separate quarters for the servants and separate entrances into the main house. By the late 17th century, planters were expressing a preference for a two-room house plan with chimneys on the gable ends where the front door opened into the larger of the rooms, called the "hall," and where a stair to the half story rose either along the partition or beside the chimney.[92] Domestic labor was increasingly removed from the main house, meaning that there was little need in house design to include separate rooms to accomplish such tasks—this "architecture of apartheid" is a hallmark of Southern architecture until the end of slavery.[93] (Of course, enslaved workers continued to labor in these two-room houses and their labor in separate outbuildings is not of lesser importance, but within the context of the architectural evolution of gentry dwellings, the enslaved workers themselves had little agency.) In the 17th century, the hall was used for a multitude of tasks—cooking, dining, and servant lodging included, while the parlor was the sleeping quarters for the family. But by the beginning of the 18th century, a growing preoccupation among the gentry class with social status inspired a shift in room usage. As both the servants and enslaved workers themselves, and their labor, were more often removed from the main house to separate working and sleeping quarters, the function of the hall and parlor began to change. The planters reclaimed the hall as a space to entertain their social equals, while the parlor became a private dining room where they might dine with family or others of the same

[88] Carson et al.: 147-148.
[89] Beverly quoted in Carson et al.: 160-161.
[90] Wells, *Material Witnesses*: 19.
[91] Cary Carson and Carl R. Lounsbury, *The Chesapeake House*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in association with The University of North Carolina Press, 2013: 96.
[92] Carson and Lounsbury: 98.
[93] Carson and Lounsbury: 99.

class. Initially, the main sleeping area for the planter and his wife shared the parlor with the dining furniture, but increasingly the main sleeping quarters were moved to a new room appended to the back of the parlor – the bedchamber ell.[94]

This new function of the hall and parlor as "drawing room" and "dining room" also reflects the increasing social importance of class and the desire of the gentry to impress each other with their hospitality. By the early 18th century, the hall was the planter's formal, public space where he could offer food and drink and social interaction to others of the same class. This importance of "hospitality" as a social obligation inspired the shift in room use from parlor to dining room, which occurred during the first quarter of the 18th century, and is reflected in the architectural record. Architectural historian Dell Upton notes that in the typical two-room house, the front door opened directly into the hall and the room was often "furnished as elegantly and as formally as circumstances allowed" to visually demonstrate the social standing of the owner and his ability to offer hospitality to his peers.[95] If the hall was the public room, the parlor cum dining room was a semi-public space that mediated between the public space of the hall and the private spaces of the chambers and the work yards.[96] Often, the dining room was physically connected to all of these spaces, with multiple doorways for different users – a primary entrance from the hall for guests and secondary entrances to the chamber (for the planter and his wife and their servants) and often to the exterior yard in the direction of the kitchen, for servants to deliver food. The degree of architectural decoration in the new dining rooms was still elevated, to impress the guests invited to dine.

The rise in social importance of the dining room as a separate space from the best chamber is reflected in the floorplans and inventories of mid-18th century gentry houses. In some cases of modifications to existing houses, a new private chamber was added with a shed roofed addition onto the rear of the house and connected to the former parlor, now dining room. In new construction, one option was to add a rear ell to the familiar rectangular, two-room box with end chimneys, and the Lynnhaven House (69000363, BC100011638; DHR#134-0037) in Virginia Beach, Virginia is an important Tidewater example of this approach (the original ell is no longer standing but evidence for it is well-documented). Another documented option was a linear approach, with the three rooms making a long rectangle, but by far the most popular option was a square plan with three living spaces of different sizes and a stair passage. The hall, which, by the second half of the 18th century was increasingly referred to as the "drawing room" by members of the gentry class, was still the largest and most elaborately decorated room in the house, while the dining room was slightly smaller but, in some cases, had the same degree of architectural distinction. The chamber was located behind the dining room and was not directly connected to the hall (or drawing room), or sometimes even the passage. Its limited accessibility from the more public spaces of the house speaks to the increasing importance of separating private from

[94] Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 17, no. 2/3, 1982, pp. 95–119: 109. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1180893. Accessed 2 Feb. 2024.
[95] Upton: 103.
[96] Upton: 104.

public spaces. By the mid-18th century, the new three-room plan, whatever form it took, was preferred by the Chesapeake gentry class.[97]

This interest in segregating public from private spaces led to the rise in the central passage plan house, which also occurred in the early 18th century with the first documented reference dated 1710.[98] By the mid-18th century, central passages and double-pile house plans were increasingly preferred by the gentry class, both for their functionality in physically dividing and, controlling access to, public and private spaces, but also for the social statement that they made.[99] The visual statement of the two-story, double-pile Georgian brick house standing tall above vast agricultural fields and one-story service buildings communicated the status of the landowner to all who passed by. By 1750, gentry houses were increasingly English in their inspirations, using new terminology for room types and relying on English architectural publications for design ideas.[100] Waterman believed that the design for Belle Isle was taken from Plate 33 in Robert Morris's *Select Architecture*, published in London in 1755.[101] Members of the gentry class in the second half of the 18th century strove to associate themselves more closely with their English forebearers both in their use of the Georgian architectural style and in the names of the rooms in their houses – inventories from the period refer to spaces such as the "saloon," the "drawing room," the "dressing room," and the "parlor," (by which they actually meant the best entertaining room in the house, formerly known as the hall). All of these terms had no prior use in Virginia but were imported directly from England.[102]

The first period floorplan at Belle Isle reflects all of these influences – the growth in importance of the dining room as separate from the best chamber, the importance of finely detailed entertaining spaces, and the interest in stair passages segregated from these entertaining spaces. The dining room at Belle Isle during the Griffin era is believed to have been the SE corner room, with access from the stair passage and the chamber, and probably an exterior door on the south elevation (now where the door to the south wing is); the drawing room was the largest room on the first floor, accessible from both the stair passage and directly from the exterior from a primary entrance on the (west) façade. The chamber was the room behind the dining room, accessible only from that space (and possibly from the exterior where the bathroom is now, but that evidence was lost at least 100 years ago). Photographs from the late 1920s, prior to the removal of the first-floor trim, show that the entire first floor was richly detailed with paneling and molding, all intended to impress other members of the gentry class. The three-room plan selected at Belle Isle was not the more common central-passage plan, but a less typical three-room plan with living spaces of different sizes and a corner stair passage. The stair passage served the dual purpose of segregating the public spaces from the private rooms above stairs and

[97] Carson and Lounsbury: 129.
[98] Mark R. Wenger, "The Central Passage in Virginia: Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Living Space," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 2, 1986, pp. 137–49: 137-138. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3514325. Accessed 4 Mar. 2024.
[99] Wenger: 141.
[100] Wenger: 144.
[101] Thomas Tileston Waterman, *The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776*, New York: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945: 383.
[102] Wenger: 142.

as an entry point that controlled access to the dining and drawing rooms beyond. A similar plan is found at Shirley Plantation (69000328; DHR#018-0022) in Charles City County, and at Eppington (69000230; DHR#020-0025) and Olive Hill (75002017; DHR#020-0049) in Chesterfield County.

While the interior arrangement of space in gentry dwellings was both a reflection of social priorities and an attempt to control them, the role of a gentry dwelling within the broader landscape was quite simple – "cut a distinguished figure in the countryside."[103] On the exterior, Belle Isle, like Shirley (located on the James River) and Olive Hill (located on the Appomattox), had two identical facades, one facing the river and one facing the land approach. The siting of the Colonial mansion on a rise or overlooking an important waterway was also intentional. As the waterways were the highways of commerce and personal travel in the 18th century, more people were likely to approach the grand houses from the water than they were the land, but by designing their houses with two equally important facades, the elite class sought to send the message that their authority and formality were the same no matter how a visitor approached. Their mansions had no "bad" sides.[104] There has been some debate about which elevation of Belle Isle was the original "front." While it is often assumed that the river-facing side of an 18th century house was intended to be the front, due to the primary travel function of the waterways at the time, the floorplan of Belle Isle suggests that the stair passage entered from the land approach may have been the original primary entrance. Given the context of the rise in the importance of the passage as a way to control access to the hospitality offered within the drawing room and dining room, it seems more likely that Griffin made a conscious decision to place his stair passage on the land-side of the house. At Shirley, historians have argued that the land-front, which opened into the corner stair passage, was the intended primary entrance for the house because the passage was unheated and provided independent access to the second floor, both important characteristics that it shared with central passages found in other houses.[105] Undoubtedly, at Belle Isle, both facades are intentionally equal in their formality and detailing and in this way, Belle Isle is a dwelling on the cusp between the Colonial era and its importance of landings and water travel and the early national period with its internal road improvements of the late 18th and early 19th century. The major improvements that Downman undertook in 1802 more definitively oriented the house towards the land approach.

Griffin designed his house in the Georgian style, which was the preferred architectural vocabulary of the Virginia Tidewater gentry by the mid-18th century, as two full stories on a raised basement and with a tall, hipped roof to accentuate the height of the building above the surrounding landscape. Griffin's wife, Judith Burwell, was the daughter of Carter Burwell and grew up at Carter's Grove (69000249; DHR#047-0001) in James City County, and it has been suggested that Carter's Grove was an inspiration behind the design of Belle Isle. Both are brick Georgian style houses with formal, symmetrical facades with tall, hipped roofs, but their interior floorplans are quite different. Their exterior architectural vocabulary is similar, but historians have pointed out that the architecture of 18th century Virginia gentry houses in general, with its

[103] Wells: *Material Witnesses*: 34.
[104] Wells: *Material Witnesses*: 34.
[105] Carson and Lounsbury: 140.

