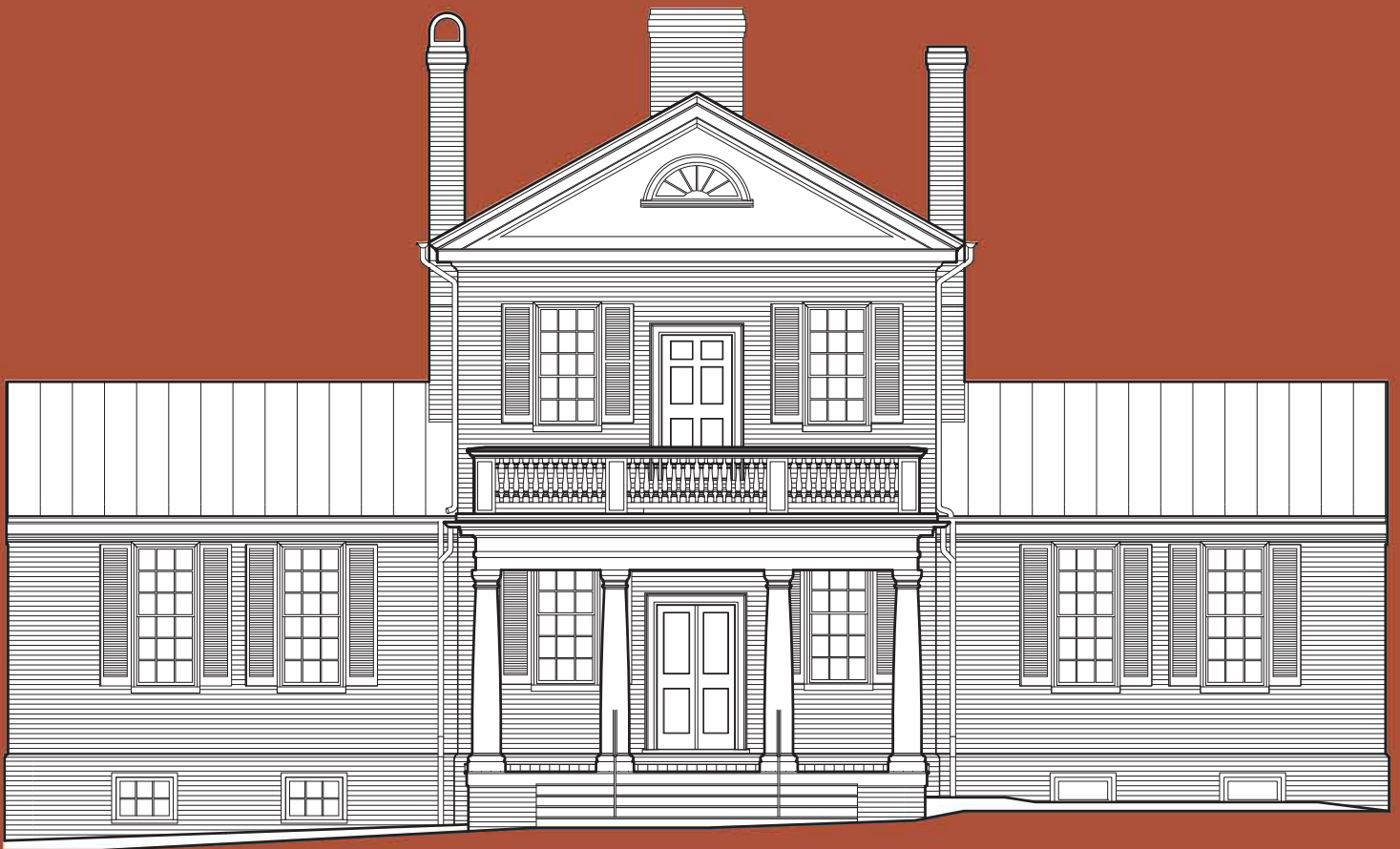


UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA HEALTH

# OAK LAWN



HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT &  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT





# OAK LAWN

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



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## HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT & CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

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2025



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*The following Fife family members have provided valuable information about the history and development of the Oak Lawn property and its occupants over time. In addition, the Fife family has provided the CLR–HSR team with digital copies of photographs which have been invaluable to understanding the evolution of the buildings, structures and landscape.*

Millie Fife

Rev. Richard Fife

Nancy K. O'Brien

Marjorie Fife Thomas

*We are grateful to Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor Emeritus of Architectural History at the University of Virginia, for sharing his expertise on the architecture and construction of Thomas Jefferson and his workmen.*

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*Figure 1. Sarah (Sallie) Fife (between the center two columns) with her family on the front steps of Oak Lawn. The photo is annotated with the family names: "Daisy, Katherine, Ella, James, Mother [Sallie], Cousin Sammy, Madge, Nanny." Note that the front steps extend the full width of the porch. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*



# OAK LAWN

## INTRODUCTION

*Oak Lawn is a very important example of the impact of Thomas Jefferson's classical design elements, with its tripartite form of a central block, wings, and portico, derived from his pavilions on the Lawn at the University of Virginia. It demonstrates how classicism was carried on and interpreted by Jefferson's workmen, such as James Dinsmore, creating a house vernacular for Virginia.*

*Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor Emeritus,  
Architectural History, University of Virginia*

The history, design, and landscape of Oak Lawn is firmly rooted in the Jeffersonian environment of Charlottesville in the early nineteenth century. With the construction of the University of Virginia underway by 1819, many skilled master builders, including bricklayers and carpenters, were drawn to the area to work on Thomas Jefferson's visionary project. It is within this small but prolific design and construction climate that Nimrod Bramham Sr., an established businessman known to Jefferson and well-versed in the building trades, completed construction of his residence in 1822, just as work at the University's Rotunda resumed with the groundbreaking of the Rotunda.

Bramham, who was a founding member of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle, developed his property with a series of farm and livestock outbuildings and benefitted financially from its crop production, which could not have operated without the labor of enslaved African Americans. From 1820 until his death in 1845, Bramham is recorded at various times as owning more than 30 enslaved individuals, with between six and 18 of these individuals being 'employed in agriculture'.

In 1847, the Rev. James Fife, a Scottish immigrant and organizer of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, purchased the property from Bramham's estate and embarked on a repair and renovation campaign to the house and farm outbuildings. At some point before the Civil War, Fife renamed the property "Oak Lawn".

As the regional economic and political importance of the City of Charlottesville grew at the end of the nineteenth century, the agricultural use and prosperity of Oak Lawn began to decline. Shortly after Rev. Fife's death in 1876, the Fife family began to subdivide and sell or otherwise dispose of outlying parcels of the estate, primarily for speculative residential development; this process continued gradually throughout the twentieth century.

For a total of 175 years, four generations of Fife family descendants lived at Oak Lawn and managed the farm and surrounding landscape, overseeing minor changes to the building's form and interior while gradually reducing the acreage and number of agricultural outbuildings and other landscape features surrounding the house. Despite changes to the size of the property over time, the historic importance, integrity, and significance of Oak Lawn was recognized as early as

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1936 and recorded as part of the Historical Inventory of Virginia. In 1973, Oak Lawn was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. After a renovation in 1997–1998, Francis H. Fife and Nancy K. O'Brien, two former mayors of Charlottesville who had married in 1982, moved in as the last Fife family residents of Oak Lawn.

Today, the Main House at Oak Lawn and the Cook's House sit on an overgrown landscape of just over five acres that has been recently acquired from the Fife Family by the University of Virginia/University of Virginia Health. To ensure that the historic integrity of the Oak Lawn property is maintained and preserved as the site's future use is contemplated, John G. Waite Associates, Architects, along with Rivanna Archeological Services, LLC and Liz Sargent Historic Landscape Architecture, was engaged by UVA in April of 2024 to prepare this integrated historic structure report and cultural landscape report for the property.

The preparation of a historic structure report in coordination with a cultural landscape report is the necessary first step in developing a disciplined approach to the analysis and care of historic buildings and their surrounding landscapes. A team of restoration architects, architectural historians, building conservators, archeologists, landscape architects, and land surveyors worked together to carry out the recording and investigation of the buildings and landscape. The team researched archival materials relating to the initial construction and evolution of the property and reviewed the existing conditions of both the buildings and the landscape. Careful measurement of all exterior and interior features has made possible the preparation of a set of architectural drawings that document the present configuration of the buildings. Specific problems of repair have been identified, and the team has developed preliminary recommendations for the preservation and adaptive use of Oak Lawn's buildings and landscape. Additionally, the team has identified potential zones for development of the site that may accommodate new construction compatible with the historic scale, configuration and character of the property and surrounding neighborhood, to further inform the University's future planning efforts.

This comprehensive effort has identified the close relationships between the architectural design, building technology, and use of materials with Jefferson's other buildings. However, it has not been exhaustive, and there remain areas of archival research, physical investigation, and archaeological research that could contribute to a more complete understanding of the history of Oak Lawn. Therefore, it is important to adopt a conservative approach to any proposed changes that are recommended for the site and structures, retaining historic building fabric and landscape features wherever possible, until additional research and documentation can be undertaken.

The goal of this report is to inform preliminary planning and adaptive use efforts for Oak Lawn that the University and UVA Health will undertake in concert with the wider Charlottesville community. This report can also provide a guide for future design and construction work that will respect the character-defining features of the site and its structures while providing new spaces for use by the University and the community. Ultimately, the adaptive use of Oak Lawn by UVA/UVA Health could be a new model for the integration of a significant historic building and landscape that is associated with the early nineteenth-century development of Charlottesville into the fabric of the expanding University of Virginia in the twenty-first century.

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## HISTORY

The following summary of the major periods of pre-contact indigenous history presents a fuller understanding of the history of Albemarle County and the central Virginia Piedmont region and is intended to provide an interpretive context for understanding the development and historical trajectory of the Oak Lawn property.

### PRE-CONTACT PERIOD

Virginia's indigenous history traditionally is divided into three major chronological periods: PaleoIndian, Archaic, and Woodland, with the latter two periods being subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late periods (Table #1).

TABLE 1: INDIGENOUS HISTORIC PERIODS AND DATES

PaleoIndian	15,000–8,000 BCE <sup>1</sup>
Early Archaic	8,000–6,500 BCE
Middle Archaic	6,500–3,000 BCE
Late Archaic	3,000–1,200 BCE
Early Woodland	1,200 BCE–300 CE
Middle Woodland	300–1,000 CE
Late Woodland	1,000–1,600 CE

Indigenous cultural periods are defined both by diagnostic artifact types and by broad patterns of settlement, subsistence, technology, and socio-cultural organization that have been developed from research carried out throughout Virginia and the broader mid-Atlantic region. Over the long course of Virginia prehistory, a series of broad developmental trends have been discerned through the analyses of archaeological remains that articulate and give interpretive meaning to this periodization. These trends include 1) on-going adaptive response to changing climatic and environmental conditions, 2) generalized population growth over the long-term, 3) increasing intensification of production, 4) progressive exploitation of and settlement within riverine environments, 5) increasingly sedentary lifestyles, 6) growing organizational complexity, 7) the

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1. Continued archaeological research in Virginia and the broader mid-Atlantic region keeps pushing the date of the first human occupation earlier and earlier. Before Common Era (BCE) and Common Era (CE) are the terms used in this document to refer to chronology.

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development of ceramic technology, and 8) the adoption of horticulture. The manufacture and use of ceramics marks the divide between the Archaic and Woodland Periods. Hunting and gathering economies were the mainstay of Native American subsistence over most of the vast arc of Virginia prehistory, with agriculture becoming firmly established only by the Late Woodland (circa 1000 CE). By the 1730s, when European and African-American settlement began in earnest in the region that was to become Albemarle County, Native Americans appeared to have largely disappeared from the landscape. Population loss through disease, warfare, enslavement, and outmigration may well have played a role, although Native peoples may also have deliberately concealed themselves in out-of-the-way places and/or among other socially marginal groups along the advancing colonial frontier.

### PALEOINDIAN PERIOD (CIRCA 15,000 - 8,000 BCE)

In Virginia, as throughout North America, the earliest indigenous inhabitants are referred to as PaleoIndians. PaleoIndian populations colonized North America towards the end of the Pleistocene Epoch when the continent was still dominated by Late Glacial climatic and environmental conditions and characterized by a landscape that has no modern parallel. Traditionally, the earliest PaleoIndian settlement in Virginia and throughout North America is associated with distinctive, fluted lanceolate projectile points of the Clovis type. The appearance of Clovis technology in Virginia traditionally is dated circa 9,500 BCE. Recent radiocarbon dates from pre-Clovis layers at the Cactus Hill site in Sussex County suggest that the earliest PaleoIndian occupation in the Virginia Tidewater may have begun as early as circa 13,000 BCE, however the dating and interpretive significance of pre-Clovis horizons along the mid-Atlantic coast remains a topic of on-going debate and research.<sup>2</sup>

PaleoIndian lifeways have been characterized primarily in terms of a highly mobile, subsistence-based economy probably focused on the hunting of now extinct large mammals and supplemented by small game hunting and generalized foraging. On the basis of research at and around the Thunderbird Site in Warren County, Virginia in the northern Shenandoah Valley, Gardner has proposed an integrated PaleoIndian site typology that includes lithic quarries, quarry-related base camps, lithic reduction stations, base camp maintenance stations, outlying hunting sites, and isolated point sites. Lithic artifacts of the PaleoIndian period invariably are made of high-quality cherts and jaspers and PaleoIndian sites in Virginia tend to be located near natural sources of these cryptocrystalline rocks. While finds of Clovis points, invariably from

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2. William M. Gardner, "Flint Run PaleoIndian Complex and its Implications for Eastern North American Prehistory," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 288 (1977): 251-263; William M. Gardner, "An Examination of Cultural Change in the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene (circa 9,200 to 6,800 BC)," In J. Mark Wittkofski and Theodore J. Reinhart, eds., *PaleoIndian Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 19, 5-52. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1989); Bruce Bower, *Science News*, Vol. 157, No. 16 (2000): 244; M. Parfit, "The Dawn of Humans: Hunt for the First Americans," *National Geographic*, Vol. 198 (2000): 40-67.

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the surface, have been made throughout Virginia, the greatest geographical concentration of PaleoIndian materials occurs across the Tidewater and the Piedmont province south of the James River. Five Clovis points, all surface finds, have been recorded for all of Albemarle County, with three of these coming from a single site near the town of Alberene on the eastern flank of Green Mountain approximately 11 miles southwest of Charlottesville. The fourth, McCary's Clovis point No. 315, was discovered just east of Piney Mountain in the Ragged Mountains approximately 5 miles west-southwest of Oak Lawn, while the fifth point was discovered east of the Southwest Mountains near the county's northeastern border not far from Gordonsville. Counties bordering Albemarle all have fewer than five recorded Clovis finds.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the known regional distribution of PaleoIndian remains in central Virginia, the potential to recover material of this period in the current project area is considered extremely low.

### ARCHAIC PERIOD (CIRCA 8,000 - 1,200 BCE)

The onset of the Archaic Period is traditionally associated with the end of the Pleistocene and the initiation of a warmer and drier climate. During the course of the Archaic Period, climatic changes resulted in a progression from boreal woodland environments dominated by spruce and pine to a mixed deciduous-coniferous forest. The end of the Archaic Period corresponds closely to a trend towards cooler, moister conditions and the onset of essentially modern climatic and environmental regimes.<sup>4</sup>

During the Early Archaic (circa 8,000–6,500 BCE), human adaptations appear to have remained similar to those of the preceding PaleoIndian period with a likely shift in focus to the hunting of smaller mammals following the extinction of Pleistocene megafauna. Corner-notched and side-notched projectile points, indicating changes in hafting technology possibly associated with the use of the spear-thrower (atlatl), are hallmarks of the Early Archaic, and other flaked and chipped stone tool types also appear. Early Archaic stone tool technology, following the

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3. Gardener, "Flint Run PaleoIndian Complex."; Gardener, "Cultural Change in the Late Pleistocene."; E. Randolph Turner III, "PaleoIndian Settlement Patterns and Population Distribution in Virginia." In J. Mark Wittkofski and Theodore J. Reinhart, eds., *PaleoIndian Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 19, 71-94. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1989); Richard Mattson, Frances Alexander, Daniel Cassedy and Geoffrey Henry, *From the Monacans to Monticello and Beyond: Prehistoric and Historic Contexts for Albemarle County, Virginia*. Unpublished report submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. (Raleigh: Garrow and Associates, Inc., 1995); Ben C. McCary, *Survey of Virginia Fluted Points*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 12. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1983); C. G. Holland, "Albemarle County Settlements: A Piedmont Model?" *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1978): 29-44.

4. Victor Carbone, *Environment and Prehistory in the Shenandoah Valley*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976. Catholic University of America; P. A. Delacourt and H. R. Delacourt, "Vegetation Maps for Eastern North America: 40,000 years BP to the Present." In R. Romans, ed., *Geobotany: An Integrating Experience*, 123-166. (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1981).

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PaleoIndian precedent, primarily utilized similar cryptocrystalline rocks and was characterized by a strong emphasis on curation.<sup>5</sup>

The Middle Archaic Period (circa 6,500–3,000 BCE) corresponds to the full transition from pre-boreal/boreal environments to mixed coniferous-deciduous forests of the Atlantic episode. A variety of stemmed projectile points are characteristic of the period, with bifurcate stemmed types such as LeCroy and St. Albans marking the earlier Middle Archaic, and straight or contracting stemmed types such as Stanly, Kirk Stemmed, Morrow Mountain and the lanceolate Guilford type marking the period's later part. The stemmed and side-notched Halifax point form is alternatively dated to the latter Middle Archaic or the earlier part of the ensuing Late Archaic/Transitional. The Middle Archaic period also marks a shift in lithic resource preferences towards more widely distributed and locally available materials such as quartz and quartzite. A study of Albemarle County sites by Parker suggests considerable continuity in settlement locations between the Early and Middle Archaic. According to Parker's study, Middle Archaic sites tend to be relatively small and to be more commonly located in upland as opposed to floodplain settings. Overall, Middle Archaic sites are far more numerous throughout the Piedmont than are sites of the PaleoIndian and Early Archaic Periods, interpreted by many as indicative of long-term regional population growth.<sup>6</sup>

The Late Archaic (circa 3,000–1,200 BCE) appears to have been characterized by marked increases in the size of Native American populations, decreases in territorial ranges, larger site sizes and increasingly sedentary lifestyles, and a heightened preference for riverine environments over preceding periods. Soapstone, available locally in the southern part of Albemarle County, became widely used during Late Archaic Period for the manufacture of carved stone vessels. Diagnostic lithic tool types of the Late Archaic include various, often large, stemmed and side-

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5. Gardner, "Cultural Change in the Late Pleistocene," 122.

6. Carbone, *Environment and Prehistory*, 76; Gardener, "Cultural Change in the Late Pleistocene," 23; William M. Gardner, "Comparison of the Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain Archaic Period Site Distribution: An Idealized Transect (Preliminary Model)." *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology*, Vol 3 (1987): 49-80; William M. Gardner, "Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before: The Flint Run PaleoIndian Complex Revisited." *Archaeology of Eastern North America*, Vol. 11 (1982): 49-64; Joffe L. Coe, "Formative Cultures of the Carolina Piedmont." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 54, Part 5. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1964); Keith T. Egoft and Joseph M. McAvoy, "Chronology of Virginia's Early and Middle Archaic Periods." In Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary E. N. Hodges, eds., *Early and Middle Archaic Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*, 61-79. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 2. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1990); Frederic W. Gleach, "A Working Projectile Point Classification for Central Virginia." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1987): 80-120; Michael J. Klein and Thomas Klatka, "Late Archaic and Early Woodland Demography and Settlement Patterns." In Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary E. N. Hodges, eds., *Late Archaic and Early Woodland Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 23. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1991); Daniel L. Mouer, "The Formative Transition in Virginia." In Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary E. N. Hodges, eds., *Late Archaic and Early Woodland Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 23. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1991); Scott K. Parker, "Early and Middle Archaic Settlement Patterns and Demography." In Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary E. N. Hodges, eds., *Early and Middle Archaic Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*, 99-117. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 22. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1990).



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notched knife and projectile point types including Halifax, Lamoka, Susquehanna, and Perkiomen forms, and, by the end or Transitional stage of the Late Archaic, wide-spread use of the large, broad bladed, Savannah River type.<sup>7</sup>

### WOODLAND PERIOD (CIRCA 1,200 BCE–1,600 CE)

The onset of the Early Woodland Period (circa 1,200–500 BCE) is marked by the appearance of ceramics in the archaeological record. The earliest Woodland ceramics in Virginia resemble in form soapstone vessels of the preceding Late Archaic and, in fact, the earliest Native American clay pastes in Virginia often contain crushed soapstone as a tempering agent. Various stemmed projectile points including, perhaps, a small variant of the Savannah River type, are characteristic of the Early Woodland Period. Analysis of archaeological data from the central Virginia Piedmont is suggestive of a preference for floodplain/riverine settings during the Early Woodland. According to Holland's study of Albemarle County indigenous sites, settlements of the Early Woodland Period are limited to the floodplains of the James River along the County's southern boundary, however Holland's conclusions were based upon a dearth of systematically collected data and almost certainly Early Woodland settlement can be expected to have been regionally more extensive.<sup>8</sup>

The Middle Woodland Period (circa 500 BCE–900 CE) in the central Virginia Piedmont is characterized by the appearance of cord- and net-impressed ceramics tempered with sand and crushed rock (typically quartz). The riverine focus of Native American settlement continued, with sites found along both higher and lower order streams in the region. In addition to stemmed projectile point types, larger triangular forms also appeared during the Middle Woodland. Holland's study of Albemarle County indigenous sites suggests settlement within the Rivanna River floodplain may have begun or, at least, intensified during the Middle Woodland.<sup>9</sup>

The Late Woodland Period (circa 900–1,600 CE) in the central Virginia Piedmont is marked by the appearance of agriculture and of year-round villages situated along the region's major rivers. In Albemarle County, this riverine focus is exemplified by Holland's observation that 86% of all Woodland sites are located on soils of the Congaree series (according to the Devereux et al. 1940 classification scheme). Congaree soils, ranked as the region's most productive agricultural soils, are

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7. Mark Catlin, Jay F. Custer, R. Michael Stewart, "Late Archaic Culture Change in Virginia: A Reconsideration of Exchange, Population Growth, and Migrations." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, Vol. 37 (1982): 123-140; Daniel L. Mouer, *The Archaic to Woodland Transition in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain Sections of the James River Valley, Virginia*. Ph.D. Dissertation, 1989. Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia; Mouer, "Formative Transition in Virginia," 73.

8. Klein and Klatka, "Late Archaic and Early Woodland Demography"; Holland, "Albemarle County Settlements," 31.

9. Jeffrey L. Hantman and Michael J. Klein, "Middle and Late Woodland Archaeology in Piedmont, Virginia." In Theodore R. Reinhart and Mary E. N. Hodges, eds., *Middle and Late Woodland Research in Virginia: A Synthesis*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication No. 29, 137-164. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1992); Holland, "Albemarle County Settlements," 31.

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limited to river floodplains. Beyond the inferences drawn from site location, Hantman and Klein, and Mattson et al. provide recent reviews of more direct evidence supporting an agriculturally based economy during the Late Woodland Period. Late Woodland Period people of the central Virginia Piedmont also created communal accretional burial mounds in which bones of deceased members of the group were periodically interred. Such a mound, located in the floodplain of the Rivanna River's South Fork near Carrsbrook, was explored by Thomas Jefferson, and another Late Woodland burial mound existed along the banks of the Rapidan River in Orange County. Documentary evidence suggests yet another mound may have existed in the southern part of Albemarle County in the vicinity of Tucker Coles' Tallwood plantation on the eastern flanks of Green Mountain. Late Woodland ceramics within the central Piedmont region are highly diverse and include crushed rock tempering with fabric- and cord-marked surfaces similar to Middle Woodland wares as well as sand tempered cord-marked wares. Small triangular projectile point types associated with bow-and-arrow use also appeared during the Late Woodland Period. Earlier views that the Late Woodland Period in the central Virginia Piedmont was characterized by essentially egalitarian social organizations have been challenged by Hantman who holds that hierarchical social formations, specifically chiefdoms, developed in the region during this period.<sup>10</sup>

The Late Woodland period (circa 900–1000 CE) is when most archaeologists recognize a culturally distinct group of indigenous people, the Monacan Nation, living in central Virginia, as well as the Valley and Blue Ridge. Unlike the preceding millennia where indigenous people in central Virginia were composed of highly mobile non-agricultural bands that were socially and culturally connected to one another, by circa 900–1000 CE several important hallmarks emerge that inform shared cultural values, and a cultural heritage distinct from indigenous peoples in other regions of Virginia. As noted by Hantman and others, “there are certain collective behaviors that are so distinct in time and space that a cultural, political, or ethnic group can be named. The changes that take place at 1000 CE include an emphasis on floodplain agriculture, a move to living almost exclusively in hamlets or towns alongside the rivers of the region, and most importantly the burial of the dead and honoring of the ancestors in the construction of burial mounds unlike any others in the eastern United States.”<sup>11</sup>

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10. Hantman and Klein, “Middle and Late Woodland Archaeology,” 146-147, 150-151; Holland, “Albemarle County Settlements,” 31; Mattson, et al., *From the Monacans to Monticello and Beyond*, 9; Howard A. MacCord, *The Lewis Creek Mound Culture in Virginia*. (Richmond: Privately Published, 1986); D. I. Bushnell, “The ‘Indian Grave’—A Monacan Site in Albemarle County, Virginia.” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (1914): 106-112; C. G. Holland, Sandra Spieden, and David Van Roijen, “The Rapidan Mound Revisited: A Test Excavation of a Prehistoric Burial Mound.” *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*, Vol. 38 (1983): 1-42; Gary H. Dunham, Debra L. Gold, and Jeffrey L. Hantman, “Collective Burial in Late Prehistoric Virginia; Excavation and Analysis of the Rapidan Mound.” *American Antiquity*, Vol 68 (2003): 109-128; John H. Moore, *Albemarle: Jefferson's County, 1727-1976*, 5-6. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976); Jeffrey L. Hantman, “Between Powhattan and Quirank: Reconstructing Monacan Culture and History in the Context of Jamestown.” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 92 (1990): 676-690.

11. Jeffrey L. Hantman, *Monacan Millenium: A Collaborative Archaeology and History of a Virginia Indian People*, 21. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018).



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Over the course of the past eight decades, archaeological research in the central Virginia region has also documented the presence of Monacan settlements and Woodland period sites. Beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century David Bushnell, a Smithsonian Institution archaeologist with the Bureau of Ethnography, came to Albemarle County to re-examine the earthen burial mound first examined by Jefferson. Bushnell conducted limited additional excavations and also visited other sites up and down the Rivanna River. In his numerous publications addressing indigenous sites in Albemarle County, he noted the frequency of sites identified through formal excavation, privately owned material culture collections, agricultural plowing and scouring of the floodplain, that the ‘valley of the Rivanna’ was the center of Monacan territory, and that numerous “smaller sites which evidently belonged to the same people [Monacan] have been discovered on the banks of the Rivanna both above and below the great village [Monasukapanough].”<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the 1940s, Charlton Gilmore ‘Gilly’ Holland continued the Albemarle County research initiated by Bushnell. Holland described and recorded the location of many indigenous archaeological sites establishing relationships with farmers and locals with artifact collections and visiting plowed agricultural fields. Holland intentionally conducted fieldwork immediately following floods, visiting recently scoured floodplain lands on private property adjacent to the James, Rivanna and other central Virginia rivers. Along the Rivanna River floodplain and its tributaries, Holland recorded numerous sites containing both Archaic and Woodland period lithics and ceramics. He summarized his findings on indigenous sites in Albemarle County in 1978, an article that had significant implications for understanding changes in settlement and subsistence patterns in the immediate pre-contact Woodland period. Holland noted that nearly all of the sites he had recorded that contained indigenous ceramics were located “on or near the banks of streams.” In contrast to this, non-ceramic sites were located near streams and in areas more distant from water sources. He concluded that for archaeological sites containing indigenous ceramics, there had to be an environmental factor that drove site selection. Because not all stream or river sites possessed abundant fish and/or shellfish, he assumed that the environmental determinant had to be productive soils. “The most persuasive association between ceramic sites and their valley locations is the fertile soils; and if the use of these soils was the compelling attraction, the association must lie in horticulture, with other food resources secondary to this.” He went on to note that 76.5 % of all ceramic bearing sites he documented were located on soils identified as Congaree series. “The largest areas [of Congaree Loam] border the Rivanna River, and the widest is formed at the junction of the North and South forks.” In the same article Holland provided general locations for these indigenous archaeological sites. Along the Rivanna River

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12. See David I. Bushnell, Jr., “Evidence of Indian Occupancy in Albemarle County, Virginia,” *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, Vol 89, No. 7, Publication 3217. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1933); David I. Bushnell, Jr. “Monacan Sites in Virginia,” *Explorations and Field-Work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1930*, Smithsonian Institution Publication 3111. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1931); David I. Bushnell, Jr., “‘The Indian Grave’—A Monacan Site in Albemarle County, Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (October 1914): 106-112.

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between the eastern border of Albemarle County and the south fork to Buck Mountain Creek and the north fork to its intersection with Route 29, he noted a total of eleven ceramic bearing sites, a hallmark of the Late Woodland period and Monacan occupation.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1979–1980, Daniel L. Mouer and Virginia Commonwealth University students conducted limited salvage excavation at Point of Fork in Fluvanna County at the confluence of the Rivanna and James Rivers (44FV0019). In 1980, a 200-foot-wide trench approximately 15–20 feet deep was excavated for a gas line through the James River floodplain at Point of Fork. Examination of the soil profiles and backdirt associated with this excavation recovered ceramics, animal bones, numerous projectile points, and lithic debris. Ceramics recovered from 44FV0019 dated to the Late Woodland period (900–1,600 CE) strongly suggesting that the site was occupied up into the seventeenth century. Likewise, a single radiocarbon date from a trash pit dated to 1,050 CE. Limited controlled excavation was also accomplished in undisturbed soils. Several pit features, possible cooking and/or refuse pits, were excavated. The pits contained hickory nuts, animal bone, maize, and food remains. While stating that additional work at the site needed to be done, Mouer noted that the site could potentially be the Monacan village of Rassawek and dated its occupation from 700 A.D. to the present.<sup>14</sup>

University of Virginia Anthropology professor Jeffrey L. Hantman and several graduate archaeology students conducted a systematic survey of areas proposed for future development throughout Albemarle County in 1985. Like Holland before him, Hantman and his colleagues also recognized a correlation between site location and soils, elevation and distance from the nearest drainage in their survey data. They found that both Archaic and Woodland period sites were identified on only a few soils, but that 80% of Woodland period sites were found on just one soil, Congaree loam. They concluded that “both site types are on or adjacent to soils suitable for agriculture. The Woodland sites are, however, typically on higher grade soils.” In addition, Archaic and Woodland period sites were also found to be within 918 feet of any drainage and only 65 feet in elevation above the nearest drainage. Woodland period sites however were found to be much closer to drainages, only 410 feet from any drainage and only 20 feet in elevation above the nearest drainage.<sup>15</sup> In advance of its development as soccer fields in the 1990s, the University of Virginia Department of Anthropology again conducted pre-development archaeological investigations on a site believed to be the Monacan town of Monasukapanough as identified on the 1608 John Smith map. The research identified a Woodland period village site that dated to the early seventeenth

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13. Holland, “Albemarle County Settlement: A Piedmont Model?,” 34-35.

14. Daniel L. Mouer, “A Review of the Archeology and Ethnohistory of the Monacans,” 26. In *Piedmont Archaeology*, Mark Wittkofski, ed., 21-39. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1984); Daniel L. Mouer, “Archeology at Point of Fork, Fluvanna County, Virginia,” *The Bulletin of the Fluvanna County Historical Society*, No. 39 (April 1985): 27-31.

