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NRHP 10-23-3

(Rev. 10-90)  
NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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. Set instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheet; (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name McVitty Home  
other names/site number Im at Burwell Place, Salem. VDHR# 129-66

2. Location

street & number 601 West Main Street not for publication  
city or town Salem vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county City of Salem code 161 Zip 24153

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this      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      nationally      state de X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 9/3/03  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
     entered in the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.  
     determined eligible for the National Register  
     See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper  
     determined not eligible for the National Register Date of Action  
     removed from the National Register  
     other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_



U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

McVitty Home  
Salem, Virginia

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

roof asphalt shingle, porch: metal-standing seam

walls wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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.
- 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.
- 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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

McVitty Home  
Salem, Virginia

architecture

Period of Significance 1906-1953

Significant Dates 1906, 1925

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Salem Museum, Salem, VA

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property 0.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 17 582630 4127430    2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_    4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Mark J. Bukowski, Owner

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ date March 18, 2003

street & number: 601 West Main St. telephone 540-387-3279

city or town Salem state VA zip code 24153

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mark J. Bukowski and Cindi Lou MacMackin

street & number 601 West Main Street telephone 540-387-3279

city or town Salem state VA zip code 24153

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## 7. Narrative Description

### Summary

The McVitty Home, now called The Inn at Burwell Place, was built in 1906 by Samuel H. McVitty; a prominent local businessman who made a significant contribution to the local community. This private residence is located on the north side of main street and is part of a group of five large mansions that border historic Lake Spring Park on the west end and the Downtown Salem Historic District on the east end. Additionally, this property is situated on the Wilderness Trail that was originally developed by Daniel Boone. The original property encompassed the residence and several outbuildings, today it encompasses the residence set on one-half acre of land. Architecturally, the style is eclectic Colonial Revival with Adam elements throughout. The original structure was a classic two-story box with weatherboard siding. It has a full-length wrap-around porch with Tuscan columns, elaborate dormers, stunning fanlight windows and an attached sun/sleeping porch. In 1925, a substantial addition was added to the existing structure that changed the shape of the house from a classic box to a rear-facing L shape. The property and its grounds are in immaculate condition.

### House Exterior

Although the overall style is Colonial Revival, there are many Adamesque details throughout. Among the more prominent are: a front door with overhead elliptical fanlight and ornate sidelights; front windows in three-ranked symmetry, semi-circular dormer lunettes; and elaborate elliptical fanlight windows over single-sash ribbon windows.

The front exterior is a classical side-gabled box shape with a full-width, wrap-around one-story, dropped porch. It has a spectacular, elaborate fanlight door entrance with sidelights. Three gabled dormers stretch across the roof in perfect three-ranked symmetry. A first floor sunporch and second-story sleeping porch are attached on the left-hand side to the main building. The massive porch is seventy-seven feet. It has nine Tuscan style, one-story columns with square bases that are consistent with the Colonial Revival and Adam styles (1). The full-width, one-story porch typifies Colonial Revival style but the wrap around nature of the porch is more typical of the Queen Anne period (occasionally it is found in other architectural styles) (2). The ceiling of the porch is tongue-and-groove wood strips. On top of the columns is a full entablature. In addition, the porch has a dropped secondary roof with built-in gutters made of copper.

The front door is a recessed five-paneled solid wood door with a spectacular overhead elliptical fanlight and sidelights (3).

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All of the windows (except sunporch and sleeping porch) are double-hung sash windows. On the front, they are aligned vertically and symmetrically arranged in a three-ranked pattern (4). The large double-hung sash windows have eight window panes per sash separated by thin wooden muntins. The windows have architrave trim on each side and a prominent sill located below the window. Above the upper window sash is a classical-style entablature. Full-length wooden shutters are situated on both sides.

The middle second-floor window on the front side is rather unusual. It is located directly above the fanlight front door and has the same width. Architecturally, it looks like a Palladian window without the overhead elliptical fanlight. It has a six/six double-hung sash window in the center, separated by a mullion and a smaller (half-width) four/four double-hung sash window on each side. The architrave and entablature are the same as above. A modified, symmetrical Palladian window in the second story above the main entrance is consistent with the Adam style.