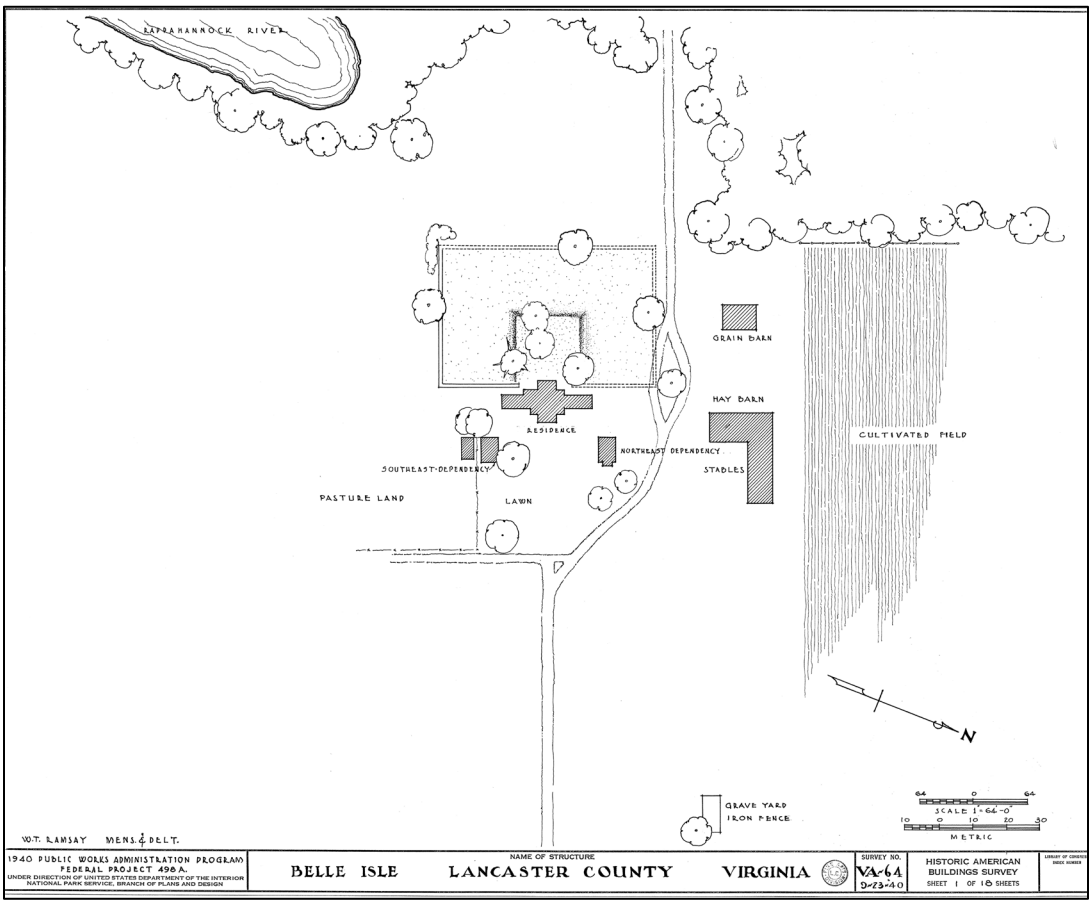
adherence to symmetry and regularity, results in an overall similarity in appearance when viewed from the outside. "The architecture of mid-eighteenth century Virginia embodied social formality as an assertion of local social and political control where Virginia's elite could hope for little more."[106]

Architectural historian Camille Wells, who led the study that conducted dendrochronology on Belle Isle and many other 18th century houses in the Northern Neck and studied Belle Isle in depth, believes that the architectural evidence on the side elevations of the main block suggests that Griffin originally intended to construct flanking one-story wings or hyphens beside the main block in 1767 – the narrower size of the window openings on the side elevations of the first floor and evidence for brick racking bonded into the original brickwork suggest that he always envisioned a tripartite plan for his house.[107] Other contemporary examples of tripartite gentry houses include Battersea (69000344; DHR#123-0059), in the City of Petersburg, and Eppington in Chesterfield County (Waterman believed that Battersea and Belle Isle were inspired by a plate in Robert Morris' *Select Architecture* published in 1755 in London). Griffin never followed through with the construction of the wings, possibly because his wife and two children died within three years of the start of construction and he never remarried. But 35 years later, under the ownership of Rawleigh William Downman, symmetrical flanking wings were finally added to the main block. Wells believes that the south wing was originally intended to serve a social function, possibly a larger dining room or ballroom, based on the degree and quality of architectural ornamentation - the room was fully paneled with a dentiled cornice (now at Winterthur); while the north wing was intended to serve as a more private family retreat. This arrangement of interior space, with public entertaining space in one wing and private family spaces at the opposite end of the house in a matching wing, is also found at Battersea and Eppington.[108]

Formality wasn't limited just to gentry dwellings and the social customs they embodied; it was expressed on the surrounding plantation landscape as well. As with their selection of Georgian architecture, order and regularity were desirable qualities in the plantation plans of the gentry elite. All gentry dwellings and the lifestyle they embodied relied upon an army of enslaved people laboring in numerous detached outbuildings surrounding the main house. The arrangement of outbuildings, work yards, ornamental plantings, and pleasure gardens was intended to be neat and orderly and convey the planter's mastery over his domain. In the mid-18th century, the construction of earthen terraces, often descending down a slope towards a waterway and planted with formal gardens, was one expression of this control. A well-known example is found at Carter's Grove, the childhood home of Griffin's wife, Judith. Little remains of the first period landscape at Belle Isle, but the level terrace on the west side of the house does seem to date to the original construction of the house. When the property was documented by HABS in the late 1930s and 1940, a small fragment of a brick wall that once enclosed a lower terrace was still standing. The orientation of the brick wall (based on historic photographs) to the wings added in 1802 suggests that the wall predated the wings and corresponded with the

[106] Upton: 119.
[107] Wells: "Belle Isle": 4.
[108] Wells: "Belle Isle": 6.

upper terrace. Therefore, Belle Isle may have had formal "falling gardens" during Griffin's ownership. Olive Hill in Chesterfield County, which also has a similar floorplan to Belle Isle and two equal facades, also had falling gardens descending from the house to the adjacent Appomattox River.



HABS site plan, 1940. Showing the buildings standing at the time and the remains of the brick wall around the lower terrace.

The arrangement of outbuildings and the architectural vocabulary of their construction could also lend formality to the landscape. One defining characteristic of the most elite of the gentry houses of the 18th century was the presence of flankers, matching subordinate outbuildings arranged in a symmetrical relationship with the main house.[109] These flankers served numerous functions, including kitchens, laundries, schoolhouses, offices, and housing for enslaved domestic servants, and may have been constructed with the same materials and architectural details as the main house, to best create a symmetrical, cohesive complex. At Shirley Plantation, in Charles City County, a total of six outbuildings created a forecourt through which the approaching visitor, traveling down a straight axial drive, processed to the main entrance of the grand house.[110] Other examples of mansion complexes with formal flankers and forecourts

[109] Wells: *Material Witnesses*: 30.
[110] Carson and Lounsbury: 140.

include Blandfield (69000238; DHR#028-0005) in Essex County, Mount Airy (66000845; DHR#079-0013) in Richmond County, Stratford (66000851; DHR#096-0024) in Westmoreland County, and Menokin (69000276; DHR#079-0011) in Richmond County. The surviving dependencies, forecourt, and drive at Belle Isle have the same effect. The brick construction of the kitchen and schoolhouse echoes that of the main house, and their orientation perpendicular to the main roofline of the mansion and enclosing a forecourt create a formal approach. The surviving axial drive was an important component of the orchestrated approach to the complex. When dendrochronology was done on the main house at Belle Isle, no testing was completed on the dependencies (no clear explanation has been found in writing, but it is believed that the original floor joists and roof framing do not survive to date) so their exact date of construction is not known. Based on a comparison between the sizes of the bricks in the main block of the mansion, the wings (added in 1802, per dendrochronology), and the dependencies, and the orientation of the dependencies to the main block and wings, it is believed that the dependencies date to Downman's 1802 renovations to the property. The schoolhouse and kitchen are arranged so that their front walls align with the outside corners of the wings, not the main block, and create a clear forecourt with buildings on three sides. If they had been constructed by Griffin in 1767, they would be expected to align with the corners of the main block and the wings would be located behind them when viewed from the front. The comparison of the brick sizes by the author is far from scientific, but, generally, the bricks in the main block are slightly smaller in both length and width than those found in the wings and the dependencies, suggesting that the wings and dependencies are contemporary and were not constructed at the same time as the main block (and the theory that the wings and the main block were not constructed at the same time is supported by the dendrochronology).

The Colonial Revival Movement

Belle Isle conveys the significance of the architecture of the Tidewater gentry of the 18th and early 19th centuries, but it is also intimately connected to the Colonial Revival movement of the very late 19th and 20th centuries. The Colonial Revival was more than just an architectural style; Richard Guy Wilson has argued that it is the "single most persistent theme in American arts and culture" and elements of the theme could be found in interior design, furniture, art, and landscape design, in addition to architecture.[111] The peak of the Colonial Revival extended from 1880-1940, a period which saw a proliferation in Colonial-inspired architectural details published in pattern books and popular and trade magazines, as well as Colonial imagery pervading popular culture as a whole.[112] The Colonial Revival movement idealized and romanticized the American past; Wilson defined it as, "an attitude or a mental process of remembering and maintaining the past that generations of Americans have quite consciously created."[113] In some ways, the Colonial Revival can be seen as a response to modernism and an attempt to address the problems of contemporary life and the Great Depression. One quote from Nancy McClelland writing in

[111] Richard Guy Wilson, Shaun Eyring, and Kenny Marotta, *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival,* Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2006: 3; and Richard Guy Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004: 89-90.
[112] Wilson et al., *Re-creating*: 5.
[113] Wilson et al., *Re-creating*: 3.

the mid-1930s nicely sums up this idea of the Colonial past as a balm for the messy present: "If we can recapture from the past the homely and livable qualities of the old Colonial house; if we can translate into our modern dwellings its chief characteristics, its restfulness and sincerity, we shall have done something that is undoubtedly good for our souls in the heedless and hurried day and generation."[114] It seems highly unlikely that all the enslaved Black people forced to work in these Colonial houses would call "restfulness" one of the chief characteristics of their place of work, but historical accuracy was never the goal of the Colonial Revival movement. Themes in Colonial Revival architecture include overelaboration, enlargement, and a general attempt to improve on the past.[115] These twin forces of idealizing the past and attempting to improve it spawned the early historic preservation movement as the Mt. Vernon Ladies' Association was born of "a concern for the colonial relics and their meaning" and John D. Rockefeller's motivation for restoring Williamsburg was, at least in part, in the lessons of patriotism and the devotion of the founding fathers to the common good that could be taught there.[116] Rockefeller's reconstruction of Williamsburg, while based in historic research and archaeological investigations, was not constrained by these things, and took liberties with the known facts to create an idealized version of a Colonial town that lacked evidence of the problematic elements of Colonial Virginia history (enslaved labor) and amplified the supposed higher calling of the founding fathers. In turn, Colonial Williamsburg was one of the most influential tastemakers of the 20th century, promoting, through its own merchandise as well as model house plans by restoration architecture firm Perry, Shaw, & Hepburn, an aspirational way of living.[117] There was perhaps no more iconic image of the idealized American past than the southern plantation; Virginia's large brick houses are "one of the most popular and persistent Colonial design idioms" and the "myth of the gracious and genteel Old Dominion assumed a place of importance in the public imagination."[118]

Statewide Preservation Movement and the Colonial Revivalization of Virginia gentry houses