15. Jeffrey L. Hantman, Mark Catlin, Dawn Haverstock, Thomas Klatka, Michael Klein, Scott Parker, and Douglas Sanford, *The Archaeology of Albemarle County: Results of a Systematic Survey of Proposed Development Areas in Albemarle County, Virginia*, 133-134, 139-140. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Department of Anthropology, 1985).

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century, but also much earlier. In addition, an Archaic period component was identified on the first terrace above the floodplain.<sup>16</sup>

In 2007, Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC conducted Phase I shovel testing and deep trenching and geoarchaeological analysis in the Rivanna River floodplain and an adjacent terrace near historic Dunlora. Investigations identified a Middle to Late Woodland period site in the floodplain defined by both potential cultural features, charred organics, and diagnostic lithics and ceramics. Likewise, 'pre-settlement' sediments containing Native American artifacts and potential features were found to be deeply buried to a depth of between 1.0 to 8.2 feet below grade. The floodplain of the Rivanna was recommended as containing high potential for additional potentially significant indigenous cultural deposits and features. Privately held material culture collections have been made by individuals in Albemarle County throughout the twentieth century. These collections also attest to a long-term indigenous presence in the Rivanna River floodplain and adjacent uplands. Significant sites have been identified in the Key West Rivanna River floodplain vicinity.<sup>17</sup>

The Oak Lawn property would likely have been an attractive environment for the Monacan. The original 394-acre Oak Lawn parcel was only 2,750 feet north of the drainages of Moore's Creek and possessed numerous intermittent drainages and springs that would have attracted people and animals to the area. While the Oak Lawn parcel did not possess a Monacan settlement or village, it was likely utilized by the Monacan as part of the broader Piedmont hunting and gathering grounds west of the Rivanna River. The vicinity of Oak Lawn would have provided cover for many small to large mammals hunted by the Monacan and also provided a hard mast (acorns, nuts, etc.) that would have been gathered on a seasonal basis.

## THE MONACAN INDIAN NATION<sup>18</sup>

The Siouan-speaking Monacan Indian Nation and their ancestors have lived in and occupied a broad area of what is now Virginia for millennia. Their traditional lands once encompassed the Piedmont, Blue Ridge, and Ridge and Valley physiographic provinces west of the fall line and between the Potomac and Roanoke River valleys. In particular, the Monacan have occupied the James and Rivanna River tributaries in what would become Albemarle and the counties that surrounded it. The Monacan people practiced a diversified subsistence that included hunting,

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16. Hantman, *Monacan Millennium*, 132-133.

17. Stephen M. Thompson, *Phase I Archaeological Survey and Geoarchaeological Investigation in Two Portions of the Belvedere Development Property, Albemarle County, Virginia*. VDHR File #2006-0394. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project #2006- 7633. (Charlottesville: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, 2008).

18. Information contained in this portion of the historical narrative is taken from the Monacan Indian Nation website, and portrays an understanding of their own history, culture, and livelihood, and interactions with the first Europeans settlers. "Our History," Monacan Indian Nation, <https://www.monacannation.com/our-history.html#:~:text=The%20Monacan%20Nation%2C%20headquartered%20in,to%20celebrate%20their%20Indian%20culture>, accessed June 24, 2024.

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gathering and agriculture. Deer, elk and other small to medium sized mammals were hunted and adjacent riverine environments provided fish, crustaceans, and other riverine oriented mammals. The Monacan also gathered native plants, nuts, and fruits across a wide area driven by the deep knowledge of the environment and seasonally available resources. Agriculturally productive fields located in rich floodplain soils, where the 'three sisters' crops of corn, beans and squash were planted, contributed significantly to the Monacan diet. Villages, composed of numerous dome-shaped huts covered in bark and reed mats, were located in floodplain settings often with palisaded walls. Monacan dead were buried in large earthen mounds.

The Monacan people interacted with their indigenous neighbors, the Algonquin speaking Powhatan to the east, the Iroquois to the north, as well as other Siouan speaking people such as the Saponi, Occaneechis, and Tutelo in the broader area that would become Virginia. Economic trade and cultural interaction with other indigenous tribes flourished in the centuries leading up to European contact. After 1607, the Monacan Indian Nation encountered European explorers and traders but wanted little to do with them. Throughout the seventeenth century, the Monacan people moved west seeking to avoid the European presence. While many Monacan moved to what is now Pennsylvania and eventually Canada, some chose to remain in Virginia and located in their ancestral home in the mountains, what is now Amherst County. By the mid-eighteenth-century, historic maps document the presence of the both the Monacan and Tuscarora people in what is now Amherst and Bedford counties, Virginia (Figure 2).

## CONTACT PERIOD (1607–1765)

As John H. Moore, author of *Albemarle: Jefferson's County*, has noted, in the central Virginia Piedmont much of Virginia's earliest 'historic' period can be classified as the last stage of the long prehistoric era.<sup>19</sup> In June of 1608 Capt. John Smith set out from Jamestown with a small group to explore the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. Although Smith did not achieve his goal of discovering riches or a westward passage to the Pacific Ocean, during his travels he met and traded with many native tribes and learned through informants about indigenous settlements further inland. Of importance, Smith kept journals and notes of his travels, his impressions of indigenous people, and the information that they conveyed to him. His journals were then transformed into a book entitled *Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* published in 1629. Smith's map, based on his 1608 travels and first published in 1612, provides an incredibly accurate depiction of the extent of indigenous settlement, their cultural identities, and the location of important cultural centers.

In particular, Smith's map documented the presence of the Monacan people in the vicinity of the upper James River. The 1612 Smith map depicts the upper James River and shows where the Rivanna River branches off to the north. Between the James River and the upper reaches of the Rivanna River Smith notes two Monacan '*kings howses*,' one named Rassawek located at the

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19. Moore, *Albemarle*, 6.



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Figure 2. (Above) Detail, A Map of the middle British Colonies in North America, showing the red-highlighted area marked as occupied by the 'Monacans or Tuscaroras' in the vicinity of present-day Amherst and Bedford counties, Virginia, and the red circled approximate location of Oak Lawn. Lewis Evans, 1755.

Figure 3. (Left) Detail, A Map of Virginia, showing the Rivanna River outlined in red and the locations of 'kings howses' at Monasukapanough (upper right) and Rassawek (upper center), two Monacan communities. John Smith, 1612.

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confluence of the Rivanna and James Rivers, and a second named Monasukapanough located on the northern side of the Rivanna River (Figure 3). Rassawek, as reported to John Smith by a captured indigenous man named Amoroleck who came from the Virginia interior on the Rappahannock River drainage, was 'the chiefest village' to which all Monacan villages paid tribute. The Monacans, as the Jamestown colonists and Smith would come to know, were different from the Powhatan that lived on the coastal plain. They resided in "hilly Countries by small rivers, living upon rootes and fruits, but chiefly by hunting." They spoke a different language, they were reputed to be enemies, and they controlled the Virginia interior and access to the wealth of mineral resources that the English were told existed there.<sup>20</sup> How long Rassawek and Monasukapanough remained occupied beyond the date of Smith's map is uncertain.

Reference to the presence of Monacan people comes from European explorers and settlers of the area that would become central Virginia and Albemarle County. Early Europeans clearly noticed physical evidence of the former presence of indigenous people, but perceived the land they settled on as an abandoned landscape. Hantman notes that the Monacan and other indigenous peoples "largely eluded the colonists' notice or interest," dispersing in advance of active European settlement, and perhaps joining with other regional native tribes or moving to more isolated areas. However, after encountering cleared fields, large earthen mounds, or former village sites, European settlers often named drainages and other natural landscape elements (e.g. Indian town, Indian branch) after their predecessors.<sup>21</sup> Up through the third quarter of the eighteenth century, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson wrote of the presence of indigenous people who passed through the central Virginia vicinity in which he lived, noting their visit to an earthen burial mound. In 1783 Jefferson examined and dug into a Monacan mound on the Rivanna River believed to be Monasukapanough as represented on the John Smith map.<sup>22</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, all portions of what was to become Albemarle County<sup>23</sup> had been to some degree settled by European-American landowners or their agents.<sup>24</sup> Those parts of the county to be first patented and settled, beginning in the late 1720s and 1730s, included large swaths of upland territory on the flanks of Green, Carter, and Southwest Mountains and the broadest areas of valley land along of the region's two main rivers, the James and the

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20. Hantman, *Monacan Millennium*, 34-35, 39, 42, 84.

21. Ibid., 51-53.

22. Ibid., 51-52, 69-70.

23. Albemarle County was first created out of western Goochland and Louisa Counties in 1744 and included all of present-day Nelson, Amherst, Buckingham, and Fluvanna Counties as well as most of Albemarle and part of Appomattox and Campbell Counties. In 1761, all the land in 'Big Albemarle' south of the James River and west of its confluence with the Rockfish River was separated off to form independent counties. At the same time, a considerable quantity of land north of Charlottesville was separated from Louisa County and incorporated into Albemarle, and the county seat moved from near Scottsville to the more centrally located Charlottesville. In 1777, the current boundaries of Albemarle County were established by the partitioning off of Fluvanna County from its eastern side.

24. William M. Dabney, "Jefferson's Albemarle: History of Albemarle County, Virginia, 1727-1819," 15. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, 1951. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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Rivanna. Early European-American settlers also moved into the region from the west, crossing the Blue Ridge Mountains from the Shenandoah Valley, to settle areas around Brown's Cove, Greenwood, and Woods' (Jarman's) Gap.<sup>25</sup> Roughly one-quarter of the nearly 200 land grants made in the region between 1727 and 1745 were greater than 1,000 acres.<sup>26</sup>

### POST-CONTACT PERIOD (1765–1818)

Albemarle County was established and formed from Goochland County in 1744. 'Big' Albemarle contained all or part of what are now Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Buckingham, Campbell, Fluvanna and Nelson counties. The first seat of government for Big Albemarle County was located on Edward Scott's Totier plantation on the James River near what would become Scottsville (Figure 4). Due to the continually westward expanding population in Virginia, in 1761 the General Assembly ordered the division of 'Big' Albemarle into three separate counties, Albemarle, Amherst and Buckingham. With the new shape and size of Albemarle, in 1762 the Virginia General Assembly also authorized the move of the county court from the James River to the more central location of Charlottesville. A 50-acre parcel was set aside for the new town of Charlottesville, named after Queen Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the wife of King George III. The 50-acre town was laid out in 56 lots and a grid of north-south and east-west oriented streets. Each lot was one-half acre in size. A two-acre public square was also laid out adjacent to and northwest of the new town (Figure 5).

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, Albemarle County was almost entirely rural and devoted to agricultural pursuits. Although other crops were grown, tobacco was the principal crop, serving both as a source of income as well as its own currency.<sup>27</sup> By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Albemarle County was producing large quantities of the crop. However tobacco cultivation, especially in the hilly Piedmont, had a deleterious effect upon the landscape and the fertility of the region's soils.<sup>28</sup>

Getting tobacco to market was, of course, a major concern. Both the James River and the Rivanna River, at least as far upstream as Milton, were navigable and were used early on to ship tobacco east. Among the earliest roads into the Albemarle County region were the River Road, which followed the James from the Goochland courthouse to the mouth of the Rockfish River,

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25. K. Edward Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country, Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia*, 25. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); Moore, *Albemarle*, 19-20.

26. Moore, *Albemarle*, 21.

27. Dabney, "Jefferson's Albemarle," 74; Moore, *Albemarle*, 31-35.

28. Herbert G. Fisher, The Virginia Piedmont—A Definition: A Review of Physiographic Attributes and Historic Land Use of this Region, 4. In J. Mark Wittkofski and Lyle E Browning, eds., *Piedmont Archaeology*. Archaeological Society of Virginia Special Publication 10, 2-8. (Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia, 1983); Emily J. Salmon and John Salmon, *Tobacco in Colonial Virginia*. Encyclopedia Virginia. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Electronic resource: [http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Tobacco\\_in\\_Colonial\\_Virginia](http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Tobacco_in_Colonial_Virginia). Accessed, January 29, 2013.



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Figure 4. Detail, A Map of the most inhabited part of Virginia, showing the rural nature of early Albemarle County and the red-shaded approximate location of what would become Charlottesville. Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, 1755.



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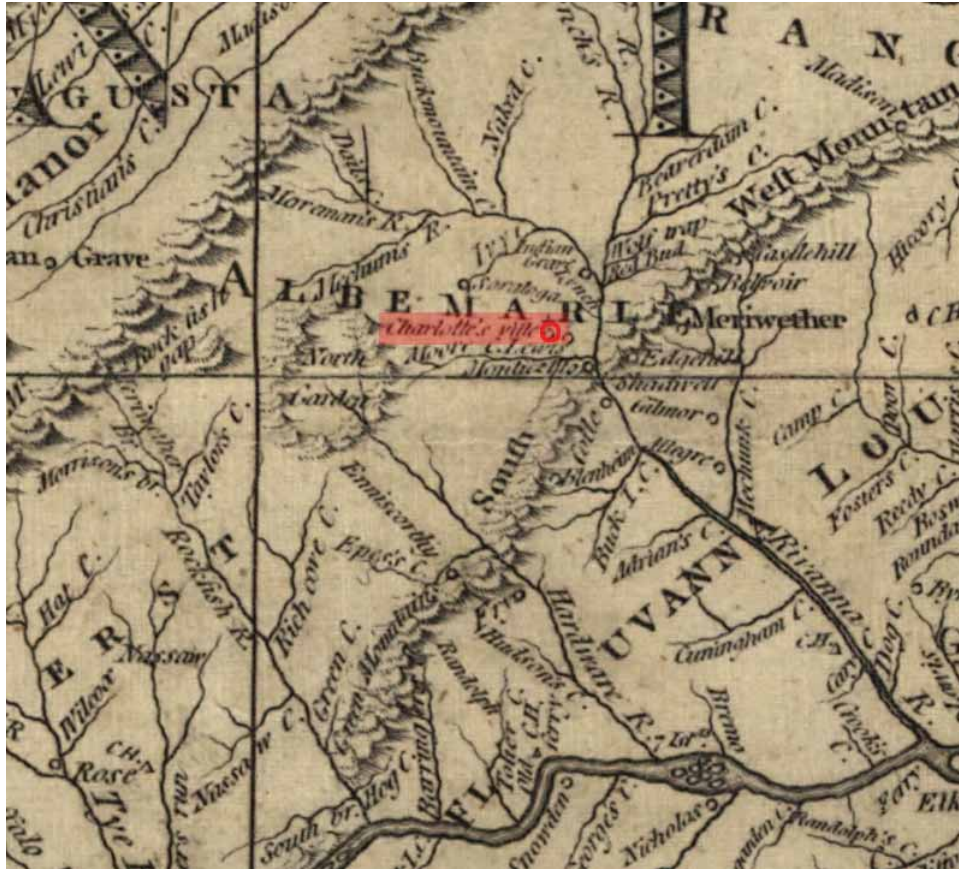


Figure 5. Detail, A Map of the country between Albemarle Sound, and Lake Erie, comprehending the whole of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania, showing the location of the town of Charlottesville. Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Neele, and John Stockdale, 1787.

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and the Three Notched Road (originally Mountain Road, roughly modern Route 250), which ran along the upland divide between the Rivanna and South Anna Rivers to Secretary's Ford across the Rivanna near the future site of Charlottesville. From there, Three Notched Road ran west to cross the Blue Ridge at Woods Gap.<sup>29</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, owing to the loss of British markets and widespread soil depletion, tobacco cultivation was waning in importance and area farmers were increasingly turning to the cultivation of wheat.<sup>30</sup> The profoundly deleterious effects of tobacco cultivation upon the landscape and productivity of the central Virginia Piedmont were increasingly recognized and the early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a movement to transform regional agricultural practices and to reclaim much of the region's worn out agricultural lands. In 1817, Thomas Jefferson and a number of other local planters, including Nimrod Bramham, formed the Agricultural Society of Albemarle, which was devoted to experimenting with and publicizing new techniques of cultivation and animal husbandry.<sup>31</sup> By 1821, John H. Craven, widely regarded as one of the County's best farmers, set about establishing model farming practices on his newly acquired Pen Park plantation.<sup>32</sup>

Transportation systems improved throughout the region during the early nineteenth century. In addition to an ever-growing network of roads, a system of wing dams and sluices for bateaux navigation was in place on the Rivanna River above Milton by 1812 and during the second quarter of the century a series of locks and dams was constructed along the upper Rivanna.<sup>33</sup> Saw and grist mills sited along the Rivanna and many other of the smaller streams in the region became increasingly common through the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup>

The land containing what is now Oak Lawn was first purchased by Joel Terrell, Jr. through a 328-acre Land Office patent issued by the Governor of Virginia in 1765.<sup>35</sup> The land was described as "lying and being in the County of Albemarle on the branches of Moore's Creek." Terrell had, just five years earlier, patented an additional 350 acres in Albemarle County, located "on the south side of the Rivanna on the Branches of Meadow Creek." According to the Rev. Edgar Woods in his *Albemarle County in Virginia*, Joel Terrell Jr. inherited thousands of acres of land in what would become Albemarle County that was patented in the 1730s by his father, Joel Terrell, Sr. Joel Terrell

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29. Nathaniel M. Pawlett, *Albemarle County Road Orders, 1783-1816*, 4, 6, 47, 94. Virginia Highway Transportation Research Council, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1975. Revised April 2004; Nathaniel M. Pawlett, *Albemarle County Road Orders, 1725-1816*, 10, 14. Virginia Highway Research Council, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1981. Revised September 2003.

30. Dabney, "Jefferson's Albemarle," 74-75, 83-84; Moore, *Albemarle*, 25-36, 88-90; Fisher, *Virginia Piedmont*, 5.

31. Dabney, "Jefferson's Albemarle," 103; Moore, *Albemarle*, 90.

32. Newton B. Jones, "Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, 1819-1860," 25-27, 35-36. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, 1950. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.; Woods, *Albemarle*, 174.

33. Minnie Lee McGehee and William E. Trout, *Mr. Jefferson's River: The Rivanna*, 19-21, 29-30. (Palmyra: Fluvanna County Historical Society, 2000).

34. Moore, *Albemarle*, 94-97.

35. Land Office Patents, Book No. 36: 1764-1767, p 834. *Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants*. Library of Virginia, Virginia Memory. Electronic Resource: [www.virginiamemory.com](http://www.virginiamemory.com). Accessed May 21, 2024.

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Jr. did not likely live on the land that would become Oak Lawn. Rather, his residence was located in Charlottesville proper on the corner of Market and 5<sup>th</sup> streets, where he lived until his death in 1774. It is possible that Terrell could have cultivated the land that would become Oak Lawn, however according to Woods he was also a ‘dealer in real estate’ and may have held the land for investment purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Once a patent was issued, the patentee had three years to seat and plant the land. ‘Seating’ required payment of the quit rent, an annual payment to the crown of one shilling for every fifty acres. ‘Planting’ required either cultivating one acre or building a house and keeping livestock.

Joel Terrell Jr. made out his will in 1774. He directed that his real estate, including his lots in Charlottesville and numerous other parcels of land in Albemarle and Louisa counties be sold. He also directed that his daughter, Mary Adams, receive “what I have delivered to her” as well as “two negroes Judah and Hanna.”<sup>37</sup>

An inventory and appraisal of Joel Terrell Jr.’s estate taken on November 2, 1774, noted the presence of 16 enslaved African Americans (Table #2). The inventory also noted cattle, hogs, sheep, as well as plows, hoes, axes, adzes and other typical tools used in clearing and cultivating land. The inventory made no reference as to which property the enslaved laborers or agricultural implements were located.<sup>38</sup>

TABLE 2: ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS OWNED BY JOEL TERRELL JR. AT HIS DEATH IN 1774.

<i>Enslaved Names</i>	<i>Appraised Value (L, S, P)</i>	<i>Enslaved Names</i>	<i>Appraised Value (L, S, P)</i>
Dick	45	Sampson	50
Jack	60	Cate	35
Major	60	Rachel	30
Sarah	15	Judy	22-10
Lucy	30	Rose	15
Sall	60	Harry	12-10
Sew	60	Abby	10
Fortune	65	Dave	5

36. Rev. Edgar Woods, *Albemarle County in Virginia*, 324-325. (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1901).

37. Albemarle County Will Book [ACWB] 2:311, undated [1774]. Clerk’s Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

38. ACWB 2:328, November 2, 1774.

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A decade after Joel Terrell, Jr.'s death in 1774, his executors sold to Micajah Chiles "the houses and lots whereon Joel Terrell deceased formerly lived, also a forty acre lot adjoining the town of Charlottesville, and other lots belonging to Thomas West and John Day, also one tract of land containing by estimation one hundred and ninety seven acres."<sup>39</sup>

Micajah Chiles moved into the former Terrell residence in Charlottesville and lived there for approximately 15 years. Land tax records for Albemarle County do not document any improvements to the land he owned that would become Oak Lawn.<sup>40</sup>

Between 1783, the first year that Albemarle County recorded personal property tax, and 1800, Micajah Chiles is documented as owning between 1–3 enslaved African Americans.<sup>41</sup> While Chiles was certainly a slave owner, this small number likely was not enough to cultivate the land he owned south of what is now West Main Street. Therefore, the enslaved individuals owned by Chiles likely resided with him in his residence in downtown Charlottesville.

Nearing his demise, Micajah Chiles made out his will in January of 1799. He left a substantial real estate, which he directed was to be sold and the profits arising from the sale to belong to his 'reputed' son Henry Fleming West Alberty, aka Henry Chiles.

...To Henry Fleming West Alberty my reputed son I give and bequeath two mahogany table, one bed and furniture, six chairs such as he may choose, my sorrel horse with a bridle and saddle and my watch. It is my will and I do hereby direct that my executors herein named make sale of all my estate both real and personal, lotts, houses and lands upon such a credit as will in their judgements enable them to obtain the highest prices for the same. ...It is my will that all the money arising from the sale of my estate be paid by my executors to Henry Fleming West Alberty my reputed son at the time he arrives at the age of twenty three years. ...It is my will and I hereby direct that at my decease for just faithful services my slaves Frank, Mark, Fanny and Bridget, be discharged from all future claim of service and they are hereby after the period aforesaid liberated and made free so that they shall enjoy all the privileges of freed people. ...All and every species of my estate not herein before disposed of by way of specific legacies or in trust to my executors to sell, I give and bequeath unto Henry Fleming West Alberty my reputed son.<sup>42</sup>

The four enslaved African Americans freed by Micajah Chiles in his will, Frank, Mark, Fanny and Bridget, conform to the small number of enslaved individuals owned by him and recorded in Albemarle County tax records, and are likely the only individuals he owned while residing in Charlottesville.

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39. Albemarle County Deed Book [ACDB] 8:139, June 10, 1784. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

40. Albemarle County, Virginia, *Land Tax Records*. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

41. Albemarle County, Virginia, *Personal Property Tax Records*. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

42. ACWB 4:30, January 9, 1799.

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Micajah Chiles had died by 1799 at the latest. The executor's accounts of his estate submitted on August 7, 1813, noted the sale of his Charlottesville residence and other lots, as well as small parcels of land.<sup>43</sup> In the period between 1800 and 1815, a portion of the Micajah Chiles estate including his residence and lots in Charlottesville and 567 acres of land north of town were sold to Menan Mills, but as a result of non-payment, ultimately ended up in dispute. During this 15-year period, the land that would contain Oak Lawn may have sat idle or was perhaps leased to an unknown tenant. No record of a lease for the land could be found in local records.<sup>44</sup>

On May 8, 1815, Micajah Chiles executors sold a 204-acre parcel noted to be "adjoining the three notched road and bounded by the lands of Alexander Garrett, Wests estate, lands of Trent heirs, and John M. Perry," to Henry Chiles, his 'reputed' son. As described in the deed of conveyance, the parcel's description and metes and bounds place the property south of what is now West Main Street and adjacent to neighbors on the east (Alexander Garrett and Thomas West), and west (John M. Perry, the land of Trent's heirs), clearly identifying it as containing the land that would become Oak Lawn.<sup>45</sup>

On the same date he obtained title to the lands, Henry Chiles sold a 400-acre parcel to Jesse W. Garth. The 400 acres sold to Garth contained the same 204-acre parcel he had acquired from Micajah Chiles executors, an adjacent approximately 50-acre parcel he had acquired from Edward W. Trent's heirs, and an approximately 146-acre portion of a 214-acre parcel of land he had acquired from William Wardlaw. The approximately 400-acre parcel was described as "lying in the County of Albemarle adjoining Charlottesville, Alexander Garrett, Thomas West, John M. Perry, Reuben Maury and Francis Taliaferro."<sup>46</sup>

Born in Albemarle County, Virginia, Jesse Winston Garth was 27 years old in 1815 when he acquired the portion of the Micajah Chiles estate that would later become Oak Lawn. Educated in law, Garth went on to become an attorney and began practicing in Charlottesville in 1809. In the War of 1812, Garth served in the 88<sup>th</sup> Virginia Militia alongside Nimrod Bramham, ultimately rising to the rank of Major. He was also elected to and served in the Virginia Assembly as the Albemarle County Delegate between 1813 and 1817, a term that immediately succeeded that of Nimrod Bramham. As a lawyer, Garth likely resided in Charlottesville and by 1813 may have also had a residence in Richmond during his tenure as a Delegate.<sup>47</sup> Given their mutual service in the 88<sup>th</sup> Virginia Militia and Virginia House of Delegates, it is likely that Garth and Bramham were well acquainted with one another.

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43. ACWB 6:22-25, August 7, 1813.

44. Albemarle County, Virginia. Micajah Chiles Executors vs. Menan Mills, *Albemarle County Chancery Court Records* 1805-020. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

45. ACDB 20:107, May 8, 1815.

46. ACDB 20:261, May 8, 1815.

47. "General Jesse Winston Garth," *Huntsville History Collection*, <https://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hhc/browse-person.php?a=person&pe=General%20Jesse%20Winston%20Garth>, accessed May 20, 2024.



## OAK LAWN

Albemarle County Land Tax records from the early nineteenth century document that Jesse W. Garth owned a 400-acre parcel located ‘near Charlottesville’ that possessed a total value of \$436 in 1817. A year later in 1818 Garth is recorded as owning 393 acres with a total value of \$429.27.<sup>48</sup> Between 1815 and 1818, Albemarle County personal property tax records document that Garth owned between 4 and 7 enslaved African Americans.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence to support Garth’s cultivation or development of the 400-acre parcel that contained what would become Oak Lawn.

Like many Virginians, Jesse W. Garth decided to move further south following the Creek War (1813-1814) and the forcible acquisition of indigenous lands by General Andrew Jackson that eventually led to the Trail of Tears. In 1816 the United States negotiated the Treaty of Turkeytown with the Cherokee and Chickasaw, a compact which ceded Cherokee lands south of the Tennessee River to the United States for a payment of \$5,000. The U.S. Government would go on to sell the former Cherokee land to white settlers. Perhaps in an effort to acquire prime agricultural lands in the newly established Alabama territory, in late 1817 Jesse W. Garth moved his family to what would become Decatur in Morgan County, Alabama. Over the next several decades, Garth would go on to establish and develop one of the largest plantations along the Tennessee River, an agricultural complex that in 1860 was supported by the labor of 31 enslaved African Americans.<sup>50</sup>

Shortly following his move to Alabama, Garth sold his land “near the town of Charlottesville containing 394 acres ...joining the lands of John M. Perry, Henry Chiles, Robert Battles, Thomas Wests estate, George Perry and Reuben Maury,” to Nimrod Bramham.<sup>51</sup>

## THE BRAMHAM FAMILY AND OAK GROVE (1818–1847)

Nimrod Bramham was born in 1769 in Culpeper County, Virginia (Figure 6). At least a generation earlier, the Bramham family had moved to Orange County, and then Culpeper County from the Tidewater region during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Nimrod Bramham married Margaret (Peggy) Marshall in 1797. Shortly after their marriage, Nimrod and Margaret Bramham moved to Albemarle County, purchasing land and establishing a residence and plantation named Sebree, later renamed Walnut Hill, in the Stony Point vicinity, approximately 8.2 miles northeast of Charlottesville.<sup>52</sup>

Nimrod and Margaret were members of, and involved with, the Baptist Church. In May of 1805, Nimrod donated one acre of ground to the Preddy Creek Baptist Church. The deed noted

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48. Albemarle County, Virginia, *Land Tax Records*. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

49. Albemarle County, Virginia, *Personal Property Tax Records*. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

50. “Treaty with the Cherokee, 1816.” *Tribal Treaties Database*, Oklahoma State University Library, <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-choerokee-1816-0133>, accessed October 24, 2024; *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Slave Schedule, Morgan County, Virginia*.

51. ACDB 21:207, April 11, 1818.

52. ACDB 12:436, December 26, 1797.

## OAK LAWN



Figure 6. Portrait of Nimrod Bramham, n.d.

that there was already a ‘meeting house’ standing on the parcel, and that the real estate gift was to be restricted for ‘religious worship.’<sup>53</sup> Bramham continued to be involved in the Baptist Church throughout his life. He was a founding member of the Albemarle Bible Society in 1828 and, after moving to Charlottesville, was a Trustee of the Charlottesville Baptist Church in 1835.<sup>54</sup>

Early fire insurance policies document that in addition to his wooden one-story residence at Sebree, Nimrod also operated a tavern, a merchant store, and a lumber house in Stony Point.<sup>55</sup> Bramham’s early commercial success in the Stony Point vicinity eventually led to his purchase of land in Charlottesville proper. In 1806 Bramham purchased a portion of Lot 58 in Charlottesville. The lot was located immediately west of and was adjacent to the Albemarle County Courthouse. There he opened a merchant store on Court Square, initially partnering with John R. Jones, and afterwards in 1821 with his son-in-law William Bibb. Fire insurance policies document that Nimrod Bramham continued to reside at his Stony Point residence through the early 1820s.

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53. ACDB 15:172, May 1, 1805.

54. Rev. Edgar Woods, *Albemarle County*, 102-103, 134, 148-149.

55. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, “Mutual Assurance Society Against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, Declarations,” *Microfilm 5794*, 1796-1838, Declaration 418, Reel 2, Volume 14; Declaration 996, Reel 2, Volume 17; Declaration 997, Reel 2, Volume 17; Declaration 4891, Reel 4, Volume 36; Declaration 2088, Reel 5, Volume 45. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

# OAK LAWN

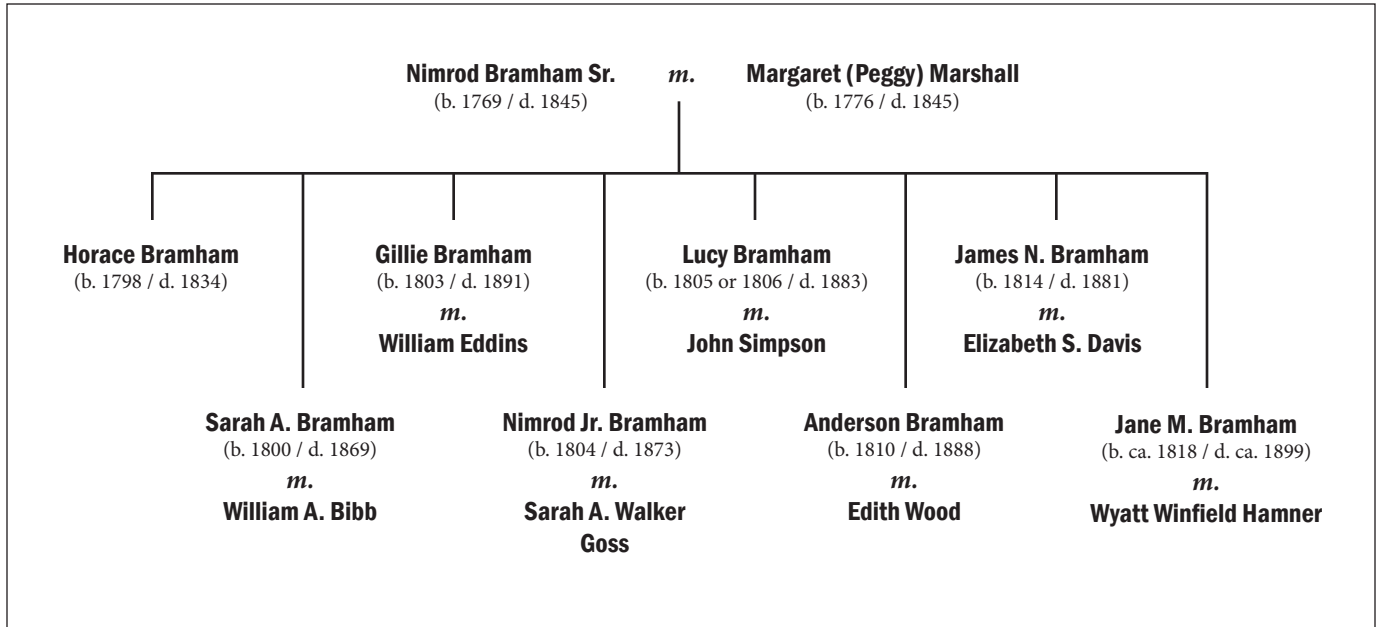


Figure 7. Nimrod Bramham family.



