

EDGEWOOD FARM
West side of State Route 600,
.8 mile north of State Route 778
Clover Vicinity
Halifax County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1290

HABS
VA
42-CLOV.V
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

EDGEWOOD FARM

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LOCATION: West Side of State Route 600, .8 mile North of State Road 778, Clover Vicinity, Halifax County, Virginia

USGS Saxe and Clover Quadrangles, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: A: 17.704080.4083320; B: 17.704080.4083080; C: 17.703670.4082840; D: 17.703460.4082930; E: 17.703440.4083520

PRESENT OWNER: Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, Glen Allen, Virginia

PRESENT USE: Vacant

STATEMENT OF

SIGNIFICANCE: Edgewood Farm is an important local example of the agrarian architectural environment of Virginia's "southside" region. It is historically associated with the Black Walnut Plantation established by members of the Sims family and was, in fact, created out of a part of that plantation for William B. Sims in the 1880s. In addition to a large frame farmhouse with Victorian detailing, the farm contains a significant complement of tenant houses, flue-cure tobacco barns and sheds constructed in the manner of the region's vernacular traditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1755, Richard Randolph acquired two tracts in what was then Lunenburg County, Virginia, along the Staunton River and Black Water River. The first tract contained 1,800 acres and the second, 2,800 acres (Patents PB 31:539, 542). By the time the land was sold to William Sims in 1768, it was already called "Black Walnut Tract" or "Black Walnut Plantation" and may already have contained a small settlement, since the term "plantation" implies occupation. It is unlikely, however, that the Randolph's themselves occupied the land as their home plantations were located along the James River in Henrico County, and John Randolph identified himself as resident in "Henrico Park, Henrico County." William Sims, at the time of the sale, resided in Cornwall Parish, Charlotte County (Deeds 7:170).

William, Matthew, and David Sims were three sons of William Sims. It is not clear whether William the Elder or William the Younger bought the land from Randolph in 1768. A few years later, in 1773, however, William Sims sold the entire tract to Matthew Sims; both men were then residents of Halifax County (Deeds 9:157). Within a year, Matthew sold slightly more than half of the tract, 1,750 acres, to his younger brother David (Deeds 9:212). David died in 1784, leaving the bulk of the real estate to his son John, although the entire property was to be held in trust until the children came of age or married (Wills 2:57). David's estate was substantial, containing 30 slaves, 70 head of cattle, three oxen, 57 head of sheep, 59 head of hogs, 11 horses and mares, household furnishings, and farm tools (Wills 2:109).

The estate was held in trust for John until 1803. John ran Black Walnut Plantation until he died in 1852. He increased his land holdings in the county and was reported in the tax lists as the owner of multiple tracts. His enormous estate included 150 slaves, 245 sheep, 12 yoke of oxen, 300 hogs, 100 head of cattle, household goods, tools, and implements (Wills 23:666-671).

William H. Sims assumed control of Black Walnut upon the death of his father, John, in 1852. In 1859, he reported 16 separate tracts in Halifax County, ranging in size from the 1,500-acre Staunton River tract, which presumably corresponds to Black Walnut, to the 17-acre Turkey Run parcel (Halifax County Land Book 1858-1860:147). In the agricultural schedule on the eve of the Civil War, William reported 1,800 acres of improved land and 2,000 acres of unimproved land (U.S., Bureau of Census 1860a:31). On Black Walnut plantation were 35 horses, 8 mules, 20 milch cows, 24 oxen, 30 "other" cattle, 190 sheep, and 180 hogs. From the fields, William had harvested in the last year 2,500 bushels of Irish potatoes, 10 bushels of sweet potatoes, 20 bushels of grass seed, and 5 pounds of butter,

3 pounds of beeswax, and home manufactures amounting to \$450. William maintained a management approach that combined tobacco with other commercial crops (wheat, corn, and oats) and livestock raising.

After the war, William reduced the size of the plantation, most likely by renting land to tenant farmers. In the 1870 federal census of population, 12 of the 20 households enumerated after William Sims's were headed by black farm workers, none of whom owned land (U.S., Bureau of Census 1870b:55-56). In the agriculture schedule, William reported 225 acres of improved and 1,000 acres of unimproved land. During the year, he had paid \$4,000 in wages and had harvested 1,000 bushels of wheat, 1,750 bushels of Indian corn, 1,000 bushels of oats, and 20,000 pounds of tobacco. Although his output of tobacco was less than half of his output of 10 years earlier, William was still among the top five tobacco producers in the Roanoke District.

II. HISTORY OF EDGEWOOD FARM

In 1880, William H. Sims deeded his elder son, John, a 599.25-acre tract along the Staunton River (Deeds 67:612). The parcel, subsequently known as Fort Hill, came out of the original Black Walnut plantation. In the same year, William deeded his younger son, William B. Sims, a 365-acre parcel, which had also been contained in the Black Walnut tract (Deeds 67:609). In 1888, William H. sold William B. a second, 20-acre parcel on the road from Clover Depot to Clark's Old Ferry on which William B.'s dwelling, called "Edgewood", already stood (Deeds 78:555).

