

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 6/8/06
NRHP 9/6/06

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 *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 sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property


historic name Oak Lawn
other names/site number Burford House; DHR file no. 005-5029

2. Location

street & number 155 Winridge Drive N/A not for publication
city or town Madison Heights X vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Amherst code 009 zip code 24572-6150

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 7/24/06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Oak Lawn
Name of Property

Amherst County, Virginia
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property Category of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply) (Check only one box)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>secondary structure</u>

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>secondary structure</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Georgian
Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

<u>foundation</u>	<u>Stone, Brick</u>
<u>walls</u>	<u>Wood</u>
<u>roof</u>	<u>Metal</u>
<u>other</u>	<u>Glass</u>
	<u>Concrete</u>

Narrative Description

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

Oak Lawn
Name of Property

Amherst County, Virginia
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Burford, Sylvester L.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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 fifty years.

Period of Significance

Ca. 1810-1881

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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:

Oak Lawn
Name of Property

Amherst County, Virginia
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 6.181 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 17	663600	4149980	3		
2			4		

___ See continuation sheet.

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	J. Daniel Pezzoni		
organization	Landmark Preservation Associates	date	March 23, 2005
street & number	6 Houston St.	telephone	(540) 464-5315
city or town	Lexington	state	VA
		zip code	24450

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name	Richard B. and Janet H. Wills		
street & number	704 Libbie Avenue	telephone	(804) 330-4204
city or town	Richmond	state	Virginia
		zip code	23226

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.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Oak Lawn is a two-story frame house located at 155 Winridge Drive (SR 795) in western Amherst County, Virginia. The house and its grounds, which are shaded by large oaks, stand near the crest of a ridge at nearly 800 feet in elevation. The wooded east side of the 6.181-acre parcel on which the house stands slopes down to the bed of the CSX Railroad, originally the Orange and Alexandria Railroad constructed in the late 1850s. To the north of the house are views over a modern subdivision to the valley of Harris Creek, a tributary of the James River, and Tobacco Row Mountain, an outlier of the Blue Ridge.

The original section of the house dates to the first two decades of the nineteenth century and was enlarged into the present house ca. 1857. The house has weatherboard siding, a metal-sheathed gable roof, 6/6 windows, an entry with a transom and sidelights, a stone and brick foundation, and four gable-end chimneys (two on each gable end). The two-room-deep center-passage-plan interior has plaster wall and ceiling finishes, wood floors, Late Georgian and Greek Revival mantels, a center-passage stair, and several doorways with crosssetted surrounds. A latticed well house dating to the late nineteenth century stands in a corner of the front yard and a modern shed stands to the rear.

Inventory

1. Oak Lawn. Ca. 1810; ca. 1857. Contributing building.
2. Well house. Late 19th century. Contributing building.
3. Shed. Late 20th c. Noncontributing building.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Description (continued)

Exterior

The foundation is brick or fieldstone under different sections of the house with cinder block under part of the rear shed. The foundation has been painted and parts of it appear to have been parged. The four nineteenth century masonry chimneys with detached stacks were encased in concrete in the early twentieth century and given large corbelled brick caps. The northeast chimney, which serves the original section of the house, appears to have been lowered in height when the house was remodeled ca. 1857. It is partially of stone construction. The roof has three glass globe and metal lightning arrestors, half-round galvanized gutters, and full-round galvanized downspouts. The mortise-and-tenon frame walls have weatherboard siding. Most of the weatherboards are plain edged and probably date to the enlargement of the house ca. 1857. At least two boards at the south corner of the east gable end appear to have beaded edges and may date to original construction in the early nineteenth century (if so they were moved to their present position). The plain edged weatherboards were painted gray originally or at an early date. Later paint layers and the present layer are white.