## OAK LAWN

Bramham sold two large parcels in the Stony Point vicinity, likely representing his Walnut Hill plantation, in 1827 and 1828.<sup>56</sup>

Like many wealthy and prominent men of his generation, Nimrod Bramham became involved in the military, government, and politics. In February of 1809, Nimrod Bramham was appointed Secretary of the reformed the 88<sup>th</sup> Virginia Militia, composed of a number of Revolutionary War veterans and calling themselves “the Company of Men of the year ’76, of the 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Virginia.” The 88<sup>th</sup> was reformed for military duty because it was “more than alarmed at the opposition made in the Eastern part of the Unions, to the will of the majority.” The 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment further committed that “if there should be occasion for it in the field, [it would] march in full force without leaving it’s own home too much exposed.” In March of 1813, Col. Nimrod Bramham and his 88<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment along with many other County regiments were given orders to “take the field within three days,” and march to Richmond in support of the American effort in the War of 1812.<sup>57</sup>

Nimrod Bramham was also involved in both local and state-wide government. Bramham served as an Albemarle County magistrate in 1801, and was certified as the Albemarle County Commissioner of Elections for the 1812 Presidential election. Bramham was also elected to the Virginia House and served as a Delegate for Albemarle County between 1811 and 1813. Perhaps a reflection of his standing in the local community, Nimrod Bramham was one of ten commissioners designated by the General Assembly to receive subscriptions or shares in the Rivanna Company, a corporation organized in 1805 to improve the navigation of the Rivanna River from Columbia in Fluvanna County to Milton in Albemarle County. Likewise in the late 18-teens, Bramham was appointed to serve as an Overseer of the Poor, responsible for assessing the needs of, and providing assistance to, the local poor.<sup>58</sup>

As the Albemarle County Delegate, Nimrod Bramham would necessarily have been intimately associated with other delegates from central Virginia, as well as prominent local leaders and residents of Albemarle County and their causes and concerns. Thomas Jefferson in fact wrote to Nimrod Bramham in early 1813 during his tenure as the Delegate for Albemarle County. Jefferson was attempting to provide Bramham with essential facts about his interactions with the Rivanna Company, and their actions at and adjacent to his own Shadwell Mills complex on the Rivanna River. In the letter, Jefferson was trying to influence a new law, arguing that it needed to preserve his rights in and to his own mill site, and assure that tolls collected by the Company were only

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56. Rev. Edgar Woods, *Albemarle County*, 148-149; ACDB 15:492, August 2, 1806; Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, “Mutual Assurance Society Against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia, Declarations,” *Microfilm 5794*, 1796-1838, Declaration 2490, Reel 9, Volume 73, Declaration 5243, Reel 12, Volume 84; ACDB 27:13, October 3, 1827; 27:357, December 22, 1828.

57. “For the Enquirer,” *Enquirer*, Vol. 5, No. 93, February 24, 1809; “General Orders,” *Enquirer*, Vol. 9, No. 102, March 26, 1813.

58. Rev. Edgar Woods, *Albemarle County*, 148-149, 377; Commonwealth of Virginia, “An Act Incorporating a Company for Improving the Navigation of the Rivanna River,” 42-45. *Acts Passed at a General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1811*. (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants Jr., 1811).

## OAK LAWN

done so at their own locks which were upriver from his mill site.<sup>59</sup> As previously noted, based on their military service in the War of 1812 and their successive terms in the Virginia House of Delegates as an Albemarle County Delegate, it is likely that Nimrod Bramham and Jesse W. Garth may have known each other quite well.

Nimrod and Margaret would come to have eight children together, Horace (b. 1798), Sarah (b. 1800), Gillie (b. 1803), Nimrod Jr. (b. 1804), Lucy (b. 1805), Anderson (b. 1810), James (b. 1814), and Jane (b. circa 1818). All of their children were born before or by the time Nimrod Bramham purchased what would become Oak Grove in 1818. The increasing size of their family in fact may have been one of the primary motives for moving from their one-story, 16 by 27-foot wooden dwelling house at Stony Point. Of their six children, Sarah would marry William A. Bibb in 1820, Nimrod Jr. would marry Sarah A. Walker Goss in 1826, Lucy would marry John Simpson in 1828, Gillie would marry William Eddins in 1836, James would marry Elizabeth S. Davis in 1838, and Jane would marry Wyatt W. Hamner in 1840.

The 394-acre tract purchased by Nimrod Bramham from Jesse W. Garth in 1818 bordered the south side of what is now Jefferson Park Avenue and extended down to the branches of Moore's Creek at Cleveland Avenue. It also occupied a relatively narrow north-south oriented lobe of high ground overlooking unnamed drainages of Moore's Creek located to both the east and west (Figure 8).

Almost immediately Bramham set about constructing a residence on his lands west of Charlottesville. Albemarle Land Tax Records document that the value of Nimrod Bramham's 394-acre tract in 1819 was \$429.46, and that this amount did not change between 1819 and 1821. By 1822 however, the land tax records note that the value of the land and buildings combined was \$7,925, with a note of a significant increase of "\$3,000, added for new buildings."<sup>60</sup> The 'new buildings' noted in the Albemarle County tax records likely reflect the completed construction of a new residence, as well as a number of unidentified supporting outbuildings.

The Nimrod Bramham residence, a property he named Oak Grove, was a two-story, three bay brick residence with gable end pediment and columned Tuscan portico, arranged in a 'T' plan, and inspired by Jeffersonian Classicism. Design and construction of Oak Grove is traditionally attributed to master builder James Dinsmore (see the "James Dinsmore and Oak Lawn" chapter in this report).

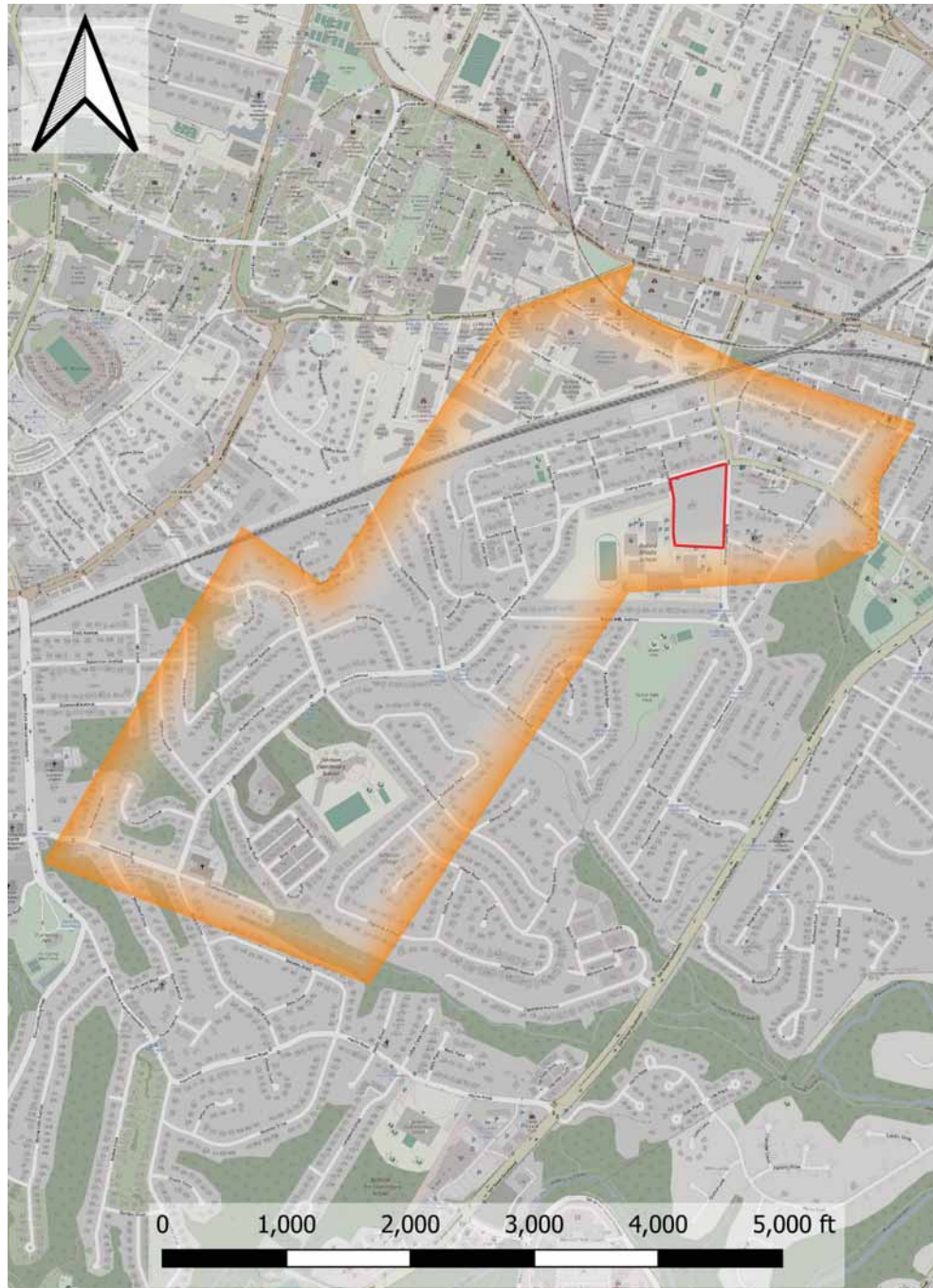
In 1840, Albemarle County land tax records document the only additional increase in the value of Oak Grove during Nimrod Bramham's lifetime. In that year, the valuation of Bramham's property "on account of buildings" was \$3,700, a \$700 increase from previous years. No note or explanation of the increase was provided in the land tax books. It is assumed that this modest

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59. Thomas Jefferson to Nimrod Bramham, January 5, 1813. *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-05-02-0455>, accessed November 1, 2024.

60. Albemarle County, Virginia, *Land Tax Records*, Microfilm Reel 8, 1814B–1825A. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. In the 1820s, Virginia land tax records begin recording "value added to land on account of buildings."

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 8. Plan showing location of 394-acre tract purchased by Nimrod Bramham from Jesse W. Garth in 1818. Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC., 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

increase likely reflected the construction of an unidentified alteration to the residence, or perhaps the construction of one or more significant outbuildings on the broader property.<sup>61</sup>

Although primarily known as a merchant, Nimrod Bramham was also a planter who farmed the land he owned. Like many of his wealthy peers, Bramham relied upon agricultural production as a source of income. Bramham's interest in agricultural practices was sincere and in 1817, he joined Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Mann Randolph, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, James Barbour, Mann Page, William Meriwether, George Gilmer, John H. Cocke, Joseph C. Cabell, Philip P. Barbour, among other local leaders, as a founding member of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle. The Society was dedicated to agricultural reform and published the *American Farmer* beginning in the 1820s. In the early 1820s, Nimrod Bramham served as treasurer of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle.<sup>62</sup> According to G. Harold Williams' article "Agricultural Society of Albemarle County," agricultural societies took the lead in bringing about reform and the Albemarle Agricultural Society in particular had a significant impact on the agricultural practices in the Commonwealth.<sup>63</sup>

Agricultural production at Oak Grove could not have taken place without the labor of enslaved African Americans. Personal property tax records for Albemarle County document that between 1818 and 1822, Nimrod Bramham Sr. was taxed on between 4 and 5 enslaved individuals. However from 1823 onwards, Bramham paid taxes on between 9 and 15 enslaved individuals. The significant increase in taxable property from 1823 onwards corresponds to Bramham's purchase of Oak Grove in 1818 and completing the construction of his residence and associated outbuildings circa 1822 (Table #3).<sup>64</sup>

Federal decennial census records between 1820–1840 tell a different story. Population statistics during this period record that Bramham owned considerably more enslaved African Americans than the number for which he was taxed. In 1820, only two years after acquiring Oak Grove, Federal census records document that Bramham owned 33 enslaved individuals. The census also noted that 18 of these individuals were 'engaged in agriculture.' A decade later in 1830, Bramham is recorded as owning 27 enslaved individuals. By 1840, when Bramham would have been in his 70s, he is recorded as owning 19 enslaved individuals, six of whom were 'employed in agriculture' (Table #4).<sup>65</sup>

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61. Albemarle County, *Land Tax Records*. Reel 10, 1836-1844. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

62. *Central Gazette*, Vol. 2, No. 55 (February 9, 1821):3.

63. Rodney H. True, "Early Days of the Albemarle Agricultural Society," 246-247. *Agricultural History Society Papers*, Vol. 1 (1921): 243-259; G. Harold Williams, "Agricultural Society of Albemarle County, Virginia," iii-iv. Master of Arts Thesis, 1965, University of Richmond.

64. Albemarle County, *Personal Property Tax Records*. Reel 7, 1814-1822. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

65. *Fourth U.S. Census, 1820*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; *Fifth U.S. Census, 1830*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; *Sixth U.S. Census, 1840*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

## OAK LAWN

TABLE 3: ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS TAXED BY ALBEMARLE COUNTY AND OWNED BY NIMROD BRAMHAM, 1818–1845.<sup>66</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Taxed Enslaved Individuals</i>
1818	4
1820	5
1823	15
1825	15
1830	13
1835	12
1840	11
1845	9

TABLE 4: ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED BY THE FEDERAL CENSUS AND OWNED BY NIMROD BRAMHAM, 1820–1840.<sup>67</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Enslaved Males</i>						<i>Enslaved Females</i>						<i>Totals</i>
	<i>Under 14</i>	<i>14-25</i>	<i>26-44</i>	<i>45 +</i>			<i>Under 14</i>	<i>14-25</i>	<i>26-44</i>	<i>45 +</i>			
1820	3	7	2	5		17	5	5	3	3		16	33
	<i>Under 10</i>	<i>10-23</i>	<i>24-35</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55+</i>		<i>Under 10</i>	<i>10-23</i>	<i>24-35</i>	<i>35-54</i>	<i>55+</i>		
1830	7	1	4	2	1	15	5	3	3	1	0	12	27
1840	4	2	0	3	1	10	1	3	2	2	1	9	19

The scale of enslavement and the number of individuals employed in agricultural activities as recorded by the U.S. Census clearly links the Oak Grove plantation to large scale agricultural production. Although no formal records exist as to the agricultural productions at Oak Grove over the quarter century between the 1820s and 1845, it is likely that Bramham produced a mix of both cash and subsistence crops similar to those espoused by the Agricultural Society of Albemarle. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, farmers in central Virginia had been transitioning from a near exclusive reliance on tobacco to a mixed-grain production, one that included wheat, corn, oats, barley as well as limited quantities of tobacco. An inventory and appraisal of the Nimrod Bramham estate in 1845 documents the presence of farming implements used in both tobacco and grain production including numerous ploughs and plow chains, 2 wheat fans, 3 scythes and cradles, 2 grass scythes, 3 cultivators, a ‘clover seed gatherer,’ 3 grubbing hoes, 2 mattocks, and 7

66. Albemarle County, *Personal Property Tax Records*. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

67. *Fourth U.S. Census, 1820*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; *Fifth U.S. Census, 1830*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; *Sixth U.S. Census, 1840*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.



## OAK LAWN

hilling hoes, as well as pens and lots of chaff, stacks of hay, straw, and oats, “158 bushels 51 lbs. wheat in Timberlake’s Mill,” and a “crops of corn growing supposed 75 bbl.”<sup>68</sup>

Bramham also kept significant quantities of livestock on his plantation to provide for the residents of Oak Grove. The same inventory and appraisal of the Nimrod Bramham estate in 1845 documents 1 roan horse, 1 brown horse, 1 bay horse, 1 black mare, 1 sorrel horse, 1 bell cow and calf, 1 brindle cow and calf, 1 red cow and calf, 1 buffy cow, 1 red cow, 1 little red cow, 1 Durham bull, 1 bell calf, 1 red & white, 1 red ox, 1 red heifer, 1 black yearling, 1 red spotted yearling, and 1 lot of hogs.<sup>69</sup>

Surrounding the primary residence at Oak Grove, there likely would have been other buildings and structures that supported the day-to-day agricultural operation of the plantation, as well as serving the running of the Bramham household. The 1845 inventory and appraisal of Nimrod Bramham’s Oak Grove estate identified three outbuildings by name: at least two stables, one described as ‘nearest’ but also implying a second ‘farther’ stable, both presumably where livestock were housed and cared for; and at least one barn, likely where grain and other agricultural products may have been processed and stored.<sup>70</sup> There likely would have been several other buildings and structures at Oak Grove in the pre-Emancipation period including one or more quarters where enslaved African Americans lived and possibly worked, and other typical support structures such as a kitchen, a smokehouse, an icehouse, privies, and a well. The kitchen, smokehouse, icehouse and well would likely have been located close in, or convenient to, the primary residence. Quarters for enslaved African Americans could have been located both close to, as well as some distance from the primary residence.

Throughout the decade between 1830 and 1840, Nimrod Bramham sold off small portions of his Oak Grove estate to individuals he likely knew including 2.25 acres to Professor George Blaetterman in 1830; a parcel totaling “3 or 4 acres” to Allen W. Hawkins, a brick mason, in 1840; and 2.5 acres to James Lobban, also a brick mason, sometime prior to 1844. Each of these small parcels was located at the western end of his Oak Grove parcel adjacent to the University of Virginia.

Perhaps following a bout of serious illness, in late 1837 Nimrod Bramham made out his will. In it he left his merchant store and dwelling house at Court Square to his wife Margaret for her lifetime. He also left to Margaret “three such negroes as she may select from the whole number of my negroes.” The rest of his real estate was divided up between his six surviving children, Sarah,

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68. “An Inventory & Appraisement of the Estate of Col. Nimrod Bramham, dec’d made on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1845.” Albemarle County Will Book [ACWB ]19:90, August 4, 1845. Clerk’s Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

69. “An Inventory & Appraisement of the Estate of Col. Nimrod Bramham, dec’d made on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1845.” ACWB 19:90, August 4, 1845. Clerk’s Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

70. “An Inventory & Appraisement of the Estate of Col. Nimrod Bramham, dec’d made on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1845.” ACWB 19:90, August 4, 1845. Clerk’s Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.



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Nimrod Jr., James, Lucy, Gilly and Jane. He directed his executor, his son-in-law and business partner William A. Bibb, to sell “the plantation on which I now reside called Oak Grove.”<sup>71</sup>

At the time of his death in June of 1845, Nimrod Bramham Sr. owned a total of 22 enslaved African Americans. The inventory and appraisal of his estate in 1845 noted the names and relationships of these individuals and assessed their value. The inventory documents at least three enslaved families including 1) Spencer and Dinah and their four sons Wilson, James, Jackson and Lewis; 2) Dick and Maria/Mariah and their four children and one grandchild, Lemuel, John, Abram and Hardina and her infant child; and 3) Martha and her two children, an unnamed infant and son Albert. Not noted to be related to any other individuals were two enslaved men, John and Willis, and three enslaved boys George, Gilbert, and William (Table #5).<sup>72</sup>

TABLE 5: ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS  
OWNED BY NIMROD BRAMHAM AT HIS DEATH IN 1845.

<i>Enslaved Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Valuation</i>
Spencer	Negro man	n/a	\$375
Dinah	Negro woman	Wife of Spencer	\$225
Wilson	Negro boy	Child of Spencer	\$550
James	Negro boy	Child of Spencer	\$550
Jackson	Negro boy	Child of Spencer	\$350
Lewis	Negro boy	Child of Spencer	\$225
Dick	Negro man	n/a	\$300
Maria and infant	Negro woman	n/a	\$300
Martha	Negro girl	n/a	\$500
Albert	Negro boy	Martha's son	\$150
Lemuel	Negro boy	Dick and Mariah's son	\$150
John	Negro boy	Dick and Mariah's son	\$250
Abram	Negro boy	Dick and Mariah's son	\$600
Hardina and infant	Negro girl	Mariah's daughter	\$500
George	Negro boy	n/a	\$475
Gilbert	Negro boy	n/a	\$475
William	Negro boy	n/a	\$300
John	Negro man	n/a	\$400
Willis	Negro man	n/a	\$550

71. ACWB 17:61, October 5, 1837.

72. “An Inventory & Appraisement of the Estate of Col. Nimrod Bramham, dec'd made on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1845.” ACWB 19:90, August 4, 1845. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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The disposition of the enslaved men, women and children owned by the Bramham estate is not yet known. It is likely that at least some of the individuals continued to live with Margaret Bramham until her death a month later in July of 1845, and after that they likely resided with the children of Nimrod and Margaret Bramham.

Two years after the deaths of Nimrod and Peggy Bramham, in 1847 William A. Bibb sold the Oak Grove property, then a tract of 388 acres, to the Reverend James Fife. The deed of conveyance specifically excepted from the sale of a roughly 60 by 210-foot family burying ground.

“William A. Bibb reserves to himself, for the use of the children and other descendants of the said Nimrod Bramham dec’d, and of such other persons as may be permitted to use the same, the “Family Burying Ground” situated on and belonging to the said tract or parcel of land hereby conveyed, ...with rights of entry thereon, at any time and at all times and upon all neet and proper occasion. And which said burying Ground contains or is intended to contain 400 square yards and is bounded as follows to wit: beginning 11 feet from the southwestern corner in an easterly direction 20 yards—thence at right angles in a southerly direction 20 yards, thence westerly parallel with the second line 20 yards to the beginning.”<sup>73</sup>

Based solely on the grave of Dr. Horace W. Bramham (d. 1834), Nimrod’s oldest son, the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery was likely established sometime in 1834. Although many Bramham family members are buried in the cemetery, so too are members of the related Bibb, Garland, Hamner, Pinkard, Simpson, and Slaughter families predominantly representing the families of the daughters of Nimrod and Margaret.

## JAMES FIFE AND OAK LAWN (1847–1876)<sup>74</sup>

Born in Scotland in 1793, James Fife and his family were initially Presbyterian, but became Baptists in the early 1800s. In 1811, James and his brothers Robert and William had immigrated to the United States. James moved on to Richmond and is reported to have eventually been employed as a surveyor or engineer.<sup>75</sup> By the 1820s Fife had moved westward to Goochland County and

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73. ACDB 45:89, March 22, 1847.

74. At some point in time, James Fife renamed Oak Grove to its current Oak Lawn. The specific date for this change, and the reason why it was renamed, are not known. However, evidence suggests that this transition occurred sometime right before the Civil War. Land tax records refer to the property owned by James Fife as Oak Grove up through 1855. Likewise, a letter written by Margaret H. Fife to her son Herndon in 1863 notes that it was written from Oak Lawn. For the purpose of this document, and to facilitate ease of reading and comprehension, the residence and estate will be referred to as Oak Grove during the Bramham tenure, and as Oak Lawn during the Fife tenure. Further research into additional family correspondence during the late 1850s to early 1860s may narrow the time frame for this name change.

75. WPA historian Nancy O’Brien reported for the Virginia Historical Inventory in 1936 that James Fife “had in his youth practiced landscape gardening in Scotland, and was a civil engineer, [and] had laid out some of the early subdivisions in Richmond.” O’Brien would likely have received this information from an unnamed Fife family member

# OAK LAWN

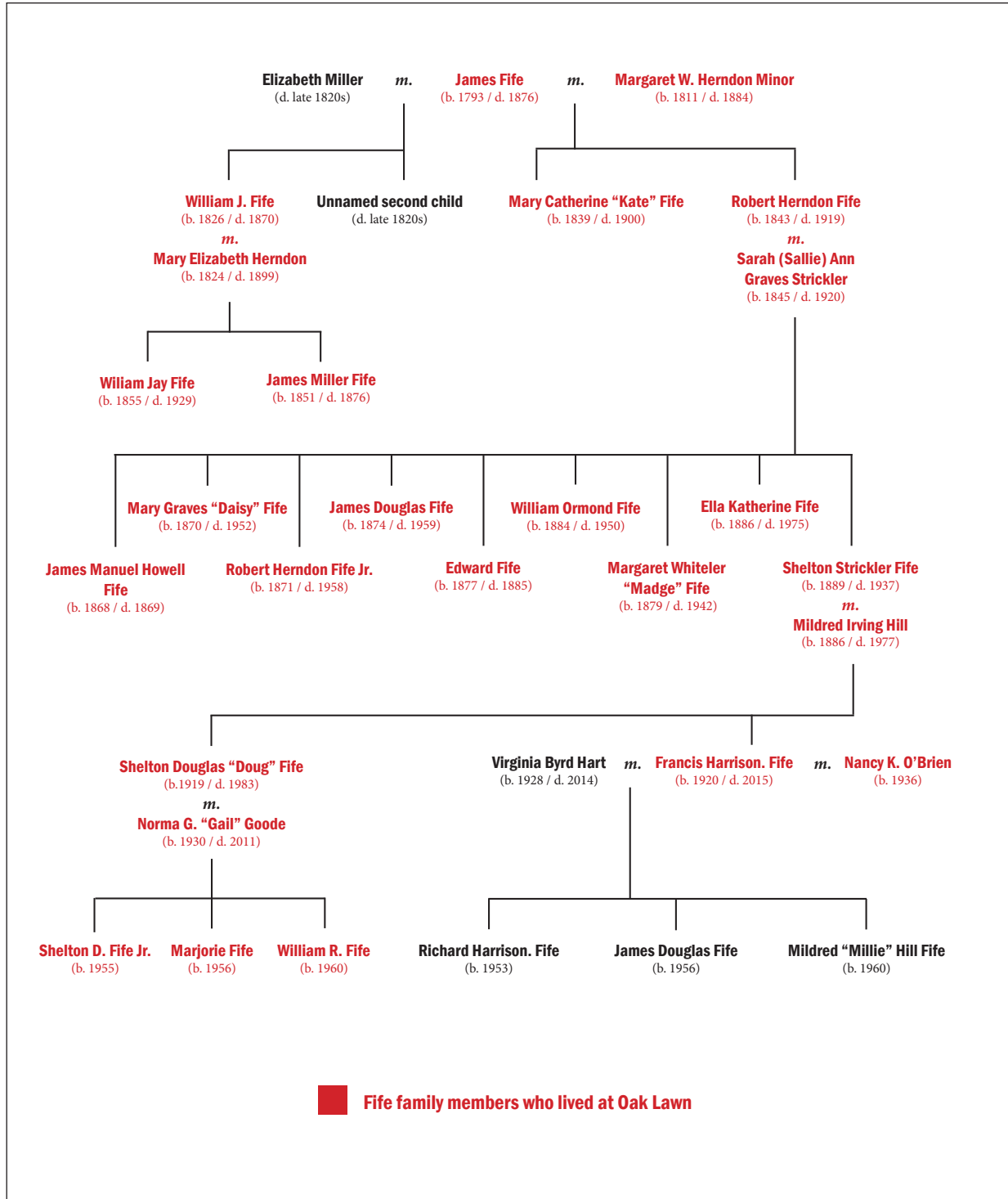


Figure 9. Fife family tree.

## OAK LAWN

began actively preaching in a number of local churches. In 1823, along with fellow pastor Edward Baptist, Fife organized the Baptist General Association of Virginia.<sup>76</sup>

At some time in the early 1820s, James Fife met his first wife, Elizabeth Jones Miller. In September of 1824 James and Elizabeth were married in Goochland County. Together they had two children, William J. Fife who was born in 1826, and a second unidentified child born shortly thereafter. Because Elizabeth Miller died sometime in the late 1820s, it is possible she may have died in childbirth along with their second child.<sup>77</sup>

In the post-1832 period, widower Rev. James Fife met the widow Margaret Whitley Herndon. They became engaged and were married in 1835.<sup>78</sup> By the late 1830s Rev. James Fife and his family had moved to Albemarle County, purchasing the Rock Hill estate north of Charlottesville. In Albemarle County, the Rev. Fife served as pastor of Chestnut Grove, Pine Grove, Liberty, Mountain Plain, Fork Union, Hardware, Blue Run, and Zion Baptist churches in central Virginia.<sup>79</sup> At Rock Hill, James and Margaret had two children: Mary Catherine (b. 1839), and Robert Herndon (b. 1843).<sup>80</sup> In 1847, the year that he purchased Oak Lawn from the Nimrod Bramham estate, the Rev. James Fife also sold his Rock Hill estate, “lately occupied as the residence of James Fife,” and the 66 acres which surround it.<sup>81</sup>

Almost immediately, James Fife began to repair and renovate his new residence and grounds. In a March of 1848 letter to an acquaintance, he wrote that “I have been very much employed since I moved to my current residence on account of the place being in a state of ruin when I bought it.” The ‘state of ruin’ that Fife referred to in early 1848 may have reflected its sitting vacant during the nearly three years between Nimrod and Margaret Bramham’s death in mid-1845, the subsequent dispersal of enslaved labor to children and descendants, and Fife’s acquisition of the property.<sup>82</sup>

In 1850, the Virginia Central Railroad arrived in Charlottesville from Gordonsville, Virginia. By 1854, the Orange and Alexandria Railroad began construction of a new line from Charlottesville to Lynchburg, Virginia which was completed in 1860. The new Orange and Alexandria Railroad line passed through the northern portion of James Fife’s lands. Between

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at Oak Lawn while she was visiting the property. Research has not been able to verify if Fife was a landscape gardener or engineer.

76. George B. Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 225–236. (Lynchburg: J. P. Bell, 1912).

77. Millie Fife to Benjamin Ford, Electronic mail communication, October 28–29, 2024.

78. Margaret Whiteley Herndon was married to Dr. Henry Laurens Minor in 1829. Dr. Minor died circa 1832. They had a son who died in infancy.

79. Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 225–236; *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond), “Death of Rev. James Fife,” Vol. 50, October 7, 1876: 3.

80. Census records also note a son named William J. Fife who was 26 years old in 1850. William was the son of James Fife and his first wife Elizabeth Miller.

81. ACDB 45:322, October 21, 1847. Rock Hill contains numerous terraces contained by rubble stone retaining walls, possibly landscape features that the former City Engineer of Richmond built.