William H. Sims died in 1890, and the remaining lands associated with the antebellum Black Walnut plantation were divided between his sons John and William, with the exception of the mansion and 300 acres immediately associated with it, which went to his widow, Sallie, and daughter, Maria (Wills 35:259). Deeds and mortgages executed in the 1890s by William in association with his brother John, or on behalf of his sister Maria, refer to crops of tobacco and corn, evidently the principal commercial crops grown during this period. Both Maria and William Sims appear in the 1900 Federal Census (U.S. Bureau of Census 1900:101b, 102a), and as had been the case since the Civil War, most of their neighbors were black farmers who rented their land. In that year, William Sims' household at Edgewood included his wife, Annie, daughters Sarah and Jane, son William, mother-in-law Sallie Ruffin and two servants, Judie Bouldin and Rose Guthrie.

Maria Sims died in 1914. She had never married, and left the bulk of her estate, including Black Walnut, to her brother William

(Wills 40:581). Thereafter, William Sims appears to have moved out of Edgewood and back to the Black Walnut complex. He died in 1928, leaving all of his real and personal property to his wife. When Anne Sims died in 1947, she left the "home place, 'Black Walnut'" to their daughter, Jane Ruffin Sims. Jane and her siblings, William and Anne, inherited equal shares in all of the remaining property, including "the plantation house known as 'Edgewood'", as well as other buildings and crops on these properties (Wills 49:160).

III. ORIGINAL AND SUBSEQUENT OWNERS

[References to deeds and other records on file at the Halifax County Clerk's Office, South Boston, Virginia.]

- 1880 William H. Sims to William B. Sims
April 20, 1880, recorded June 18, 1880
HC 67:609
- 1888 William H. Sims to William B. Sims
April 20, 1888, recorded April 23, 1888
HC 78:555
- 1928 Will of William B. Sims
October 2, 1926 proven January 23, 1928
HC Wills 42:581
- 1947 Will of Annie Cameron Ruffin Sims
December 4, 1942, proven April 5, 1947
HC Wills 49:160
- 1960 Will of William B. Sims, Jr.
April 29, 1944, proven November 14, 1960
HC Wills 63:23.
- 1961 Eva K. Sims (widow of William B. Sims, Jr.) to Anne Ruffin
Wallerstein and Jane Ruffin Sims
November 25, 1961, recorded January 2, 1962.

IV. SITE DESCRIPTION

Edgewood Farm is located west of Route 600, which extends in a northeasterly direction out of the town of Clover. The main house is situated on elevated ground above, and well back from, the road. To the north of the house is a large open area in which are a number of agricultural structures and sheds. These include three log flue-cure tobacco barns, a large, relatively recent hay and

machine shed, a tobacco storehouse, and a deteriorated log barn or stable enclosed within a fence. Most of the other buildings associated with the farm are located along a gravel lane that extends off Route 600 about 1,400 feet south of the main house. Along this lane are four tenant houses and several tobacco barns. One of the tenant houses has several outbuildings, including a small stable. A fifth tenant house is located on Route 600, just south of the main house. Nearly all the outbuildings at Edgewood are of rough-hewn log construction with diamond corner notching. Two of the tenant houses are also of log construction, the remaining three, and the main house, of frame construction.

The area around the farm is very rural in character. The farm proper has become heavily overgrown through gradual abandonment, although the yard around the main house remains neatly kept.

V. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Friedlander, Amy

1989 House and Barn; The Wealth of Farmers, 1795-1815. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology, Baltimore, Maryland.

Records Consulted at the Halifax County Courthouse:

- Administrations
- Chancery Records
- Deeds
- Farmer File
- Inventories
- Land Book, 1858-1860
- Patents
- Wills

U.S., Bureau of Census

1820a Fourth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

1820b Fourth Census of the United States. Slave Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

1830a Fourth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

- 1830b Fourth Census of the United States. Slave Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1840a Fourth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1840b Fourth Census of the United States. Slave Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1850a Seventh Census of the United States. Agriculture Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1850b Seventh Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1850c Seventh Census of the United States. Slave Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1860a Eighth Census of the United States. Agriculture Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1860b Eighth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1860c Eighth Census of the United States. Slave Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1870a Ninth Census of the United States. Agriculture Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1870b Ninth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1880a Tenth Census of the United States. Agriculture Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