Each of the three front dormer windows is symmetrically located in vertical alignment with the lower windows. There are nine elaborate gable dormers on the roof – three on the front (original building), two on the rear (original building), two on the rear (addition), and two on the side (addition). Each dormer has raking cornice. Each pediment is embellished with a semi-circular lunette that is recessed and framed by an arched architrave with keystone. Separating the lunette from the six/six double-hung sash windows is a classical frieze and architrave. Supporting the pediment and framing the double-hung window sashes are two pilasters. A prominent sill is located below the window. The lunette windows, keystone, prominent sill and arched architrave are faithfully adapted from the Adam style (5).

Attached to the main building on the left-hand side (front facing view) are a first floor sunporch with a second-floor sleeping porch directly on top. The Palladian-style sunporch windows are very unusual because they consist of a full-length elliptical fanlight window overhead with four contiguous, nine panel, single-sash ribbon windows centered below the fanlight. Ribbon windows (three or more contiguous windows) can be found on all post 1900 Eclectic styles but are typically only on side wings (6). Each of the four windows is separated by a mullion with a prominent sill below the entire window structure. There is a recessed freeze that borders the entire window grouping and a keystone at the top of the arch (7).

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The sleeping porch windows are unusual in that they are single sash ribbon windows. There are three windows on the front side, two smaller end windows with twelve panes in each and a center window with eighteen panes. The panes are set up in an unusual grouping: a small square pane on top and bottom and larger rectangular pane in the middle. They are also interesting because they open from the top down. When fully lowered, the windows are concealed within the lower wall.

The foundation is concrete below the ground level with brick above ground until it meets the weatherboard siding. This siding covers the entire house with the exception of the second-floor sleeping porch and the area below the first-floor sunporch windows that are covered with plain pattern wooden shingles. The second floor sunporch siding is wooden with seven inset, recessed panels. The roof of the original building was cedar shake shingles that were later replaced by asphalt shingles (8). The porch roof and sleeping porch roof are standing seam metal with a built-in gutter system.

The roof-wall junction can best be characterized as a boxed eave (9). At the top of the exterior wall siding is a broad frieze with architrave trim. Bed molding sits on top of the frieze at the roof-wall junction. The eave overhang is about one foot. A fascia board and cornice trim complete the eave and provide a facing for the built-in guttering. The use of a slight eave overhang with classical moldings is consistent with the Colonial Revival and Adam styles (10).

The roof pitch of the original building is moderate. A side-gabled, moderate pitch roof is consistent with Adam and Colonial Revival styles (11). Other unusual details are a one-story Tuscan column at the outside edge of the first and second floor sunporch and sleeping porches. In addition, there are two, one-story pilasters at the junction of the main building and sun/sleeping porches. A large brick chimney straddles the roof and can be seen from the front side. The interior placement of the chimney is consistent with Northern Adam houses (12).

The sunporch roof-wall junction supports a built-in guttering system. Symmetrically, the sun porch façade is similar to the sleeping porch façade because there are four Tuscan, one story columns that span the front. Structurally it is different because it has three sets of the unusual Palladian windows located between the columns. Plain pattern wooden shingles run from the bottom sill to the floor.

A flat metal roof with standing seams and built-in guttering covers the sleeping porch. The roof-wall junction is a boxed eave similar to the one described above. The frieze and architrave



are supported by four one-story columns built into the structure. Symmetrically, the sleeping porch façade is made up of three sections. Each section is made up of two single-sashes, twelve-panel windows separated by a mullion. Below the windows are four recessed wood panels. Separating the sections is a Tuscan wood column.

Both gable ends (east and west facing) are characterized by boxed eave construction. They have large overhangs and seven by three foot elliptical fanlight windows inset at the base of the gable Pediments. Each window has curved or arched architraves, a keystone at the top of the arch, and a prominent sill below. In keeping with the symmetrical balance, each window is identical and located at opposite gable ends. On the side of the gable end are straight or plain pattern wooden shingles.