82. James Fife to Martin B. Shepherd, March 2, 1848. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 2. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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1856 and 1857 court commissioners assessed the land that was required to be condemned, as well the damages to property owners through which its line passed. A total of 6.5 acres of Fife's land was condemned and valued at \$325. In addition, a total of \$266.66 were paid to Fife on account of general damages, "borrow pits," and "damages to the residue of the tract over and above the advantages of the same."<sup>83</sup>

Albemarle County Land Tax records between 1848 and 1856 document that the value of Oak Lawn and its buildings remained fairly constant suggesting that no new taxable construction took place during this period. However, in 1857, the value of the buildings at Oak Lawn increased by \$300, making a total value for all buildings of \$4,000. No explanation for the change in value was given, however this relatively modest increase could reflect the construction of a small addition to an existing structure or an entirely new outbuilding.<sup>84</sup>

Between the late 1850s and mid-1860s, James Fife began selling off small portions of Oak Lawn. During this period, he sold a 2.75-acre parcel to one Mary Daniel; a 0.4-acre parcel to Virginia Shackelford; a 4-acre parcel to Thomas Harris, a 17.75-acre parcel to George D. Harris; and a 15.1-acre parcel to John T. Barksdale and John Fry. All of these parcels were located at the western end of the Oak Lawn parcel, north of the Orange and Alexandria's railroad line, and south of what was then Wheeler's Road (now Jefferson Park Avenue) in the vicinity of the University Hospital.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to his primary calling as a Baptist preacher, the Rev. James Fife was also a very active farmer. An account book for Oak Lawn, kept between 1847-1855, recorded the daily activities that occurred on the plantation, as well as Fife's purchases and expenses. Within the first few years of his ownership, James Fife expended a significant amount of money fencing his land. Between the Spring of 1847 and the Spring of 1850, Fife employed the free black Battles family to accomplish numerous tasks. Fife paid Robert Battles to haul posts and rails, Elijah Battles, a free black carpenter, to erect numerous fences, and Noah Battles for shingling a quarter at Oak Lawn. Likewise, Fife continued to improve the lands surrounding the Oak Lawn mansion through plowing, fertilizing, and ditching. In 1847 he paid an enslaved man named Ben for 137 yards of ditching. Later in the same year he paid a man named Byers for ditching. Four years later Kirby was paid for additional ditching. The ditching may have served to drain low-lying areas of Oak Lawn, or perhaps provide water to fields via a reservoir. Improvements to the structures on the property included paying Robert Battles for shingling "two rooms," in January of 1848, and paying Elijah Battles for shingling a stable in March of 1851, a "house" in April of 1851, for repairing the "machine shed at Barn" in February of 1853, for unidentified work on a smoke house in April of 1854, and for "timber and shingles for a kitchen in September of 1854. In May of 1859, Franklin Battles was paid for "fencing done and covering barn and shed it being a settlement" for all of the

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83. ACDB 66:207.

84. Albemarle County, *Land Tax Records*. Reel 11, 1845-1850; Reel 11A, 1850-1854; Reel 11B, 1855; Reel 11C, 1856-1860. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

85. ACDB 57:618; 59:101; 60:139; 60:360; 60:373.

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work he had done at Oak Lawn. In 1850 George W. Spooner, a prominent white carpenter and contractor, performed repair work on the roof of the Oak Lawn residence. Spooner was paid for ordering slate, and for 'slating,' between June and September of 1850. Fife paid Spooner \$100.99, the "balance due for slating house" in January of 1851. The roof on the residence at Oak Lawn was repaired again in April of 1856. In that year Fife noted that he had paid "Elliott for repairing roof of my house."<sup>86</sup>

Fife's account book also notes the location and names of fields surrounding the residence at Oak Lawn, often providing prominent landmarks and structures as references. In 1851 Fife recorded a total of 113-acres of fields he had sowed including "on the hill next to Phillips brick kiln – 11, next to H. Murry's – 9, next Watson's fence – 10, hill south of Barn – 16; flatts and hill west of them – 22, south of the grave yard – 3.5, back of the stable – 11.5, from the barn down the branch – 7.5, big hill next Whitfields [Widderfield] – 17, west side of branch running from Whitfields [Widderfield] – 5.5." Five years later in 1856, his wheat crop was planted on 96 acres including in "the field to Murry's – 24, from the branch to the house – 12, at the gate – 6, in triangle – 2, in field – 8, next to Miss Maury – 4, sowed west of the road leading to the spring – 10, sowed on the same – 6, between branch and stable – 4."<sup>87</sup>

James Fife was an advocate of fertilizer to obtain the most productive yields from his fields. He used fertilizers extensively, experimenting with several and comparing their use on various crops. Between 1847 and 1856 Fife ordered manure and ashes from local sources, as well as lime and guano from local and regional suppliers. Shortly after his purchase of Oak Lawn, Fife began putting manure on his fields. His account book notes numerous payments for wagon loads of manure between 1847 and 1850. By mid-1848, Fife was also paying for large quantities of guano, a fertilizer that cost between \$40 and \$50 per ton not including shipping and haulage fees. In June of 1848 he ordered a ton of 'African guano.' His orders for guano from local merchants increased to 7 tons in 1849, and 9.5 tons in 1850. By 1853 he was ordered 13 tons of guano from Baltimore, and in 1854 another 3 tons. Less frequently Fife purchased 'plaster' in large quantities, a product that was ground at a local mill and presumably for agricultural purposes. In 1856 Fife also experimented with ashes as a fertilizer, purchasing 45 barrels in 1856, one from "a negro man at Bower's."<sup>88</sup>

James Fife also conveyed his knowledge about agriculture to other local and regional farmers, writing many articles for the *Southern Planter* and other agricultural periodicals between the 1840s and 1870s. The subjects he wrote about centered generally on manures and fertilizers, his experiments with them, and his recommendations on each. He wrote about his experiments with

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86. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 2, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855; Receipts of James Fife 1850-1860, Box 2. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

87. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855. Box 2.

88. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855. Box 2.



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poudrette<sup>89</sup> on corn, peas, cabbage and beets, with Guano and its comparison with manure as a fertilizer, the use of single manures, potash, and pea vines as a fertilizer for tobacco, and Peruvian Guano.<sup>90</sup> Following his death in 1876, the Rev. James Fife's obituary noted that in addition to his preaching, he was "a farmer, and wrote many practical articles for agricultural and other papers."<sup>91</sup>

Federal productions of agriculture statistics for 1850 document that Fife's Oak Lawn property was valued at \$7,000 and contained approximately 300 improved and 100 unimproved acres. Livestock held at Oak Lawn were limited in number, valued at \$320, and included horses (7), milk cows (3), and swine (2). In that year, Oak Lawn produced 700 bushels of wheat, 500 bushels of corn, 350 bushels of oats, and 20 tons of hay.<sup>92</sup> A decade later in 1860, Fife farmed 240 improved and 110 unimproved acres and his plantation was valued at \$26,250. Livestock at Oak Lawn were valued at \$1,080 and included horses (7), asses / mules (1), and milk cows (6). Oak Lawn produced 1,000 bushels of wheat, 1,250 bushels of corn, 60 bushels of oats, and butter.<sup>93</sup>

Although it is unclear as to when they were constructed, or what their original purpose may have been, a series of four north-south oriented terraces separated by earthen rises, each measuring approximately between 100–125 feet long and 10–12 feet wide are located on the east facing slope between the Oak Lawn residence and the Fife and Bramham cemeteries. The falling garden style, generally composed of a series of alternating terraces and rises, was popular in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century in the mid-Atlantic region. Because of this, and due to the use of terraces and rises at the University of Virginia's Lawn, the falling garden likely dates to the pre-Emancipation period.<sup>94</sup>

Rev. James Fife could not have produced the subsistence and cash crops that productions of agriculture record for his plantation prior to 1865 without the labor of free and enslaved African Americans. Records from the Fife family document his purchase of enslaved individuals, the leasing of enslaved individuals from others, and the leasing out of enslaved individuals he owned both before his move to Albemarle County, and during his tenure at Oak Lawn. While living in Goochland County, Fife leased three enslaved women, Jane, Celia and Dolly for two years between 1825 and 1826, and purchased an enslaved man named Wilson in 1827, and a "negroe boy named Andrew" in 1835. Fife leased two enslaved men that he owned in 1836. In a letter to his wife

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89. Poudrette is a dried, granular fertilizer composed predominantly of 'night soil' but often mixed with other ingredients such as gypsum.

90. "Poudrette," *Southern Planter*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1, 1844): 12; "Guano," *Southern Planter*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (April 1, 1849): 113; "On the Use of Single Manures," *Southern Planter*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (February 1, 1853): 42; "Peruvian Guano," *Southern Planter*, No. 5 (May 1, 1875): 1.

91. "Death of Rev. James Fife," October 6, 1876. *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond), Vol. 50 (October 7, 1876).

92. *Seventh U.S. Census, 1850*. Productions of Agriculture, Albemarle County, Virginia.

93. *Eighth U.S. Census, 1860*. Productions of Agriculture, St. Anne's Parish, Albemarle County, Virginia.

94. Prior to arriving in Charlottesville, James Fife is reported to have been employed in Richmond as an engineer or landscape gardener. In addition, he purchased the Rock Hill property in Charlottesville in 1839 which also had terraces with reinforcing stone retaining walls. James Fife may have been well qualified to design such a garden. As noted in subsequent chapters, the terraces are first documented as being used by the Fife family during the Great Depression.

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Margaret, Fife told her he had concluded to hire a man named William out. "I hired him to work at the carpenters business on the rail road for \$115." He then instructed Margaret to "start William off for Richmond" the next day. The same letter also records that an enslaved man named Jerry, despite his reluctance, was hired out as well. "I thought as Jerry would have to drive a wagon at the pitts it would be easier for him than to work in tobacco as he will have to go on a farm and likely to Mr. Binford. If he would study his own case he would prefer driving a wagon." In October of 1843, while he was residing at Rock Hill, Fife purchased "one mulatto boy Reuben" from Michael Johnson. Reuben would move with the Fife family to Oak Lawn in 1847. Records document that Fife purchased new shoes for Reuben in January of 1848, that Reuben was paid for his help in harvesting in September of 1850 and June of 1856.<sup>95</sup>

Between 1847 and 1855, Fife's account book for Oak Lawn documents that he regularly hired enslaved and free black laborers, and often paid his own enslaved men and women particularly during harvest time each year when it was crucial to bring in and process crops in a timely manner. Fife hired "two men for two days cutting clover in June of 1850, hired an enslaved man named William from his white owner Mr. Heiskell for 6 days of work harvesting in July of 1850, and paid Mrs. Ward for the work of a "man for binding in harvest" in July of 1850. Fife also paid Robert Battles for two days harvesting in July of 1850, and paid Thomas Farrow, also a free black tradesman, for a well pump in 1850. During the wheat harvest of June of 1856, Fife paid a number of enslaved individuals, including Horace, Garland, Simon, John, Henry, Peter, Moses for cutting and binding. Fife also hired out an enslaved woman named Charity on a monthly basis for at least nine years to various white residents, between 1848 and 1856. Fife received \$5 a quarter for Charity's work. Throughout the Fife family's tenure at Oak Lawn African-American labor, both free and enslaved, was essential to its success as a productive farm.<sup>96</sup>

Personal property tax records for Albemarle County document that James Fife owned between 5 and 22 enslaved individuals from 1847 to 1865. These records also document that the number of enslaved individuals held by Fife between 1847–1859 varied only slightly ranging between 5 and 7 individuals. However, between 1860 and 1863 the individuals held in bondage by James Fife were recorded as between 9 and 22 (Table #6).<sup>97</sup>

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95. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943. Box 1 Receipts Given James Fife in Various Transactions, 1825, 1843, 1852; Miscellaneous Receipts of James Fife, 1826-1828; Receipt for Money Received in Sale of a Male Slave by William A. Ford, 1827; Box 2. Receipt given James Fife by Kemp G. Holland in Fife's Purchase of a Male Slave, 1835; James Fife to Margaret Fife, --, 19, 1836.

96. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855. Box 2.

97. The significant increase in enslaved African Americans owned by James Fife as recorded by county tax records between the late 1850s and the early 1860s cannot be easily explained. Census and tax records often disagree with one another as one recorded ownership and had a bearing on Federal representation, and the other recorded responsibility for taxable property. Local tax records may not have recorded all enslaved laborers owned by an individual as labor could be leased out to other individuals who might then be liable for paying the annual tax. In addition, an accurate accounting of enslaved labor during the war years was difficult to obtain. Enslaved labor could be conscripted by the Confederacy, hired out when prices were high, or moved to other locations with white individuals fleeing threatening situations.

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TABLE 6: ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS OWNED BY REV. JAMES FIFE AND TAXED BY ALBEMARLE COUNTY BETWEEN 1847 AND 1865.

<i>Year</i>	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860
Enslaved Individuals	5	5	7	7	7	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	9
<i>Year</i>	1861	1862	1863											
Enslaved Individuals	10	16	22											

Slave schedules for the U.S. Census enumerated in 1850 and 1860 also recorded the number enslaved African Americans owned by the Rev. James Fife. Only three years after his purchase of Oak Lawn, the 1850 slave schedule records that Rev. James Fife held a total of 20 enslaved individuals, 8 males and 12 females. The population of enslaved African Americans living and working at Oak Lawn in that year was skewed to the young, with 5 of 8 males (62%) younger than age 12, and 7 of 12 females (58%) also younger than age 13.<sup>98</sup> A decade later in 1860, similar statistics prevailed. In that year Rev. James Fife is recorded as owning a total of 21 enslaved African Americans, 15 males and 6 females. Ten of 15 enslaved males (66%) were younger than age 12, three were aged 12–14, and only two were adults age 17 or older. Most of the enslaved females (5 of 6) were between the ages of 20 and 70 (Table #7).<sup>99</sup>

TABLE 7: ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS OWNED BY REV. JAMES FIFE AND ENUMERATED BY THE U.S. CENSUS, 1850–1860.<sup>100</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>						<i>Female</i>						<i>Totals</i>
<i>Age</i>	0-10	11-16	17-35	36-50	51+	Total Males	0-10	11-16	17-35	36-50	51+	Total Females	
<i>1850</i>	4	1	1	1	1	8	6	1	5	0	0	12	<b>20</b>
<i>1860</i>	10	3	1	1	0	15	1	0	4	0	1	6	<b>21</b>

The U.S. Slave Schedule for 1860 also recorded that there were three ‘slave houses’ on Rev. James Fife’s Oak Lawn plantation in that year, and that two enslaved African Americans, a 50-year-old male and a 14-year-old male, had escaped at an unknown time and were considered ‘fugitive from the state.’<sup>101</sup>

98. *Seventh U.S. Census, 1850*. Slave Schedule, Albemarle County, Virginia.

99. *Eighth U.S. Census, 1860*. Slave Schedule, Albemarle County, Virginia.

100. Ages of enslaved men, women and children are provided in the 1850 and 1860 slave schedules. However the age ranges provided in this table are arbitrary and facilitate presentation of the data.

101. *Eighth U.S. Census, 1860*. Slave Schedule, Albemarle County, Virginia.

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Beginning in 1849, James Fife hired a white overseer to manage his Oak Lawn plantation and its enslaved labor force. Initially the overseer was a man named Garland. He was succeeded by a man named Cleveland in 1850 and 1851, George D. Harris in 1852, and Robert Anderson was hired in late 1853. Wheat, corn and oats appeared to be the primary cash crops planted and harvested at Oak Lawn between 1847 and 1855. Chaff, shucks and straw were also sold locally.<sup>102</sup>

The Commonwealth of Virginia also kept birth and death records from 1853 onwards. These records document that six births of enslaved children occurred at Oak Lawn between 1853 and 1861. In 1853 two enslaved women owned by James Fife gave birth. Susan gave birth to George on February 29<sup>th</sup> and Lucinda gave birth to Coleman on November 12<sup>th</sup>. Three years later in 1856, Lucinda again gave birth to Lucian in April. In 1860, Susan gave birth to Maria in August, and Evalina gave birth to an unnamed child in November. In 1861, Susan gave birth to Beauregard in December of that year. No names of fathers were given for enslaved births in the state records. Likewise, an enslaved African-American man owned by James Fife, Jerry, died of 'old age' in 1859 at the age of 75. Jerry was one of Fife's enslaved men who was leased as a waggoner in the 'pitts' in 1836 when they were residing in Goochland County.<sup>103</sup>

While the general number and ages of enslaved African Americans living and working at Oak Lawn up to 1865 are known, we know only a few of these individual's names. Based on Freedmen's Bureau contracts with the James Fife and their comparison to 1860 slave schedules, independent research conducted by University of Virginia graduate and undergraduate students has identified several members of the Buckner family as having been enslaved by Rev. James Fife.

The enslaved Buckner family living at Oak Lawn prior to 1865 was composed of husband and wife Robert (b. circa 1806) and Susan Buckner (b. circa 1825), and their four children George (b. circa 1853), James (b. circa 1856), Thomas (b. circa 1858), Maria (b. circa 1859-1863), and Robert Buckner's two children with a former spouse named Sylvia, Anthony (b. circa 1845), and Willis (b. circa 1851).<sup>104</sup>

Because of his recorded occupation as a farm laborer at Oak Lawn in the post-Emancipation period, Robert Buckner likely also worked in the field planting, raising, and harvesting crops, and tending livestock at Oak Lawn in the pre-Emancipation period. Susan Buckner may have worked in the Fife household, perhaps laboring in the kitchen or as a servant in the residence. Robert's older sons, Willis and George may have also worked in the field in the late 1850s to 1860s, possibly alongside their father. Anthony Buckner, the oldest son of Robert, is reported to have served as

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102. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855. Box 2.

103. Commonwealth of Virginia, *Virginia Death Records, 1853-1912*, Albemarle County, Virginia, [familysearch.org/search/collection/1708697](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1708697), accessed June 13, 2024; Commonwealth of Virginia, *Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics, Birth Records, 1853-1949*, Albemarle County, Virginia, [familysearch.org/search/collection/4496127](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/4496127), accessed June 13, 2024.

104. Jake Calhoun, Cassondra Hanna, and Katie Wu, "Oak Lawn Research Memo," June 15, 2023, 2-3. *The Memory Project*, University of Virginia; "Buckner, Robert." *The Daughters of Zion Cemetery: "Gone But Not Forgotten,"* [www.daughtersofzioncemetery.org/the-people/buckner-robert/](https://www.daughtersofzioncemetery.org/the-people/buckner-robert/), accessed June 5, 2024. Throughout the Fife family documents, Robert Buckner's son Anthony is referred to as either Antony, or Anthony. This document uses the name Anthony throughout.

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a household servant to the Fife family, possibly as a personal servant to Robert Herndon Fife (b. 1843).<sup>105</sup> During his enslavement, Anthony Buckner became ill enough that James Fife resorted to calling a local Doctor. In January of 1855, a Dr. Hughes was paid \$7 for his “attendance on Anthony.”<sup>106</sup>

According to the 1860 slave schedule, two of the enslaved African American men owned by Rev. James Fife escaped from bondage sometime prior to the enumeration date of September 25, 1860. The ‘fugitives from the state’ were listed as a 50-year-old male and a 14-year-old male. Based solely on the ages of the fugitives, the identity of the enslaved are likely Robert Buckner and his son Anthony. It is not known how far away from Oak Lawn and Charlottesville Robert and Anthony were able to flee, but they were eventually caught and returned to Rev. James Fife.<sup>107</sup>

At the outbreak of the Civil War Rev. James Fife’s son, Robert Herndon Fife (17), was enrolled at the University of Virginia. He withdrew in March of 1862 and enlisted in the Charlottesville Light Artillery unit. During his service in the Confederate forces, Fife saw action in the Seven Days Battle outside of Richmond (June of 1862), a number of significant battles under General Robert E. Lee in the Army of Northern Virginia including Chancellorsville (April 1863), Gettysburg (July 1863), and Spotsylvania Court House (May 1864). With the destruction of his battery at Spotsylvania Court House, Fife joined the Staunton Artillery and proceeded to defend against Union General Philip Sheridan’s march through the Shenandoah Valley between late summer and fall of 1864. Fife was captured near Petersburg, Virginia during its siege by Federal forces between 1864-1865, but escaped to rejoin General Lee at Appomattox.<sup>108</sup>

Throughout much of Robert Herndon Fife’s service in the Confederate forces, Anthony Buckner was sent from Oak Lawn to the various temporary camps where he was staying to perform labor for a man who was fighting to keep him enslaved. Letters written between Robert Herndon Fife his mother Margaret and father James between June of 1863 and December of 1864, document the struggle of his parents to provide him with an enslaved servant, and later the presence of Anthony Buckner and the services he performed. In June of 1863 Robert Herndon Fife wrote to his mother requesting a servant. “Please if you can get one for me any where send me a servant, we have to march much that we have no time for cooking. We will give \$25 a month.” Over the next few weeks he continued to ask his parents to try and acquire an enslaved laborer. “Please send a servant from some where, by the first opportunity, as we have a hard time without one.” In late June his mother responded, “we are making every endeavor to get you a servant & hope we shall secure a suitable one soon. We shall have to get a free man because it would be too great a risk to send a slave into Maryland that is Mr. Bibb’s objection to sending Chapman. If he

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105. Calhoun et al., “Oak Lawn Research Memo,” June 15, 2023, 3-7.

106. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, James Fife Account Book, 1847-1855. Box 2.

107. Calhoun et al., “Oak Lawn Research Memo,” June 15, 2023, 3-4, 6.

108. R. T. W. Duke, Jr., “Robert Herndon Fife,” 108-109. In Homer Richey, ed. *Memorial History of the John Bowie Strange Camp, United Confederate Veterans*. (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1920); Calhoun et al., “Oak Lawn Research Memo,” June 15, 2023, 6.

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should be captured he would not be returned.”<sup>109</sup> His father became concerned too due to the stress the situation was causing his wife. In early July he wrote his son, “your mother however is in great trouble by day and night because she cannot send you a servant. ...she has almost killed herself but in utter despair she has cried out incessantly about it. I went in to town two or three times about it chiefly because she was so concerned but no one would for less than \$60 a month and very doubtful if offered whether they would. I was willing to send either Anthony or Daniel to go. I wish if you cannot do without a servant you would say it. ...But try not to write anything that would distress [your mother] but write to me as she is so easily disturbed in her mind.” Robert Herndon Fife wrote back to his mother trying to allay her concern. “I am very sorry my dear mother that I have troubled you so much about a servant and I hope you will not put yourself to any further trouble about one as we can get on as well as others who have none. We have become accustomed to cooking now and don’t mind it half as much.”<sup>110</sup>

The first documented presence of Anthony Buckner in a military encampment with Robert Herndon Fife is in August of 1863. In an August 6 letter to his mother, Robert Herndon Fife noted that Anthony was “improving fast” and seemed “very well satisfied.” He also requested that “if you all send me any thing at any time, don’t forget him [Anthony],” that Anthony wanted soap, and that Anthony “sends love to all the servants.” The letters between Robert Herndon Fife and his parents indicate that Anthony was sent to him frequently for shorter periodic visits to deliver much needed supplies, but also for longer stays especially when Fife bunked down in winter camps for several months. When the Fifes could spare him, Anthony was sent to find Robert Herndon Fife and generally stayed in camp for several days. These trips likely took several days each way and Buckner would frequently bring items from home such as new clothes, socks, soap, and presumably food and other welcome items. Anthony’s time in camp was often short lived for when there was nothing for him to do, when he was ill, or when rations were short, Fife would send him back home to Oak Lawn. During his stays at Confederate camps, Anthony performed menial tasks such washing clothes and cooking. Like his enslaver, Anthony also suffered from deprivations such as a lack of shoes and socks, and winter clothes. In June of 1864, Anthony became sick and was sent back to Oak Lawn. Over time, Anthony Buckner lived with Robert Herndon Fife on a more permanent basis, particularly during winter encampment when there would be more work. In December of 1864, Fife wrote his mother “I would like very much to have Anthony’s service now if he can be spared. If he comes and you can raise a small oven or skillet anywhere let him bring it to cook in. I am going to try and get enough rations on hand.”<sup>111</sup>

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109. The ‘Mr. Bibb’ referenced in the late June of 1863 letter of Margaret Fife to Robert Herndon Fife is likely William A. Bibb, Nimrod Bramham’s son-in-law and business partner in his mercantile store adjacent to the Albemarle County Courthouse.

110. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 5, Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, June 15, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, June 21, 1863; Margaret Fife to Robert Herndon Fife, June 25, 1863; James Fife to Robert Herndon Fife, July 4, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, July 19, 1863.

111. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 5, Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, August 6, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, August 28, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, September 23, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife



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Anthony's absence from Oak Lawn also impacted agricultural production on the plantation. On more than one occasion Robert Herndon Fife expressed regret that his parents had sent Anthony to him. "I am very sorry you did not keep Anthony to work at the harvest, but I never was so pleased to see anything from home as I was to see the clothes. I have a great deal to thank you for and I fear I never will be able to repay you half I owe you for your kind attention to all my wants." Very few records recording the Civil War period at Oak Lawn have been identified. However, James Fife did write to his son that prices for labor in the Charlottesville vicinity during this period were extremely high. Clearly the high price of labor impacted Fife's ability to depend upon free blacks, and the hired labor of other local enslaved African Americans, making field preparation, sowing, seasonal maintenance, and harvesting a much more expensive endeavor. As James Fife wrote his son, "I have paid \$5 for cutters in the harvest and to my knowledge some have gone above six."<sup>112</sup>

Between 1863 and 1865, the agricultural productions from Oak Lawn, crops that were produced and raised by enslaved African Americans, were directly used to support the Confederate forces. In April of 1863, the Confederate government passed a tax-in-kind law that required farmers to donate 10% of their crops to support the war effort, after reserving for themselves a supply of wheat, corn and potatoes. In December of 1863, James Fife was given a receipt for the crops from Oak Lawn that he turned over to the Confederate States. The receipt documents that on December 23, 1863 "at his farm in Albemarle County," Fife delivered "100 bushels of corn, 500 pounds of hay, 400 pounds of blade fodder, 800 pounds of top fodder, 400 pounds of shucks, and 600 pounds of straw" to R. F. Mason, agent for the Confederate government in Charlottesville.<sup>113</sup>

Union forces under the command of General Philip Sheridan entered and occupied Charlottesville for several days in early March of 1865. In the process, the town of Charlottesville surrendered and much of Albemarle County was liberated. Many formerly enslaved African Americans in Albemarle County chose to follow the Union forces believing they would be safer as well as seeking newfound freedoms. It is likely that many of those freedmen formerly enslaved at Oak Lawn chose to seek their freedom by leaving the area. Following the surrender of Confederate forces in April of 1865, Charlottesville and Albemarle County was governed under military

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to Margaret Fife, September 25, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, September 30, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, October 29, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, November 19, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, December 9, 1863; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, January 3, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, June 2, 1864; Box 6, Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, June 8, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, June 27, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, July 4, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, [July] 7, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, November 16, 1864. Calhoun et al., "Oak Lawn Research Memo," June 15, 2023, 6.

112. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 5, James Fife to Robert Herndon Fife, July 4, 1863; Box 6, Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, [July] 7, 1864; Robert Herndon Fife to Margaret Fife, November 16, 1864.

113. University of North Carolina, "Tax and Assessment Acts, Confederate States of America" *Documenting the American South*, [www.docsouth.unc.edu/imlss/taxasses/taxasses.html](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/imlss/taxasses/taxasses.html), accessed June 24, 2024; *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 5, James Fife Receipts, 1863.

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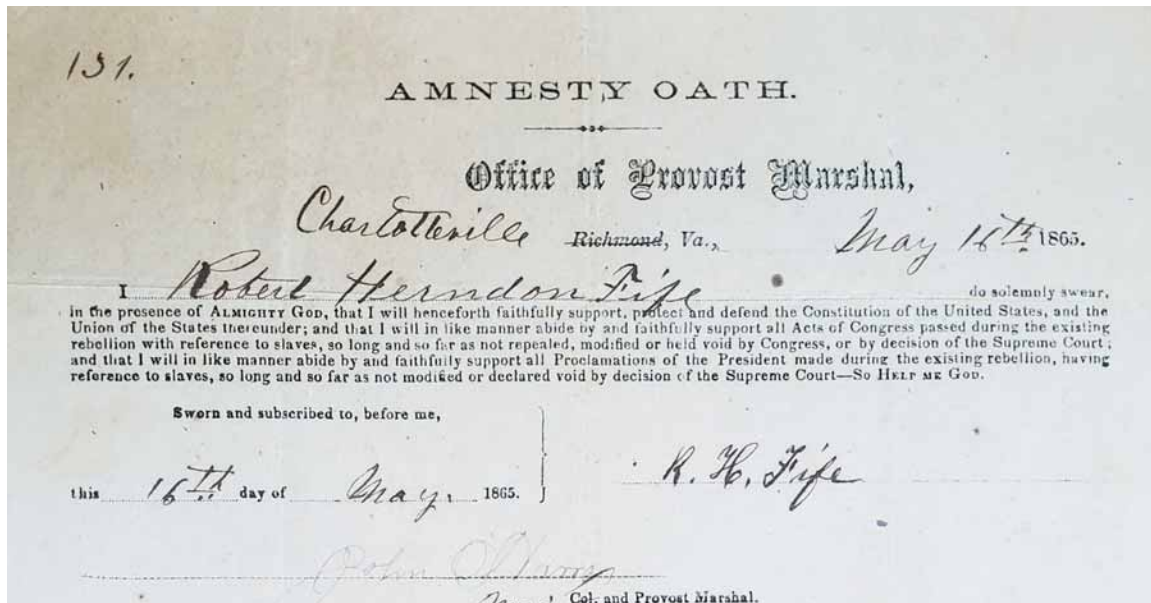


Figure 10. Amnesty Oath signed by Robert Herndon Fife, May 16, 1865. University of Virginia Special Collections Library, Mss 5943, Box 6.

occupation and a military commissioner for Albemarle County was appointed. Established in March of 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was responsible for the management of all issues relating to freedmen in Virginia and all southern states. The Bureau operated primarily between 1865–1868 during the initial years of Reconstruction, until its formal abolition in 1872.

After Robert E. Lee and the Confederate forces surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Virginia in early April of 1865, many Confederate troops made their way home. On May 16, 1865, Robert Herndon Fife took an Oath of Amnesty, swearing to “support, protect and defend the Constitution and the Union of States.” Several months later, in August of 1865, James Fife was given amnesty and pardoned by President Andrew Johnson for his role in supporting the rebellion (Figure 10).<sup>114</sup>

As was the custom in the pre-Emancipation period, white ministers like Rev. James Fife also preached to black congregations. Prior to Emancipation, free and enslaved African Americans worshipped in the segregated white First Baptist Church in Charlottesville. In 1863, Charlottesville’s black Baptists successfully petitioned the White First Baptist Church to form their own ‘independent African Church.’ Initially, the Charlottesville African Church met in the basement of the white First Baptist Church. However, in 1868 the black Baptist congregation

114. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 6, Amnesty Oath, Robert Herndon Fife, May 16, 1865. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia

## OAK LAWN

purchased the former Delevan Hotel, or Mudwall, and began holding services there. The Delevan Church was demolished in the mid-1870s and a new building (now First Baptist Church, 632 West Main Street) was completed on the same site in 1883. Rev. James Fife served as the second of three white ministers to the Charlottesville African Church in the mid-1860s, prior to their move to Main Street. The first black ordained Baptist pastor was William Gibbons, a formerly enslaved lay preacher, who led the Charlottesville African Church in 1866.<sup>115</sup>

In 1867, James and Margaret's son Robert Herndon Fife married Sarah (Sallie) Ann Graves Strickler. Throughout her teens Sarah kept a diary. In 1867 after her marriage to Robert, Sarah commented on her initial impression of Oak Lawn and her parents-in-law. "I must tell you about my new home—it is very sweet, the trees around it are oak & it reminds me of an English residence. The house was built at the same time with the University ... It is halfway between Charlottesville & the University—half mile from each. Herndon's father is a Scotchman & has the full accent; he is a minister & a man of very fine sense & instruction. Mrs. Fife is perfectly amiable & gentle, & so kind—she is devoted to her two children; always cheerful, always the same, intelligent & cultivated."<sup>116</sup> Robert and Sarah would go on to have eleven children together, seven of whom survived to adulthood including Mary G. (Daisy) (b. 1870), Robert H. Jr. (b. 1871), James D. (b. 1874), Margaret W. (b. 1879), William O. (b. 1884), Ella K. (b. 1886), and Shelton S. (b. 1889).