The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities was founded in 1889 as the first statewide preservation organization in the country as a direct result of the social and political upheaval of the post-Civil War era.[119] Their mission was to promote cultural traditionalism, that is, elite, White rule and the prominence of Virginia in the National discourse, and they used historic sites as a tool to reform society to their traditional view.[120] The sites that they chose to purchase, protect, and restore were those that fit neatly into this mission. Their earliest projects were in Williamsburg, where little colonial architecture remained in the 1890s, and Jamestown. They focused their early efforts on the colonial magazine, or Powder Horn, the foundations of the Capitol, and Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, and the 22 ½ acre plot of Jamestown that they were gifted in 1893, which included the ruins of a church, a cemetery, a colonial

[114] Wilson, *Colonial Revival House*: 92.
[115] Wilson et al., *Re-creating*: 5.
[116] Wilson et al., *Re-creating*: 6.
[117] Wilson, *Colonial Revival House*: 166-173.
[118] Wilson, *Colonial Revival House*: 148.
[119] James M. Lindgren, *Preserving the Old Dominion: Historic Preservation and Virginia Traditionalism*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993: 14.
[120] Lindgren: 10.

magazine, and a Confederate fort. While their early preservation and restoration efforts were romantic and unscientific, their focus on the historic symbols of early Virginia history did succeed in making Jamestown a mecca for White, protestant traditionalists.[121] By the late 1930s, the work of the APVA was largely dictated by the whims of the local branches, which acquired properties all over the state.[122] Because their preservation mission was so closely tied to the idea of promoting cultural traditionalism, for decades, the end goal of an APVA preservation project had to be a public museum that could educate the populace on the greatness of Virginia. These early restoration projects, therefore, are not necessarily scholarly examples of restoration techniques and practices, but they do illustrate the history of what the White elite wanted the public to value and emulate. In 1933, APVA acquired Smith's Fort plantation in Surry County, which they restored as a museum and interpreted as the home of the son of Pocahontas; even after local researchers proved that there was no truth to this claim, APVA continued to promote their false narrative.[123] According to researcher James Lindgren, "what appeared to be real was as good as what was real."[124]

Understanding a restored building requires an understanding not only of the historic context—what was the world like in which this building was created—but also the context of the restoration—who did the work and what was their mission; what was the bigger picture in which they were completing this project? In 1940, when the Boatwrights and Waterman set about restoring Belle Isle, the Colonial Revival movement, the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, the Historic American Building Survey, and the preservation activities of APVA all influenced their approach. The restoration of Belle Isle in 1940 is just as much about the story that they wanted to tell as it is about what the building told them. Betsy Hunter Bradley suggests that in lieu of the terms "preservation" or "restoration," the term "reviving" is a more accurate description of the Colonial Revival-inspired remodeling of early American houses by architects and homeowners.[125] The intent of these Colonial Revivalization projects was not true preservation or restoration in any scholarly sense, but the creation of a comfortable home that embodied an idealized vision of the past wrapped in the symbolism of American mythology.

Henry Francis duPont and Winterthur

As the Nation's appetite for all things "Colonial" grew in the early century, a new twist on Colonial Revival domestic architecture emerged – the removal of Colonial-period building elements from historic houses and their reuse in entirely new dwellings. Henry David Sleeper began construction of his house, Beauport, in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1907 using fragments of old houses that he purchased with the intent of recombining them into his own personal vision.[126] In the southern United States, many of the houses constructed a century or two earlier that embodied a way of life sustained only by the enslaved labor of African Americans had fallen

[121] Lindgren: 136.
[122] Lindgren: 235.
[123] Lindgren: 234.
[124] Lindgren: 239.
[125] Bradley in Wilson et al., *Re-creating*: 167.
[126] Wilson, *Colonial Revival House*: 92.

on hard times after the Civil War and were ripe for the picking by these "Colonial" enthusiasts. The extremely wealthy private collectors were joined in the hunt by newly minted professionals as the study of American antiques and Early American Decorative Arts was first professionalized in the early 20th century.[127] The Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its American Wing of period rooms in 1924, which included interiors from 15 historic houses all over the United States. Henry Francis duPont, wealthy Delaware-based heir of the duPont fortune, visited Sleeper's new old house in 1923 and became enamored with the idea of creating period rooms, on par with those at the museum, but for the purposes of living private daily life.[128] He began collecting American antiques in earnest that same year and when his father died in late 1926, he finally had control of his beloved Winterthur estate, where he had lived his entire life but had enjoyed very little agency to make any substantial changes. With his inheritance in hand, H.F. du Pont could create his own "Colonial" house. The house at Winterthur was originally constructed in 1839 but had already been enlarged numerous times even before H.F. duPont began his own expansion, which more than doubled the size of the house. He collected the interiors of ten historic American houses with the intent of installing 23 period rooms at Winterthur.[129] One of those houses was Belle Isle. H.F. duPont purchased all of the interior trim from the first floor of Belle Isle, plus the stair itself, in January 1928 from a Wilmington, Delaware-based antiques dealer, Charles MacLellan, for $25,000.[130] Schleich Studios, Inc. of New York was responsible for the in-situ documentation of the woodwork and its removal. Designs for its reinstallation at Winterthur – in the aptly named Belle Isle Room, Lancaster Room, Bertrand Room, Walnut Room, and Belle Isle Stair Hall - were done by architect Albert Ely Ives in 1928, 1929, and 1930.[131] During this initial phase of period room installation, duPont was not concerned with historical accuracy, and he altered historic trim as needed to fit the specifications of his existing rooms, and combined trim elements from different houses as he saw fit – a mantel from one house paired with paneling from another, for instance. It was not until 1951 that duPont would decide to open Winterthur as a museum, and during the early 1930s, the house and acreage were very much a representation of a private country estate reimagined on the grandest scale possible by an extremely wealthy man imbued with the fervor of the Colonial Revival.

duPont would eventually come around on the matters of historical accuracy and historic preservation, and Winterthur, of course, would go on to become one of the most well-respected and influential museums of early American decorative arts, and both were facilitated by a man intimately connected to Belle Isle – Thomas T. Waterman.

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[127] Wilson, *Colonial Revival House*: 92.
[128] Walter Karp, "Henry Francis du Pont and the Invention of Winterthur," *American Heritage*, Vol. 34, Issue 3, April/May 1983. Viewed online, https://www.americanheritage.com/henry-francis-du-pont-and-invention-winterthur
[129] Karp.
[130] Ron Fuchs, "Virginia Rooms at Winterthur," Excerpt from Paper delivered to APVA March 18, 2004, DHR Archives file 051-0001.
[131] Winterthur Museum finding aids for Winterthur Museum Collection, Winterthur Cartographic Collection, Winterthur Photographic Collection, Henry Francis du Pont papers. http://findingaid.winterthur.org/html/Finding_Aids.html

Thomas Tileston Waterman

Thomas Tileston Waterman started working for Ralph Adams Cram, a renowned architect known for his Colonial Revival churches, in 1919, when he was 17 years old. He started out as an office clerk and spent 8 years training under Cram in all aspects of architectural practice. He never attended college nor received any professional training but worked his way up in Cram's office and finally spent two years as Cram's personal draftsman.[132] Not surprisingly, under these circumstances, Cram's approach to architecture and history had a deep impact on Waterman. Cram viewed architecture as both a mirror of history and an inspiration for cultural development; he was opposed to the Colonial Revivalists use of mimicry in design and believed instead that the architect should immerse himself in history and "design a true regeneration of its original style."[133] Waterman absorbed these lessons deeply. While he was still a teenager just starting out with Cram, Waterman also began working with William Sumner Appleton, the founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), completing measured drawings for threatened buildings, and he developed a passion for historic preservation that would shape his life.[134] His work documenting threatened sites for SPNEA often led to the creation of conjectural measured drawings of what the house might have looked like in its prime and this practice, of meticulous measured drawings inspired by historic study and inference, found their perfect application at Colonial Williamsburg.[135]

In July 1928, Waterman was hired by Colonial Williamsburg as one of the first four draftsman hired to design the reconstruction of the 18th century town, a position that synthesized his gifts for drawing and research and his passion for historic architecture. Waterman proved adept at analyzing the findings of the archaeologists and studying the historical record to produce conjectural designs of what the early significant buildings in the town may have looked like. He worked on the Wren Building, the Capital, Raleigh Tavern, and the Governor's Palace.[136] Architectural reports that Waterman wrote for CW during this time showcase his attention to detail, and display the research-based, conglomerative approach to recreating a Colonial town that CW was practicing in the early 1930s. His report on Raleigh Tavern from 1932 enumerates the source material for every element in every room. In some cases, like the flooring in the house, actual historic materials were salvaged from historic houses – "Note the antique floors in this building were from: Farm on the Main, James City County, 1100 feet, Springfield Farm, New Kent County, 1500 feet, David Jones Farm, James City Country, 850 feet, Mulberry Spring, New Kent County, 1500 feet, Robinson House, New Kent County, 500 feet, also some from a house on Clay Street, Richmond, Virginia." - while in others the precedent for the recreated design was noted – about the mantel in the Reception Room: "This mantel is inspired by one at Brookes Bank without following it in detail. The roll moulding surround, overmantel mould and

[132] Fay Campbell Kaynor, "Thomas Tileston Waterman: Student of American Colonial Architecture," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, 1985, pp. 103–147: 104. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1181032. Accessed 11 Apr. 2025.
[133] Kaynor: 105.
[134] Kaynor: 106.
[135] Kaynor: 106.
[136] Kaynor: 108-116.

shelf profile are from Hampton Court."[137] But after five years designing the reconstruction of these first four major buildings at CW, Waterman found himself out of a job in 1933 when the Great Depression led to staff reductions.

Colonial Williamsburg's loss would be duPont's gain as Fiske Kimball, another champion of historic preservation and Colonial architecture, who was friends with both Waterman and duPont, introduced the two. By 1932, duPont had installed his first round of period rooms at Winterthur, including the materials removed from Belle Isle, and was eager for more. In Waterman, duPont saw someone with the professional experience and knowledge to help him grow his collection. In November 1932, Waterman guided duPont on a three-day tour of 20 historic Virginia houses; the itinerary did not include Belle Isle (which, in 1932, had already been denuded of its first floor interior trim and was in serious decline) and it is not immediately clear which of the houses that they visited would eventually be mined for duPont's collection.[138] But Waterman and duPont became friends, bonded by their love of Colonial architecture, and their correspondence reveals that duPont often sought Waterman's guidance with his work at Winterthur.[139]

Following a European tour in early 1933, Waterman was offered a job by the National Park Service as the architectural director of the new Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) based in Washington, D.C. He was responsible for reviewing all of the materials produced by the program for the first four years and often traveled to many of the most important threatened sites to document them himself.[140] He was also responsible for some of the first eastern-state restorations done by the National Park Service – Pierce Mill in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., dwellings at Morristown National Historical Park, and the Ford Mansion.[141] His restoration decisions for NPS were based on a thorough "reading" of the building and its physical evidence an approach that forms the bedrock of historic preservation and architectural restoration today.[142] Waterman worked for NPS from 1934 to 1942.

