

VLR-10/18/83 NRHP-3/8/84

144-25

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Longwood House (Preferred) (VHLC 144-25)

and or common same

2. Location

street & number Johnson Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Farmville  vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county Prince Edward Co. code 147

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Board of Visitors, Longwood College c/o Janet D. Greenwood, President

street & number Longwood College

city, town Farmville ~~Virginia~~ Virginia state 23901

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince Edward County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Farmville state Virginia 23901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Virginia Historic Landmarks  
title Commission Survey (VHLC 144-25) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Longwood House is a combination late Federal and Greek Revival central-passage residence located off Johnson Drive in Prince Edward County. The massive, 2 1/2-story, wood-frame, double-pile dwelling was originally built ca. 1815 and extensively remodeled ca. 1839. The renovations include the replacement of what was probably a hipped roof with a half-story gable roof, the addition of a west wing and the embellishment of the interior with stylish Greek Revival woodwork. After becoming the property of Longwood College in 1928, a wing was added to the east elevation, modeled after that found on the west; no major alterations have since been made to the dwelling. Long an attraction at Longwood House, the garden still preserves a number of shrubs and trees that date from its 19th-century landscape plan.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Longwood House is situated on a private road off Johnson Drive immediately outside the corporate limits of Farmville, Prince Edward County. Owned by Longwood College and used as the residence of the president, the property consists of the main house and a garage.

Built ca. 1815 and enlarged and remodeled ca. 1839, Longwood House is a 2 1/2-story, wood-frame, double-pile residence. Covered by beaded weatherboarding, the dwelling sits on a raised brick basement and is covered by an immense gable roof.

The facade (south) elevation is distinguished by a one-story, Greek Doric porch enhanced by a Doric entablature with triglyphs and metopes. The porch sits on brick piers, the spandrels filled with a lattice screen. The porch has a balustrade executed with plain balusters. A balustrade is found on the roof and constitutes a later addition. The porch shelters the main entrance which consists of double doors flanked by sidelights and topped by a transom. The frontispiece has molded architrave trim and corner blocks. It was undoubtedly derived from Asher Benjamin's, The Practical House Carpenter (1830), Plate 27, "Design for a front door." The carriage lights that flank the door were installed in the mid-20th century. Above the entrance on the second story are a single door flanked by sidelights and a transom that date to the early 20th century. A cornice runs along the eaves. Fenestration consists of 12/12 hung-sash windows on the first story and 8/12 hung-sash windows on the second story. The openings are framed by molded architraves and flanked by louvered shutters.

The garden or rear elevation has a one-story pedimented Tuscan porch. Like the front, the porch sits on brick piers with lattice screens set between the supports. The porch has a balustrade, again with plain balusters. The rear entrance consists of a double door framed by a molded architrave. The carriage lights flanking the door were installed in the mid-20th century. Like the front, the rear elevation has 12/12 hung-sash windows on the first story and 8/12 on the second. The openings have molded architrave trim and flanking shutters.

The east elevation has a two-story wing added in the 1920s. The wing is flanked by two exterior-end chimneys executed in American bond brick. The windows follow the treatment found on the front and rear elevations.

The west elevation also has a two-story wing flanked by two exterior-end chimneys. It is thought that the wing was added to the house ca. 1839 when the valuation of the property rose to \$3,000 in the Prince Edward County Land Tax book. At the same time the

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1815; 1839      **Builder/Architect** unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Longwood House, one of the Farmville region's notable architectural landmarks, illustrates the evolution of a simple Federal farmhouse into one of Prince Edward County's most stylish Greek Revival-mansions. The massive, wood-frame structure began as a 1 1/2-story dwelling built by Nathaniel E. Venable soon after a fire destroyed an earlier house on the site in 1815. After Venable had risen to prominence as a state delegate and senator the residence was enlarged and refashioned in the Greek Revival style by the ca. 1839 addition of its present gable roof, Doric columned porch, two-story west wing, and interior woodwork. Derived from the designs of Asher Benjamin in his Practical House Carpenter (1830), the woodwork ranks among the finest examples of its type in the area. Since 1929, when the property was acquired by State Teachers College at Farmville as a rural student retreat, Longwood House has become the most important identifying symbol of the college community, giving its name to the institution in 1949 and serving more recently as the official residence of its president. Efforts are now underway to restore the house and surrounding landscape to their former antebellum appearance.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The land on which Longwood House now stands was first settled in 1765 by Peter Johnston, Sr. who named it Cherry Grove. Johnston migrated to Virginia from Scotland in 1727 and originally resided at Osborne's landing. After moving to Prince Edward County Johnston became prominent in local affairs and represented the county in the House of Burgesses in 1769. In 1774 Johnston offered the Hanover Presbytery 100 acres of land for the site of a school. The gift was accepted and in 1775 Johnston became a founding trustee of Hampden-Sydney College.