Another unusual feature is the side door entrance on the east side. It consists of a wood door with sidelight windows but without the elliptical fanlight. Each sidelight window is a double-hung sash window with six window panes per sash. As with all of the windows they have architraves, prominent sills and classical entablatures. The entrance door is a heavy wooden door with fifteen panes of glass separated by thick muntins. To the right of the porch is a large bay window that completes the original building. This bay window is composed of two smaller four/four double-hung sash windows along the outside edge and two interior six/six double-hung windows. The bay window is framed by an architrave and is consistent with Colonial Revival architecture (13).

The architectural elements of the addition are identical to the original building with two exceptions. First, there are two hooded pediment entrances and second, there are no eight/eight double-hung sash windows. All of the windows are six/six. There are two hooded pediment entrances on the side exterior that are not present on the original building. One of the entrances is the primary rear entrance and is situated at the center of the side exterior. The other hooded pediment entrance is north-facing and was probably a secondary entrance. Each of the pediments has scrolled supports and frames a five-panel door and outside screen door. The underside (ceiling) of the pediment has tongue and groove wood panels. Both of these hooded pediment entrances are consistent with Colonial Revival architecture (14).

### House Interior - Summary

Among the highlights of this mansion are: twenty-seven rooms (8000 plus square feet), four entrances, eight bathrooms (five with original fixtures), four entrances, six sets of French doors, two staircases, two fireplaces and hardwood floors throughout. The house interior is pristine.

## House Interior – General Details

All of the interior doors with the exception of the French doors and two interior doors with glass panes are heavy, solid wood, five-panel doors. All of the doors have the original brass hardware consisting of an oval faceplate with turtle-top ridge and oval turtle-top brass handles.

Most of the main floor and the second floor hallway have recessed panel wainscoting with a wainscoting cap. Non-wainscoted walls have a three-part, eleven and one-half inch molding made up of a base cap molding shaped like classical picture mould. Underneath the base cap is a classical base finished with one-inch shoe mould. The door molding for all doors is made up of several parts. First, on the sides of each door are twelve-inch plinth blocks on the bottom. Directly on top of the plinth block is a classical casing molding. Over the top of the door sits a header stop molding and then a six-inch header topped off by a classical header cap.

All interior walls and ceilings are plaster over lath. The ceilings on the first, second, and third floors are ten feet high.

Hot water fed into radiators and warmed by a gas boiler provides heat to the entire house. Retrofitted air-conditioning was added in 1997 without disturbing any of the original architectural details.

Original hardwood floors in good condition are located throughout. With the exception of the kitchen and third floor which is narrow plank, tongue-and-groove maple, all floors are narrow plank, tongue-and-groove oak.

## House Interior – Floor Plan

Entering through the front door brings you into a foyer with a staircase, two sets of French doors on each side and an archway that leads to a single wooden door with glass panes that accesses the breakfast room. The five-panel recessed front door is flanked by sidelights with circular muntins. The top, bottom and middle muntins are separated by curvilinear star-shaped muntins framing wavy glass. Overhead is a spectacular elliptical fanlight window. In the foyer, there are three beautiful, brass lamp/sconces that are original to the house. The foyer has recessed panel wainscoting throughout. As you face the staircase in the front foyer, the French doors to the left (fifteen glass panes on each door separated by thick muntins) open into a cavernous living room. This room has recessed-panel wainscoting throughout. It also has a large brick fireplace in the center of the room with a wonderful, classical mantle. On the north and south interior

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walls there are four large, flame shaped, two-arm brass wall sconces framing the interior