While Waterman was working for NPS, he also worked for duPont and took on other private clients. For 18 years, Waterman worked for duPont alongside his duties with NPS, directing the installation of antique woodwork at Winterthur. Research for this project did not reveal definitive examples of Waterman directing duPont to acquire materials from a historic property that Waterman was aware of through his work with the HABS program, but in his position as director, he would certainly have been aware of many significant historic properties in neglected condition. The evidence suggests that Waterman did not, in fact, have any involvement with the removal of the historic interiors from Belle Isle in 1928; his name does not appear on any of the drawings of the house prior to the removal of the trim or on the drawings for the original

[137] Thomas Tileston Waterman and Finlay Ferguson, *The Raleigh Tavern Architectural Report,* 1932/1952, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: 4-5. https://digitalcollections.colonialwilliamsburg.org/asset-management/2RERYD4AFVEC
[138] Kaynor: 117.
[139] Kaynor: 118.
[140] Kaynor: 127.
[141] Kaynor: 129.
[142] Kaynor: 129.

installation of the rooms at Winterthur (from 1928 to 1930), and he did not become acquainted with duPont until after he finished working at CW in 1932. Once they met, Waterman was captivated by duPont's vision, but his passion for historic preservation resulted in ethical concerns about the removal of woodwork from historic houses that were still standing, and he attempted to educate duPont about the importance of historic preservation.[143] He was also passionate about authenticity, and correspondence between the two reveals that Waterman pushed back against some of duPont's desired alterations to the historic materials.[144] The creation of a museum was never the intent of duPont when he started collecting historic interiors and antiques and, indeed, it was a decision that he came to and acted upon in quick succession in 1950. Waterman was also influential in that decision and, in 1951, designed a new house for duPont and his wife just across the driveway from the soon-to-be museum. Waterman's attention to detail and emphasis on authenticity were essential to Winterthur over the years and when the museum opened, duPont remarked about him, "Without his advice, Winterthur would never be what it is."[145]

Waterman never set up a formal office of his own – with a full-time job with NPS and steady work with Winterthur, he must have had no need - but he had a steady stream of private clients, nonetheless. There are 22 known examples of Waterman's restoration work and 12 known examples of new construction demonstrating historic influences.[146] Waterman was hired to restore Belle Isle and design Bel Air in 1939, decidedly in the middle of his career. When the Pollards and Boatwrights acquired Belle Isle Farm that same year, the Belle Isle mansion was in poor condition. No photos of the interior after the removal of the paneling in 1928 have been located thus far. When Waterman started working with the Boatwrights on the restoration, his choices were to either recreate the trim and stair that were by then reinstalled at Winterthur and which Waterman was, by then, quite familiar with, or he could design something new but compatible with the historic structure. In his book *Mansions of Virginia* (published in 1946) Waterman discusses the architecture and significance of Belle Isle and offers clues as to why he chose option two. He describes the historic floorplan of the house as "curious and impractical" and notes that it was "somewhat modified" during restoration. His tone is condescending when he describes the interior as having "an unacademic air due partly to a country builder's interpretation of the designs" (referring to the architectural designs of Robert Morris as published in his book, *Select Architecture,* which Waterman believed to be the source of inspiration for numerous Virginia and North Carolina houses) and he seems to have special contempt for the stair, which he describes as "especially unacademic" with "crudely-turned" balusters and posts.[147] The only room that he has praise for is what he calls the "Great Room," believed to be the largest room in the south wing. He describes the trim in that room as being "of particular interest," "delicate," "curious," and "unique."[148] In the context of Waterman's own career, this statement is perhaps most interesting: "No attempts were made to simulate early work, but the

[143] Kaynor: 124.
[144] Karp.
[145] Kaynor: 124.
[146] Kaynor: 132, 138.
[147] Waterman, *Mansions*: 383.
[148] Waterman, *Mansions*: 384.

mouldings and forms of the period of 1800 were freely used."[149] Given Waterman's own aversion to mimicry on the part of Colonial Revival architects and his passion for interpreting how a building could have or should have or might have looked, this statement seems laudatory. For his own part, Waterman decided to design replacement woodwork that "fit the house and the furniture of the present owner" but did not replicate the historic trim, describing it as "simple Georgian designs."[150] A newspaper article in 1962 described the restoration of Belle Isle as not a copy of the old house "but a design in the 18th century manner," a description that Waterman would probably have liked very much.[151] Interestingly, Waterman chose to illustrate his discussion of Belle Isle in his book with photographs of the historic trim reinstalled at Winterthur (though they are not clearly identified as such and the reader might believe that the images actually show Belle Isle) and not the house as restored with his "simple Georgian designs." Waterman's designs for new construction are all "reminiscent of past eras but modern in their own way," including duPont's new house at Winterthur that Waterman designed shortly before his death in 1951 and Bel Air, designed for the Pollard family in 1939.[152] Bel Air is a gracious Colonial Revival country house, comfortably sized for the Pollard family but not overly large, defined by its formal simplicity and symmetry. The design for Bel Air is said to be inspired by the Pollard family's ancestral home in King and Queen County, which was also called Bel Air, and much of the interior woodwork is salvaged historic material from both that house and others nearby (Donald Haynie, son of the builder, Bayse Haynie, reports that in his recollection most of the woodwork in Bel Air – stair, trim, possibly flooring - was removed from the Pollard's old house by his father and grandfather, Richard Savin, and reinstalled at Bel Air, while a 1962 newspaper article reports that the woodwork at Bel Air is a combination of salvaged materials from three different houses.). Bel Air, then, is the quintessential Waterman design – steeped in history and authentic historic materials wherever possible, but designed for the private, day-to-day lives of his clients.

During the course of his career, Waterman sought to share his knowledge of and appreciation for historic dwellings with the wider public. He published four books, *Domestic Colonial Architecture of Tidewater Virginia* (1932), *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (1941), *Mansions of Virginia* (1946), and *The Dwellings of Colonial America* (1950). His first book, *Domestic Colonial Architecture of Tidewater Virginia*, was written while he was employed by Colonial Williamsburg where part of the restoration plan involved forays into the local countryside to document the types of historic buildings that they would need to recreate in Williamsburg. *Mansions of Virginia* is probably his most well-known work and, in part, it serves as a sort of preservation handbook, laying out the preservation principals that would become the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation in the 1960s.[153] But in it, he also displays his detailed research and analysis into uncovering the architects of some of Virginia's earliest mansions and making connections to English antecedents. In a review of *Mansions* at the time of publication, Fiske Kimball wrote, "the solid contributions of Waterman's book are

[149] Waterman, *Mansions*: 384.
[150] Kaynor: 136 and Waterman, Mansions: 383.
[151] Long.
[152] Kaynor: 138.
[153] Waterman, Mansions: 409-410; Kaynor:132

quite sufficient to make it one of the most important studies of art in America."[154] It has stood the test of time, as more than 50 years later, architectural historian Camille Wells called it "the most influential treatment of domestic architecture in colonial Virginia."[155] In 1947, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts hosted an exhibition of the work of Thomas T. Waterman, hanging around 50 photos of "before and after" images of houses he restored. Belle Isle was one of the houses displayed and owner Mrs. H. Lee Boatwright "presided over the punch bowl" at a preview of the exhibition in March 1947.[156] Waterman gave a lecture at the Museum as part of the events surrounding the exhibition, which coincided with the second printing of the *Mansions* book. Unfortunately, the VMFA archives does not have any images of the exhibition or of the photographs that were displayed.

Waterman's career bridged the formative years of the historic preservation movement and the academic study of architectural history. His restoration work and his writing shaped the way that Virginians, in particular, and Americans as a whole, would experience Colonial architecture for decades to come, and his importance to the Colonial Revivalization movement in Virginia cannot be overstated.

Justification of Criterion D: Archaeology

Belle Isle is significant under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology: Historic/Non-Aboriginal for the information that it has yielded and may still yield pertaining to the development and operation of the landing and tobacco warehouse on Deep Creek in the early 18th century by the Bertrand family. While all 889 acres of Belle Isle should be considered to have archaeological potential due to the topography and landform and the historic documentation of the long occupation of the site, professional archaeological investigations have only been undertaken in a few specific locations, and the archaeological significance for the purposes of National Register listing are tied to a specific site, 44LA0147. This site, represented by numerous cultural features and thousands of artifacts, is located just south of the Visitor's Center on the shore of the Rappahannock River/Deep Creek and represents the remains of multiple structures that archaeologists believe to be related to the landing and tobacco warehouse constructed and operated at the site between 1690 and 1730. The site was first identified in 1993 and was recommended eligible for listing on the National Register in 2005. Additional Phase II excavations took place at the property in 2020 and confirmed the National Register eligibility of the site.

The archaeological work completed in 2020 by the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (W&MCAR) is complemented by Lonnie Lee's book published the same year, *A Brief*

[154] Fiske Kimball, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1946, pp. 205–08: 208. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3047078. Accessed 23 June 2025.
[155] Camille Wells, "The Multistoried House. Twentieth-Century Encounters with the Domestic Architecture of Colonial Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 106, no. 4, 1998, pp. 353–418: 368. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249736. Accessed 2 July 2025.
[156] Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Waterman Exhibition Folder, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Archives. Including a clipping from the Richmond Times Dispatch, March 8, 1947.

History of Belle Isle Plantation, 1650-1782. Together, the archaeology and historic documentary research illuminate the early history of Belle Isle that is no longer represented by the standing buildings, and the site offers extensive potential for further research.

Research Design

This entire section was copied from the report, An Archaeological Evaluation of Site 44LA0147 Associated with the Proposed Belle Isle Shoreline Stabilization Project, Lancaster County, Virginia, by Thomas F. Higgins III and David W. Lewes for William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (2020) and edited by the nomination author for clarity and brevity.

The W&MCAR conducted an archaeological evaluation of Site 44LA0147 within the proposed Belle Isle State Park Shoreline Stabilization Project in Lancaster County, Virginia, from August 10, 2020 through September 3, 2020. The evaluation was conducted under an agreement with the VDOT. The intent of the investigation was to provide specific information concerning the nature of a brick-lined well, a cellar, and unidentified features, which were recently exposed in the face of the bluff due to ongoing tidal erosion, and to identify any other potential cultural features that may be affected by the proposed project and determine whether or not these resources are significant and contribute to the NRHP eligibility of Site 44LA0147.