Upon the elder Johnston's death, the land, renamed Longwood after the Johnston estate "Loughwood" in Scotland, passed to his son Peter Johnston, Jr, later judge of the General Court for Prince Edward County. In 1811 the younger Johnston exchanged his circuit for one in the Southwest and moved to Abingdon. The Longwood House tract, consisting of 1181 acres, was sold to Abraham B. Venable, who died very soon afterward in the Richmond Theatre fire of December 26, 1811. The victims's property was divided among various relatives, with Samuel W. Venable inheriting the house and 363 acres. He in turn gave the Longwood estate to his son, Nathaniel E. Venable in 1814.

Nathaniel E. Venable, the builder of Longwood House was a distinguished citizen of Prince Edward County. A graduate of Hampden-Sydney, Venable served in the War of 1812, and as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and the State Senate. He served as a trustee of Hampden-Sydney College from 1827 to 1846. He married Mary Embry Scott of Falkland, Halifax County.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #3)

Bradshaw, Herbert Clarence. History of Prince Edward County, Virginia. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1955.  
Prince Edward County. Deed Books 4 (1811); 25 (1845-50); Land Tax Book (1810-50); Will Book 4 (1812).

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 4 acres

Quadrangle name Farmville, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	7	7	3	2	2	6	0	4	1	3	0	2	5	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property is comprised of four acres that includes the main house, garage and front and rear yards. The four acres is a small fraction of the original 363 acres of land owned by Nathaniel E. Venable when he built the house in ca. 1815.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (See Continuation Sheet #3)

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date 1983

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date October 18, 1983

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Longwood House, Farmville, VA  
Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

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7. DESCRIPTION--Architectural Analysis

wing was added, it is believed that the present gable roof was added since the roof cornice is identical to that found on the west wing. The wing is fronted by a pedimented, one-story Tuscan porch, similar in execution to that found on the rear elevation. The portico shelters two entrances. The main entrance, which opens into the house, is similar to that found in The Practical House Carpenter, Plate 27. The second entrance opens into a wood-frame pent that has been incorporated into the wing. To the north of the porch a third entrance leads into the basement. The windows on the west elevation are like those on the preceding elevations.

Longwood House has a central passage, double-pile plan. The central passage is divided by an elliptical arch into an entrance hall and stair hall. The arch has a central molded keystone, carved extrados and paneled intrados. The entrance hall has a molded chair rail and wainscotting. The doors have symmetrical molded architrave trim with square corner blocks.

The dog-leg stair has a paneled spandrel, turned newel, plain balusters and a molded handrail. Like the entrance hall, the stair hall has a molded chair rail and wainscotting. The trim for both halls was influenced by The Practical House Carpenter, and dates to the ca. 1839 remodeling of the house.

To the east of the central passage is a double parlor. It is divided by a wall containing a double doorway. The large paneled folding doors are framed by symmetrically molded architrave trim with corner blocks and have a central rectangular tablet. The inspiration again may have come from Benjamin, who published double doors in his builder's guides of the 1830s. The remaining door and window openings in both parlors are framed by symmetrically molded architrave trim with corner blocks. The Greek Revival mantels have Doric colonettes supporting a paneled frieze and a mantel shelf. Each room has a molded chair rail and wainscot. In 1968, bookcases were installed in the rear parlor.

The room southwest of the parlor is used as a den. Unlike the other principal rooms in the house, its door and window openings have two-part architrave trim without corner blocks. The trim suggests that it may date prior to the ca. 1839 remodeling. The mantel is Greek Revival and has a paneled frieze and pilasters.

The northwest room is the kitchen. It was totally renovated in 1968. A lateral hall separates the kitchen from the den. The principal chambers on the second floor have symmetrically molded architrave trim with square corner blocks and Greek Revival mantels. The second floor has a stair off the main hall which leads to the third floor. The third-floor rooms are plainly finished. It is believed that these rooms were added in ca. 1839 to accommodate the growing Venable family.