Emancipation ushered in a significant transitional period where former plantations and farms were required to employ wage labor to survive. No longer could white farmers depend upon enslaved labor to produce subsistence and cash crops. Upon his return to Charlottesville and Oak Lawn, Robert Herndon Fife took on an active role in the management and direct supervision of his father's plantation. An account book, and diary and farm journal, kept by Robert Herndon Fife between 1865 and 1867, and 1870 respectively, documents the activities that were undertaken at Oak Lawn during the Reconstruction period. Like many of Albemarle County's white farmers, in the post-Emancipation period Robert Herndon Fife employed 'hands,' typically local African-American laborers, to assist during intensive planting and harvest periods. In June of 1866 he hired Jack, Bob, Anthony, Henry, Albert, Peter and Susan and Mary all of whom performed labor such as cutting, harvesting, and binding wheat and oats. Many of these same individuals also plowed and sowed fields. A year later between June and July of 1867, Fife employed Robert Jones,

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115. First Baptist Church Charlottesville. Clerk's Minute Books, 1851 - 1950, *First Baptist Church Records, 1831-1950*, Mss 4620. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; First Baptist Church Charlottesville, "Our History," <https://fbc4g.org/history/#:~:text=The%20new%20building%20was%20completed,had%20fifteen%20African%2DAmerican%20pastors>, accessed June 5, 2024; Richard I. McKinney, "Keeping the Faith, A History of First Baptist Church, 1863-1980, in Light of Its Times," 1981. Mss 10479. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia

116. *Diary of Sara Ann Graves Strickler Fife, 1861-1902*. Mss 5633. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; Anne Freudenberg, "Oak Lawn," Material Collected by Anne Freudenberg, n.d., n.p. City of Charlottesville Individual Survey Forms: 501 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW Significance Statement, [https://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/650804/501%209th%20Street%20SW\\_Significance%20Statement.pdf](https://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/650804/501%209th%20Street%20SW_Significance%20Statement.pdf), accessed August 3, 2024.

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Bob Cheatham, Anthony Buckner, Matthew, Andy, Charles Taylor, Jemmie Lewis, Winston, Davy Monroe, John Preston, Albert, Scott, Daniel, Chris, Harlow, Sam, Frank, Aron, Ben, Dangerfield, Tyler and Crawford for cutting and harvesting wheat, and for hoeing and binding corn. In addition to temporary farm labor, Fife also employed more permanent help on month-to-month contracts, including Davy, Henry, Jim Brown, Fleming, Bob, Edmund, Sam, and Jim Ellis who were employed on a monthly basis between 1866–1867. In March of 1869, Robert Herndon Fife recorded the status of Oak Lawn, including those who labored for wages. “I have on hand now in stock 2 mules, 2 colts both horse, 3 mares, ...2 pigs a boar pure Chester, a sow half Chester and half Suffolk, 19 head of cattle; I have in the first field wheat, in the second some clover and some orchard grass, in the third some grass and some under fallow for corn, the fourth under plow for oats. Have planted about the first of the month 1 peck Early Rose potatoes, in the last week one bushel white Mercers, one bushel Peach Bloom, one half bus Goodrich. The regular hands employed are Bob, Buckner, Jacob Spooner, and Willie Fife. This morning two of them Bob, Jake are laying the fence between the stable and the corner of the woods.” Willie Fife may be the son of William J. Fife. Over the course of two years, Fife’s ‘regular’ hands were kept busy cleaning out the barn and stable, fertilizing and plowing fields, preparing for and conducting harvest, planting and tending a kitchen garden, repairing fences, and tending to the livestock.<sup>117</sup>

One task undertaken in the Spring of 1869 by an individual named Burton was to tear down the “old cabins.” While the location or number of cabins demolished is not known, it is likely that some of these structures could have been former quarters for enslaved laborers.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the loss of his enslaved labor, in the succeeding decade Rev. James Fife and his son Robert Herndon Fife continued to farm Oak Lawn as best they could. Productions of agriculture statistics reflect that the subsistence and cash crops produced at Oak Lawn in 1870 were lower than in pre-Emancipation years. In that year, Oak Lawn was valued at only \$30,000 and was composed of 230 improved and 110 unimproved acres. Livestock at Oak Lawn were valued at \$578 and included horses (6), asses /mules (2), milk cows (6), other cattle (10), and swine (6). Oak Lawn produced 675 bushels of Spring wheat, 375 bushels of corn, 600 bushels of oats, as well as butter and milk. Fife also paid a total of \$800 in wages to his employees during the calendar year.<sup>119</sup>

Like many other newly freed African Americans, Robert Buckner made the decision to continue a working relationship with his former enslaver Rev. James Fife. On January 1, 1866, Buckner entered into a contractual agreement with Fife to work as a ‘laborer’ at Oak Lawn for a period of a year. Buckner was to be paid \$124.00 for his entire year of labor, at a rate of \$12.00 per month. Buckner was also provided with “suitable food and quarters for self and family” and he was given ‘liberty’ to raise a hog on the property. Typical for these contracts, Fife also agreed “to hire the services of his [Robert Buckner’s] wife and 5 children.” The contract also stipulated that “each

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117. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 6, Herndon Fife Account and Order Book, 1865-1867; Box 9 Diary and Farm Journal of R. H. Fife, 1869-1870.

118. Robert Herndon Fife, Farm Journal, April 23, 1869. Ms. in possession of Fife family.

119. *Ninth U.S. Census, 1870*. Productions of Agriculture, St. Anne’s Parish, Albemarle County, Virginia.

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Figure 11. Anthony Buckner and his granddaughter Eileen Buckner, August 12, 1918. Rufus Holsinger, Neg. X06569A. Holsinger Collection, UVA. The Holsinger image only identifies A.[n]thony J. Buckner. The name of his granddaughter was obtained from the Preserver's of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery website. "The Daughters of Zion Cemetery, 'Gone But Not Forgotten.'" <https://daughtersofzioncemetery.org/the-people/buckner-anthony-t/>, accessed February 4, 2025.

day that said Buckner is not able to work he will forfeit 50 cts. a day.”<sup>120</sup> Robert Herndon Fife’s account book for Oak Lawn between 1865–1867 documents the contract with Robert Buckner. Buckner was paid for his labor between January and December of 1866. His son Anthony was also paid for periodic work at Oak Lawn.<sup>121</sup>

Given his work at Oak Lawn as a farm hand, and his family’s assistance in agricultural and domestic labor, Robert Buckner and his family were also permitted to reside at Oak Lawn, and perhaps were provided with a former quarter for enslaved African Americans. It is not known how long Buckner and his family continued their labor relationship with James Fife, however the 1870 U.S. Census lists just Robert Buckner, then a 60-year-old black farm hand, residing in a separate structure, adjacent to James Fife and his family at Oak Lawn. This adjacency implies that Buckner may have been residing at least part time at Oak Lawn. Also living adjacent to the Fifes, were two other black families: 50-year-old farm hand Charles Monroe and 30-year-old Louisa Monroe who was keeping house; and 40-year-old Polly Johnson, also keeping house, and her two children 6-year-old Catharine and 2-year-old James. In 1874 Robert Herndon Fife noted in his Farm

120. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. Robert Buckner and James Fife Contract, January 1, 1866. *Records of the Field Office for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872*, NARA Series Number M1913, Reel 67, Record Group 105. U.S. Freedmen’s Bureau Labor Contracts, Indenture, and Apprenticeship Records, 1865-1872.

121. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 6, Herndon Fife Account and Order Book, 1865-1867; Box 9 Diary and Farm Journal of R. H. Fife, 1869-1870.



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Journal that he was fixing up a house “in the woods” that the Monroes rented for \$5.00 per month from the Fifes. It is likely that Buckner and Monroe may have provided the bulk of the farm labor at Oak Lawn in this year, with Louisa Monroe and Polly Johnson perhaps providing domestic labor.<sup>122</sup>

At some point prior to 1870 the Buckner family had also established their own household separate from the Fife’s and Oak Lawn. The 1870 Federal census lists Robert Buckner as a 60-year-old farm laborer, his wife Susan 55 years old ‘keeping house,’ and sons George (17), James (14), Thomas (12), and daughter Maria (11) attending school. Three other younger children Charles (6), Lucie (3), and Mary (2 months) were also listed. Anthony Buckner was also listed as a 25-year-old head of household employed as a dining room servant with his 22-year-old wife Louisa and one child Annie (2).<sup>123</sup>

A decade later in 1880, the census again recorded both the Robert and Anthony Buckner households as adjacent neighbors. Robert Buckner (74) worked as a gardener, his wife Susan (55)<sup>124</sup> was employed as a washerwoman, and sons George (23) and James (22) were employed as dining room servants. Robert and Susan’s daughter Maria (17) was employed as a washerwoman, and Charles (15) and Lucie (11) were attending school. Anthony Buckner (37) was employed as a waiter in a hotel, his wife Louisa (29) was keeping house, and they had one daughter Hattie (9/12 months) living with them. The Monroe family had also moved on from Oak Lawn. In 1880 they were associated with an unidentified school for girls. Charles (60) was recorded as a domestic servant and his wife Lucy (45) was recorded as a cook (Table #8).<sup>125</sup>

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Albemarle County witnessed a doubling in the number of farms as large antebellum plantations were increasingly divided and sold to both newly freed African Americans, as well as significant numbers of immigrants from both the northern states and Europe.<sup>126</sup> Alongside the trend towards fragmentation of the agrarian landscape into numerous smaller farmsteads came an increased agricultural diversification. Fruit production, in particular, grew in importance throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a primary focus on the cultivation of grapes, apples, and peaches.<sup>127</sup> Dairy and poultry products also gained increased economic significance for local farmers in the post-War decades,<sup>128</sup> while

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122. *Ninth U.S. Census, 1870*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia. Millie Fife, “Material for Ben,” July 15, 2024.

123. *Ninth U.S. Census, 1870*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

124. Susan Buckner would have been 65 years old in 1880, not 55 as recorded by the census taker.

125. *Tenth U.S. Census, 1880*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

126. William E. Webb, “Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, 1865-1900,” 55. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, 1955. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia; Moore, *Albemarle*, 249.

127. Webb, “Charlottesville and Albemarle County,” 59-60; Moore, *Albemarle*, 250; Mattson et al, *Monacans to Monticello*, 14.

128. Robert E. Devereux, Edward Shulkcum, and Bonnie H. Williams, *Soil Survey of Albemarle County, Virginia*, 6. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1940).



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TABLE 8: U.S. CENSUS, POPULATION STATISTICS FOR 1870 AND 1880 DOCUMENTING THE HOUSEHOLDS OF ROBERT BUCKNER AND ANTHONY BUCKNER.

Name	Occupation 1870	Age 1870	Occupation 1880	Age 1880
Buckner, Robert	Works on farm	60	Gardener	74
Buckner, Susan	Keeping house	55	Washerwoman	55
Buckner, George	Attending school	17	Dining room servant	23
Buckner, James	Attending school	14	Dining room servant	22
Buckner, Thomas	Attending school	12	n/a	n/a
Buckner, Maria	Attending school	11	Washerwoman	17
Buckner, Charles	At home	6	Attending school	15
Buckner, Lucie	n/a	3	Attending school	11
Buckner, Mary	n/a	2 mo.	n/a	9
Buckner, William	n/a	n/a	n/a	7
Buckner, Anthony	Dining room servant	25	Waiter in Hotel	37
Buckner, Louisa	Keeping house	22	Keeping house	29
Buckner, Annie	n/a	2	n/a	n/a
Buckner, Hattie	n/a	n/a	n/a	9 mo.

the growth of various manufacturing industries further diversified the region's economic base and provided sources of wage labor for the region's growing, non-agricultural population.<sup>129</sup>

In early February of 1873, calamity hit the Oak Lawn plantation. "On Wednesday night 10 o'clock the barn on the farm of Rev. James Fife, in the vicinity of the University, was destroyed by fire, the work of an incendiary. A warrant is out to arrest the person who did the act."<sup>130</sup> It is not known how the fire was known to be arson, or whom they suspected of starting it. It is assumed that the fire destroyed the barn and also that it was subsequently rebuilt.

In March of 1874, James Alexander visited Oak Lawn paying his respects to the Bramham family during the burial of a great granddaughter of Nimrod Bramham. Alexander's visit to the property provides one of the few eyewitness descriptions of Oak Lawn from the immediate post-war period. The Bramham-Bibb family cemetery was described as a "large enclosed square of ground covered in periwinkle."

129. Webb, "Charlottesville and Albemarle County," 74-82.

130. *Tri-Weekly News* (Lynchburg, Virginia), Vol. 15, No. 14, February 14, 1873.

## OAK LAWN

One day last week we stood in the cemetery of the late Col. Nimrod Bramham, while the remains of his great grand-daughter were interred, and the voice of prayer ascended to heaven from the lips of Rev. J. C. Long, the Baptist pastor. The cemetery is a large enclosed square of ground, and the dead for five or more generations repose there. It is a quiet, sunny spot, and the periwinkle which creeps around the tombs of the silent dead was in full bloom, its bright blue flowers contrasting with the dark chocolate of the soil.

Col. Nimrod Bramham and his wife, Margaret, were the parents of a large family; on all sides of their graves, their descendants also sleep. They were good people, followers of Him who gave His life a ransom for the lost.

An obelisk of white marble stands nearly in the centre, on which is engraved "Our Parents"; on one side of the shaft, Wm. A. Bibb, and on the other side Sarah R. Bibb. Mrs. Bibb was the oldest daughter of Col. Nimrod and Margaret Bramham, and W. A. Bibb was her husband. Then there is the grave of Dr. Horace Bramham, cutoff in the springtime of life and usefulness. A white tablet records the decease of John Simpson, the son-in-law of Col. Bramham.

Here repose also, the remains of Dr. Wyatt W. Hamner, another son-in-law of Col. Bramham, and here are the remains of Edward J. Timberlake, the son-in-law of W. A. Bibb, and now his daughter, Mrs. Nellie T. Smith finds a resting place among her kindred, who have preceded her to the grave.

Other persons, the friends of Col. Bramham's family, also rest here. The children of Wm. and Nancy Garland, Mr. John and Martha Smithson. Immediately next to the grave of Wm. and Sarah Bibb are three large tombs, on the top of each rest marble tops; one reads, Elizabeth Garland, born 1767, died Nov., 1840. Erected by her children. On one side of her is her grandson, Robert Slaughter, died July, 1840, aged 15 years 4 months. On the other side lies Elizabeth Slaughter.

Mrs. Garland and Mrs. Smithson, previous to marriage, were named Hamner. In another enclosure near this cemetery lies the body of Mr. William J. Fife.

It is well to sit around the tombs of those whom we once knew; it brings to remembrance the happiness enjoyed in their company while living, and the good which has resulted from their example of piety and trust in God, and of the further necessity of being, like them, prepared for death.

The fine brick mansion on the farm now occupied [by] Rev. James Fife, was erected by Col. Bramham about 1824. The place was formerly owned by Gen. Winston Garth, who removed to Alabama. Both Gen. Garth and Col. Bramham, had been members of the House of Delegates in the Virginia Legislature, from Albemarle County.<sup>131</sup>

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131. Mary Rawlings, ed., *Early Charlottesville: Recollections of James Alexander 1828-1874*, 61-63. (Charlottesville: Albemarle County Historical Society, 1942).

## OAK LAWN

In 1871, Rev. James Fife made out his will. He directed his entire estate to be sold by his executors, his wife Margaret and his oldest son Robert Herndon Fife. The proceeds of the sale of his real and personal estate were to be divided between his wife who was to get one third for the remainder of her life, his son Robert Herndon Fife who was to get one third, and his daughter Mary C. Fife who was to also receive one third.<sup>132</sup>

After over half a century of preaching in the Baptist faith, Rev. James Fife died in October of 1876 at the age of 83. The state document noting his death recorded that he died of ‘old age,’ and that he was both a “farmer and preacher.” The Rev. James Fife was buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn.<sup>133</sup>

In February of 1877, an inventory of the estate of Rev. James Fife was taken at Oak Lawn. The Oak Lawn property, then entailing approximately 340 acres, was valued at \$17,000. Livestock at Oak Lawn included 5 horses, 4 cows, a boar, and ‘a lot of hogs.’ Produce on hand included 120 bushels of corn, oats, hay, and chaff & fodder. Farming implements included a wagon and several horse carts, a one-horse plow, a two-horse plow, and a three-horse plow, shovel plows harrows, a cultivator, wide hoes, 3 scythes and cradles, pitch forks, shovels, mattocks, a cutting box, and a corn sheller. Oak Lawn also possessed 900 lbs. of pork. The inventory and appraisal confirms that Fife, and the African-American laborers he employed there, continued to farm Oak Lawn, although at a much reduced scale when compared to the pre-Emancipation period.<sup>134</sup>

Numerous buildings and structures would have surrounded the primary residence at Oak Lawn in the post-Emancipation period. The February of 1877 inventory and appraisal of the estate of James Fife noted only one building, a ‘granary.’<sup>135</sup> Sometime prior to 1973 however, Frederick D. Nichols produced a sketch map depicting the location of Oak Lawn residence and the outbuildings that surrounded it. Nichols’ map was based on oral historical information conveyed to him via Anne Freudenberg, which was conveyed to her by her mother Ella K. Fife in 1964 and represents her memory of the Oak Lawn property in her youth. Nichols’ map, titled ‘*Plat of Buildings Originally at Oak Lawn*,’ depicts the location, size, orientation, and function of outbuildings surrounding the two extant structures on the property, the primary residence and the brick Cook’s House. Marjorie Fife Thomas recalled that she had been told that an unnamed cook and her enslaved husband lived in this structure.<sup>136</sup> All of the outbuildings represented are depicted either south or west of the primary residence. Adjacent to and west of the Oak Lawn residence was a rectangular shaped east-west oriented kitchen structure and a well to the west of it. Further south was a long east-west oriented ‘shed’ structure containing a smokehouse, privy, and shelter for chickens and roosters. Southwest of the primary residence were two large agricultural

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132. ACWB 29:217, May 12, 1871.

133. Commonwealth of Virginia, *Register of Deaths, Albemarle County, First District, 1876*. Virginia U.S. Death Registers 1853-1911, Ancestry.com, accessed June 4, 2024.

134. ACWB 29:260, February 7, 1877.

135. ACWB 29:260, February 7, 1877.

136. Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 13, 2024.

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buildings, a large stable, and a large log barn. The stable contained a room for carriages as well as stalls for horses, and a room for fodder. The barn contained stalls for horses and cows, and two shed additions, one for pigs. West of the primary residence and Cook's House was an ice house, two small log houses 'on stilts,' one a corn granary, and a second for machinery. A single structure located northeast of the residence and west of a farm lane and sited at an unusual angle relative to other structures, was a 'quarters for 19 slaves' (Figure 12).<sup>137</sup>

Given that the Nichols' map was based on the knowledge of Ella K. Fife in her youth (b. 1886), the map likely represents the configuration of buildings and structures at Oak Lawn during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, but also possibly representing immediate pre-Emancipation conditions as well. Geo-registration of the Nichols' sketch map documents that only the kitchen, shed with smokehouse, privy and chicken coop, and stable are likely located within the current boundaries of the Oak Lawn property. All of the other outbuildings and structures would likely have been located west of Oak Lawn, on what is now the Buford Middle School property owned by the City of Charlottesville (Figure 13).<sup>138</sup>

## THE FIFE FAMILY AND THE SUBDIVISION AND SALE OF OAK LAWN (1876–1920)

The Fife household living at Oak Lawn in 1880 was composed of an extended family that consisted of Robert Herndon Fife (37), his wife Sally (34), and five children including Mary (9), Robert H. (7), James (5), Edward (3), and Margaret (1), as well as Robert's mother Margaret Fife (70), Robert's sister Kate (40), and aunt Mary (50), as well as a brother-in-law Virgil Strickler (17). Robert Herndon Fife's occupation was listed as farmer.<sup>139</sup>

Charlottesville was incorporated as a city in 1888. In the same year, it also annexed an approximately 564-acre parcel from Albemarle County in a belt surrounding the former town. These two factors, as well as the construction of the City's first street car system in 1887, the emergence of numerous industrial businesses, and a late nineteenth-century municipal marketing campaign, all contributed to a rapid population expansion and the emergence of Charlottesville as the region's primary urban center.<sup>140</sup> During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the region's railroad network also expanded significantly. Among the railways opened during the late nineteenth century was the Charlottesville and Rapidan Railway, now the Southern Railway,

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137. Frederick D. Nichols, "Oak Lawn," n.d. [Pre-1973]. Material collected by Frederick D. Nichols. City of Charlottesville Individual Survey Forms: 501 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW Significance Statement, [https://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/650804/501%209th%20Street%20SW\\_Significance%20Statement.pdf](https://weblink.charlottesville.org/public/0/edoc/650804/501%209th%20Street%20SW_Significance%20Statement.pdf), accessed August 3, 2024.

138. Aerial photographs from the 1930s and 1950s document that no buildings or structures were present on the land that was acquired for the construction of Buford Junior High School, now Buford Middle School.

139. *Tenth U.S. Census, 1880*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

140. The area annexed by the City of Charlottesville in 1888 did not include Oak Lawn but bordered its northern and eastern boundaries. It was only in 1916 that the land containing Oak Lawn was annexed by the City of Charlottesville.

## OAK LAWN

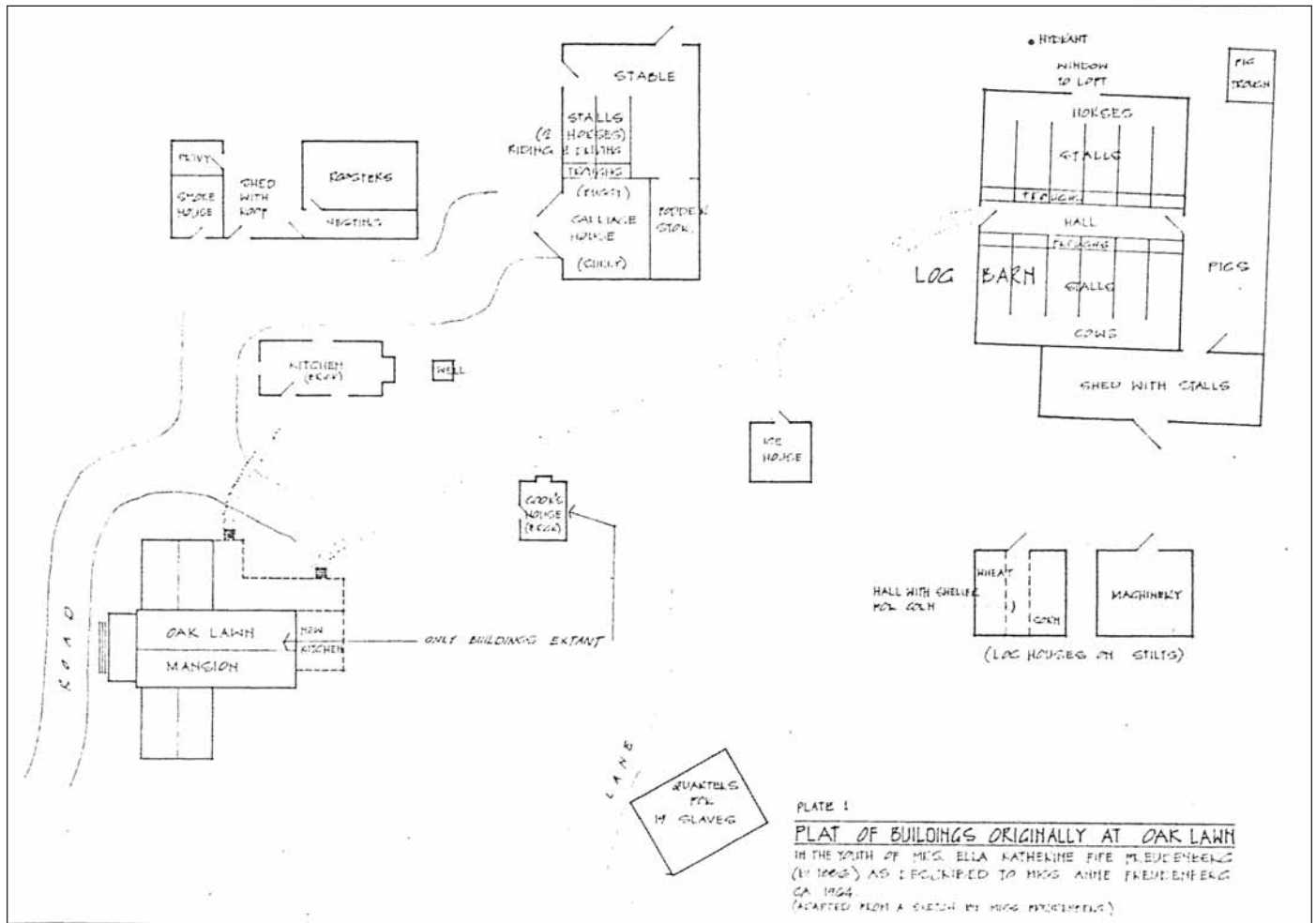


Figure 12. "Plat of Buildings Originally at Oak Lawn," n.d. Frederick D. Nichols.

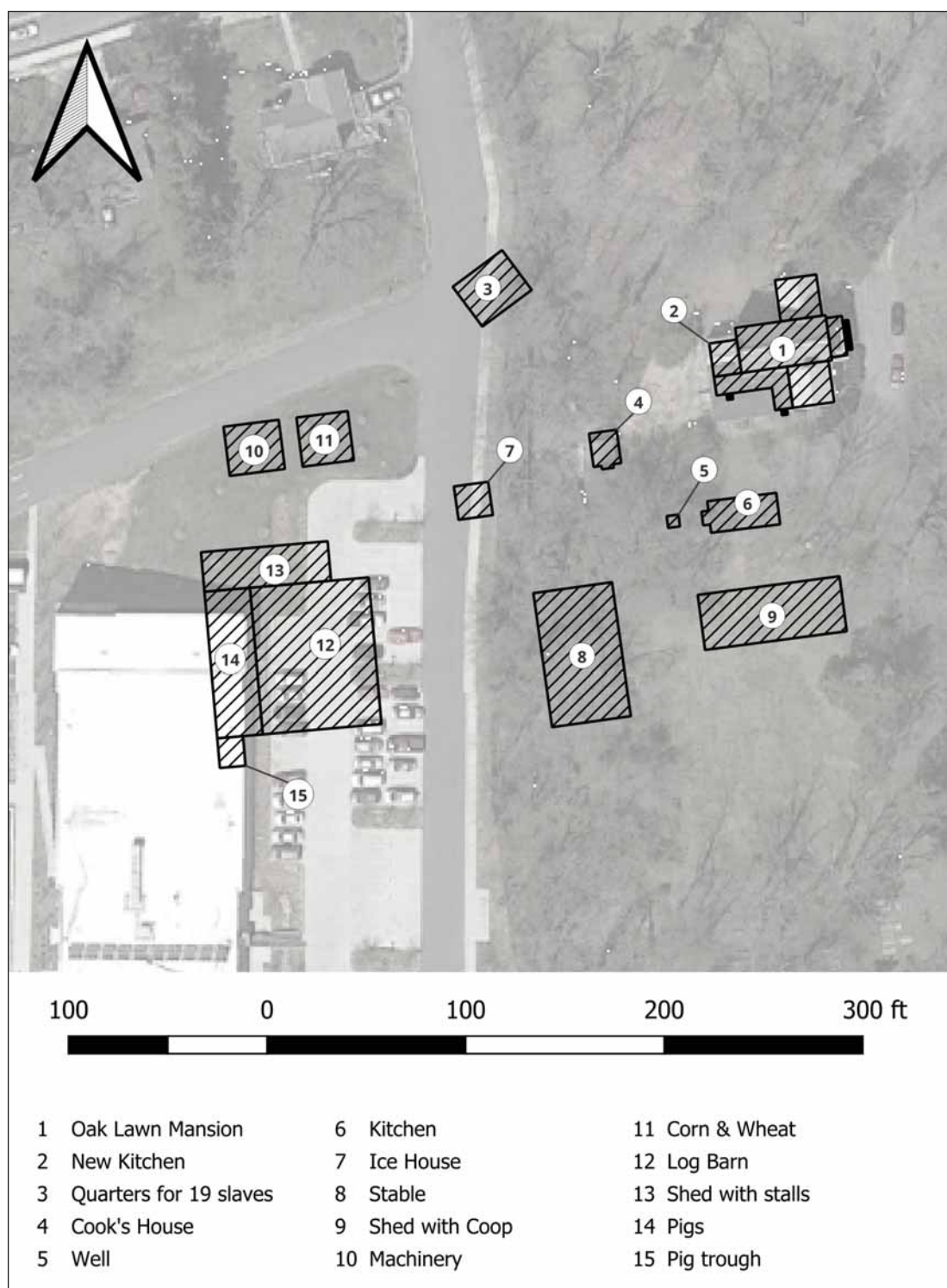


Figure 13. Nichols sketch map showing nineteenth-century buildings at Oak Lawn geo-registered on existing conditions. Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, 2024.



## OAK LAWN

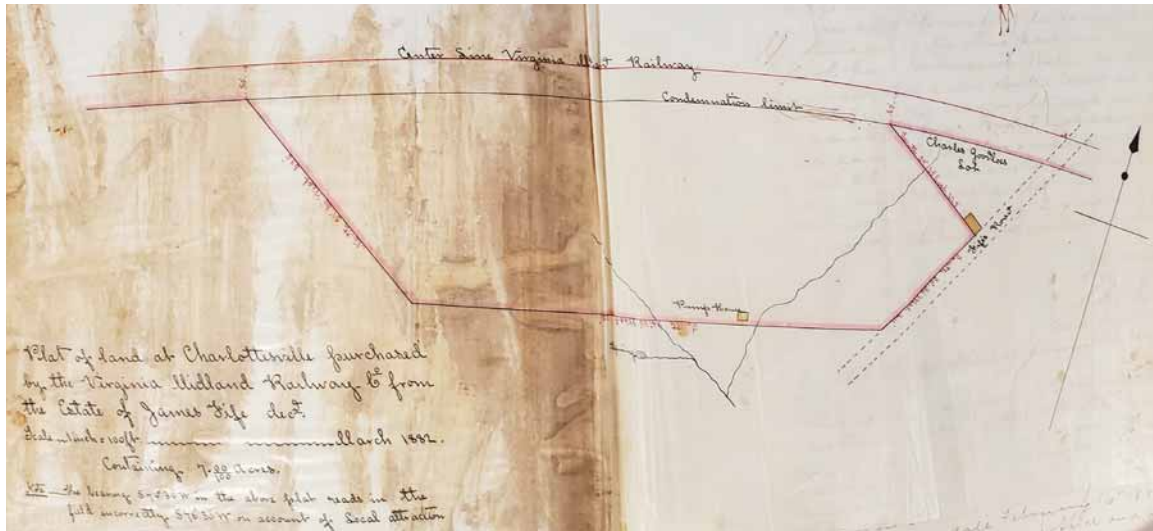


Figure 14. Plat showing a 7-acre lot sold by Robert H. Fife to the Virginia Midland Railway in 1880. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 89:392.

running north to Orange from Charlottesville's Union Station. As Charlottesville's importance as a regional economic and political center grew, many of the outlying towns in the region not located along the rail lines declined.<sup>141</sup> (Figure 14).