Historical background research indicates that the resources identified during the evaluation correspond with the period of occupation at Site 44LA0147 by John and Charlotte Bertrand and their young adult children, William and Mary Ann, beginning at the close of the seventeenth century and into the first quarter of the eighteenth century. John Bertrand developed his plantation (which became known as Deep Creek) soon after he acquired the property in 1692. These developments included the construction of a landing and a store. The landing and the store were important assets that "made possible the plantation's future role as one of the intercolonial and transatlantic trading centers of the Rappahannock region. His influence on the plantation and its future was transformative."[157] After the death of her husband in 1701, Charlotte Bertrand successfully managed Deep Creek for more than a decade. She maintained and even expanded the commercial ties of the plantation to local, regional, and international markets, which included business with other plantation owners and store merchants along the Rappahannock and with English merchants in Bristol and Liverpool. "Charlotte made the (Deep Creek) landing a transshipment point for tobacco headed for England and a dock on which to unload imported European manufactured goods for sale to Virginia settlers."[158] The plantation's waterfront, which included the area encompassed by Site 44LA0147, remained particularly active until early in the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

The archaeological evaluation involved cleaning and documenting the well, cellar, and unidentified features that were exposed in the face of the bluff. This was followed by the mechanical stripping of the plowzone on top of the landform above each of the features to determine their horizontal limits and to identify the potential for associated features, and limited

[157] Lee: 38.
[158] Lee: 47.

sampling of features. At the request of the VDOT, W&MCAR undertook additional mechanical stripping of the plowzone on top of the landform above the cellar feature beyond the limits of the initial stripping to identify the presence of any cultural features that might be part of a building associated with the cellar. The investigation identified 30 features and yielded 1,996 artifacts.

The identified resources (i.e., a brick-lined well, cellar/structure, postholes, possible robbed out footings, artifact deposits), coupled with the results of previous research on Site 44LA0147 in 2004 and 2018, suggest that these were part of an extensive late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century domestic and commercial complex at the confluence of Deep Creek and the Rappahannock River. Historically, the portion of Site 44LA0147 revealed in this investigation corresponds to the earliest, and perhaps most active years of the Bertrand family's operation of Deep Creek landing, ca. 1690–1730 and may be associated directly with the Bertrand household or perhaps their indentured servants. The data suggests the household was probably of middling status, though it may have had higher aspirations based on the material culture and the remains of the dwelling and the brick well. Though overall the dwelling may have been modest, the evidence suggests that it was repaired, enlarged, and even upgraded over time. The construction of the brick chimney and the addition of plastered walls, for example, and the laying of a brick floor in the cellar and the stabilization of the cellar with a brick wall reflect improvements, if not aspirations, of the occupants. We know from history that Charlotte Betrand's son-in-law, Charles Ewell, was a master bricklayer and builder, and taught enslaved people the trade. He may have had a hand in constructing this structure and others at Site 44LA0147.[159] Though far from certain, it is possible that the dwelling was initially the home of Mary Ann Bertrand Ewell and Charles, or perhaps more likely, indentured servants of the Bertrand family. Years later, in the 1720s or 1730s, the house was improved, perhaps by Ewell and/or enslaved workers.

[159] Moore et al.



Site 44LA0147, features 2, 6, and 15, east view. August 2020. Photo by Thomas Higgins, William & Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

The recovery of nearly 2,000 early eighteenth-century domestic artifacts (e.g., ceramics, tobacco pipes, animal bones, bottle glass, straight pins), and numerous features attest to the intense level of activity at Site 44LA0147 during the formative years of Deep Creek plantation. The fact that an unknown but perhaps significant portion of the site has been lost to erosion is evidenced by the extensive brick and artifact scatter on the beach that is visible at low tide just below the exposed features in the bluff face. As revealed by this investigation, important elements of the house/house lot remain just inland of the bluff, however, and these resources have research potential. The evaluation strategy involved the identification, documentation (i.e., mapping and photographing), and limited sampling of features, and the complete excavation of the remaining portion of the cellar, which was undergoing active erosion in the bluff face. The southwest

quarter of the brick-lined well was excavated to 4.94 ft. (1.50 m) amsl (the elevation that represents the deepest extent of the proposed down cutting of the bluff associated with the proposed bluff stabilization). This work indicated that three of the four deposits revealed in the well section represented post-occupation (eighteenth-century) robbing activity of the well brickwork and the fourth layer, deposition when the well was abandoned, most likely in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Limited mechanical removal of the plowzone on top of the bluff over the cellar revealed that only a relatively small portion of the cellar feature survived behind the bluff face, with most of the cellar having been lost to erosion. After concurrence with the VDOT and the DHR, archaeologists completely excavated the remaining portion of the cellar deposits. Several features were identified adjacent to the cellar on the north and the east, including a series of structural postholes, a brick chimney base, and a wall sill trench. These features were carefully mapped and photographed. The trench feature was sampled to confirm its function and association with the structure. The investigation of the two brick/trench-like features (Features 3 and 4) in the face of the bluff to the west of the well and cellar indicates that these features have been mostly eroded away. The unexcavated and undisturbed brick-lined well and cellar/structure and associated features are considered to hold the potential to provide significant information about historic settlement and domestic themes in the Northern Coastal Plain of Virginia during the Settlement to Society (1607–1750) Period and contribute to the NRHP eligibility of Site 44LA0147.

Research Questions

- As a site associated with members of the gentry class (the Bertrands), indentured servants, and enslaved workers, site 44LA0147 can be analyzed to explore differences in the material culture of each. The site was occupied at a time when the Bertrands were transitioning their labor force from mostly indentured servants to mostly enslaved workers; how is this reflected in the archaeological record and what can this site tell us about interactions between the two groups of laborers?
- The research of Lonnie Lee has established that the Bertrands were operating a landing and tobacco warehouse that engaged in significant transatlantic trade. The artifact assemblage from this site, both already excavated and still to be excavated, can inform our understanding of the types of goods imported from Europe in the very early 18th century, which can in turn be used to study both the commercial patterns and consumer culture of the time.
- The site exhibits luxury goods among the artifacts identified so far and evidence of improvement of the building, as represented by the construction of the cellar wall and flooring of the cellar with brick. What can this tell us about social status as it is reflected in material culture? What can the site tell us about the increasing stratification of society in the 18th century as the gentry strove to distinguish themselves from those of a lower class?
- How does the artifact assemblage here compare with the artifact assemblage at other earthfast dwellings? Does the variety of high-end ceramics point to the trade going on at the site or the status or aspirations of the resident?

- A portion of the house and house lot remain undisturbed just inland of the bluff. Further exploration of this area could provide additional information about what other buildings were associated with the site and how they all may have functioned as part of the historically documented landing and tobacco warehouse that was located here.
- What can depositional deposits in the well tell us about when and why it was abandoned? Was its abandonment associated with a downturn in use of the landing?

Comparative Properties

Belle Isle has always been among the elite class of dwellings and properties due to its size and the wealth of its owners, so it has never had many comparable neighbors. Today, the number of similar properties has dwindled even further due to the subdivision and development of large properties and the demolition or alteration of 18th century houses. Architecturally speaking, in Lancaster County, the most comparable property is probably Verville (87000609; DHR#051-0026). The brick house was built around 1745 and significantly enlarged and altered around 1805. The three-bay house has a gambrel roof, a product of the 1805 remodeling, two interior end chimneys, and flanking wings that may be later additions. It lacks the Georgian detail of Belle Isle but boasts fine Federal woodwork on the interior that is a product of the early 19th century remodeling. Verville is listed on the National Register with five acres of associated property and no contributing secondary resources. Like Belle Isle, it was "revived" in the late 1950s by new owners working with architect Walter Macomber, who, like Waterman, gained important experience in historic restoration working for Perry, Shaw, & Hepburn at Colonial Williamsburg. It also retains remnants of excavated terraces between the house and the river which may represent formal "falling gardens."

Statewide, there are several properties with important similarities to Belle Isle, some of which were mentioned above in the discussion of 18th century gentry architecture. Shirley Plantation (69000328; DHR#018-0022) in Charles City County, while much larger and grander than Belle Isle, has a comparable setting with vast agricultural fields on a riverfront location; a straight axial drive that leads through a forecourt created by formal flanking outbuildings to the grand front of the mansion; two equal facades, one facing the river and one the land approach; and a main floorplan consisting of three rooms and a corner stair passage. The mansion at Shirley was built ca. 1738 with Flemish bond brickwork and remodeled in the 1770s. It is listed on the National Register and is a National Historic Landmark.

Olive Hill (75002017; DHR#020-0049) in Chesterfield County is more modest than Shirley and is of frame construction rather than brick, but it also features a riverfront setting with two equal facades and a square floorplan with three rooms and a corner stair passage. Like Belle Isle, it retains remnants of falling gardens between the house and the river. Olive Hill is listed on the National Register.

In addition to Olive Hill and Verville, terraced gardens are also found at Carter's Grove (69000249; DHR#047-0001) in James City County, which was the family home of Thomas Bertrand Griffin's wife, Judith, and Mount Airy in Richmond County. Mount Airy (66000845;

DHR#079-0013) also boasts a formal mansion complex with a forecourt and flanking dependencies. Like Belle Isle, Mount Airy is located along the Rappahannock River; it has a five-part plan rendered in stone masonry construction. It was built between 1748 and 1758, and the façade was derived from James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728). It is listed on the National Register and is a National Historic Landmark.

Waterman found strong similarities between Belle Isle and Battersea (69000344; DHR#123-0059) in the City of Petersburg; he believed that both houses were inspired by a plate drawn by Robert Morris in his book *Select Architecture* published in 1755. Both houses exhibit fine masonry and a tripartite form. Both houses also feature matching wings that are differentiated in their use, with one devoted to public entertaining space and the other dedicated to private family use. Eppington (69000230; DHR#020-0025), in Chesterfield County, also shared the tripartite plan arrangement and the different uses of the flanking wings. It also has a floorplan that is similar to Belle Isle, with a square main block with three rooms and a corner stair passage. Unlike Battersea and Belle Isle, Eppington is of frame construction. The main block was built ca. 1770 with the flanking wings added in 1790. Like Belle Isle, it exhibits fine interior paneling. Both Battersea and Eppington are listed on the National Register.

Within the context of the Colonial Revivalization of Virginia gentry houses, there are several other comparable statewide examples, in addition to Verville. Chatham, in Stafford County, was built in the Georgian style between 1768 and 1771 and "revived" by architect Oliver Clark in the 1920s. It is now the headquarters of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park (66000046; DHR#089-0067-0125) and is listed on the National Register as part of that historic district. Brandon (69000271; DHR#074-0002), located on the James River in Prince George County, was constructed around 1765 and was also inspired by a plate in Robert Morris' *Select Architecture*. The brick mansion has a seven-part composition and was "revived" by new owners in 1926. It is listed on the National Register and is a National Historic Landmark.