The present garage, formerly an office, is the only outbuilding. The setting of Longwood House in the 1850s was noted in 1901 by William Wynn Thornton in the Kaleidoscope. He observed, in part:

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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Longwood House, Farmville, VA  
Continuation sheet #2

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"A broad, level lawn shadowed by spreading trees, with grass growing long and thick and green up to their very trunks, and calves and colts grazing in the dappled shade; a big garden stretching away in the rear with democratic mingling of cabbages and roses and violets and onions and beds all abloom with the sweet old flowers of our grandmothers, and bushes loaded with curious fruits; and in the midst the old square house with its great wide hall and its high pitched rooms, dim and cool and fragrant and its floors polished like mirrors." The house still preserves its broad lawn and many of the box shrubs to the north (rear) of the house date to the 19th century. The sites of the flower beds are discernable as mounds. The land to the west of the house constitutes the Longwood College golf course.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Sketch of Charles Scott Venable". Hampden - Sydney Kaleidoscope 1901. Quoted in Herbert Clarence Bradshaw, History of Prince Edward County, Virginia, p. 369. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1955.

8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

Soon after he acquired the Longwood House estate, the original Johnston house burned and in 1815 was replaced by the present edifice. The residence is distinguished not only by its massive double-pile, 2 1/2-story size but also by its fine Greek Revival woodwork. Greek features include a Doric front porch, doorways derived from Benjamin's Practical House Carpenter (1830), and stylish interior trim, especially that found in the double parlors. It is thought that the original house of 1815 was built with a hipped roof. In ca. 1839 the present gable roof with its half-story apparently was added, along with the two-story west wing. At the same time, the interior wood trim was also modernized, resulting in its present Greek Revival style. One of the most likely reasons for the additions was the growth of the Venable family: Nathaniel and Mary Scott Venable were the parents of eleven children, nine of whom lived to maturity.

Nine of the eleven Venable children were born at Longwood House, the first in 1823. Of these, Charles Scott Venable, the sixth child, was the most distinguished. Charles was born at Longwood in 1827 and graduated from Hampden-Sydney in 1842 with further study at the University of Virginia and in Germany. He distinguished himself in science and mathematics and subsequently taught at the University of Georgia, College of South Carolina, and at the University of Virginia. He was the author of a number of mathematical textbooks, and in 1860 studied the total solar eclipse. During the Civil War he served as a second lieutenant at Fort Sumter and as a colonel on the staff of General Robert E. Lee. Upon Nathaniel E. Venable's death in 1846, the property passed to Mary Scott Venable who lived at Longwood until her death in 1865.

On April 1, 1873, 200 acres of land and the Longwood House passed out of the Venable family, purchased by Wright Barber. The Barber family in May, 1928, sold the property to the State Teachers College which acquired the property at the special request of the wife of the college president, J.L. Jarman. She made the 88 7/10 acre property into a rural retreat for the students, the present east wing being added at that time.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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Longwood House, Farmville, VA

Continuation sheet #3

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8. SIGNIFICANCE--Historical Background

With the end of the Jarman era, in 1946, the house was closed to the public, but the grounds continued to be used for college functions such as the annual May Day festivities.

In 1949, three years after the Jarman administration ended its forty-four year operation of the college, the Board of Visitors of State Teachers College decided to rename the college in honor of the house. The tie at this time was more ceremonial than physical or functional, since there was no attempt at revitalizing the residence, located at some distance from the college campus.

After years of standing vacant, in 1968, the college president, Henry I. Willett and the Board of Visitors officially moved the president's residence from Farmville to Longwood House. The dwelling was completely upgraded with minimal change to the original fabric. The current president, Janet Greenwood, and the Board of Visitors have authorized a restoration of the house's furnishings and appointments to the time of Nathaniel E. Venable's residence. The gardens are to be restored in keeping with this period.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ruffin, Jane Waring. The Story of Longwood. By the Author, 1945.

Thornton, W.M. "Sketch of Charles Scott Venable." Hampden-Sydney Kaleidoscope, 1901.