The six-over-six windows have nineteenth century louvered wood shutters. The southeast corner of the house formerly had square casement windows with Craftsman three-light sash that were probably added when the space inside was upgraded as a kitchen in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The three-light windows were replaced with the present one-over-one double-hung sash windows as part of the present rehabilitation. The front entry has a four-panel door, sidelights, and a transom in a simple Greek Revival surround. At the back of the center passage is a four-panel door (the upper panels are glazed) that opens onto an enclosed porch and has a screen door. The one-story front porch, which shelters only the front entry, has a shallow hip roof, thick turned wood posts, a beaded tongue-and-groove ceiling, and a twentieth century concrete floor tinted red and with a greenstone border and brick step. The balustrade incorporates ca. 1857 beaded handrails although the square balusters and bottom rail date to the twentieth century. The posts appear to have been painted gray and black at different times before their present white color. Wood steps rise to the back porch entry. On the east side between the two chimneys is a mud room in the form of a small shed-roofed vestibule. It has four-light windows and a wood and glass panel door. The enclosed back porch occupies the middle part of the rear shed and has six-light awning windows, a wood and glass panel door, weatherboarded interior walls, and a board ceiling.

Interior

The interior, rehabilitated beginning in 2003, retains its character-defining features. Much of the original plaster-and-lath wall and ceiling finishes had been damaged by the application of drywall in the late twentieth century and was subsequently replaced with drywall. Sections of original plaster-and-lath were retained in the center passage. The single-run center-passage stair has square newels with

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Description (continued)

turned finials, rectangular balusters, and a rounded handrail. Under it is a closet accessed through a two-panel door. Doors are typically four-panel, mostly with plain panels although one first-floor door has molded panels. They are hung on butt hinges and have metal, crystal, or porcelain knobs. On both floors are Greek Revival door surrounds consisting of stepped fillet moldings on plinth blocks. The door surrounds in the first-floor center passage are crossetted. One door surround off the center passage, the one in the first-floor northwest room, is also crossetted. Window trim is asymmetrically molded.

The evolution of the house is most apparent in the style of the mantels. The mantels in the first- and second-floor northeast rooms (the original early nineteenth century section) are Late Georgian in character with double panels in the friezes and dentil moldings under the bed molds. The mantels do not have well-defined pilasters although they do have plinth blocks at their two outer corners that suggest pilaster bases. The first-floor mantel has beaded panels and a shelf that is apparently a replacement. The second-floor mantel has plain panels and a replacement bed mold. In the four first- and second-floor rooms on the west side of the house (the ca. 1857 addition) are Greek Revival post-and-lintel mantels. The mantel in the front parlor has a heavy bed mold built up of stacked fillet moldings and pilasters with molded bases and caps. The mantel in the room behind also has a stepped bed mold but is more delicate in its proportions. The upstairs mantels have canted bed molds and pilasters with molded bases and caps.

Prior to rehabilitation the house had first- and second-floor bathrooms added in the twentieth century, which have been retained and updated, and a kitchen located in the southeast corner of the first-floor. The kitchen had beaded tongue-and-groove wall and ceiling sheathing and over-counter Craftsman windows dating to the second quarter of the twentieth century as well as late twentieth century appliances, cabinets, fireplace treatment, and utility room. A doorway with a swinging door communicated with the dining room. During the rehabilitation the kitchen was modernized with new appliances, cabinets, and an island. The fireplace was walled over to allow for the placement of a stove top and ovens and beaded tongue-and-groove wainscoting and tile wall finishes were added to sections of the wall. A third bathroom was added in the rear shed wing. The roof structure, visible through a small hatch in the ceiling of the second-floor center passage, appears to date wholly to the 1850s. It has straight-sawn common rafters that meet at the top at a ridge board. Diagonal struts support the rafters, giving the structure a truss form. These and the ceiling joists and roof boards are straight-sawn. The struts and rafters are joined with cut nails and several roof boards have cut nails projecting through them, evidence of former wood shingle roofing.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Description (continued)