windows that are original to the house. Opposite the fireplace on the west wall is a huge entrance to the sunporch. This entrance has a pair of full-length French doors with twelve glass panes that open inward, flanked by a single, full-length, twelve-pane door on each side. These doors open into the sunporch as well. The sunporch is surrounded on three sides by sensational windows. Each set of windows is made up of four contiguous, nine-panel, single-sash ribbon windows centered below an elliptical fanlight window. There is a recessed frieze that borders the entire window grouping and a keystone at the top of the arch. There is one window grouping on each sidewall and three window groupings in the west-facing center wall. The entrance wall has elaborate doors with weatherboard siding on the remainder of the interior wall. Half-exposed Tuscan wood columns are interspersed throughout the walls. Completing the room is a tongue-and-groove, narrow plank wood ceiling. On the right-hand side of the entrance foyer is another set of French doors (fifteen glass panes on each door separated by large muntins) opening into a formal dining room. This room has recessed-panel wainscoting throughout and a five-panel swinging door that opens into a small country room. The country room has swinging-door entrances on both sides, a large bay window in the center wall and an entrance to the enclosed staircase that runs to the third floor. The molding in this room is the three-part molding described above. On the far side of the living room is another set of French doors (fifteen glass panes on each door separated by large muntins) that open into the breakfast room. Like the others, this room has recessed-panel wainscoting and five electrified candle sconces original to the house. This room can also be accessed from the front foyer. Under the arch is a single wooden door with fifteen glass panes that opens into the room. In back of the breakfast room and country room is a huge kitchen, office, bathroom and laundry room. Like the country room, all of these rooms have three-part moldings instead of wainscoting. There are two entrance doors in the kitchen that exit under the hooded-pediment entrances.

The staircase in the foyer has several steps that lead to a small landing. It then takes a ninety degree turn to the right and proceeds to the second floor landing. Each of the step endcaps has carved scrollwork below the stair and facing the foyer. There are three classical balusters on each step that support a carved mahogany rail that forms a circular spiral on top of a classical mahogany newel post.

The second floor contains four bedrooms, a separate full bath and a perpendicular hallway. The hallway has recessed-panel wainscoting throughout. It also has two original candle sconces on the north-facing interior wall. At the top of the stairs there is a bedroom just off the landing. This bedroom (bedroom two) has a large room with three-part molding, a built-in closet with original brass fixtures and two original candle sconces on the south-facing exterior wall. Off the east end of the bedroom is a bathroom with the original American Standard pedestal sink,

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original tub, original porcelain toilet with the porcelain lever below the tank and original gray and white one-inch hex floor tiles. The bathroom also has the original American Standard four-

prong porcelain handles in the tub/shower and the pedestal sink. The original built-in medicine cabinet is on the wall. At the other end of bedroom two is an entrance to another room that houses a separate whirlpool tub. This room has three-part wall mold, two original candle sconces on the south-facing exterior wall and a built-in curio cabinet. Moving back into the hallway and taking a ninety degree turn brings you to a full bath located off of the hallway. This bath has the original toilet, pedestal, sink, tub, porcelain fixtures and built-in medicine cabinet as detailed in bedroom two. Moving back into the hallway and straight ahead is bedroom one. It contains a large bedroom that has a triple window recessed into the far wall that looks into the sunporch. As in bedroom two, it has three-part wall mold. The interior wall houses a brick fireplace with a simple wood mantle. The sunporch can be accessed through a door that you need to step up to enter. The room has an interior wall that it shares with the bedroom. On the sunporch side, this wall is weatherboard siding with a triple six/six double-hung sash ribbon window in the center. At the far end of the interior wall is an unusual oval window with four keystones that looks into the whirlpool tub bathroom. Like the sunporch, the ceiling is narrow plank tongue and groove and there are half-exposed full-length wooden columns at the corners and imbedded symmetrically in the exterior wall. The windows are extremely unusual because they are single sash, twelve-pane windows that can be completely pulled down and hidden within the exterior wall. There is a bathroom located on the north end of the bathroom. Again it has the original pedestal sink, tub, toilet, hex tile, built-in medicine cabinet and American Standard porcelain fixtures. Directly off of this room is a separate whirlpool tub room with a marble floor.

The last two bedrooms are located down the hall and ninety degrees to the left. Both bedrooms are identical in layout. They have a large bedroom with three-part wall molding. In addition they have large walk-in closets that have the original automatic light that lights when you open the door. On the south facing interior wall there are two original candle sconces and one on the east-facing exterior wall. Adjoining the bedrooms are bathrooms with the same original details as those in bedrooms one and two above.