Finally, one of the most ambitious Colonial Revival projects in Virginia, is the house known as Wilton (76002231; DHR#127-0141), which was moved from its original location on the James River in Henrico County to the City of Richmond and carefully "revived" in 1933 by The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. The Georgian brick mansion is celebrated for its fine woodwork, including fully paneled interiors. It is listed on the National Register.

Archaeologically speaking, the most comparable property is Eyreville (RS100009579; DHR#065-5126) in Northampton County. Eyreville is quite similar to Belle Isle in that the historic resources on the property there represent over several hundred years of occupation. At Eyreville, documented intact archaeological remains extend back to ca. 1620 and represent two possible post-in-ground structures, two brick foundations from the 1650s, and numerous 17th century artifacts. It is one of the oldest Colonial-period archaeological sites excavated on the Delmarva peninsula. The main house on the property dates to 1800 with additions from 1806, 1839, and 1942. The two-and-a-half story brick mansion showcases Federal style details interwoven with Colonial Revival modifications. Like Belle Isle, the property embodies the

architectural significance of 19th century gentry housing and the early to mid-20th century "reviving" of those houses by people with financial means influenced by the work at Colonial Williamsburg and the enduring popularity of the Colonial Revival movement. In addition, both properties have intact archaeological remains that illuminate the early significance of the properties within the sphere of trade and commerce and have the potential to shed additional light on the roles of people not often immortalized in the written records – at Eyreville, the Native Americans and enslaved Africans, and at Belle Isle, the enslaved Africans and indentured servants. Both Eyreville and Belle Isle are notable for the range of resources and historic themes that they represent. Their archaeological remains have the potential to broaden our understanding of early Colonial trade, architecture, and cultural interactions, while the breadth of their evolved architectural remains enhances our understanding of early American architecture, and the interplay between social and economic history and the built environment, and the Colonial Revival-inspired "reviving" of Virginia's brick mansions. Eyreville is listed on the National Register.

Conclusion

Belle Isle is significant at the Statewide level under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its representation of the elite Georgian plantations owned by the gentry class in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the themes and cultural aspirations that they embody. It is also eligible as a Colonial mansion "revived" during the 1940s to represent the American mythology of the Colonial Revival. The property also has significance under Criterion D in the area of Archaeology: Historic/Nonaboriginal that is tied to the extensive excavations undertaken to date at site 44LA0147, which has the potential to illuminate the early history of the Deep Creek plantation and the successful landing and tobacco warehouse operated by the Bertrand family. But Belle Isle is also so much more and offers vast potential for additional research following the threads of history that tell the story of Lancaster County and Tidewater Virginia. The Red Barn is a remarkable survivor with no peers in Lancaster County. For a county with such a rich agricultural heritage, the fact that there are fewer than 5 pre-Civil War barns left is sobering. Bel Air is not just a skillful representation of the work of Thomas Waterman, but also of the careful craftsmanship of Bayse Haynie and Richard Savin, local builders who, without any great recognition, brought the well-known architect's vision to life at Bel Air and also preserved several other important historic buildings on the Northern Neck. And countless enslaved people lived and died on this land for a period of over 100 years; their hands made the bricks, and their feet walked the floors of the manor house, the kitchen, and the schoolhouse, but the traces that they left of themselves on the landscape are ephemeral. Belle Isle embodies all of this history just as much as it does the stories of wealth and privilege that are more obvious to the casual observer. The manor house and dependencies were preserved because of the story that we like to tell about Virginia history, but the whole story – of the laborers, the builders, the farmers, the businessmen and women, the oystermen, the enslaved – is complicated and worth remembering.

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Will of Thomas Bertrand Griffin – Will book 20, page 129-130.

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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
_X__ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_VA-64____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X__ State Historic Preservation Office
_X__ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia; Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Belle Isle State Park, Lancaster, Virginia

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _DHR ID# 051-0001_

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ___889_____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

1. Latitude: -76.619466 Longitude: 37.786121

2. Latitude: -76.598235 Longitude: 37.791296

3. Latitude: -76.577613 Longitude: 37.786731

4. Latitude: -76.576736 Longitude: 37.770374

5. Latitude: -76.618856 Longitude: 37.771843

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.)
The listed boundaries include all of the following Lancaster County tax parcels: 12 34B, 12 35, 12 35A, 13 34, 13 20A, 13 20B, 13 20C, and 13 20 E. Parcel 13 34 is the Downman cemetery and is the only parcel not currently owned by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The property is bounded on the north by Mulberry Creek, on the west by the Rappahannock River, and on the south by Deep Creek. The exact boundaries are shown on the attached parcel map, which was created from County parcel data on December 10, 2025.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundaries are identical to the listed boundaries of the property when it was first listed in 1973. They encompass all the remaining 920-acre property associated with the Belle Isle plantation owned by Thomas Bertrand Griffin and Rawleigh William Downman. The official acreage is currently 889 acres, and the difference is attributed both to 18th and 19th century inaccuracies in calculating the acreage for a property with such an extensive shoreline and also to land lost due to shoreline erosion.

---

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _Kristin Kirchen, Principal Architectural Historian_____
organization: _Iron Dog Preservation, LLC_____
street & number: __532 Pantela Drive _____
city or town: _North Chesterfield_____ state: __VA_____ zip code:_23235_____
e-mail: _irondogpreservation@gmail.com_____
telephone: _804-516-8200_____
date: __ July 2026_____

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

Name of Property: Belle Isle

City or Vicinity:

County: Lancaster State: Virginia

Photographer: Kristin H. Kirchen, Iron Dog Preservation, LLC, except photos 68-70 courtesy of Thomas F. Higgins, William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research

Date Photographed: January 2025 and April/May 2025, except photos 68-70 photographed August 2020

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

1 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0001
Belle Isle Manor House and Curtilage, east view.

2 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0002
Belle Isle Manor House, east façade.

3 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0003
Belle Isle Manor House, east façade, main block.

4 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0004
Belle Isle Manor House, northwest oblique.

5 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0005
Belle Isle Manor House, west facade.

6 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0006
Belle Isle Manor House, northwest corner of main block and junction with north wing.

7 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0007
Belle Isle Manor House, northeast corner of main block and junction with north wing showing closed basement entrance on north elevation of main block.

8 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0008
Belle Isle Manor House, detail of brickwork on east elevation of south wing.

9 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0009
Belle Isle Manor House, view of rear terrace and west façade, camera facing southeast.

10 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0010
Belle Isle Manor House, axial drive approaching house from the east, camera facing west.

11 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0011
Belle Isle, axial drive approaching manor house in back left of photo, cemetery in center of image, camera facing northwest.

12 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0012
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, entrance hall from stair landing, facing south.

13 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0013
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, dining room, northwest corner.

14 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0014
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, dining room, south wall and door from entrance hall.

15 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0015
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, dining room, west wall and exterior door.

16 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0016
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, library/east room/parlor, southeast corner.

17 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0017
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, library/east room/parlor, south wall.

18 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0018
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, library/east room/parlor, west wall looking into chamber.

19 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0019
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, bedroom (first floor), northwest corner.

20 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0020
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, bedroom (first floor), east wall looking into library/east room/parlor.

21 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0021
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, south wing hall, view from east doorway.

22 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0022
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, south wing hall, wainscoting on south wall.

23 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0023
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, south wing, living room, southwest corner.

24 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0024
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, north wing, 19th century exterior door on west elevation.

25 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0025
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, north bedroom, northwest corner.

26 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0026
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, north bedroom, north wall with fireplace.

27 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0027
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, north bedroom, chair rail detail.

28 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0028
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, north bathroom, window shutter detail.

29 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0029
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southeast bedroom, south wall.

30 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0030
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southeast bedroom, northeast corner and door.

31 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0031
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southeast bedroom, paneled wainscoting detail.

32 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0032
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southwest bedroom, southwest corner.

33 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0033
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southwest bedroom, door.

34 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0034
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southwest bedroom, wainscoting and chair rail detail.

35 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0035
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, second floor, southwest bedroom, window and interior shutters.

36 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0036
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, basement, original basement entrance on north wall, now closed. Note curved underside of floor joist above to create headroom.

37 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0037
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, basement, looking at brick partition wall that bisects basement and doorway.

38 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0038
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, basement, detail of call bell on south side of doorway in brick partition wall.

39 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0039
Belle Isle Manor House, interior, attic, detail of timber framing with hewn member, wooden pegs, Roman numerals.

40 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0040
Schoolhouse/North Dependency, south elevation.

41 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0041
Schoolhouse/North Dependency, northwest oblique. Kitchen in background.

42 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0042
Schoolhouse/North Dependency, east elevation, Belle Isle Manor House in background.

43 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0043
Kitchen/South Dependency, southeast oblique.

44 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0044
Schoolhouse/North Dependency, interior, main room, east wall.

45 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0045
Red barn, southeast oblique.

46 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0046
Red barn, northeast oblique.

47 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0047
Red barn, interior, center aisle.

48 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0048
Red barn, interior, roof framing and second story door into center aisle.

49 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0049
Red barn, interior, framing and carpenter's marks.

50 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0050
Camp Store/Tenant House, front (south) elevation.

51 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0051
Downman cemetery, looking northwest at all marked graves and large Downman marker.

52 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0052
Downman cemetery, grave marker for W.Y. Downman, 1864.

53 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0053
Two-story barn/Grain barn, northeast oblique.

54 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0054
Garage, southeast oblique.

55 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0055
Bel Air, front (north) elevation.

56 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0056
Bel Air, rear (south) elevation.

57 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0057
Bel Air, interior, center hall and stair.

58 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0058
Bel Air, interior, library.

59 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0059
Belle Isle State Park Visitor's Center, front (north) elevation.

60 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0060
Belle Isle State Park, sign and entrance building, looking west.

61 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0061
Belle Isle State Park, Concession/Restroom and Shelter 3 – Deep Creek, Visitor Center in far background. Looking west from near boat ramp.

62 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0062
Belle Isle State Park, Boat Ramp, on Deep Creek, looking south.

63 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0063
Belle Isle State Park, Mulberry Creek Boardwalk, looking northwest across Mulberry Creek.

64 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0064
Belle Isle State Park, agricultural fields, looking north from near Picnic Restroom.

65 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0065
Belle Isle State Park, picnic area along Rappahannock River, looking west.

66 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0066
Belle Isle State Park, looking east along Rappahannock River from picnic area towards area of archaeological site 44LA0147.