Grounds

A modern board fence separates the front yard from Winridge Drive. A mid- to late twentieth century greenstone flagstone walkway leads from the fence to the front porch. Along the fence stand two large oak trees. Between them is a block of quarried granite that may once have served as a carriage stone. At the east end of the fence is a one-story well house of cut-nailed frame construction. The building has a metal-sheathed gable roof with weatherboards in the gables and a small gabled ventilator (now closed up) on the ridge. The four sides have lattice over heavy corner timbers with knee braces. The two doors are also latticed. The foundation, which is poured concrete, may be an early twentieth century replacement of an earlier foundation. The well opening in the whitewashed interior is covered by plywood. The roof is constructed of circular-sawn common rafters that are butted and nailed at the ridge. Under the roof is a beam that probably formerly supported a winch for raising water. Behind the house is a modern frame shed with T1-11 siding and an asphalt-shingled gable roof. The shed originally stood near a small fenced wildflower garden to the east of its present site. To the south, beyond the nomination boundaries, is a collapsed log and frame barn dating to the nineteenth century. The barn adjoins a road trace that leads from Winridge Drive southward across the west end of the nominated area.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Oak Lawn, located in Amherst County, Virginia, is an evolved frame house in the Georgian and Greek Revival styles. The original section was probably built by Ambrose Burford in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and was expanded by his son Sylvester L. Burford about 1857. The entrepreneurial Sylvester Burford was identified as a carriage maker in federal censuses, but he was also a mill and store owner, a coffin maker and undertaker, and an inventor. During the Civil War he patented a wooden shoe sole with the Confederate Patent Office. Burford's two-story house is distinguished by four gable-end chimneys, Georgian and Greek Revival mantels, and crosssetted Greek Revival door frames. The house remained in the intermarried Burford and Wortham families until the 1930s and is now undergoing rehabilitation by the present owners.

Applicable Criteria

Oak Lawn is eligible under Criteria B and C in the areas of Industry and Architecture. Under Criterion B the property is significant for its association with local industrialist and inventor Sylvester L. Burford. Under Criterion C the property is significant for its Georgian and Greek Revival stylistic characteristics. The period of significance extends from the approximate date of construction of the original section of the house during the first two decades of the nineteenth century ("ca. 1810") through the approximate date of the house's enlargement ca. 1857 until the year of Sylvester Burford's death in 1881. Oak Lawn is eligible at the local level of significance.

Acknowledgments

The nomination was sponsored by Oak Lawn's owners, Richard and Janet Wills, who provided many of the historical documents used in the nomination's preparation. Dick Wills also conducted post-1850 tax records research. Assistance was also provided by the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg and Ann Andrus, Quatro Hubbard, Jean McRae and Marc Wagner of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

Historic Context

According to Amherst County land tax records, in 1820 Ambrose Burford (ca. 1774-1835) owned 270 acres on the waters of Harris Creek and buildings valued at \$400. His first recorded land purchase of eighty-four acres was in 1802, not long after his marriage to Nancy Tinsley in 1796. Presumably this tract and later ones acquired by Burford were in the vicinity of Oak Lawn for they are described as a single tract in tax records from the 1810s. Also, a purchase of fifty-three acres made by Burford in 1811 was described as being located on both sides of Harris Creek, which flows just to the north of Oak Lawn. The fact that the value of buildings on Burford's land remained constant at \$400 through and after the year of his death in 1835, coupled with the Late Georgian style of the mantels in the oldest part of Burford's house, suggest Ambrose Burford built the original section of Oak Lawn prior to 1820.¹

In November 1835 Nancy Burford was made the administrator of her late husband's estate. An inventory and appraisal filed the following month provides information on the Burford family's slaveholding and farm. The appraisers counted eleven slaves including four men, two women, four girls, and one boy. A barn or stable, a corn house or granary, and possibly a blacksmith shop and a loom house are suggested by the enumeration of ox and horse carts, "40 barrels corn in House," blacksmith tools, and three spinning wheels and "1 loom and warping mill," the latter items enumerated separately from household furnishings. One third of Ambrose Burford's personal estate was set aside for Nancy as her "portion" or "widow's dower." A subsequent deed suggests that the female slaves were allotted to Nancy although the division of the estate recorded in November 1836 notes that Nancy received Caleb, Maria and Wiatt. Shortly after the division in December 1836, Ambrose and Nancy's son Sylvester L. Burford (1808-81) purchased the interests of other heirs in the "mansion house tract of land" of Ambrose Burford. The property continued to be listed as the estate of Ambrose Burford until 1846 when it was transferred to Sylvester Burford and A. Cox. Burford appears to have enlarged the house to its present size about 1857 as noted below in the architectural discussion.² As a side note, Douglas Southall Freeman, famed Robert E. Lee biographer, was born from Bettie Allen Hamner and Walker Buford Freeman. Walker was the son of Garland Hurt Freeman and his second wife Thormuthis "The" Burford, who was a sister to Sylvester L. Burford.³