To the left of bedroom door two is a set of French doors (ten glass panes per door separated by thick muntins) that open into the hallway to access the landing and enclosed stairwell. If you go up the stairs, turn ninety degrees and follow the stairs up to a small third floor landing you will find french doors (ten glass panes per door separated by large muntins) that open into a very large great room. The east-facing wall has a seven by three foot elliptical fanlight window with architrave, prominent sill and phenomenal views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This room has ten-foot ceilings, three-part wall molding, maple floors, and two ceiling-high dormers (south facing) with semi-circular lunette windows located above 6/6 double-hung sash windows and an exposed brick chimney on

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the far wall. Off the great room is a full bath. Off the east end of the room is an adjoining bedroom. After you open the door there is a narrow hallway that opens into a long, narrow bedroom. The bedroom has an exposed brick chimney in the middle, two dormers on each side

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McVitty Home  
Salem, Virginia

with semi-circular lunettes above them and an elliptical fanlight in the center of the north-facing wall. In addition, it has a half bath with a toilet and pedestal sink. The ceilings in this room are seven feet high. Off the east end of the great room is the master bedroom. It has another seven by three foot elliptical fanlight window in the center off the outside wall offering equally stunning views of the mountains. This room has ten-foot ceilings, three-part wall moldings and a large walk-in closet. It has two ceiling-high dormers (one on the south side and one on the north side) with semi-circular lunette windows located above six/six double-hung sash windows

Finally, the basement is a concrete basement with dirt floors and exposed beams. There is a door in the enclosed staircase that leads to the basement.

### Property Setting

The property is set on one-half acre of land. The original property included the current property, the property now occupied by the Burwell Place condominiums and much of Tank Hill. The current owners have added substantial landscaping to enhance the property including: Italian Columnar Leyland Cypress trees that surround three sides of the property, multiple raised perennial beds, climbing roses to cover the front rock wall, formal English gardens, formal rose gardens and multiple brick pathways.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

The McVitty property is eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture because of its high degree of integrity as an unusually refined example of Colonial Revival architecture with Adam

English style elements. The elliptical fanlight windows and elaborate dormers are exquisite examples of this architectural synthesis not found anywhere else in the area. Also, it is historically significant for several reasons. First, it was the first home of a very prominent Salem citizen, Samuel H. McVitty. Secondly, it is historically important for its association with Samuel McVitty and Lewis Dawson of the Leas and McVitty Tannery – a business that helped define Salem from the late 1800s to the mid 1970s. Finally, the home forms the end of a group of five historic mansions that border Lake Spring Park and that were built after the demise of the Old Lake Spring Hotel.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author wishes to thank Michael Pulice from the Roanoke Historical Preservation Office for his patience, time and guidance steering me through this bewildering process. The author also wishes to thank his wife, Cindi Lou, for gathering many of the articles and stories from the Dawson family. Special thanks to the Dawson family for their willingness to provide helpful historical information. Finally, thanks to John Long from the Salem Museum.

### **Historic Context**

On April 17, 1906 Samuel H. McVitty purchased the land that is now 601 West Main Street for \$600.00 (See Copy of Original Deed). In 1906 McVitty built his first home in the Roanoke Valley on the property that is now 601 West Main St. The architect for the property was believed to be Charles Barton Keen, a prominent architect who did other projects for the McVitty family in and around Philadelphia (15). McVitty lived in the house with his wife Lucy and son Edward from 1906 until 1915.

Samuel H. McVitty was a Philadelphia native and a Princeton graduate who supervised the Salem branch of his family's Philadelphia-based business, the Leas and McVitty Tannery. The Leas and McVitty Tannery moved to Salem in 1889. According to Lewis Dawson, Jr. "the tannery was located in Salem in 1889 because of the regional availability of good chestnut bark and the proximity of a chestnut extract plant in Buena Vista The extract produced from grinding chestnut tree bark was used as a tanning agent to turn steer hides to a deep, rich color (16). McVitty arrived in 1902 from Philadelphia to run the family business – the fourth generation in

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his family to do so. Under his leadership, L&M became a leading supplier of leather. Mr. McVitty left an indelible mark on the Roanoke Valley with the establishment of Mercy House and through his philanthropic gifts of money, rare books and fine art collections which he donated to Roanoke and Hollins colleges (17). This excerpt from The Roanoker Magazine gives some insight into McVitty's character:

