

VLR-11/5/68 NRHP-4/17/70

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Northampton	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Custis Tombs

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Custis cemetery at Arlington

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: South bank of Old Plantation Creek, .1 mi. W of northern end of Rt. 644, 1.3 mi. NW of intersection of Rt. 644 and Rt. 645.

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE Virginia	CODE 45	COUNTY: Northampton	CODE 131
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
George F. Parsons

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Arlington

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cape Charles

STATE: Virginia	CODE 45
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Northampton County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Eastville

STATE: Virginia	CODE 45
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #65-1

DATE OF SURVEY: 1968     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

STATE: Virginia	CODE 45
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia	COUNTY: Northampton	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
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FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Although there probably are more graves in the immediate area, visual evidence of the Custis family burial ground consists of two tombs surrounded by a poured concrete platform raised a few inches above ground level. The tombs are enclosed by a high iron fence, all of which is set in a grove of trees. The limestone slab resting on a low brick base marks the grave of John Custis (1630-1696), Major General and member of the Council for Virginia and progenitor of the Custis family in America. However, his grave is overshadowed by the box-like marble tomb of John Custis IV with its pyramidal top and drapery carvings on the long sides surrounding the inscriptions. On the east end of the tomb is carved the Custis family crest, while an elaborate design on the west end uses a human skull motif set within a shield.

The original Arlington house of the Custis family stood near the graveyard, probably to the south.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>History</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The land's historic associations make it one of the most significant unexcavated colonial sites in Virginia. The Custis family was one of the more notable Virginia families, and its descendants include the wife of General Robert E. Lee and the adopted grandchildren of George Washington.

The progenitor of the Custis family was Major General John Custis (1630-1696), whose tomb is one of the two remaining ones in the graveyard. Custis came to Virginia circa 1650 and established his seat at Arlington on the Eastern Shore. He became a man of importance, and by the time of his death had served on the Council of Virginia and as major-general of Virginia. One of his descendants, George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of Martha Washington, was to name his plantation Arlington, in honor of his ancestral home, and this in turn was later to be turned into Arlington National Cemetery.

At his death in 1696, General Custis left Arlington to his grandson, John Custis IV (circa 1679-circa 1750), whose elaborate tomb is the other extant one in the graveyard. John Custis IV was the son of another John Custis (1653-1713), who served as a member of the Council and as major-general of Virginia. John Custis IV was a man of prominence, carrying on the family tradition of serving as a member of the Council. He is also remembered for his tempestuous marriage with Frances Parke, the daughter of Daniel Parke who died while governor of the Leeward Islands. Custis was also an outstanding gardener and conducted many botanical experiments on the grounds of his house in Williamsburg. His son, Daniel Parke Custis, was to be the first husband of Martha Washington, and his great-great-granddaughter, Mary Anne Randolph Custis, was to marry Robert E. Lee.

The use of skull motifs on the marble grave marker of John Custis IV can be found on some other funerary sculpture in Virginia, but it is certainly much more rare here than in New England. This finely carved monument is important also because of its remarkable state of preservation and because it is signed by its maker, William Colley of Fenchurch Street, London.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Whitelaw, Ralph T., Virginia's Eastern Shore. 2 vols. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968.  
 Robertson, John William, On Land and Sea. Onancock, Va.: The Eastern Shore News, Inc., 1962.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		37 ° 13 ' 44 "	76 ° 00 ' 14 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE: May 1, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Edw. P. Alexander by John  
 Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman  
 Title: Virginia Historic Landmarks Comm.

Date: June 2, 1969

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

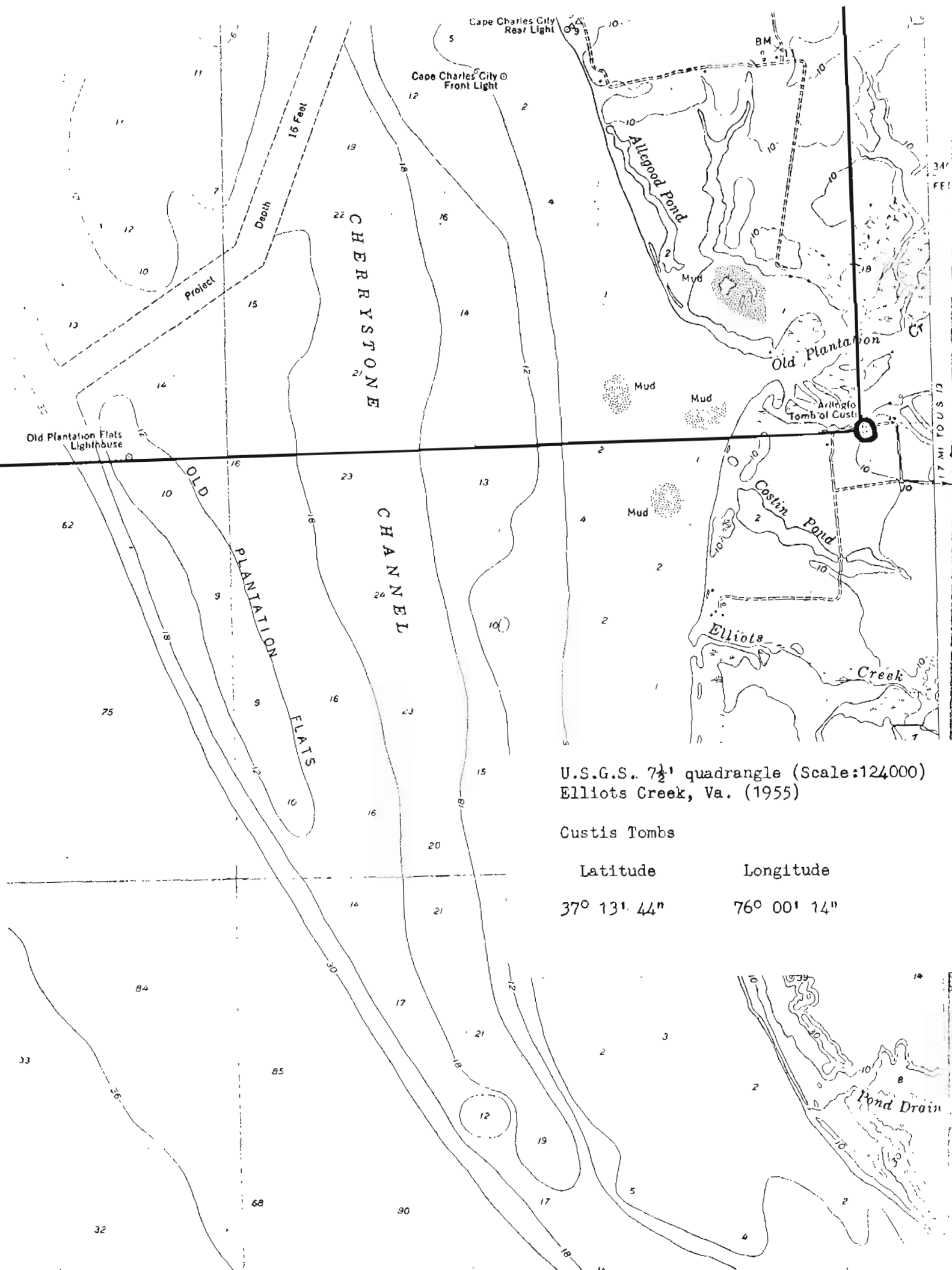
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (Scale:124,000)  
 Elliotts Creek, Va. (1955)

Custis Tombs

Latitude	Longitude
37° 13' 44"	76° 00' 14"