Sylvester L. Burford was a carriage maker according to the federal censuses of 1850, 1870 and 1880. He married Susan Cox (ca. 1805-69) in 1830 and the couple had eight children: Archer, Annie E., Emily J., Frances, Elizabeth, Powhatan, Robert Milton, and Jane. The 1850 census lists most of the children as living in Sylvester and Susan's household joined by young carriage makers Sylvester M. Burford, age twenty-five, perhaps a nephew, and James A. Fulcher, age twenty-three. The elder Burford may have been assisted in his carriage business by certain of his slaves (in 1860 he owned twenty-two slaves). By 1870 most of the children had left home and Susan Burford had died the

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

previous year, yet two of Sylvester's daughters, their husbands, and three young granddaughters lived with him. These were Emma Jane Wortham (1840-81) and her husband Richard Beverly Wortham (1840-1918) and Annie E. Fairfax (b. ca. 1833) and her husband Raymond Fairfax (b. 1829). Both husbands were Confederate States Army veterans—Wortham was a lieutenant and Fairfax a captain—and both married their wives in 1865. The census listed several African American members of the household: domestic servants Ellen and Eliza Field, both age forty, and Orney Field, age sixteen; and a blacksmith named James Johnson. Although Burford gave his occupation as carriage maker in the 1870 population schedules, the 1870 industrial schedules list him as the owner of a grist mill and sawmill. Both mills were comparatively small enterprises located on nearby Harris Creek. The grist mill utilized a single set of water-powered burr stones to produce \$5,050 worth of corn meal, \$2,400 worth of bran, \$1,400 worth of shorts, and \$420 worth of flour. (By comparison, the Amherst County mill of Small & Staples produced \$19,998 worth of flour alone.) The sawmill cut 6,500 feet of lumber valued at \$270 with a water-powered vertical saw. Burford's Mill, as it was known, was in existence during the 1860s and probably during the Civil War. It is believed to have ceased operations in the 1920s and to have been torn down in the mid-twentieth century.⁴

Sylvester Burford was involved in a number of other small-scale industrial and business enterprises. One venture of particular note occurred during the Civil War. In May 1863 Burford filed a patent with the Confederate Patent Office for a "wooden shoe sole," one of 266 patents known to have been registered with the office from 1861 through 1864. His invention reflected both his expertise in woodworking and the pressing need of the Confederacy for footwear. There is the possibility that Burford may have planned to manufacture the patented shoe soles, in which case his proximity to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which was constructed through his property in the 1850s, may have been relevant. Burford was not the only inventor to address the Confederacy's footwear shortage—E. S. Collins of Aspinwall, Virginia, patented a "wooden soled shoe" in 1862. Unfortunately, nothing more can be learned about Burford's invention from the Confederate Patent Office records since the records were destroyed in 1865 during Richmond's Evacuation Fire or shortly thereafter.⁵

A 1961 article in the *Amherst New Era-Progress* credited Sylvester Burford with being the first stationmaster at Burford's Station. A number of Burford's activities were described:

The Harris Creek postoffice was located in Burford's general merchandise store. Nearby, on Harris Creek, was Burford's Mill where people for miles around had their wheat and corn ground. Usually a certain amount of corn and wheat was paid for this service. The undertaker's establishment was owned and operated by members of the Burford family. This was a large one room building where caskets and wooden boxes were made. On one end of the building was a closed-in shed where the hearse was kept. Caskets were made of walnut and shaped to the body, small at the head and feet and large in the middle, and cost about ten dollars. The

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

hearse was drawn by two horses named Sam and Angus. This was patronized by everyone in the surrounding territory.