“McVitty never paraded his wealth. He gave freely to concerns he felt warranted attention, among them Roanoke and Hollins Colleges and Mercy House, a concern close to his wife’s heart. Lucy and Jane Morgan Harris started the home for unwed mothers, the poor and the elderly in 1932. McVitty’s strong interest in the organization continued beyond Lucy’s sudden death in 1941. Soon after McVitty’s death, Mercy House administrators changed the name of the home to McVitty House. In a 1956 issue of its newsletter, the *Mercy House Messenger*, McVitty wrote of his involvement in the organization. ‘Society makes scant provision for aged and enfeebled gentle folks who cannot be cared for in their homes and who are unable to meet the financial obligations of long stays in one of our excellent hospitals. Such people need the love and tender care of a homelike rather than professional atmosphere. Mercy House meets that need. From my association with it I have derived great personal happiness, satisfaction and inspiration’.

(18)

On March 23, 1917 Lewis E. Dawson purchased the house and three parcels of land for \$4700.00. Mr. Dawson was the manager of the Tannery and the home was said to be part of his employment contract. In 1927 Dawson added a substantial addition and five bathrooms to the existing structure. An article by Jim Fulghum sheds some light on the property.

“I spoke to Mrs. Lewis E. Dawson, who told me that she and her husband had bought the house from S.H. McVitty in 1915. Shortly after purchasing the home and moving into it, Mrs. Dawson said that her husband found that the property line was extremely close to the porch on the east side, and there was some question as to whether or not the porch overhung the Valley Railroad Company’s land. Mr. Dawson, therefore, thought it would be a good idea to purchase the lot, and he did so in about 1919. After purchasing the extra land from the Valley Railroad Company, the Dawsons, in 1925, added the rear wing to the house. The original home was built around the turn of the century by S.H. McVitty, and it is a handsome home, having grace and charm and much eye-appeal. The rooms have very high ceilings and the stairway in the hall is of an unusual style. It proceeds up five steps and then turns and winds its way up to the third floor of the building. It has just one fireplace in the living room, and was built with all the modern conveniences of its day, including central heat.” (19)

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Through the ownership of Mr. McVitty and later Mr. Dawson, the property had a common link to the Leas and McVitty Tannery which played a vital role in Salem’s past. Mike Ashley wrote a great article describing the Tannery’s past.

“The Leas & McVitty Tannery, one of Salem’s oldest and largest industries, has been gone for nearly 10 years. Most Salemites remember the old tannery and that it stood on

the site of the West Salem Plaza. Many remember the long wood-frame buildings and shelters that housed the animal hides, the tree-bark and even the smell that were part of this old trade. For 80 years, the Leas & McVitty Tannery was a vital part of Salem and the local economy. Built in 1889, the tannery provided work for several generations of Salemites. Now the old tannery, finally destroyed by fire in 1973, provides memories for the Salem men who worked there. H.M. 'Neal' Darnall of Chestnut Street in Salem is one such man." (20) "Darnall remembers the mules that pulled barkwagons across the tannery lot from the barkricks to the mills, where the bark was ground almost to dust. Usually, there was no driver as the mules automatically carried the bark to the mill and returned with the empty wagon. Because trees and their bark were so vital to the tanning process, Thomas H. McVitty established three tanneries in lush Virginia. Besides Salem, Buena Vista and Pearisburg also operated tanneries." (21) "Lewis Dawson, another Salem native and tannery worker for 34 years, took a different approach, working in all three Virginia tanneries. As an assistant general manager, assistant manager and chief engineer, Dawson was the third generation in his family to work in the tanneries. His grandfather was the manager of the Buena Vista tannery and his father was superintendent in Salem. Dawson was born at the Salem tannery in the house set aside for the manager and his family. 'Managers stayed as close to the job as they could,' explained Dawson of his birthplace in a house in what is now the Rose's parking lot. The birthplace of the Leas & McVitty partnership and the first of their tanneries was in Pennsylvania in 1812. The quality of their product, sole leather and rough leather for belting, was recognized world-wide. In fact, the company won five World's Fair awards." (22)

After Mr. Dawson died, Mrs. Dawson raised her five children and supported them by operating the home as a boarding house. In the mid-sixties Mrs. Dawson was forced to sell the house due to declining health.