67 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0067
Belle Isle State Park, general area of archaeological site 44LA0147. Rappahannock River is on the left.

68 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0068
Site 44LA0147, exposing Features 8-10 and 14, east view. 2020 by William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

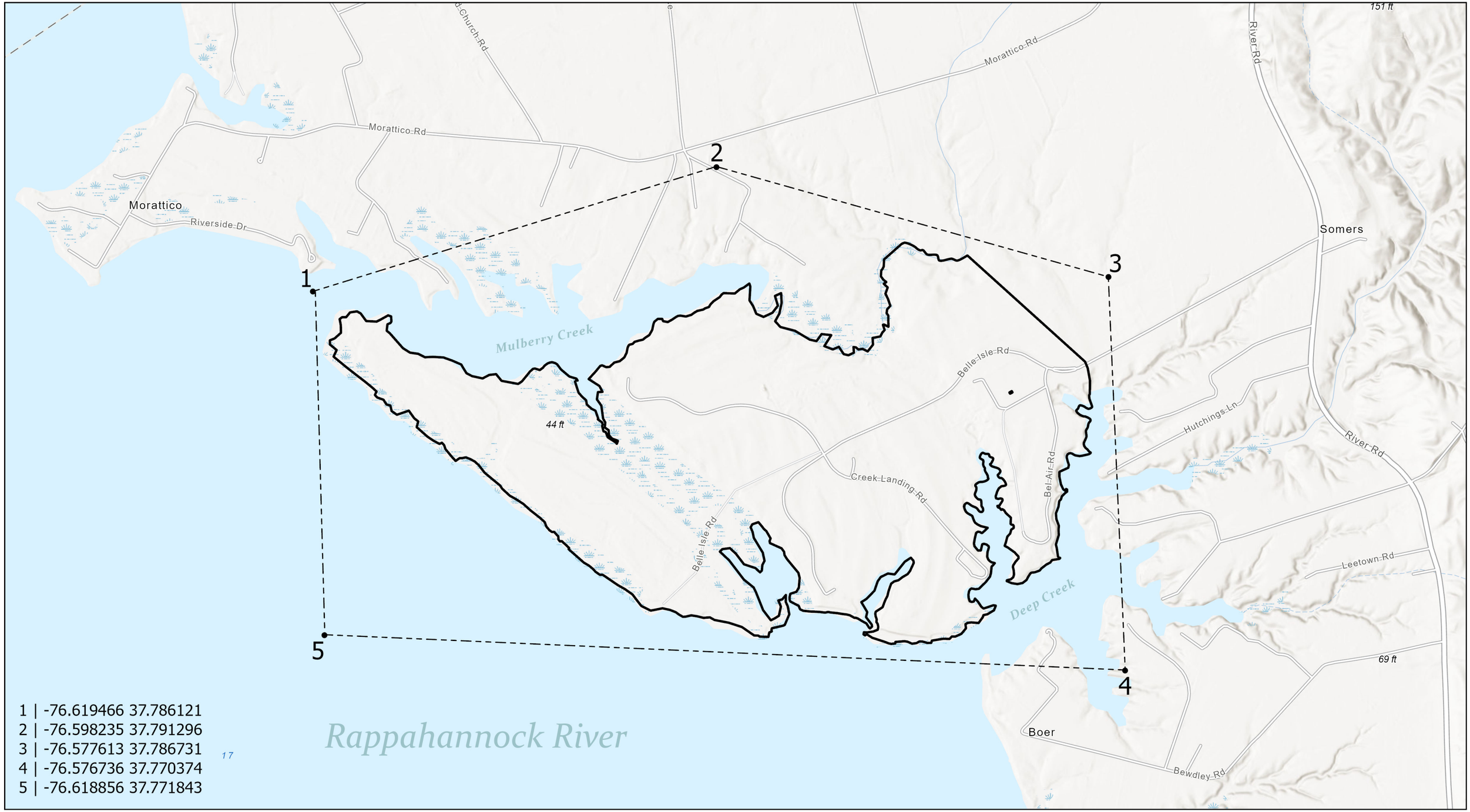
69 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0069
Site 44LA0147, Features 2, 6, and 15, east view. 2020 by William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

70 of 70. VA_LancasterCounty_BelleIsle_0070
Site 44LA0147, Feature 1, north profile. 2020 by William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



1 | -76.619466 37.786121
2 | -76.598235 37.791296
3 | -76.577613 37.786731
4 | -76.576736 37.770374
5 | -76.618856 37.771843

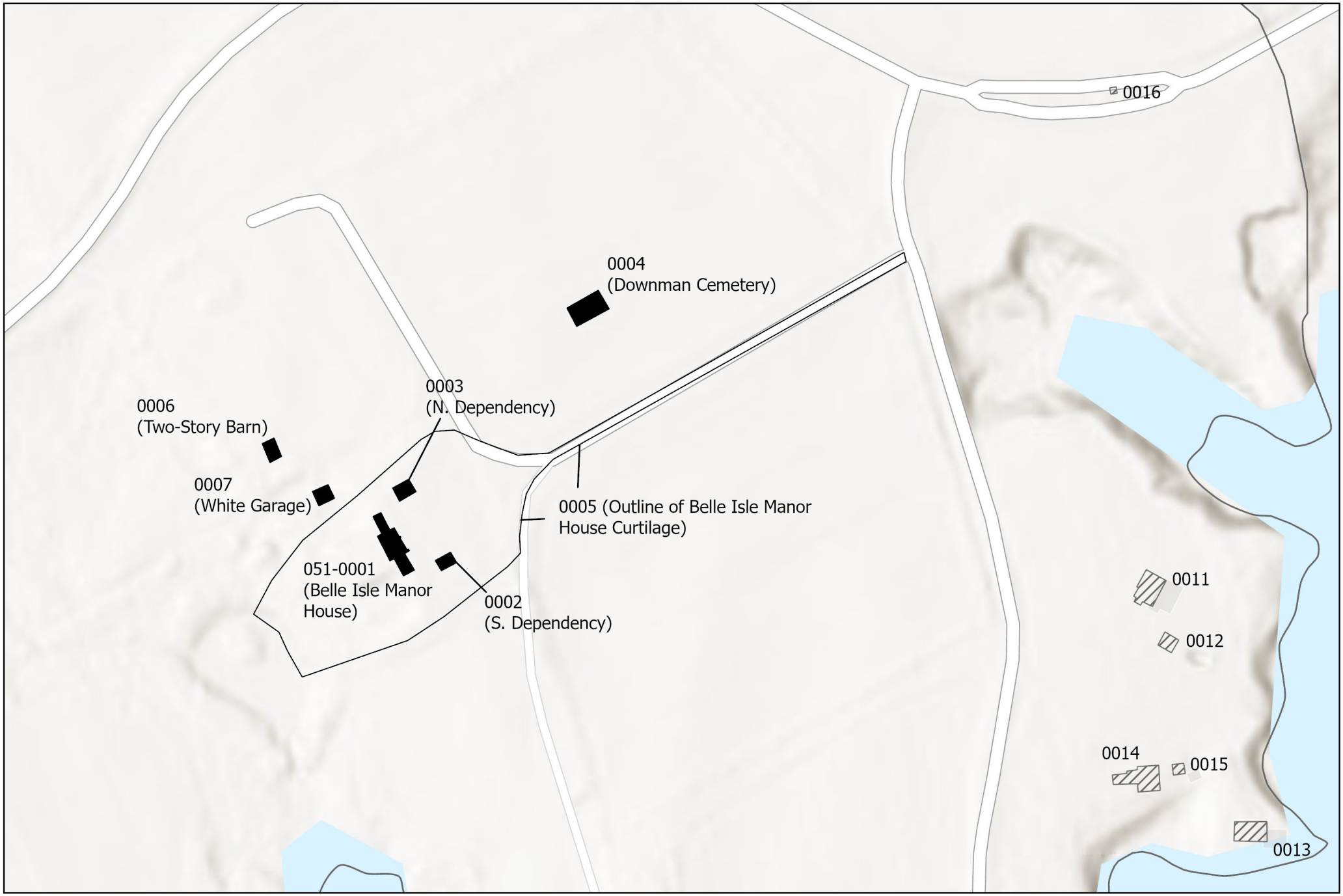
Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Location Map with Boundary Points 1 - 5 in Decimal Degrees
December 10, 2025

Legend
- Belle Isle State Park Boundary
- Location Coordinates Boundary
- Boundary Location Points

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

N



Belle Isle Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Sketch Map 1 of 4
Resources labeled with last four digits of DHR #

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

0 0.010.03 0.05 0.08
Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

N



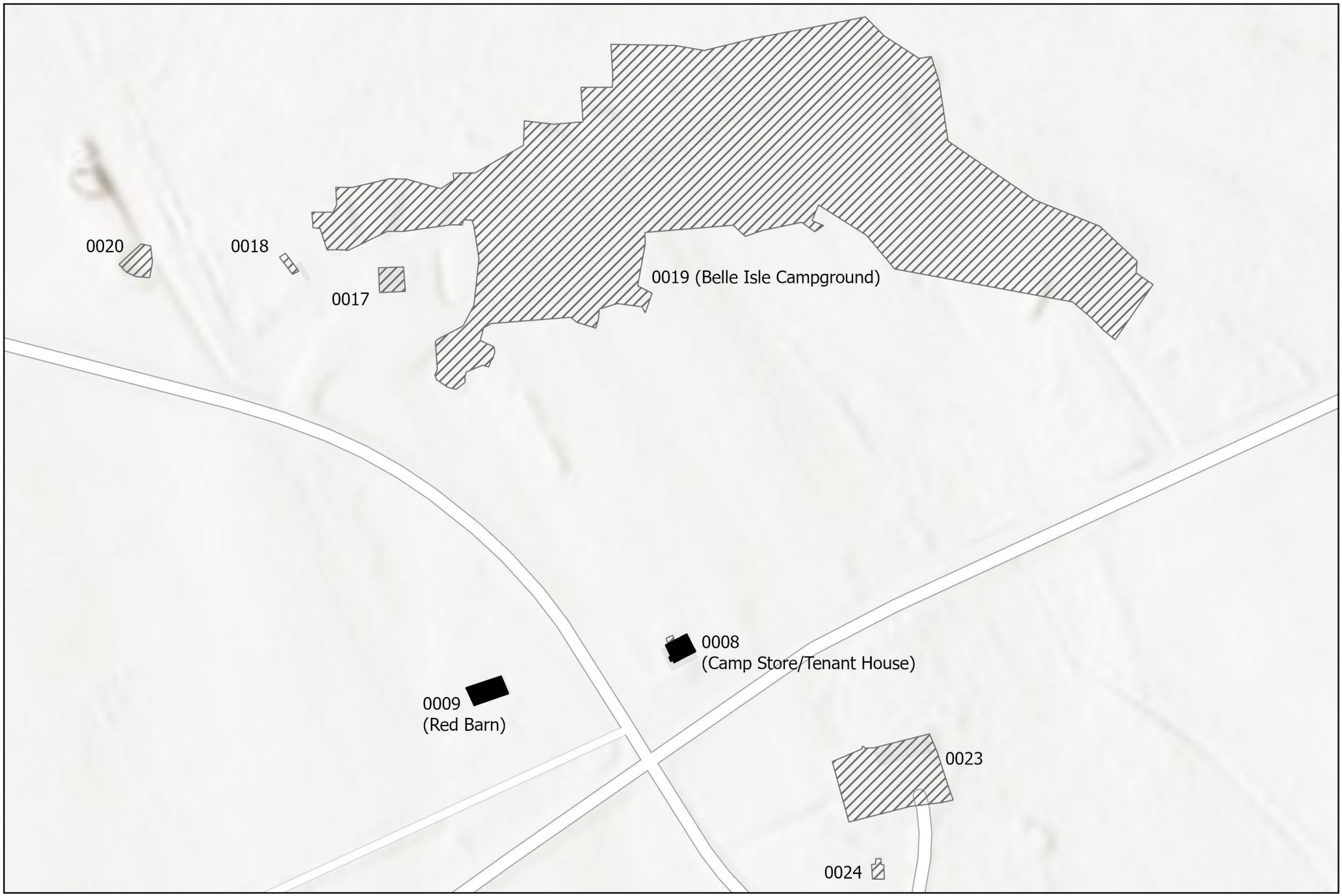
Belle Isle Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Sketch Map 2 of 4
Resources labeled with last four digits of DHR #