The account of Burford's coffin making and undertaking business is corroborated by an 1881 estate inventory which references a hearse, an "undertaker shop," and "coffin material and unfinished work." The general store was operated by Burford's son-in-law R. B. Wortham in 1870—Wortham was described as a grocer in the census of that year—and stood to the west of the house until it burned in the early 1950s. The Burford Post Office may have operated from it. The store has been described by someone who remembered it as a child as having a center entry flanked by large windows. According to another account the "wheel and blacksmith shop" was located across Winridge Drive from the house and the undertaker shop was located down the road to the east. Something of the layout of the property is hinted at in an 1864 Confederate States Army map of Lynchburg and its vicinity that shows the Burford property at the extreme north edge of the area portrayed. The map shows a relatively large building on the south side of present Winridge Drive—the main house—and a row of three smaller buildings on the north side of the road. The row of buildings has the appearance of a quarter. In addition to the blacksmith shop, which was manned by an African American blacksmith in 1870, it may have included one or more slave dwellings.⁶

Like their father-in-law Sylvester, R. B. Wortham and Raymond Fairfax worked for the railroad. Fairfax was described as a baggage master in the 1870 census and Wortham was listed as "Clerk R. Road" in the 1880 census. In 1888 he relocated to Roanoke where he worked for the Norfolk and Western Railroad as a conductor and time keeper. Other members of the family carried on other aspects of Sylvester Burford's varied business enterprises. An 1893 state business directory listed S. M. Burford of Harris Creek as a coach and wagon builder and S. M. Burford and Company as an undertaking firm. This was Sylvester M. Burford, the assistant carriage maker of the 1850 census, and the information was out of date when published since Burford died in December 1892. Sylvester M. Burford may also have operated the general store after R. B. Wortham moved away. The house itself was acquired by Sylvester L. Burford's son Robert Milton Burford, who sold it in 1900 to Alice L. Wortham. It remained in the Wortham family until 1928. In 1954, after a succession of owners, the property was acquired by Harrison and Elizabeth Nesbit, who owned it until 1989. Oak Lawn was acquired by present owners Dick and Janet Wills in 2002.⁷

Architectural Discussion

The original section of Oak Lawn is Late Georgian in style. The mantels in the first- and second-floor rooms rely on paneling and dentil moldings for their visual effect—both treatments typical of the vernacular Georgian style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—and they lack the tripartite symmetry, attenuated forms, and characteristic delicate ornamentation of the succeeding

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

Federal style. The Federal style is well documented from the mid- and late 1810s in nearby Lynchburg. Based on this evidence alone one would assume Oak Lawn is earlier, although Georgian influence may have persisted in the context of rural Amherst County, at least until the 1820s by which time the Federal style had become well established throughout the rural areas of the state.⁸

Oak Lawn was two stories in height during the first half of the nineteenth century and it may originally have had a one-room plan as suggested by the distribution of surviving Late Georgian fabric. During rehabilitation evidence for a winder stair in the northwest corner of the original first-floor room was discovered, which adds weight to the possibility that the original house had the tower-like “one room up, one room down” form that was often used in the southwestern Piedmont during the antebellum period. The 1835 inventory of Ambrose Burford’s estate sheds some light on the question of the dwelling’s original form since it enumerates “5 Chests up stairs” and a total of five beds in the house. These items and many others in the inventory seem more than a two-room house could accommodate. Perhaps other sections now missing or incorporated into the 1850s addition existed, at least by the mid-1830s. During rehabilitation work in 2003 and 2004 evidence was found that suggests the present kitchen area may have been a one-story wing of the original house. A hewn sill and aspects of the fieldstone foundation under this section hint at an early date. The size of Sylvester and Susan Burford’s family and the presence of two of Burford’s employees in the household in 1850 suggest a house of more than two rooms (although the employees may have lived elsewhere on the property).⁹

Amherst County land book records analyzed by Dick Wills suggest Oak Lawn was enlarged to its present size about 1857. Buildings on the property were valued at \$250 for much of the 1840s and 1850s. Tax records for 1857 combined all of Burford’s land holdings (a total of 527.33 acres) and listed the value of buildings as \$2,500. This was well in excess of the total value of buildings listed separately in 1856 and suggests construction activity, presumably the enlargement of the house in 1856 and/or 1857. The 1857 listing has the marginal note “12A + 26P off for RR Drainage.” This indicates the sale of twelve acres and twenty-six poles of land to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. It may be, as Dick Wills suggests, that Burford used the proceeds from the railroad right-of-way sale to finance the enlargement of Oak Lawn. The Greek Revival character of the additions to the house is in keeping with a date of construction in the 1850s, although alternate interpretations of the historic record that would point to construction earlier and also conceivably later than ca. 1857 are possible.¹⁰

The ca. 1857 addition has several notable features. The post-and-lintel mantels and cross-topped door surrounds are simple but competent renditions of more high-style Greek Revival details. The fact that Sylvester L. Burford operated a carriage making shop during the period suggests the possibility that he or his coworkers may have produced some of the house’s decorative features. The furniture-like form and narrow proportions of the turned finials on the stair newels suggest they were fashioned by someone with woodworking skills but not professional building expertise. The porch posts too have a

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

naïve quality as though they are turned approximations of professionally made classical columns (rather than the Victorian turned posts that they superficially resemble).