Through the seventies and eighties the home had several owner/occupants including the YWCA and a local architectural firm. The home sat vacant for five years before being purchased in the late eighties by a developer, JM Turner. Turner developed the adjacent land into condominiums and was preparing to bulldoze the home and build more condominiums. Fortunately, he was having financial problems and Michael Spence Robertson purchased the home in 1990.

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Robertson spent 18 months renovating the property before opening it as a bed and breakfast in 1991.

In 1997 Mark Bukowski and Cindi Lou MacMackin purchased the home from Mr. Robertson. Bukowski and MacMackin painstakingly restored the mansion to its current grandeur. Today, it continues to be a private home for the owners (and their seven year old daughter, Sarabeth) and a



small inn that is the site of many weddings and special events.

End Notes:

1. Diagram six of Virginia and Lee MacAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1984).
2. Diagrams seven and eight of Virginia and Lee MacAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1984).
3. Diagram eleven of Virginia and Lee MacAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1984).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.

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14. Ibid.
15. Oral History – Dawson Family. Various Dawson family members provided an oral history of the property, articles and old pictures.
16. "Mr. McVitty: A Gentlemen from Salem's Past" *The Roanoker*, pp. 20-21, May

1984.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. “*The Dawson Home, 507 West Main St, Salem, Virginia*”, by Jim Fulghum. Date Unknown.

20. “Tannery: Old workers remember sights, sounds, smell” *Salem Times Register*, July 7, 1983.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. The Salem Historical Society provided several articles on Samuel McVitty.

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### **Bibliography**

Ashley, Mike. “Tannery: Old workers remember sights, sounds, smell” *Salem Times Register*, July 7, 1983.

Fulghum, Jim. *The Dawson Home, 507 West Main St, Salem, Virginia*”. Date Unknown.

Macalester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. 1984.

Natale, JoAnna. "Mr. McVitty: A Gentleman from Salem's Past" *The Roanoker*, pp. 20-21.  
May 1984.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The 0.5-acre nominated parcel (McVitty Home property - parcel ID 123-501-112.00-000) is bounded on the northwest by Interstate 81, on the southeast side by US Hwy 460/Route 11 (West Main St.), and by adjacent properties to the southwest (123-605-113.25-000) and northeast (123-503-A75.21-000), as shown on City of Salem tax map 123.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel were selected because of the boundaries of parcels to the northeast and southwest, highways to the northwest and southeast; and because all extant resources associated with McVitty Home are contained within the nominated parcel.

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All photographs are of:

McVitty Home (129-66)

City of Salem, Virginia

Date: February 2003

Photographer: Robert Dementi      Negative #20425

Location of negatives: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

1. VIEW OF: North-facing, gabled-side (addition) and north-facing façade of original building.

Frame No. 1

2. VIEW OF: West-facing façade of addition and hooded pediment entrance.  
Frame No. 2
3. VIEW OF: West-facing façade (addition) and north-facing façade of original building.  
Frame No. 4
4. VIEW OF: East-facing façade (addition) and bay window.  
Frame. No. 6
5. VIEW OF: East-facing façade (addition) and wrap-around porch.  
Frame No. 7
6. VIEW OF: Interior view of front door with elliptical overhead fanlight and sidelights.  
Frame No. 25.
7. VIEW OF: Interior front foyer with curved banister and French doors.  
Frame No. 26.
8. VIEW OF: Interior front foyer with curved banister, staircase and curved archway.  
Frame No. 28.
9. VIEW OF: Interior French doors leading into sunporch.  
Frame No. 30.

**Section \_photo\_ Page \_\_16\_\_**

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10. VIEW OF: Interior sleeping porch off of bedroom #1.  
Frame No. 31.
11. VIEW OF: South-facing front façade.  
Frame No. 32.
12. VIEW OF: South-facing front façade.  
Frame No. 33.
13. VIEW OF: Interior oval window in sleeping porch off of bedroom #1.

Frame No. 33a.

14. VIEW OF: South-facing front façade.

Frame No. 34.