The closing decades of the nineteenth century also witnessed substantial African-American out-migration from Charlottesville, Albemarle County and the broader region.<sup>142</sup> Despite this, many small rural African-American communities centered around churches and schools were established throughout the region in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In Charlottesville, the historically African-American neighborhoods of Gospel Hill, Canada, and Castle Hill were established in this period. Likewise, both east and west of Oak Lawn, African Americans gradually took advantage of the break up and sale of larger estates by purchasing small parcels and urban lots.<sup>143</sup>

Between 1876 and 1884, the estate of Rev. James Fife was managed by his two executors, his wife Margaret and his son Robert Herndon Fife. After the death of Margaret Fife in 1884,<sup>144</sup> the estate was managed solely by Robert Herndon Fife. Shortly following the death of James Fife, a chancery suit was initiated that was to change the trajectory of the Oak Lawn property and directly impact the extended Fife family. In May of 1879, the executors and heirs of the estate of Rev. James Fife were sued by the receiver of the Charlottesville National Bank. James Fife's oldest son with

141. Mattson et al, *Monacans to Monticello*, 14-15, 50-51; Moore, *Albemarle*, 271-276.

142. Moore, *Albemarle*, 237-238.

143. Mattson et al, *Monacans to Monticello*, 80-81.

144. Margaret Fife was buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn.

## OAK LAWN

his first wife Elizabeth Miller, William J. Fife, was indebted to the Charlottesville National Bank, and because of his status as an heir of the James Fife estate, the Court appointed commissioners to review the accounts of Robert Herndon Fife as executor of James Fife. The commissioners were required to 1) list the accounts and prioritize the debts against James Fife's estate, and 2) list the real and personal property belonging to the James Fife estate.<sup>145</sup>

After reviewing the accounts, the Court moved forward to satisfy the debts of William J. Fife to the Charlottesville National Bank and ultimately requiring the sale of portions of the Oak Lawn estate. In June of 1880 the Court again appointed three commissioners to "sell either privately or publicly ...a portion of the real estate of Jame Fife dec'd, not exceeding 30 acres on the northern end of the tract of land near Charlottesville near and along the line of the Chesapeake & Ohio, and Virginia Midland railroads. And with this view they are authorized to employ a competent surveyor to lay off said real estate into lots and parcels as they may think advisable."<sup>146</sup> On October 11, 1880, the commissioners also ordered Robert H. Fife as executor to sell 7 acres of land to the Virginia Midland Railroad for \$1,000. The 7-acre parcel was located adjacent to and south of the Virginia Midland Railroad's tracks and between it and what is now Grove Street. A new 'round house' was subsequently constructed on this parcel.<sup>147</sup> In May of 1883 the commissioners were again authorized to sell "as much as two hundred acres of land, on the western end of the Home Tract of James Fife dec'd."<sup>148</sup> Over the course of the next seven years, and between 1881–1887, numerous individual parcels located north and east of the Oak Lawn residence were sold to individuals for development as residential lots.<sup>149</sup>

Several maps reflecting the County Court's sale of portions of Oak Lawn were drawn in the 1880s. A plat of a portion of the James Fife estate located east of the Oak Lawn residence was drawn in 1884. It depicts a 51  $\frac{3}{4}$  -acre area, labeled 'Field East of the House,' as an undeveloped parcel with a drainage running through its center. West of the parcel is a rectangular shape believed to represent the Oak Lawn residence (Figure 15).<sup>150</sup>

Another plat, drawn by surveyor John T. E. Simms in June of 1886, depicts three areas of future development: 1) a single row of lots east of and adjacent to what is now 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  St. SW and extending between Dice Street on the north and Pine Street on the south; 2) several platted blocks containing numerous lots between what are now Nalle Street on the north and Cherry Avenue on the south, and 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  Street on the east and 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW on the west; and 3) numerous lots between King Street on the south, the tracks of the Virginia Midland Railway on the north, Paton Street

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145. Albemarle County Chancer Order Book [ACChO] 11 (1878-1880):295. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

146. ACChO 11 (1878-1880):614.

147. ACDB 89:392, June 26, 1882; ACChO 12 (1880-1882):53.

148. ACChO 13 (1882-1884):215.

149. ACChO 15 (1886-1888):111.

150. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 3, Plat of Oak Lawn.

# OAK LAWN

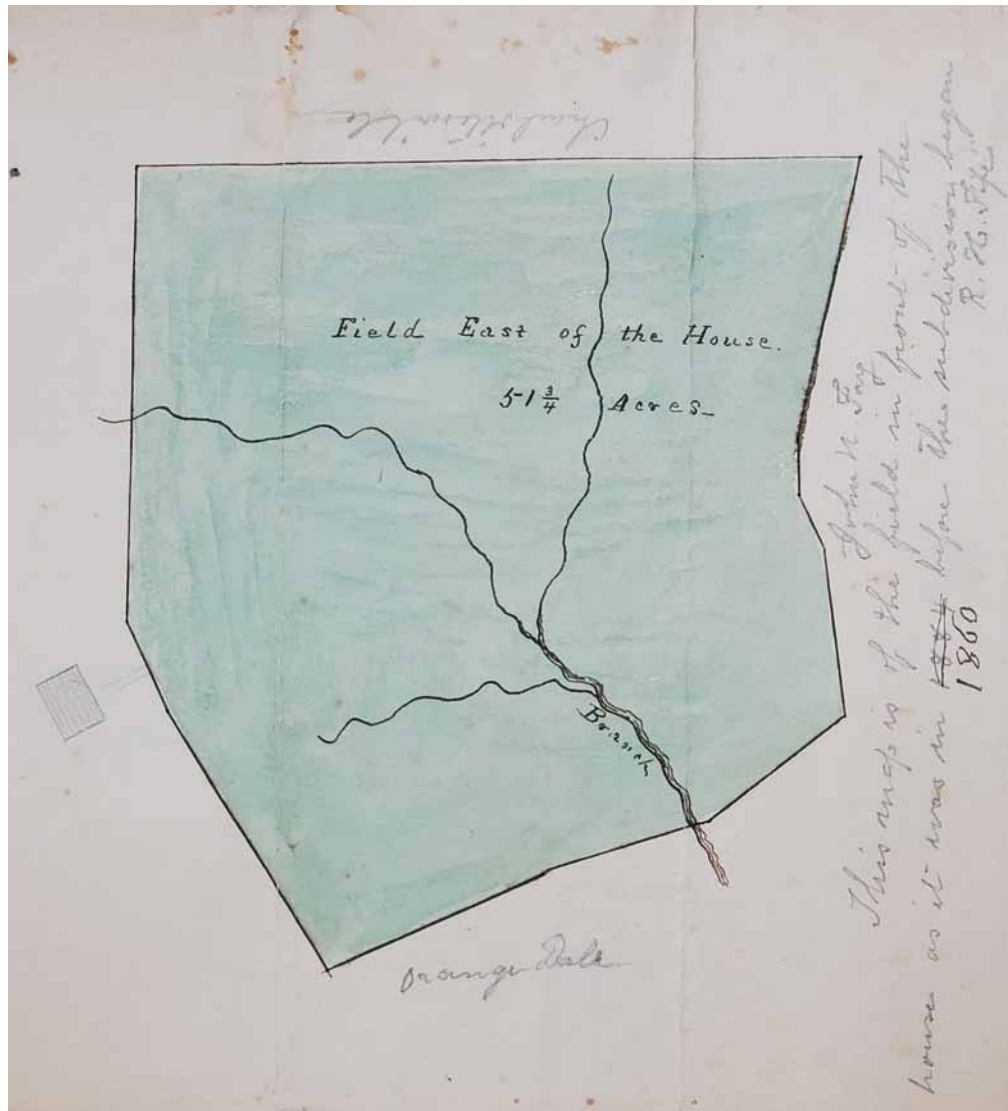


Figure 15. 'Field East of the House - 51  $\frac{3}{4}$  Acres,' Anonymous, circa 1884. University of Virginia Special Collections Library, Mss 5943, Box 3.

# OAK LAWN

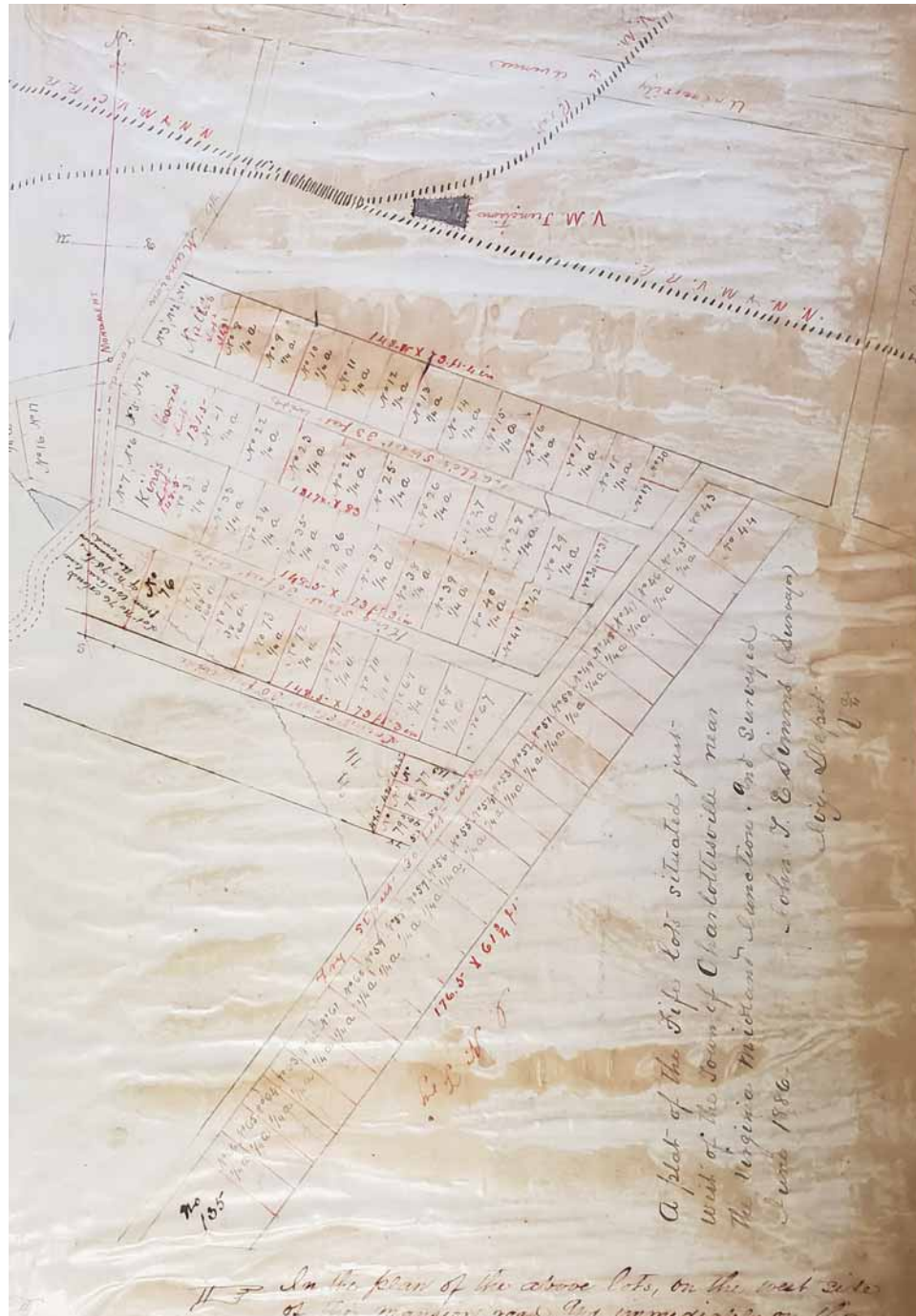


Figure 16. Detail, Plat of Fife Lots, east half. J. T. E. Simms, June 1886. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 88:176-177.



# OAK LAWN

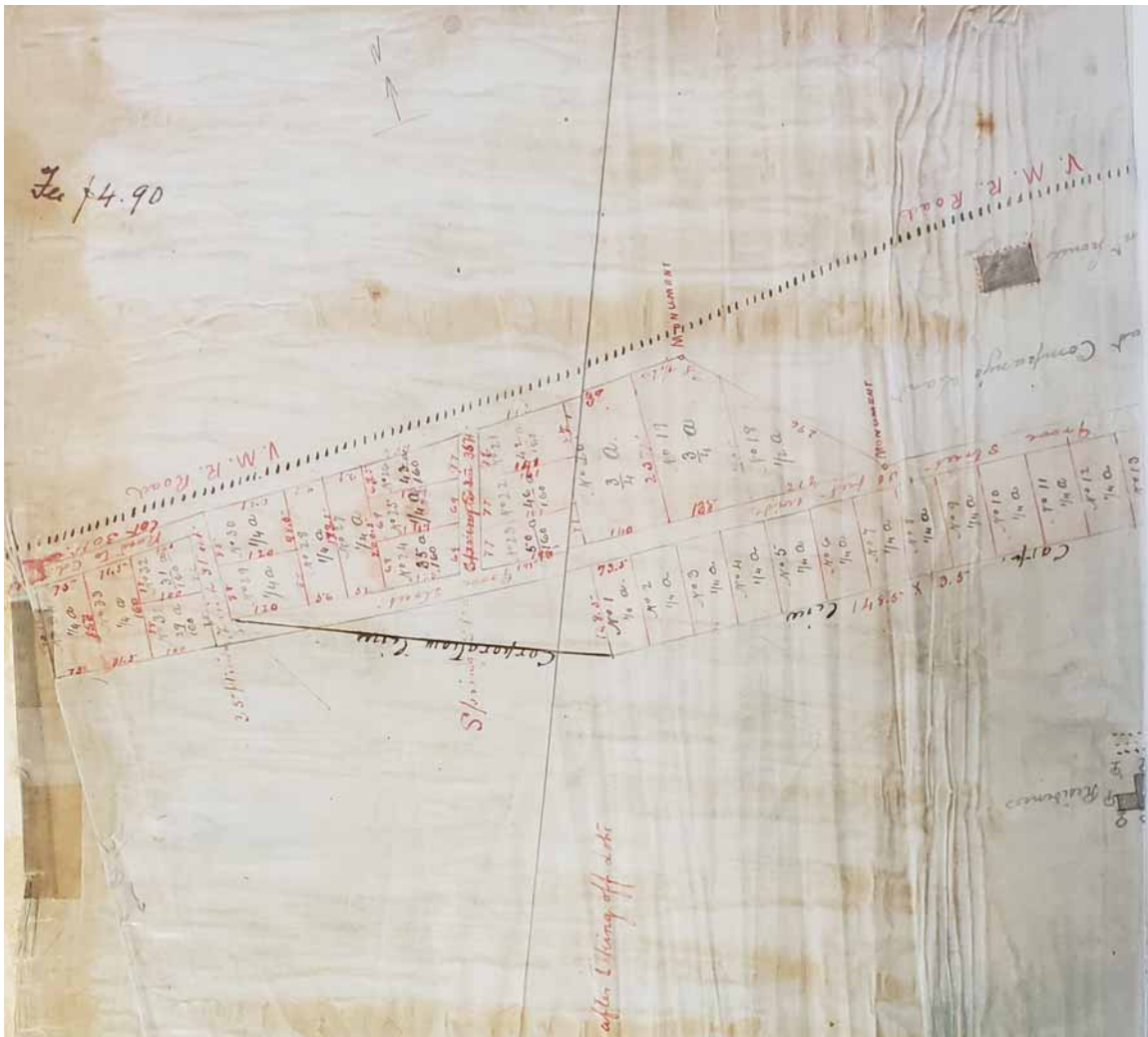


Figure 17. Detail, Plat of Five Lots, west half. J. T. E. Simms, June 1886. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 88:176-177.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 18. Detail, Plat of Fife Lots, showing Oak Lawn residence. J. T. E. Simms, June 1886. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 88:176-177.*

on the west and 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW on the east. The plat also depicted the Oak Lawn residence and a curvilinear entrance drive leading to its north façade (Figure 16 - Figure 18).<sup>151</sup>

Presumably in an effort to regain control over the future division and sale of the broader Oak Lawn estate, in October of 1887 a new chancery suit was brought by Robert Herndon Fife and Mary C. Fife against the non-resident Fife heirs, William J. Fife and his wife Mary Fife, and other defendants.<sup>152</sup> The two chancery suits were then joined with one another from 1887 onwards. During the period between 1888 and 1895, portions of the larger Oak Lawn estate continued to be divided, platted into streets and blocks, and sold as individual lots. Between 1885 and 1896, Albemarle County land tax records document that the core of Oak Lawn owned by the Fife family had dwindled from approximately 338.5 acres to approximately 225.5 acres. At least three plats depicting the division of the broader Oak Lawn estate, many showing overlapping areas, survive from this period.

A plat, drawn by surveyor John T. E. Simms and dated May of 1888, shows the northeastern portion of Oak Lawn and the blocks encompassing what are now Pine, Elm, and King streets and Cherry Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW on the west and 7 ½ St. SW on the east, and Cherry Avenue and King Street between 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW on the east and Jones Street on the west. This plat also depicts 9<sup>th</sup> St. SW as the 'mansion road,' and shows a curvilinear entrance drive leading to the north façade of the Oak Lawn residence, labeled 'Fife residence' (Figure 19 and Figure 20).<sup>153</sup>

151. ACDB 88:176-177.

152. ACChO 15 (1886-1888):408.

153. ACDB 90:39.



# OAK LAWN



Figure 19. (Above) Detail, Plat of Fife Lots. J. T. E. Simms, May 1888.

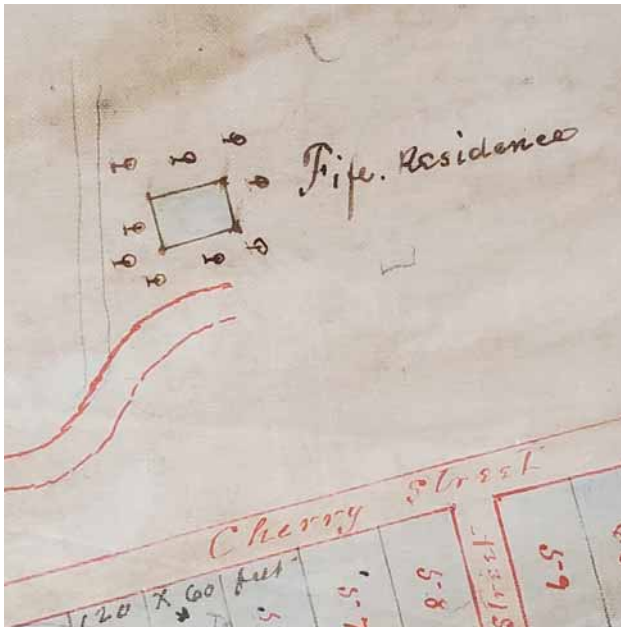


Figure 20. (Left) Detail, Plat of Fife lots, showing Fife residence. J. T. E. Simms, May 1888.

# OAK LAWN

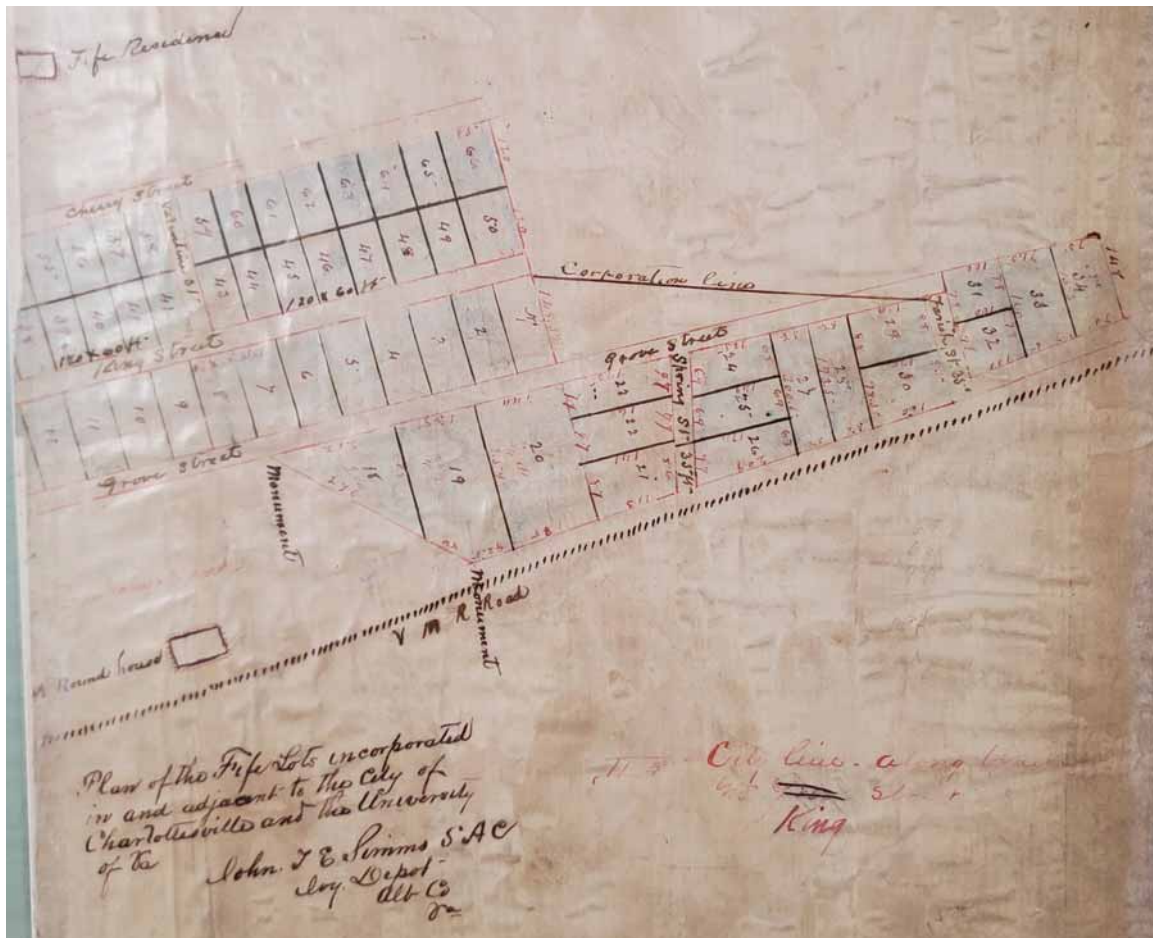


Figure 21. Detail, west half, Plan of the Fife Lots incorporated in and adjacent to the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia. J. T. E. Simms, n.d. [1888]. Clerk's Office, City of Charlottesville Courthouse, CCDB 1:38-39.

## OAK LAWN



Figure 22. Detail, east half, Plan of the Fife Lots incorporated in and adjacent to the City of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia. J. T. E. Simms, n.d. [1888]. Clerk's Office, City of Charlottesville Courthouse, CCDB 1:38-39.



# OAK LAWN

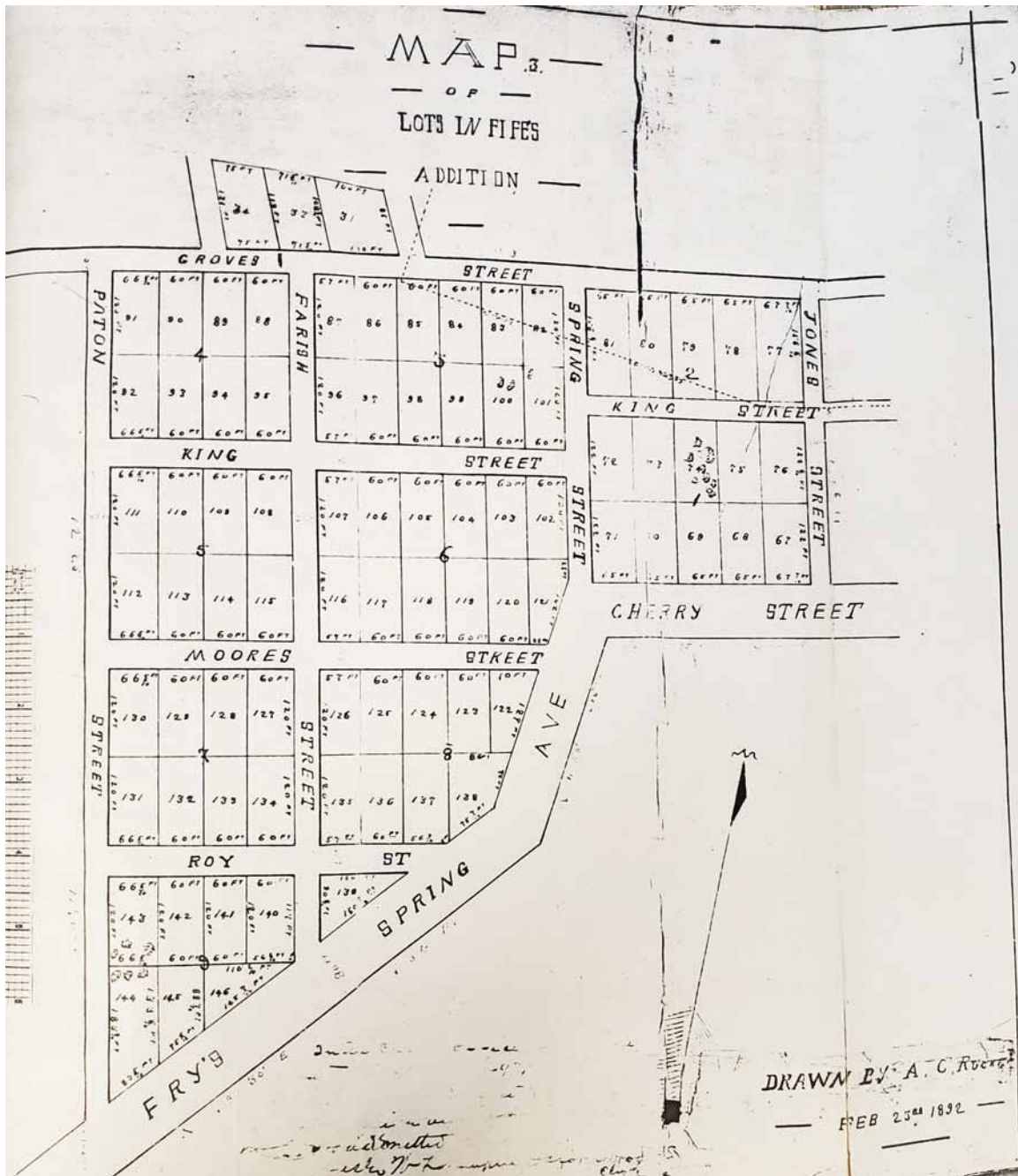


Figure 23. Map of Lots in Fife's Addition, A. C. Rucker, February 23, 1892. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 97:75.

## OAK LAWN

A second undated (circa 1888) plat also drawn by John T. E. Simms, and appearing in the City of Charlottesville deed books, depicts all of the lots platted by the Fife family in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. The plat shows all of the lots between 7 ½ Street SW and 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW east of Oak Lawn, and between Cherry Avenue and Grove Street north and west of Oak Lawn (Figure 21 and Figure 22).<sup>154</sup>

A third plat, drawn in February of 1892 by A C. Rucker, depicts what was called ‘Fife’s Addition,’ a large area north of what is now Cherry Avenue and south of Grove Street between Jones Street on the east and Paton Street on the west (Figure 23).<sup>155</sup>

Over time, much of the area platted into lots and sold by the Fife family between 1885 and 1920 became broadly known as Fife’s estates, or Fifeville. During this period, significant portions of the former agricultural lands of the pre-Emancipation Oak Lawn plantation, transitioned into small urban residential blocks divided by streets. Although there does not appear to be explicit covenants written into Fifeville deeds prohibiting their sale to or purchase by African Americans, the lots were initially purchased predominantly by white working class citizens who subsequently constructed single family residences on the lots.

In February of 1890, the Albemarle County Court required that all of the remaining unsold portions of the Rev. James Fife estate, both platted and unplatted, be sold. Micajah Woods was appointed commissioner to sell the land. A survey of the Oak Lawn estate was also ordered. In March of 1890, surveyor John T. E. Simms recorded what was then the remaining 279-acre core of the unplatted and unsold portion of the Oak Lawn estate, or “that portion of the Fife farm which has not been laid out into lots.” The plat shows the Oak Lawn estate located south of the Virginia Midland Railway line with the Oak Lawn residence portrayed as a small square located in the extreme northeast portion of the estate (Figure 24).<sup>156</sup> Presumably because it contained the Oak Lawn residence and adjacent core lands, Robert Herndon Fife and his sister Mary C. Fife purchased the 279-acre remaining unplatted portion of Oak Lawn from Commissioner Woods for \$10,000.<sup>157</sup> In late 1890, Commissioner Woods also initiated the sale of the remaining unsold platted lots, formerly part of the Oak Lawn estate, at auction. At this sale, Robert Herndon Fife and his sister Mary C. Fife purchased a total of 44 unsold lots that was charged against their shares of the James Fife estate.<sup>158</sup> In May of 1890, the Court also agreed to the “opening ...of a street or

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154. City of Charlottesville Deed Book [CCDB] 1:38-39. Clerk’s Office, City of Charlottesville Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.

155. ACDB 97:75.

156. ACDB 94:265, March 1890.

157. Albemarle County, Virginia. *Orson Adams, Receiver vs. Executors of James Fife, etc. and Executors of James Fife vs. William Fife, etc., 1895-165 (Original 1895-127 Cc)*, Albemarle County Chancery Records, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; ACDB 94:224, June 25, 1890.

158. ACDB 94:347, November 29, 1890.

## OAK LAWN

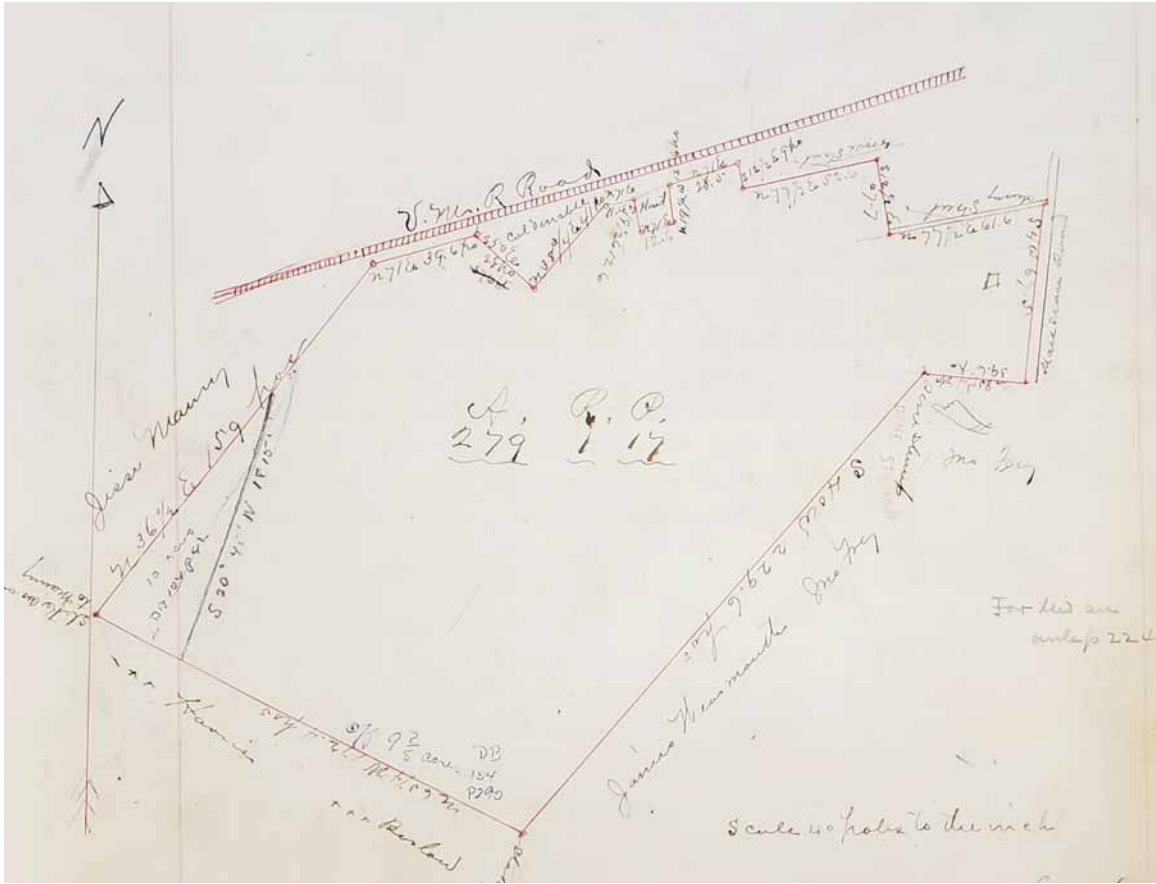


Figure 24. Plat showing the unsold portion of Oak Lawn. J. T. E. Simms, March, 1890. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 94:265.