Endnotes

1. Amherst County land books; Amherst County Deed Book I p. 361; Deed Book K p. 293; Deed Book M p. 59; Amherst County Will Book 9 pages 135 and 213; Wood, *Rucker Family Genealogy*, 114; Burford Family File.
2. Amherst County Will Book 9 pages 213 and 252; Amherst County Deed Book W pages 60, 62, 63 and 64; Amherst County land books. The slaves listed with their ages in the December 1835 inventory were: 1) Caleb (age 29); 2) Elijah (37); 3) Daniel (40); 4) Jim (60); 5) "1 woman named Maria and child Wiatt 23 years old;" 6) Betty (50); 7) Mary (9); 8) Eliza (8); 9) Carolina (5); 10) Doshia (4).
3. Johnson, *Douglas Southall Freeman*, 16.
4. U.S. census; Wills, "History of Oak Lawn;" Wills, "Oak Lawn Recollections;" Wills, "RB Wortham;" Wills, "Capt. Raymond Fairfax, CSA;" *Gravestone Inscriptions in Amherst County*, 92; Dwight, "Map of Nelson and Amherst counties;" Hotchkiss and Robinson, "Map of Amherst County;" Nixon, "Buford's Mill," 63. The 1850 Amherst County industrial schedules do not survive. Burford does not appear in the 1860 industrial schedules.
5. Dobyms, *Patent Office Pony*, 130, 213, 226; "Confederate Patent Office."
6. Becky Fox personal communication; *Amherst New Era-Progress*, October 12, 1861; *Amherst County, Virginia*, vol. 1, 25; "Lynchburg and vicinity;" Nixon, "Burford," 11; U.S. census. Formerly an icehouse may have been associated with the house. Ice is said to have been cut on Harris Creek near Burford's Mill and stored on the property (Dick Wills personal communication).
7. U.S. census; *Chataigne's Virginia Business Directory . . . 1893-94*, 199, 203; Wills, "RB Wortham;" Wills, "History of Oak Lawn;" *Gravestone Inscriptions in Amherst County*, 91.
8. Chambers, *Lynchburg*, 66, 72, 73, 74.
9. Wills, "Oak Lawn Recollections;" Amherst County Will Book 9 p. 252.
10. Dick Wills personal communication; Amherst County land books.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries correspond to Amherst County Tax Map Section 147 Parcel ((A)) 86, the present parcel on which Oak Lawn stands.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries correspond to the parcel on which the house stands and exclude modern resources and a historically associated nineteenth century barn ruins located on adjacent parcels not owned by the nomination's sponsor.

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Oak Lawn
Amherst County, Virginia

PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are of:

OAK LAWN
Amherst County, Virginia
DHR file no. 005-5029
J. Daniel Pezzoni, Photographer

DATE: February 2006
VIEW OF: North (front) and west sides of house.
NEG. NO.: 22787
PHOTO 1 OF 5

DATE: February 2006
VIEW OF: South and east sides of house.
NEG. NO.: 22787
PHOTO 2 OF 5

DATE: January 2006
VIEW OF: Dining room with Georgian mantel.
NEG. NO.: 22394
PHOTO 3 OF 5

DATE: January 2006
VIEW OF: Living room with Greek Revival mantel.
NEG. NO.: 22394
PHOTO 4 OF 5

DATE: February 2006
VIEW OF: Well house and front yard
NEG. NO.: 22787
PHOTO 5 OF 5

9159 11 SE
(AMHERST)

GLASGOW 22 MI
FLON 14 MI

62 10'