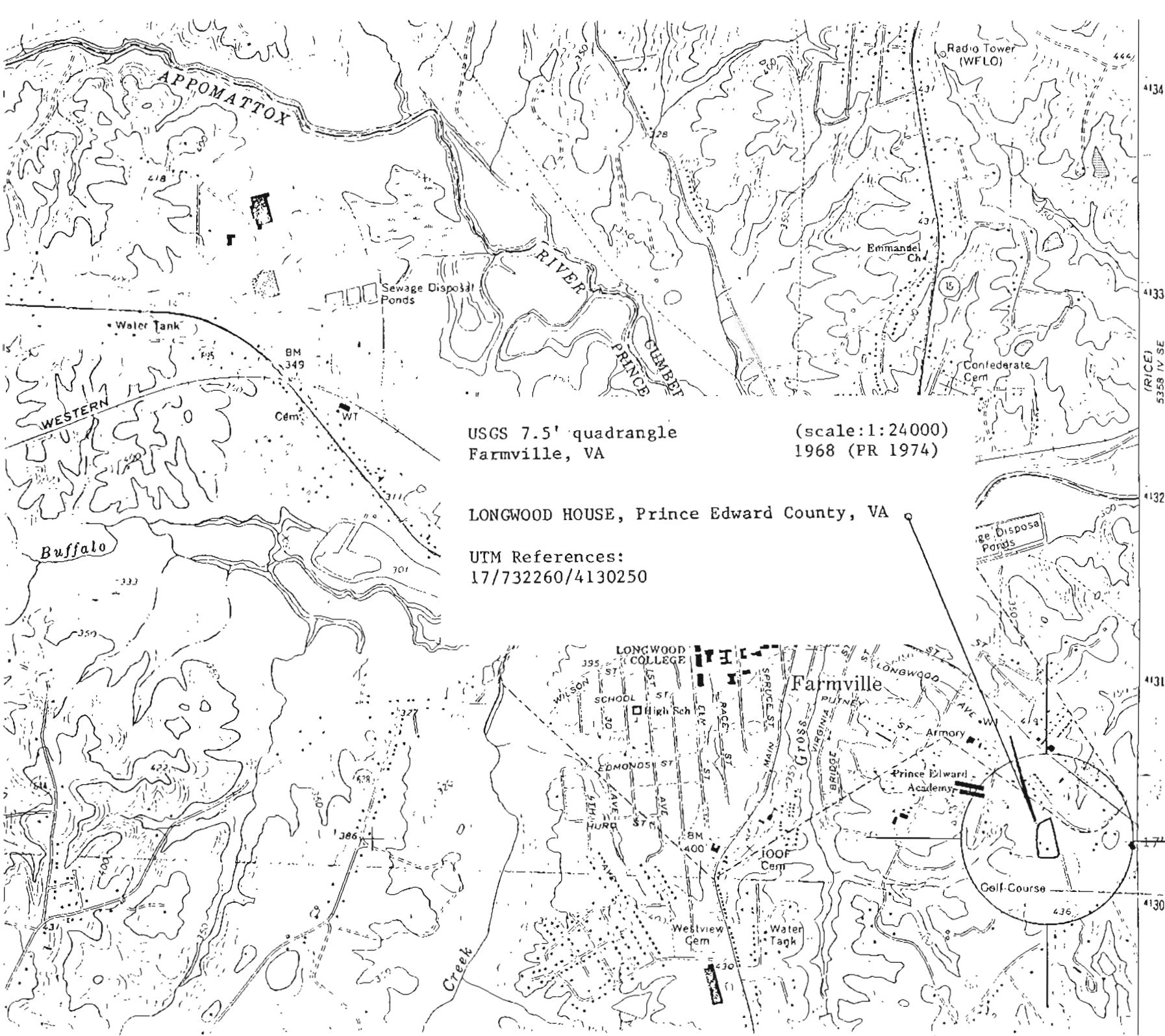
"Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia." Farmville Herald, 29 March 1935.

Venable, Elizabeth Marshall. Venables of Virginia. New York: J.J. Little & Ives Co., 1925.

Venable, Matthew Walton. Eighty Years After. Charleston, W.Va.: Hood-Siserman-Brodhag Co., 1925.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA--Verbal Boundary Description

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the W side of Johnson Drive, approximately 900' NNW of intersection of Johnson Drive and VA 638; thence extending approximately 600' NNW along W side of Johnson Drive; thence extending approximately 200' WSW along E side of private drive; thence extending approximately 500' S along E side of said drive to N side of another private drive; thence extending approximately 350' E along N side of said drive to point of origin.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Farmville, VA

(scale:1:24000)  
1968 (PR 1974)

LONGWOOD HOUSE, Prince Edward County, VA

UTM References:  
17732260/4130250

4134  
4133  
4132  
4131  
4130

(RICE)  
5358 IV SE

17730'