## OAK LAWN

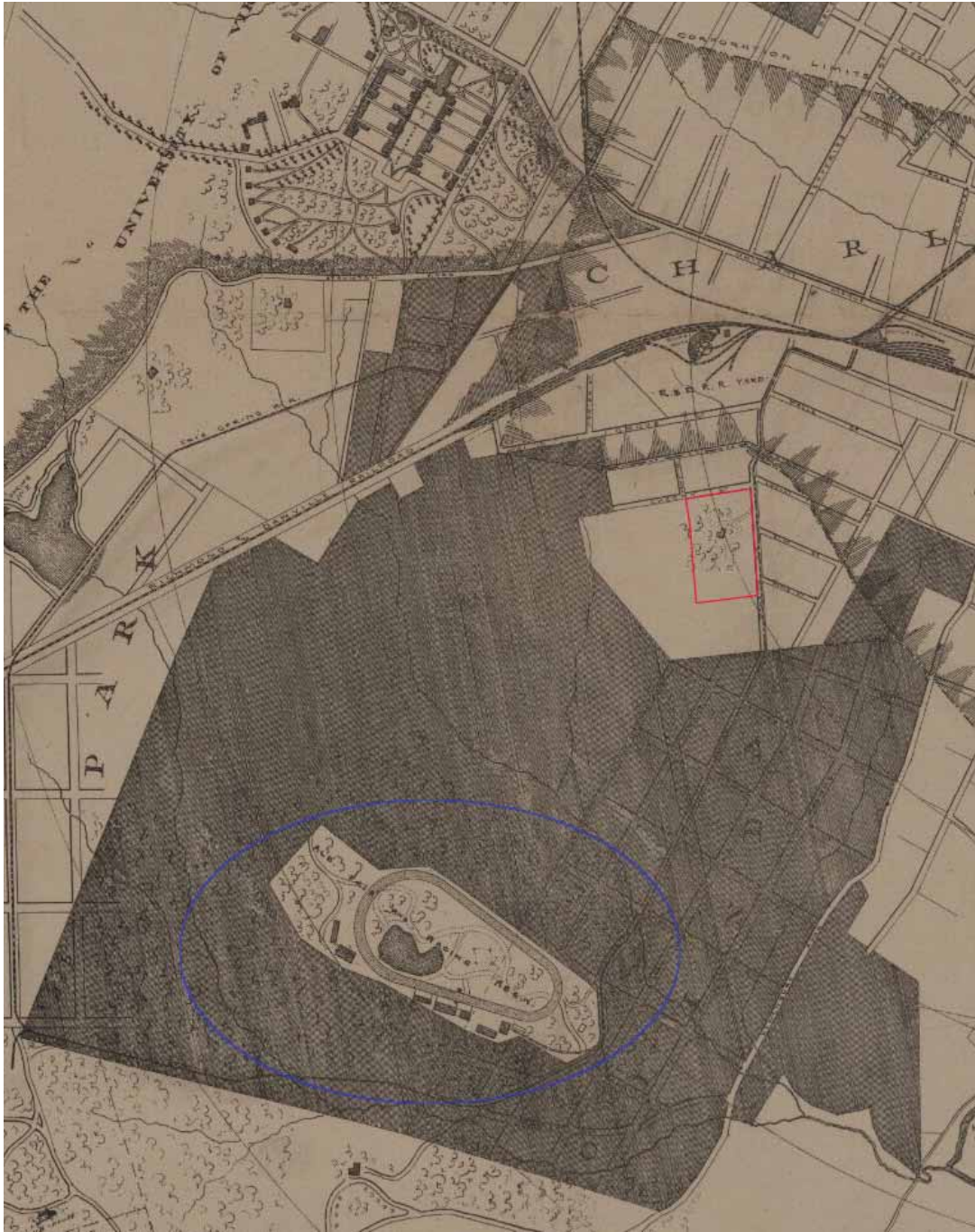


Figure 25. Detail, Map of Property Owned or Controlled by the Charlottesville Land Company, showing the blue-outlined grounds of the Albemarle Fair and Racing Association, and the red-outlined approximate location of the current 5.20-acre Oak Lawn parcel. Charlottesville Land Company, 1890. UVA Prints.

## OAK LAWN

road way through the lands of James Fife's estate toward and in the direction of Frys Spring." This unnamed street is likely the current Cherry Avenue.<sup>159</sup>

Following their purchase of the residence and adjacent core lands composing the Oak Lawn estate in June of 1890, Robert Herndon Fife and Mary C. Fife were able to jointly determine the trajectory of the family estate. In late 1890, the Fifes sold an approximately 30-acre parcel to the Albemarle Fair and Racing Association for \$3,500. The tract was described as "a part of the Oak Lawn estate ...in the south eastern portion."<sup>160</sup> A plat depicting land owned by the Charlottesville Land Company, a large real estate development firm, depicts the Oak Lawn estate and its immediate vicinity in late 1890. The map shows the Oak Lawn residence surrounded by trees, the Albemarle Fair and Racing Association grounds, and much of the former Oak Lawn estate located south and west of the primary residence as 'controlled' by the Charlottesville Land Company (Figure 25).<sup>161</sup>

Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Robert Herndon Fife diaries, journals and correspondence document the presence of additional buildings and support structures, predominantly agricultural in nature, that supported the Oak Lawn and reflect Fife's continued focus and reliance on a diversified agriculture and animal husbandry. Fife noted that he had roofed a pig pen and filled up an ice house in 1870, constructed a new hen house in 1871, underpinned a stable in 1874, and constructed a new stable in 1888. Sarah Fife noted a carriage house at Oak Lawn in 1897, and their daughter Ella K. Fife noted that a roof was placed over "the hen house and meat [smoke] house."<sup>162</sup>

The only mention of a burial ground for enslaved African Americans at Oak Lawn occurs in 1897. In a letter written to his son, James Douglas Fife, Robert Herndon Fife notes that he did not get to fencing up a field for corn located "above the old negro grave yard," and that he would do it another year. The reference to the grave yard identifies it as a specific location known to Fife family members, and appears to suggest that it may have been located some distance from the primary residence on land adjacent to agricultural fields.<sup>163</sup>

By the 1890s at the latest, but possibly well before, the Fife family hired local, African-American cooks to help out with the preparation of food and other chores. In 1893, Lizzie Thompson was a cook who lived and worked at Oak Lawn. Lizzie would likely have worked in the old brick kitchen just south of the Oak Lawn residence. The U.S. Census documents that in 1900 Lizzie Thompson was a widowed black 33-year-old laundress and resident of Charlottesville who

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159. ACChO 16 (1888-1890):568.

160. ACDB 94:227, October 28, 1890.

161. R. E. Shaw, Engr., "Map of the Property Owned or Controlled by the Charlottesville Land Co., Charlottesville, Virginia," November 29, 1890. RG-30/1/10.011, Mss 5660. UVA Prints 16321. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

162. Millie Fife, "Material for Ben, July 15, 2024." Ms. in possession of Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC., Charlottesville, Virginia.

163. *Papers of the Fife Family*, Mss 5943, Box 12, Robert Herndon Fife to James Douglas Fife, September 8, 1897.

## OAK LAWN

lived with her 14-year-old son Willis. By 1900, the cook at Oak Lawn was a 22-year-old Eliza Scott, whose occupation was listed as cook and servant. By 1905 the Fife family cook was noted as living on the property. Family oral history also records that one Alberta Fuller was a cook who lived and worked at Oak Lawn, and that she and her husband Steward Fuller, spent their honeymoon in the Cook's House together. Steward worked in the University Hospital as an orderly. The Cook's House likely served as a part-time residence for African-American cooks employed at Oak Lawn.<sup>164</sup>

In January of 1898 Mary C. Fife made out her will. After providing for her nieces, she left "all the rest and residue of my estate both real and personal of every kind and description," including the core of the Oak Lawn estate they jointly owned, to her brother Robert Herndon Fife. Mary C. Fife died sometime in early 1900 and her will was proven in court on March 5, 1900.<sup>165</sup>

In 1900 the Fifes living at Oak Lawn included Robert Herndon Fife (56), his wife Sarah (54), five of their children including Daisy F. Rinehart (30), Margaret (21), William (15), Ella (13), and Shelton [Douglas] (10), and Eliza Scott (22) a black cook and servant. A decade later, the Fife household was composed of Robert Herndon Fife (65), his wife Sallie (63), four of their children including Margaret (31), William (25), and Ella (21), Daisy Rinehart (39), and two sisters-in-law to Robert Herndon Fife, Ella Spillman (56) and Hinda Strickler (42). Robert Herndon Fife was still listed as a farmer, William was a lawyer, and Ella was a trained nurse.<sup>166</sup>

Some time about the turn of the twentieth century, a pre-Emancipation brick kitchen located immediately south of the Oak Lawn residence was demolished and a new brick kitchen was constructed adjacent to and abutting the western façade of the dining room. Various references to the 'old' kitchen note that it was a functioning structure as late as 1896. However, sometime in her youth, Ella K. Fife recalled witnessing that a "wall of the kitchen fell in," a structural failure that likely doomed the pre-Emancipation building. Born in 1886, Ella K. Fife would certainly have been old enough to remember such an event in the late 1890s or early 1900s. The recycled brick from the old pre-Emancipation kitchen structure was used to construct the new kitchen addition.<sup>167</sup>

From 1891 through 1900 Robert Herndon Fife and Mary C. Fife jointly, and from 1900–1907, Robert Herndon Fife as sole owner, sold several large tracts located west of the Oak Lawn residence. These tracts were sold to both corporate entities such as the Jefferson Park Company, as well as individual real estate investors including A. M. Brechin and R. L. Carter. Albemarle County land tax records document that between 1891 and 1907 the taxable acreage of Oak Lawn ranged

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164. Millie Fife, "Material for Ben," July 15, 2024. Ms. in possession of Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC., Charlottesville, Virginia.

165. ACWB 30:450, January 23, 1898. Mary C. Fife was buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn.

166. *Twelfth U.S. Census, 1900*. Population Statistic, Albemarle County, Virginia; *Thirteenth U.S. Census, 1910*. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

167. Nichols, "Oak Lawn"; Millie Fife, "Material for Ben," July 15, 2024. Ms. in possession of Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, Charlottesville, Virginia.

## OAK LAWN

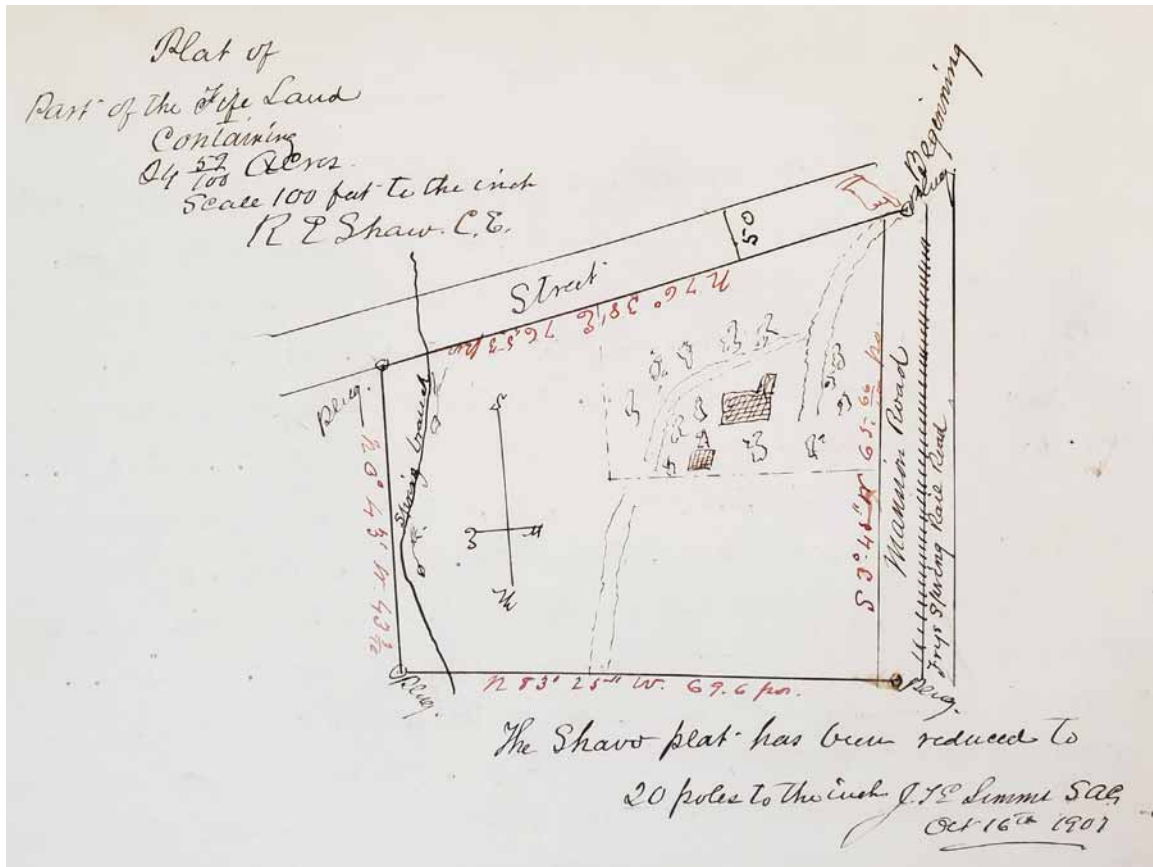


Figure 26. Plat of Part of the Fife Land, R. E. Shaw, October 16, 1907. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, ACDB 136:249.

from 249.5 acres in 1891 to 47.5 acres in 1907. By 1910, in addition to numerous individual unsold lots in Fifeville, Robert H. Fife only owned 45 acres of land.<sup>168</sup>

Twice during the first decade of the twentieth century, Robert Herndon Fife was required to deed Oak Lawn in trust to secure his debts. In 1907 he deeded a 24.5-acre portion of Oak Lawn, "on which is located the Fife mansion," as well as 60 unsold lots, to secure payment on five separate bonds. Only three years later in 1910, he again deeded the same 24.5-acre Oak Lawn parcel, "now occupied by Robert Herndon Fife together with brick dwelling and outhouses thereon," to secure payment of a \$4,000 debt. A plat specifying and delineating the 24.59-acre parcel conveyed in trust was drawn by R. E. Shaw in 1907. The plat depicts the core of Oak Lawn, including the primary

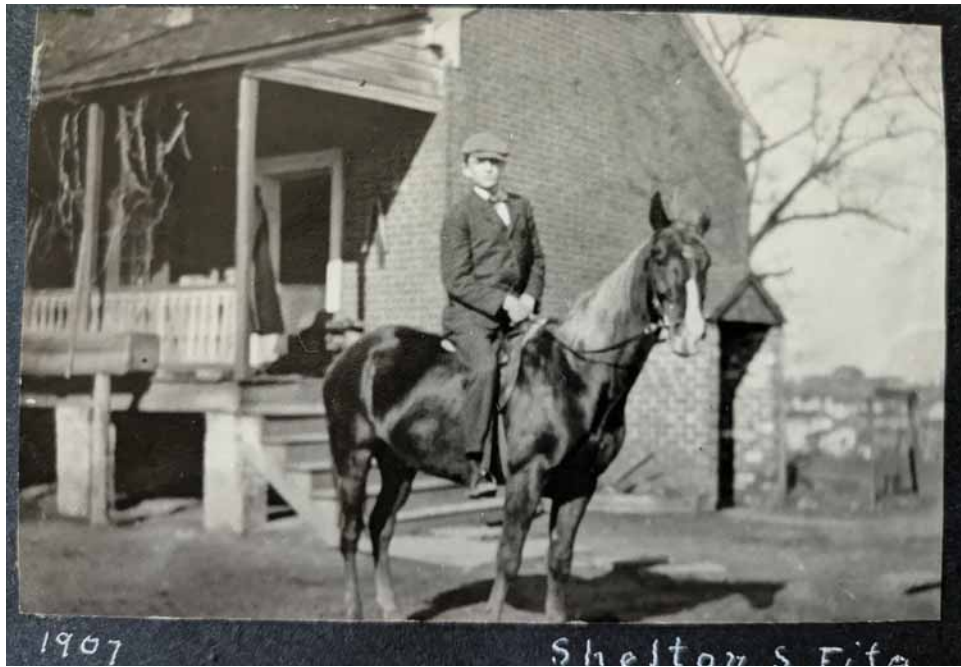
168. Albemarle County Land Tax Records. Clerk's Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.



## OAK LAWN

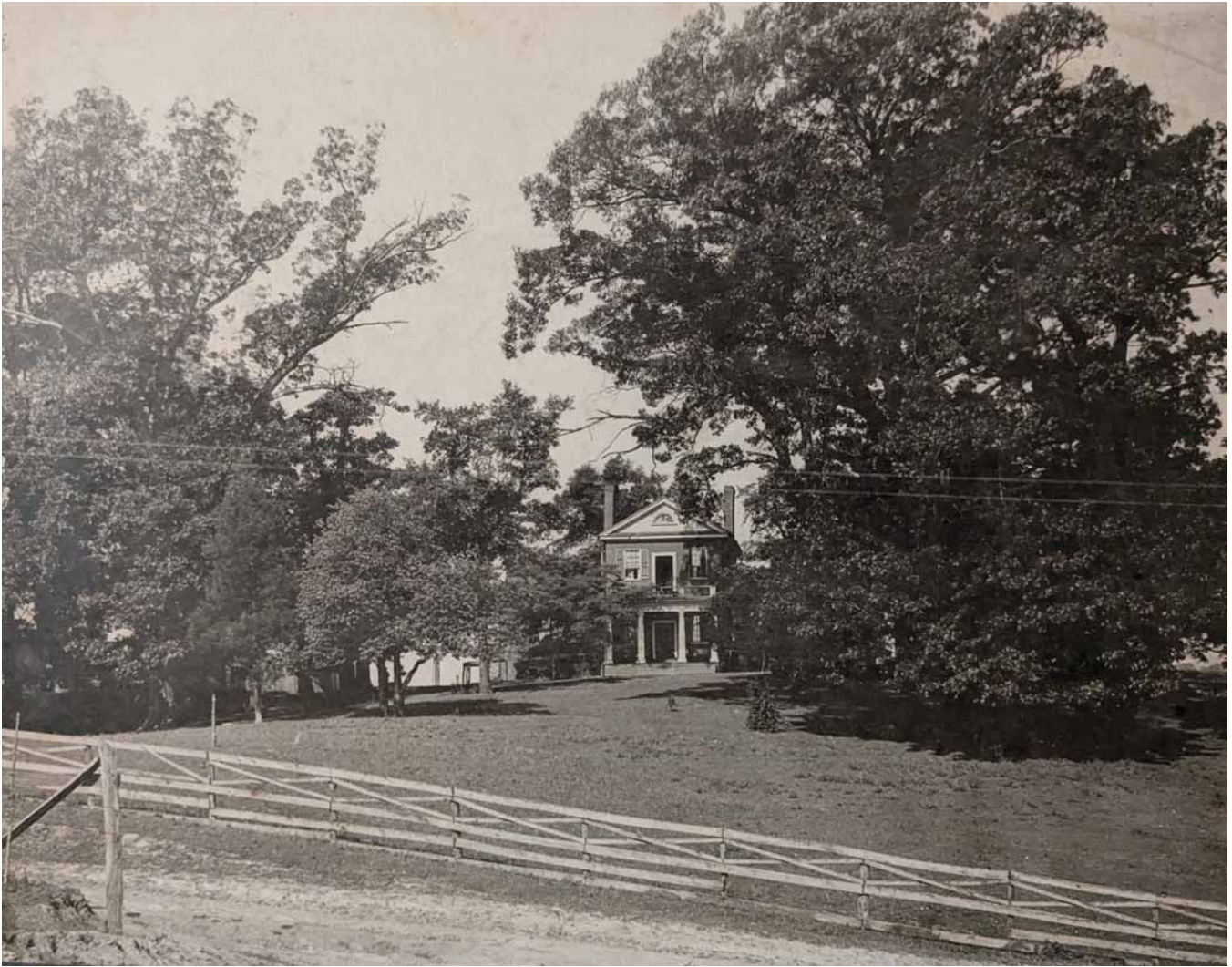


*Figure 27. Undated view of the main house from the southeast. This early view shows a second version of the porch balcony, where cast-iron railings extending between the original wood panels have replaced the original wood railings. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 28. Shelton S. Fife in 1907. Note that the south entrance to the south basement has been constructed. There are no doors in the grade-level entrance. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 29. Undated view of Oak Lawn looking west from future 9th Street corridor, showing eastern façade, open turfed lawn, and post and rail fence lining west side of road. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 30. The Cook's House, with a framed addition to the west, and another outbuilding to the south. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 31. Undated photo of Robert Herndon Fife, showing post and rail fencing, large oak trees, and farm buildings beyond. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 32. Photo of an unknown woman, looking downhill from the front yard of Oak Lawn with large trees, fences, and buildings in the distance.  
Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 33. View looking east showing a barn formerly located along the current western boundary of Oak Lawn. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN

residence surrounded by trees, an outbuilding to its southeast, and a two-pronged entrance drive (Figure 26).<sup>169</sup>

Several photographs of Oak Lawn taken by Fife family members in 1907, and more generally at the turn-of-the-century, show the primary residence, adjacent outbuildings, and the contiguous landscape within the core property. In 1907, the front or east façade of the residence is shown as covered in ivy with two board fences flanking either side of the columned front porch and extending the length of the northern and southern wings (Figure 1). The southern porches, one abutting the west façade of the southern wing, and a second abutting the southern façade of the dining room, are shown as open porches set on brick piers with posts supporting a shed-roof. A set of frame steps provided access from the rear yard to the porch abutting the west façade of the southern wing (Figure 198). A gravel surfaced road appears in front of and abutting the eastern façade of Oak Lawn in this period. The Cook's House is also depicted with a western frame shed addition (Figure 30). Several frame barn and stable-like structures are shown in a north-south oriented alignment south of the Cook's House along what is now the western boundary of the Oak Lawn property (Figure 33). Views during this period looking in a northeast direction towards Charlottesville show an unobstructed perspective looking out onto new residential neighborhoods (Figure 32). Post and wire fencing appears to surround portions of the core of Oak Lawn, particularly along or near its current western boundary, serving to separate it from the adjacent fields and pasture. A letter from Sallie Fife to her son Jamie in 1914 noted that Shelton S. Fife was installing a wire fence "for the front yard." On other portions of the Oak Lawn property, post and rail fences are also shown in the background, perhaps bounding what is now Cherry Avenue. The 'garden' to the south of Oak Lawn is shown in grass.<sup>170</sup>

Through the annexation process, in 1916 the City of Charlottesville more than tripled its land holdings from 782 to 2,458 acres. In the process it also increased its population by approximately 50%. As part of the 1916 annexation, a significant portion of the remaining Oak Lawn estate became part of the City of Charlottesville.

In August of 1919, Robert Herndon Fife died intestate, leaving his widow Sarah and seven children as heirs at law. Robert Herndon Fife was buried in the family cemetery at Oak Lawn. His widow, Sarah Graves Fife, died a year later in 1920 and was also buried in the family cemetery at Oak Lawn. At about the time of Robert Herndon Fife's death, the Fife and Bramham cemeteries were relatively open with little or no tree and vegetative growth (Figure 34). During the first half of the twentieth century, the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn was surrounded by a post and wire fence. A central pedestrian entrance, composed of an arched trellis covered in vines and either a wood or iron picket gate, was present in the north side of the cemetery (Figure 35).

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169. ACDB 136:249, October 3, 1907; 142:105, March 1, 1910; 136:262, October 16, 1907.

170. Millie Fife, "Material for Ben," July 15, 2024.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 34. View of the two family cemeteries, side by side, with trees and ornamental shrub plantings nearby. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 35. Undated view of the picket gate on the north side of the Fife family cemetery.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 36. Undated photograph of Josephine McDaniel and her son, Joseph. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

### THE OAK LAWN LAND CORPORATION (1920–1948)

Only a year after the death of their father and six months after the death of their mother, the children of Robert and Sarah, including Robert Herndon Fife Jr., James D. Fife, Daisey Rinehart, Madge F. Tucker, William O. Fife, Shelton S. Fife and Ella K. Fife, established a land management company called the Oak Lawn Land Corporation. The purpose of the corporation was to “hold title to real estate belonging to the Estate of Robert Herndon Fife” and to manage the sale of the remaining unsold lots. To that end in September of 1920 the seven children deeded to the Oak Lawn Land Corporation the remnant 24.5-acre core of Oak Lawn including all of the buildings situated on it but reserving the family cemetery, as well as a 7-acre tract in Charlottesville and 29 unsold platted lots in Fifeville.<sup>171</sup> Over the next two decades, the Oak Lawn Land Corporation sold most but not all of the remaining platted lots in Fifeville.

Following the death of Robert Herndon Fife and Sallie Fife, Oak Lawn was rented out to a tenant in March of 1920. The tenant did not work out and in 1921 Oak Lawn again was occupied by family members.<sup>172</sup> Shelton Strickler Fife and his wife Mildred H. Fife moved into the family residence at Oak Lawn in 1921.<sup>173</sup> Federal census records document that in 1920 the Shelton S. Fife household consisted of Shelton (30) whose occupation was listed as ‘city manager,’ Mildred (23), Shelton [Douglas] (10 months), and a white servant named Lottie Butter (25). A decade later in 1930 the Fifes were recorded as resident at Oak Lawn and the household consisted of Shelton (40) employed as an insurance salesman, Mildred (38), and their two sons S. Douglas (11), and Francis H. (9).<sup>174</sup>

171. ACDB 175:564, September 24, 1920; CCDB 132:235, March 10, 1947.

172. Millie Fife, personal communication, June 13, 2024.

173. Freudenberg, “Oak Lawn.”

174. *Fourteenth U.S. Census, 1920*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Ward 4; *Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Ward 4.

## OAK LAWN

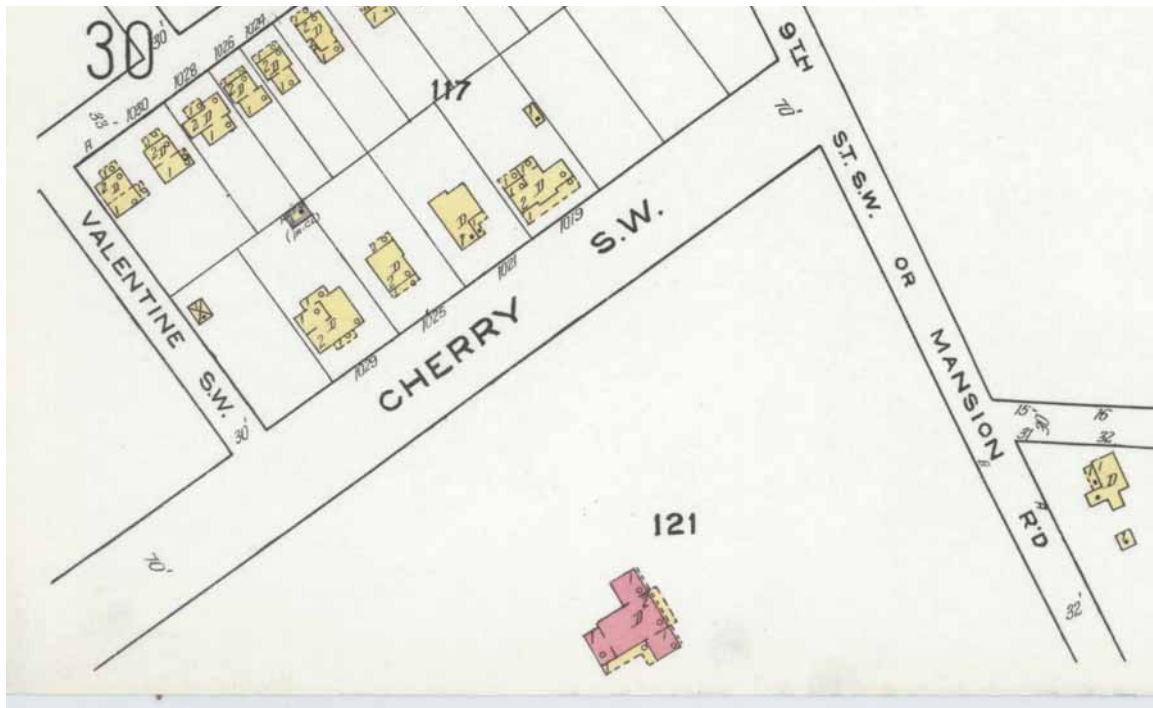


Figure 37. Sanborn Fire Insurance map showing Oak Lawn, 1920.

During the second quarter of the twentieth century, Mildred Fife hired African-American Charlottesville resident Josephine McDaniel to cook, perform household chores, and to take care of Mildred in her old age. The 1930 Federal Census documents that Josephine McDaniel was a 38-year-old head of a household with her son Joseph (9), and mother Clara Campbell (61). Josephine's occupation was listed as 'house work' for a 'private family.' Josephine and her family lived at 137 Dice Street in Charlottesville, a residence within walking distance of Oak Lawn.<sup>175</sup> A decade later in 1940, Josephine (48) lived with her son, Joseph (19) who was a 'shoe shine boy.' Her occupation was listed as 'maid' for a 'private family.'<sup>176</sup> Josephine McDaniel died at the age of 75 in 1969. Several Fife family photographs show Josephine, and her son Joseph, at Oak Lawn (Figure 36 and Figure 202).<sup>177</sup>

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps begin depicting the area south of current Cherry Avenue within Charlottesville only in 1920. The 1920 Sanborn map shows only the primary residence at

175. *Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Virginia; Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 14, 2024.

176. *Sixteenth U.S. Census, 1940*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Virginia.