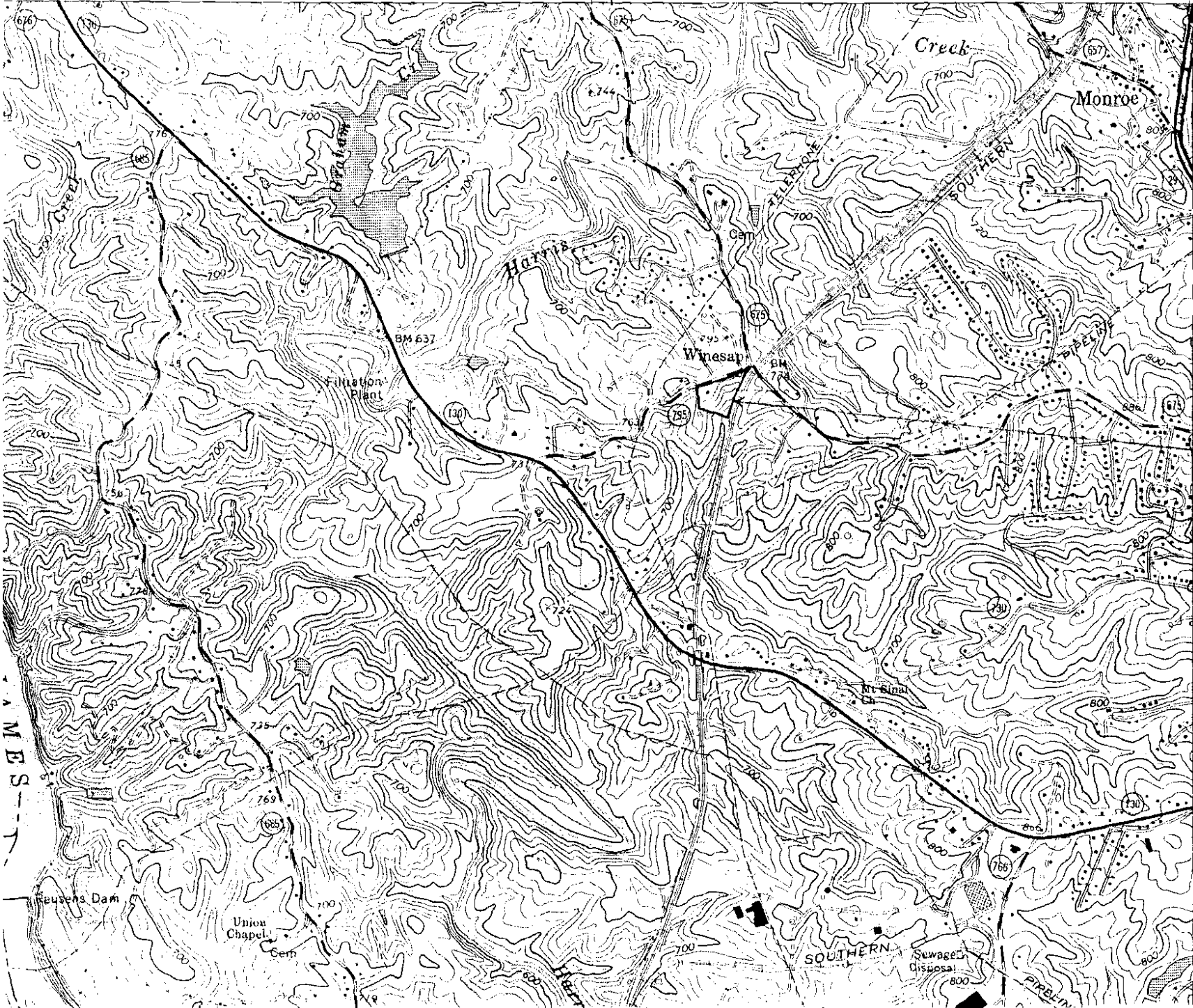
63

1 810 000 FEET

64

CHARLOTTESVILLE 55 MI 79° 07' 30"
AMHERST 8 MI

37° 30'



4151

420 000
FEET

4150

Oak Lawn
Amherst Co., Va.

UTM reference (zone 17):
E663600 N4149980

4149

0.3 MI. TO U.S. 29

4148

AMES