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

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Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

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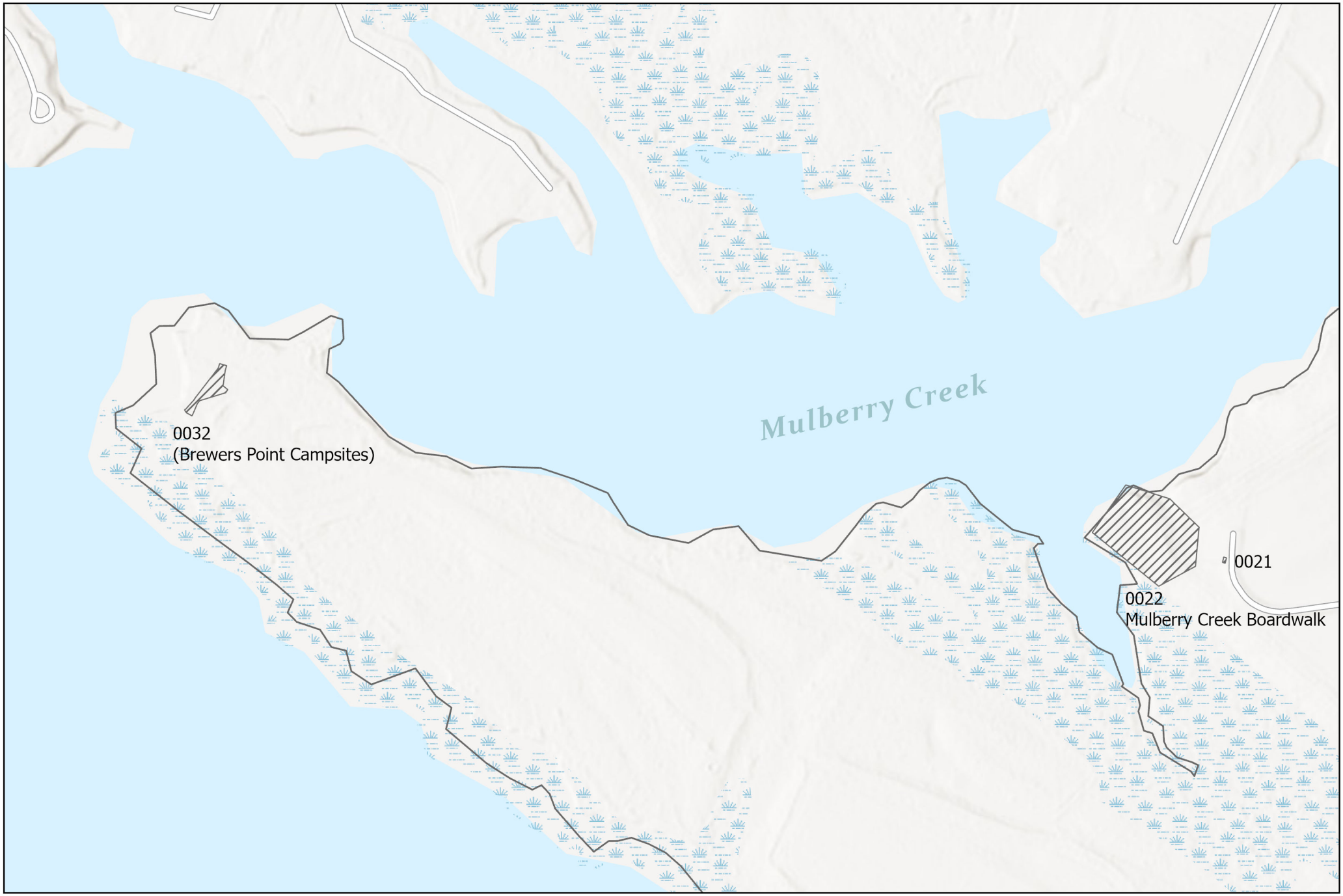
Belle Isle Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Sketch Map 3 of 4
Resources labeled with last four digits of DHR #

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

0 0.010.03 0.05 0.08
Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

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Belle Isle Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Sketch Map 4 of 4
Resources labeled with last four digits of DHR #

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

0 0.030.07 0.13 0.2 Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

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Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Photo Key Map 1 of 3
Showing photos VA_LancasterCounty_Belle_Isle_0001 through 0011, 0040 through 0043, 0051, 0053, 0054, and 0060

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

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Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

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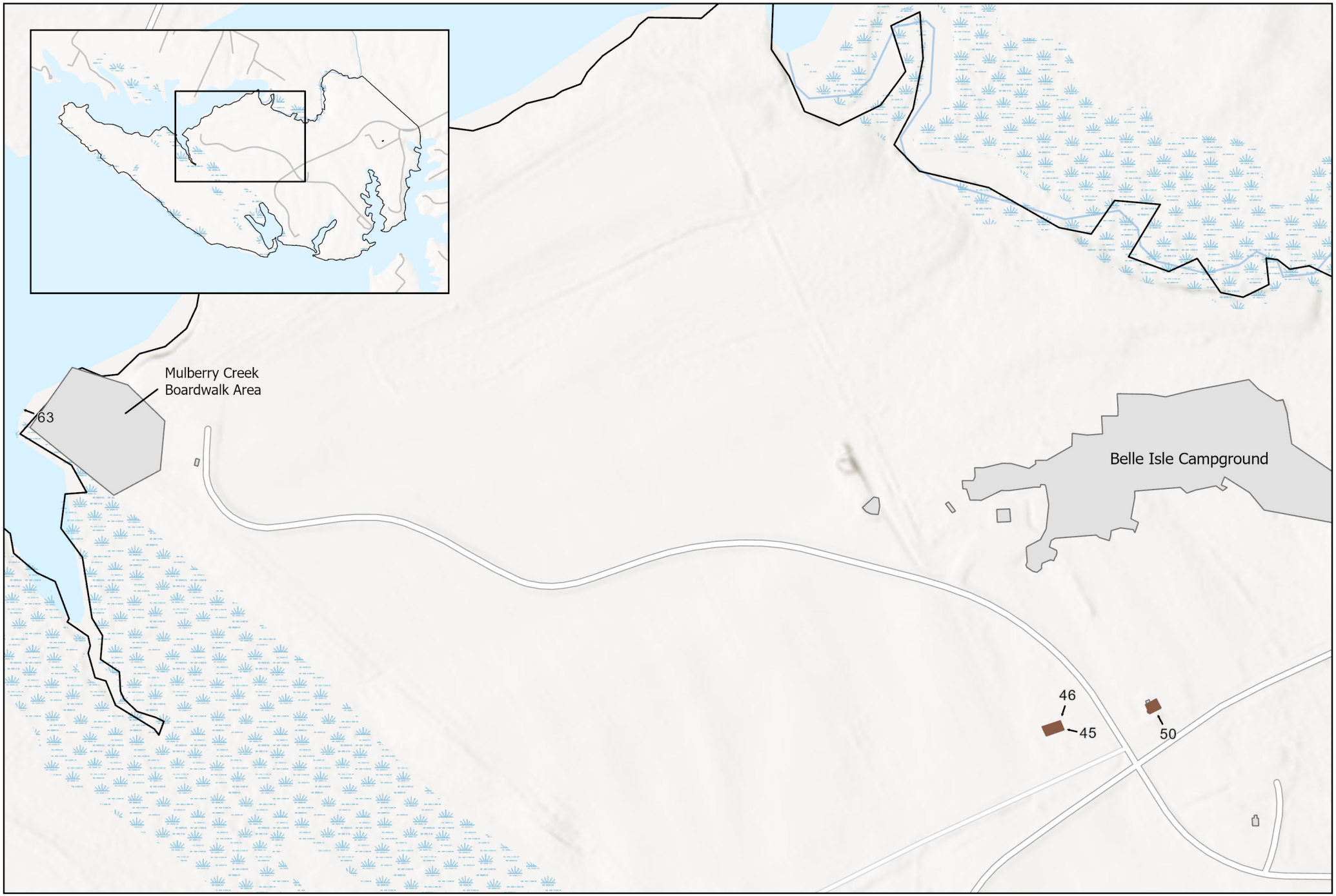


Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Photo Key Map 2 of 3
Showing photos VA_LancasterCounty_Belle_Isle_0055, 0056, 0059, 0061, 0062, and 0064 through 0067

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

0 0.02 0.04 0.09 0.14 Miles
Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

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Belle Isle/Belle Isle State Park Historic District, DHR # 051-0001
Lancaster County, Virginia
Photo Key Map 3 of 3
Showing photos VA_LancasterCounty_Belle_Isle_0045, 0046, 0050, and 0063

Legend
Contributing
Noncontributing

0 0.03 0.06 0.11 0.17
Miles

Coordinate System: WGS 1984
Software: ArcGIS Pro 3.0

N








































































































W. Y. DOWNMAN.
Departed this life
December 10th, 1864,
in the 34th year of his age
Blessed are the dead who
die in the Lord.






537










Belle Isle State Park




WARNING