15. VIEW OF: Front door with overhead elliptical fanlight and sidelights.

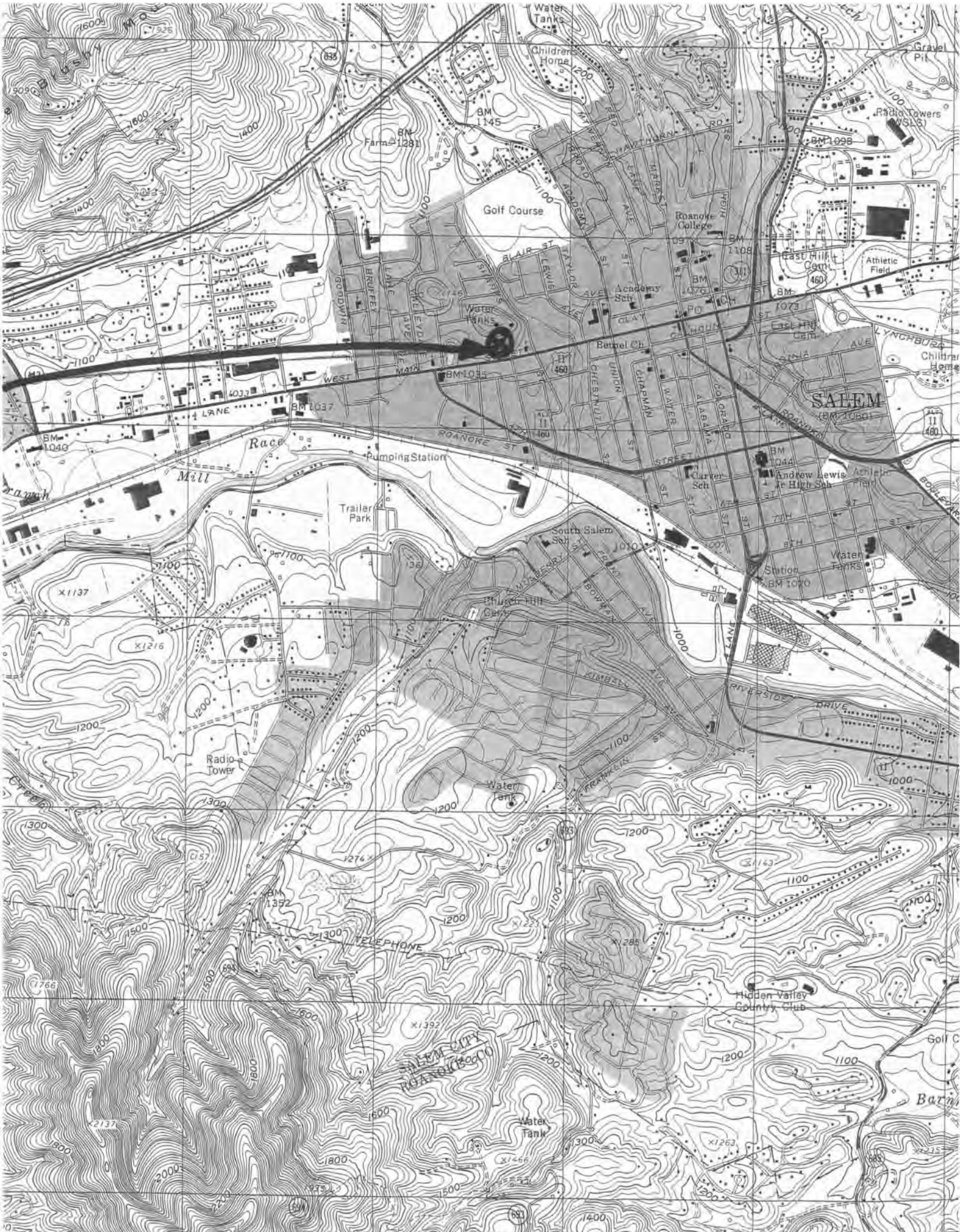
Frame No. 36.

16. VIEW OF: South-facing gabled dormer.

Frame No. 38.

17. VIEW OF: West-facing gabled façade (original building) and west facing façade (addition).

Frame No. 42.



**McVITTY HOME - CITY OF SALEM**

Scale 1:24,000

2'30"