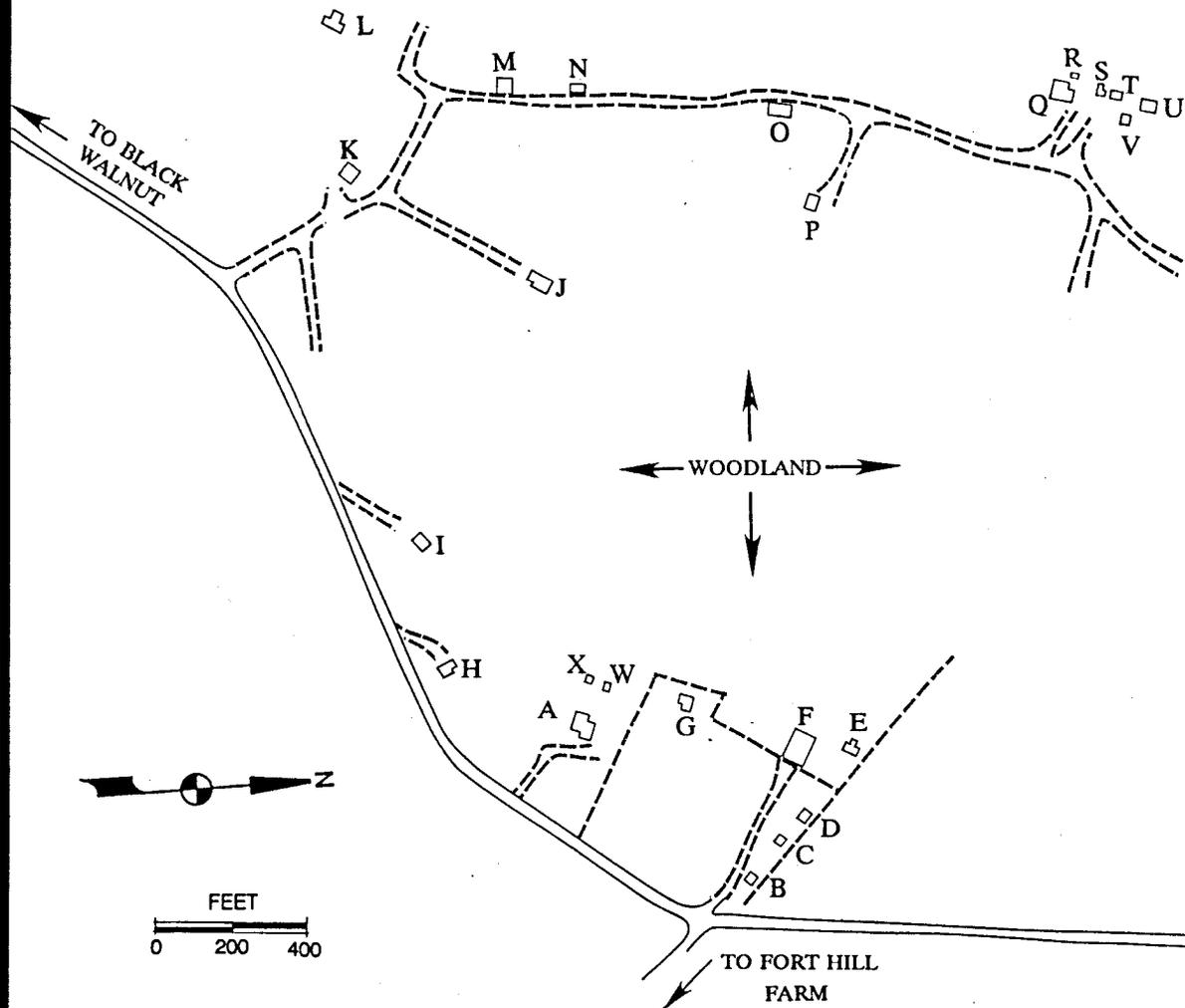
- 1880b Tenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1900 Twelfth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.
- 1910 Thirteenth Census of the United States. Population Schedules. Virginia, Halifax County. Microfilm on file at the Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia

VI. PROJECT INFORMATION

Edgewood Farm was recorded in September 1990, and July 1991 by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, and the Rural Electrification Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The undertaking for which this Memorandum of Agreement was prepared is construction of a coal-fired electric power generating facility north of the town of Clover near the Roanoke River. The project team consisted of John A. Hotopp, Ph.D., Director; Martha H. Bowers, Senior Architectural Historian; Amy Friedlander, Ph.D., Senior Historian; Ingrid Wuebber, Historian; Rob Tucher, Senior Photographer; Anthony Masso, Photographer, and John R. Bowie, A.I.A., Consulting Historical Architect.

SITE PLAN

EDGEWOOD FARM
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- A-MANSION
- B-TOBACCO BARN
- C-TOBACCO BARN
- D-TOBACCO BARN
- E-ANIMAL SHED
- F-LARGE MACHINE SHED
- G-STOREHOUSE
- H-FOUR-ROOM TENANT HOUSE
- I-LOG ANIMAL SHED
- J-FRAME TENANT HOUSE

- K-CENTER CHIMNEY TENANT HOUSE
- L-TOBACCO BARN
- M-LOG STORAGE SHED WITH LEAN-TO
- N-LOG SHED
- O-TOBACCO STORAGE BUILDING
- P-LOG TENANT HOUSE
- Q-LOG DOGTROT TENANT HOUSE
- R-LOG SHED
- S-TRACTOR SHED

- T-LOG SHED WITH LEAN-TO
- U-STABLE
- V-MACHINE SHED
- W-FRAME SHED
- X-LOG SHED