177. Commonwealth of Virginia, Certificate of Death, Josephine Campbell McDaniel. *Virginia Death Records, 1912-2014*.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 38. Josephine McDaniel and "Gran" [Mildred H. Fife] in the garden, no date. View north toward the main house across the terraces, which appear to feature ornamental plantings. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 39. Views of flower gardens at Oak Lawn in undetermined locations. Some of the gardens may have occupied the terraces east of the south lawn. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN

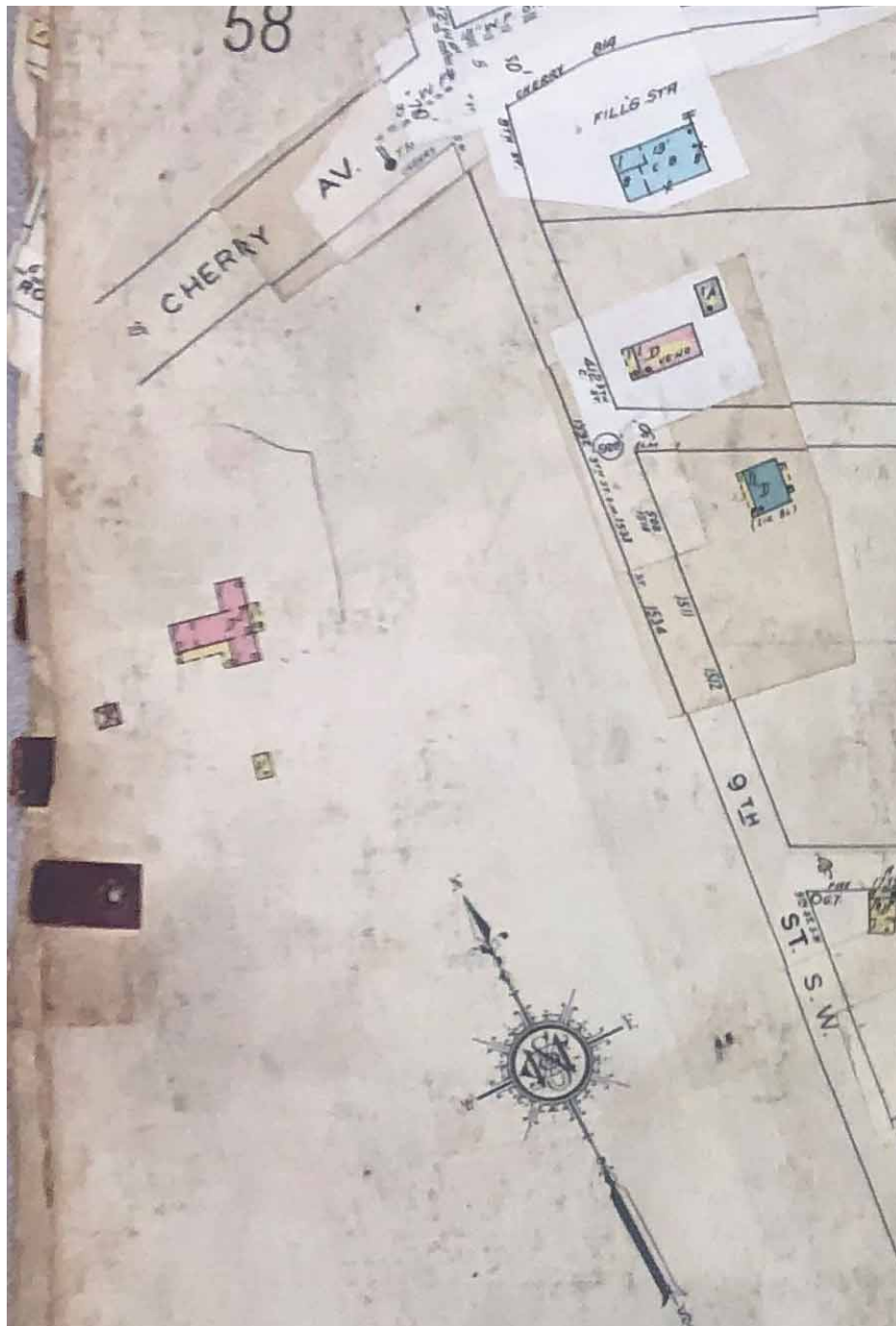


Figure 40. Sanborn Fire Insurance map showing Oak Lawn, 1929.

## OAK LAWN

Oak Lawn. In that year Oak Lawn was documented as a T-form brick dwelling with single-story northern and southern wings, and a single-story western addition. The frame southern porch was also still present. Nearly a decade later in 1929, the Sanborn map shows the same primary dwelling, as well as a single-story structure to its southwest, most likely representing the Cook's House, and a small single-story structure to the south, possibly representing the smokehouse and privy identified in the Nichols' sketch map (Figure 37 and Figure 40).

The long-term economic hardships that characterized the Great Depression had an impact on Oak Lawn and the extended Fife family. Ella K. Fife Freudenberg and her husband Richard and daughter Anne boarded at Oak Lawn during the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to Nancy O'Brien, they lived in the second story of Oak Lawn and cooked on a portable range. It is also during this period that brothers Douglas and Francis H. Fife slept in a 'hallway,' possibly the screened-in sleeping porch, often waking up with snow on their feet in cold weather.<sup>178</sup>

Despite these hardships, the rural oasis and natural resources that composed Oak Lawn provided the Fife family with a buffer from more desperate situations. By the transitional first to second quarter of the twentieth century, although possibly earlier, the Fife family had established a large approximately 0.4-acre garden, located south of the Oak Lawn residence and between it and the family cemetery. The garden was maintained by the family members and seasonal produce grown there was consumed by everyone.<sup>179</sup>

In addition, the broader landscape also provided a modest income to the Fife family. Growing up at Oak Lawn in the 1920s and 1930s, Francis H. Fife recalled that the family used to lease out their grazing land, presumed to be located west and south of the primary residence. Local livestock owners would be sold grazing rights and permitted to pasture their horses and cows in the open fields and lands attached to Oak Lawn. The livestock would presumably have been boarded in the barns and stables along the western edge of the core of Oak Lawn, structures that opened up to the western pasture. Francis also remembered milking many cows as a chore in his youth as well as taking care of chickens at Oak Lawn.<sup>180</sup>

The eastern garden terraces were also used to grow flowers during this period. Growing up, Francis H. Fife recalled that he and his brother S. Douglas sold cut flowers grown at Oak Lawn in downtown Charlottesville. A photograph from this period looking north towards Oak Lawn in the early Spring shows the terraces with two people gardening in it and numerous shrubs and flowering bushes visible (Figure 38).<sup>181</sup>

Oak Lawn's location adjacent to two railroad lines and a depot meant that it saw many transient men who stopped in to ask for work or food. Francis H. Fife recalled that Oak Lawn was known as a place where people could get a sandwich during the Great Depression. Josephine,

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178. *Fifteenth U.S. Census, 1930*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Virginia; Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

179. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

180. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

181. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 41. East façade of Oak Lawn showing columned front porch. The balcony balustrade now consists of cast-iron railings extending between narrow posts. A. Hench, June 3, 1937. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16531.*



*Figure 42. South façade of Oak Lawn showing screened porches and western kitchen addition. A. Hench, June 3, 1937. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16354.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 43. West façade of Oak Lawn showing western kitchen addition. A. Hench, June 3, 1937. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16353.*



*Figure 44. View southwest showing ivy covered east façade of Oak Lawn. A. Hench, June 3, 1937. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16352.*

the African-American cook employed by the Fife family during this period, would regularly give sandwiches to those in need.<sup>182</sup>

On February 19, 1936, Works Project Administration researcher Nancy O'Brien<sup>183</sup> visited Oak Lawn as part of the Historical Inventory of Virginia. She filed a brief historical description of the house and property, a report that likely relied upon information provided by Shelton S. and Mildred H. Fife. The residence was noted to be

“...the home of Shelton S. Fife. The house was built in 1818 by Col. Nimrod Bramham, a prominent merchant and magistrate of the community. It was sold by his executor in March 1847 to James Fife. Mr. Fife had in his youth practiced landscape gardening in Scotland, and as a civil engineer, had laid out some of the early subdivisions of Richmond. He came to Albemarle in 1839 from Goochland County. He later became

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182. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

183. No relation to Nancy O'Brien, second wife of Francis H. Fife.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 45. Oak Lawn, looking southwest towards main residence. Creator unknown, n.d. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints 16355.*



*Figure 46. Oak Lawn, looking northwest towards main residence, showing ivy covered east façade. Creator unknown, n.d. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16356.*

## OAK LAWN



Figure 47. (Left) Detail, U.S.G.S. Charlottesville and Vicinity Quadrant, showing the red-circled location of Oak Lawn. U.S.G.S., 1935.

Figure 48. (Below) Detail, 1937 aerial photograph, showing the red-circled Oak Lawn residence.



## OAK LAWN

a minister of the Baptist denomination. Oak Lawn has remained in the possession of the descendants of this family.”<sup>184</sup>

A series of four black and white photographs of Oak Lawn taken by Atcheson L. Hench, a Professor of English at the University of Virginia, document the primary residence and its immediate vicinity in June of 1937. The photographs show the east, south and west façades of Oak Lawn. Vegetation, including small trees and shrubs surround the residence. The formal east façade with columned porch has English ivy growing on the brick walls. What appears to be a gravel road winds up to the front porch. In the east yard is a well-maintained yard of sod. The south yard shows the western brick kitchen addition and southern frame porch connecting the kitchen and primary residence. Josephine McDaniel is shown working adjacent to what appears to be a pile of vegetative debris in front of the frame porch. The western façade and yard is shaded by large oak trees and what appears to be a barbed wire fence separates the domestic core from the adjacent western fields. (Figure 41 through Figure 44).

Two undated photographs of Oak Lawn, likely from the same period (circa transitional first to second quarter of the twentieth century), show the residence and front entrance drive (Figure 45 and Figure 46)

The first U.S.G.S. map to depict Oak Lawn was published in 1935. It shows the Oak Lawn residence on the southern edge of Charlottesville’s urban development (Figure 47). The first aerial photograph that shows Oak Lawn was taken in 1937. The image shows the rural nature of the larger Oak Lawn property in relation to the developed residential neighborhoods north of Cherry Street and east of 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW. Oak Lawn is shown as a wooded core with a winding entrance drive originating from 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW and terminating at the eastern façade of the primary residence. The photograph is not detailed enough to make out the location of other buildings and structures on the property other than the primary residence. Between the Bramham and Fife cemeteries and the primary residence is a large area that appears to have been plowed as a field, most likely the vegetable garden, now the sod-covered southern lawn (Figure 48).

Shelton Strickler Fife died intestate in 1937 and was buried in the Fife Family Cemetery at Oak Lawn. The 1940 Federal Census reflects the presence of Mildred H. Fife (55) widow of Shelton, and her two sons two sons S. Douglas Fife (21) and Francis H. Fife (19) living at Oak Lawn then with a formal address of 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW.<sup>185</sup>

A second quarter of the twentieth century (circa 1940) oblique aerial photograph of Charlottesville shows the Oak Lawn property from the west looking east. The photograph clearly shows the primary residence with western kitchen addition and southern porch, the white-painted brick Cook’s House, as well as several agricultural-related outbuildings located along what is now the western boundary of Oak Lawn. Immediately south of the Oak Lawn residence, and between

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184. Nancy O’Brien, “Oak Lawn,” (ALB-195) survey report, February 19, 1936. *Virginia Historical Inventory*, Virginia Conservation Commission, Division of History, <https://image.lva.virginia.gov/VHI/html/02/0347.html>, accessed May 21, 2024. This Nancy O’Brien is no relation to Nancy K. O’Brien, Francis H. Fife’s second wife.

185. *Sixteenth U.S. Census, 1940*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville, Ward 3.



## OAK LAWN

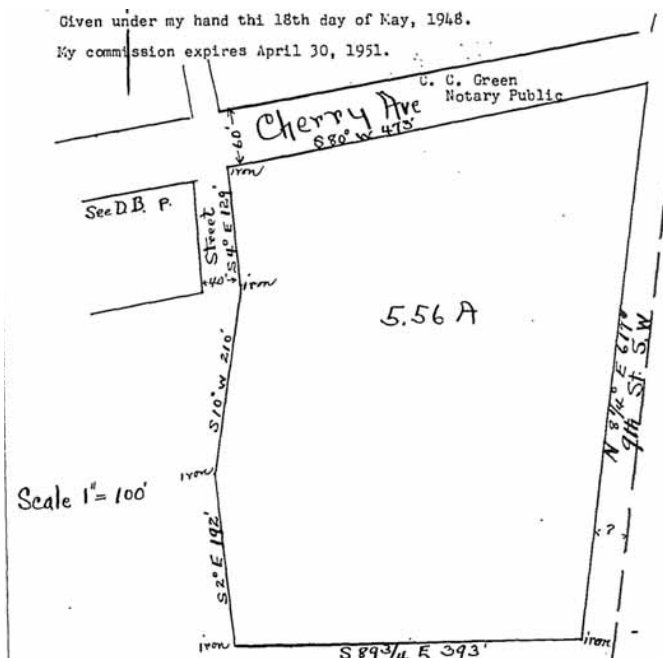


Figure 49. (Above) Detail, oblique aerial photograph, circa 1940, showing the Oak Lawn residence (at top) and several outbuildings and structures west and southwest of it. University of Virginia, Special Collections Library, UVA Prints #16191.

Figure 50. (Left) Plat showing 5.56-acre parcel sold to Mildred H. Fife in 1948. Clerk's Office, City of Charlottesville Courthouse, CCDB 163:413.

## OAK LAWN

it and the Fife and Bramham–Bibb family cemeteries, was a large, plowed field, or garden. At least four outbuildings appear to be present including (from north to south), 1) a frame structure immediately west of the brick Cook's House, 2) a small, white-painted structure; 3) a large frame building, possibly a stable or barn; and 4) a large frame building, also possibly a stable or barn. Of note, an informal north-south oriented road connected to Cherry Avenue linked these agricultural structures to the road corridor. A large open field devoid of vegetation, and defined on both the north and west by what is now Cherry Avenue, likely served as a first half of the twentieth-century pasture for livestock at Oak Lawn. Also visible in the photograph is the Bramham - Bibb family cemetery with several white stone monuments and markers (Figure 49).

With only three unsold platted lots in Fifeville remaining, the heirs of Robert Herndon Fife made the decision to liquidate their shares in the Oak Lawn Land Corporation and dissolve it. In March of 1947 the Oak Lawn Land Corporation deeded to James D. Fife, and William O. Fife as trustees, the 24.1-acre core of Oak Lawn, and Fifeville lots 5, 10, and 11.<sup>186</sup>

Only a year later in April of 1948, James D. Fife and William O. Fife as trustees for the heirs of Robert Herndon Fife, sold the 5.56-acre core of Oak Lawn containing the primary residence, to Mildred H. Fife, widow of Shelton S. Fife. The deed of sale reserved for the use of the descendants of James Fife, access to and use of the Fife Family Cemetery. A plat accompanying the sale documents that the small parcel sold to Mildred conforms to the present-day Oak Lawn parcel (Figure 50).<sup>187</sup>

### LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY DOCUMENTATION EFFORTS (1948–2023)

By mid-century the Fife household living at Oak Lawn was quite small. The 1950 Federal census documents that only Mildred H. Fife (65), her sons S. Douglas Fife (31) an automobile parts salesman, and Francis H. Fife (29) a trust officer at a bank resided there.<sup>188</sup> By the mid-1950s, S. Douglas Fife married Norma Gail Goode and both were residing Oak Lawn. S. Douglas and Gail G. Fife would go on to raise their family at Oak Lawn, including two sons Shelton D. Jr., William R., and a daughter, Marjorie, while caring for Mildred H. Fife.<sup>189</sup>

Post-World War II Oak Lawn continued to provide for the Fife family. Aerial photographs from the 1930s through the 1970s document that the vegetable garden in the south yard was plowed during this period. By mid-century the Fifes hired an unidentified local man to farm and manage the garden at Oak Lawn. This man provided the labor and care of the garden in return for

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186. CCDB 132:2356, March 10, 1947.

187. CCDB 163:413, April 20, 1948.

188. *Seventeenth U.S. Census, 1950*. Population Statistics, City of Charlottesville.

189. Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 14, 2024.



## OAK LAWN

a half share of the produce. East of the Oak Lawn residence there was also a smaller approximately 0.05-acre field, adjacent to 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW, that was planted in potatoes.<sup>190</sup>

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the approximately 18-acres of land west of and adjacent to the core of Oak Lawn was a relatively open area. In the late 1950s to early 1960s, Marjorie Fife Thomas recalled that she and her siblings used to run and play in this former pasture. Marjorie Fife Thomas also recalled that she and her siblings cared for at least two ponies who were stabled and fed in one of the two large barns or stables located immediately west of the garden. Other than the two ponies, no other farm animals or livestock were kept at Oak Lawn from the 1950s onwards.<sup>191</sup>

Initiated as a side business, in the 1950s and 1960s S. Douglas Fife Sr. began raising chinchillas, presumably for their valuable fur. He kept the chinchillas in the southeast basement level room of the Oak Lawn residence, later also expanding to the northeast basement level room. Marjorie F. Thomas recalled that she and her siblings were required to feed and care for the small rodents. The chinchilla cages were stacked two high along three walls of the southeast basement level room.<sup>192</sup>

Historic photographs document that at some point in time, after 1937 but prior to 1967, the screened-in porch abutting the southern façades of the dining room and kitchen addition was enclosed as a sleeping porch (Figure 200 and Figure 201). This entailed the construction of clapboard siding and horizontally set screens in the southern and western façades of the porch. The western porch abutting the western façade of the southern wing may also have been screened-in at this time but did not possess clapboard siding.

Beginning in the late 1940s, significant changes occurred in both the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County schools. In 1949, the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County consolidated its three high schools for African-American students (Jefferson High School, Esmont High School and Albemarle Training School) into one, what is now Burley Middle School. The new African-American High School was constructed between 1950-1951 and opened in September of 1951. In the 1954 case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public school systems was unconstitutional. The U.S. District court ordered the desegregation of schools in Charlottesville in 1956, and following massive white resistance, again in 1959. In 1959, Venable Elementary and Lane High School were required to admit the first African American students, the ‘Charlottesville 12.’ By 1962 Charlottesville public schools were completely desegregated.<sup>193</sup>

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190. Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 14, 2024.

191. Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 14, 2024.

192. Marjorie Fife Thomas, personal communication, June 14, 2024.

193. Charlottesville City Schools, “Timeline of Desegregation at Charlottesville City Schools,” [https://charlottesvilleschools.org/3838\\_4#:~:text=The%20case%20is%20cited%20across,for%20true%20racial%20equity%20continues](https://charlottesvilleschools.org/3838_4#:~:text=The%20case%20is%20cited%20across,for%20true%20racial%20equity%20continues), accessed June 10, 2024.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 51. Detail, 1957 aerial photograph, showing the red-circled Oak Lawn residence.*



*Figure 52. Detail, 1966 aerial photograph, showing the red-circled Oak Lawn residence, and the adjacent Buford Junior High School development.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 53. (Left) Exterior east elevation, Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*

*Figure 54. (Below) Exterior east façade, Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*





## OAK LAWN



*Figure 55. Exterior northwest rear oblique, Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*



*Figure 56. Exterior south side elevation, Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 57. (Above) Exterior southwest rear oblique, Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*



*Figure 58. (Left) East elevation, Smokehouse [Cook's House], Oak Lawn. E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*



## OAK LAWN

Aerial photographs taken in 1957 and the early 1960s document that the south side of Cherry Avenue and the north side of Forest Hills Avenue had been developed as domestic parcels. However much of the land located south and west of Oak Lawn, and owned by the descendants of Robert Herndon Fife, still remained open although significant portions appeared to possess areas where trees and brush were regrowing (Figure 51).

Due to the need to build sufficient school facilities for all of its students, the City of Charlottesville schools system began to look for land upon which to construct a new junior high school. The school system approached the Fife family about purchasing a large portion of Oak Lawn located west of the primary residence. The Fife family refused and the City of Charlottesville initiated a suit to acquire it through eminent domain. In May of 1964, following a court order, the City of Charlottesville purchased the condemned 18.868-acres of land from the Fife family. Construction of a new junior high school, now Buford Middle School, was completed and opened in August of 1966.<sup>194</sup>

A 1966 aerial photograph of Oak Lawn documents the completion of the new Buford Junior High School facilities. The same image also shows the Oak Lawn residence, and the northernmost of two large stables or barns first identified in a 1940 aerial photograph. Possibly as a result of the construction of Buford Junior High School and a formal entrance road bordering the western boundary of Oak Lawn, several other outbuildings located along this corridor were demolished including two unidentified structure west of and adjacent to the Cook's House, and a large frame stable or barn near the cemeteries. Subsequent aerial photographs from the 1980s onwards do not show this stable or barn suggesting its demolition (Figure 52).

Shortly after the construction of Buford Junior High School, Evelina Magruder conducted a preliminary survey of Oak Lawn in 1967 for the Historic American Building Survey. The two-page inventory form was only generally descriptive but also included six black and white photos of the property, primarily focusing on the Fife residence (Figure 53 through Figure 58).<sup>195</sup>

Sometime prior to 1973 noted architect, University of Virginia Professor of Architecture, and scholar of Jeffersonian architecture, Frederick Doveton Nichols, visited Oak Lawn and described the residence and extant outbuilding. Nichols described the interior and exterior of Oak Lawn in great detail, noting that it was "a handsome blend of the vernacular and the formal ...deriv[ing] clearly from the influence of the architecture of Thomas Jefferson."<sup>196</sup>

In 1973 Oak Lawn was listed on the Virginia Landmark and National Register of Historic Places. The nomination stated that Oak Lawn was likely constructed by a builder employed in the construction of the University of Virginia and influenced by Thomas Jefferson, and was a "notable example of Jeffersonian Classicism with the Randolph-Semple House in Williamsburg being its

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194. CCDB 253:37, May 7, 1964.

195. Evelina Magruder, "Oaklawn," 104-0031. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory. Oak Lawn stie file (104-0031). Virginia Department of Historic Resources Library, Richmond, Virginia.

196. Nichols, "Oak Lawn."

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 59. Exterior east front façade, Oak Lawn. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission staff, 1971. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*



*Figure 60. Exterior north façade, Oak Lawn. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission staff, 1971. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 61. Exterior south elevation, Oak Lawn. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission staff, 1971. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*



*Figure 62. Smokehouse [Cook's House], Oak Lawn. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission staff, 1971. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*

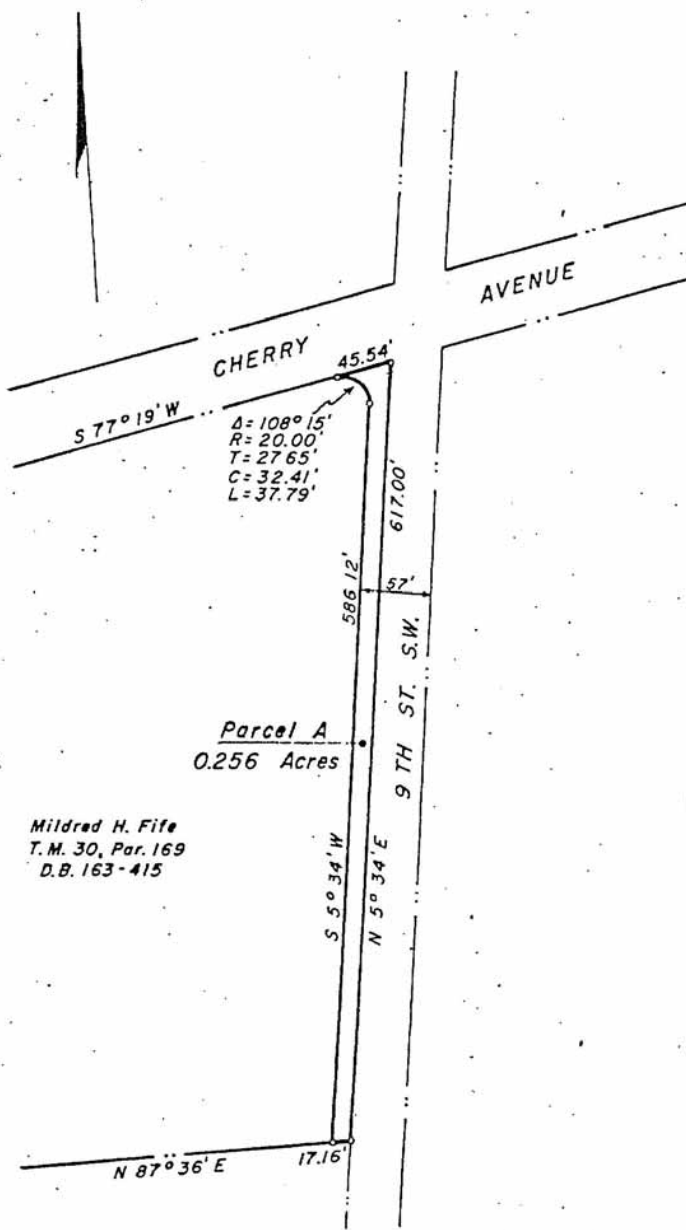


## OAK LAWN



*Figure 63. Detail, 1974 aerial photograph, showing the red-circled Oak Lawn residence.*

# OAK LAWN



PLAT SHOWING  
 PARCEL A  
 TO BE ACQUIRED BY  
 THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE  
 FROM MILDRED H. FIFE

SCALE: 1" = 100'

OCT. 4, 1974

Figure 64. Plat showing the 0.256-acre parcel along the west side of 9th Street SW acquired by the City of Charlottesville in 1976.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 65. Aerial photographs showing Oak Lawn surrounded by woods in 1980 (above left); 1990 (above right); and 1996 (left).*

## OAK LAWN

design prototype.”<sup>197</sup> Several photographs of Oak Lawn, taken as part of the documentation of the property in 1971, show the residence from a number of perspectives (Figure 59 through Figure 62).

An aerial photograph taken in 1974 shows the mature Buford Junior High School facilities, and the heavily wooded Oak Lawn property (Figure 63).

In 1976 Mildred H. Fife sold to the City of Charlottesville a narrow 0.256-acre parcel lining the western side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW, for the purposes of widening the vehicular corridor (Figure 64).<sup>198</sup> A year later in April of 1977, Mildred H. Fife died. Her will left Oak Lawn to her two sons, S. Douglas Fife and Francis H. Fife.<sup>199</sup> Mildred H. Fife was buried in the Fife Family Cemetery at Oak Lawn. In 1983, S. Douglas Fife died intestate and was buried in the Fife Family Cemetery at Oak Lawn. His interest in Oak Lawn passed to his heir-at-law and wife, Gail G. Fife.

Sometime in the mid-1980s, the Oak Lawn property was entered in the City of Charlottesville’s Landmark Survey.<sup>200</sup> In a letter to the Charlottesville Landmark Survey supporting its documentation, University of Virginia Professor of Architecture K. Edward Lay wrote that “Oak Lawn distinguishes itself as Charlottesville’s finest building outside the University. Undoubtedly designed and built by one of Jefferson’s master builders, its three-bay, two-story pedimented pavilion with lower side wings is similar to the Semple House of 1780 in Williamsburg.”<sup>201</sup>

Three aerial photographs of Oak Lawn taken between 1980 and 1996 document the wooded nature of the property. The only open and sodded areas within the 5.20-acre parcel appeared to be portions of the east and south lawns (Figure 65).

In the late 1990s, Gail G. Fife decided to leave Oak Lawn and sold her one-half interest in the property inherited through her husband S. Douglas Fife to Francis H. Fife in March of 1997. Following this transaction Francis H. Fife became the sole owner of the then 5.20-acre parcel.<sup>202</sup>

In the 1970s Francis H. Fife met his second wife, Nancy K. O’Brien, while serving on the Charlottesville City Council. Francis served on the Charlottesville City Council between 1970–1978 and was mayor between 1972–1974. Nancy served on the City Council between 1976–1980 and served as mayor between 1976–1978.<sup>203</sup> Francis and Nancy were married in 1982, the second marriage for both of them.

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197. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, “Oak Lawn,” February 1973. National Register of Historic Places Inventory–Nomination Form. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973).

198. CCDB 379:580, November 1, 1976.

199. CCWB 21:443.

200. Eugenia Bibb, “501 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Oak Lawn,” Charlottesville Landmark Survey. (Charlottesville: Department of Community Development, n.d.)

201. K. Edward Lay to Eugenia Bibb, June 5, 1987. In Eugenia Bibb, 501 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW, “Oak Lawn,” Charlottesville Landmark Survey. Charlottesville: Department of Community Development.

202. CCDB 693:243, March 10, 1997.

203. Francis H. Fife married his first wife, Virginia Byrd Hart in 1952. Together they had three children, Richard H. (b. 1953), James (b. 1956), and Mildred H (b. 1960). After his divorce, Francis H. Fife married Nancy K. O’Brien in 1982.

## OAK LAWN

In 1999 Francis H. Fife and Nancy K. O'Brien moved into Oak Lawn. Prior to moving in, however, significant renovations and new construction were undertaken on both the primary residence and Cook's House between 1998–1999. Seeking to bring light into the small brick kitchen, Nancy O'Brien explored the possibility of putting a skylight in its roof. When she was told by architects that the roof would not support it, she and Francis decided to construct a new sunroom to its south and remove the extant southern wall to the kitchen to bring light into the dark room. The extant enclosed southern sleeping porch was found to have been cobbled together and was then in a state of decay. Because of its National Register of Historic Places status, W. Douglas Gilpin, Jr., the architect chosen to design the new addition, argued that the porches were non-contributing, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources determined that the project would not affect the National Register Status of Oak Lawn. The sleeping porches and first-floor bathroom were demolished and a new enclosed southern addition, or sunroom, was constructed linking the southern façades of the kitchen and dining room and the western façade of the first floor bedroom. The southwest sunroom addition was built on piers to allow access to the western basement level space underneath the dining room via a sunken north-south oriented pathway. A new western stairway to the southwest addition facilitated access to the exterior. Additional work to the turn-of-the-century western brick kitchen included reinforcing the roof, constructing a new ceiling, removing the plaster from the eastern wall (formerly the exterior western wall to the dining room), installing a new floor and new appliances and cabinets, and removing the southern brick wall to open it up to the southwest addition. A new first-floor bathroom was also installed in the location of the old bathroom as part of the addition.<sup>204</sup>

The former first-floor bedroom was converted into an office for Francis H. Fife. As part of the conversion the wooden floor was refinished with a machine. Several other wooden floors in Oak Lawn, including the hall, the library, and the master bedroom on the second floor were also refinished manually at this time. In the wall separating the stairways between the first and second floors, new drywall was installed with a small window, or opening, constructed for the grandchildren's enjoyment. In addition, a new wooden railing was installed on the porch.<sup>205</sup>

Adjacent to and southwest of the Oak Lawn residence, the Cook's House received significant 'structural' changes to ensure that it would not fall down, such as rebuilding a portion of the chimney with concrete blocks. South of the Cook's House, a new wood tool shed was erected to store lawn and garden tools and other outdoor tools and equipment.<sup>206</sup>

Prior to and after moving in, Nancy O'Brien and Francis H. Fife began removing furniture, trunks, suitcases and boxes that had been stored in the attic of Oak Lawn. Likewise, the basement

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204. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024; William M. Crosby Jr. to W. Douglas Gilpin, Jr., November 14, 1997. "Oak Lawn," VDHR 104-0031, site file. Virginia Department of Historic Resources Library, Richmond, Virginia.

205. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024; Millie Fife, personal communication, June 14, 2024.

206. Nancy O'Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

level rooms were cleaned and cleared of old, no longer used items. Many cages, presumed to have been used to house chinchillas, were removed from the southern basement level space.<sup>207</sup>

Shortly after moving in, Nancy O'Brien began to clean up and make more presentable the southern 'entrance' to Oak Lawn, connecting the southern terminus of the driveway with the western entrance to the southwest addition. A short wooden fence and frame arched trellis entrance were constructed, and small flower beds bounding the fence line were planted. It was in this area, adjacent to and south of the southwest addition, during the excavation of a trench for the installation of a new light post, that a mortared brick foundation was encountered below grade. According to O'Brien, the brick foundation was believed to be a portion of the old brick kitchen.<sup>208</sup>

Additional plantings at Oak Lawn that occurred during the Francis H. Fife and Nancy K. O'Brien tenure include an evergreen screen. Located along the western side of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW corridor, Fife and O'Brien planted an approximately 290-foot-long north-south oriented row of evergreen trees presumably to screen the heavy vehicular traffic at the Cherry Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street SW intersection. An aerial photograph from 2006 clearly shows these new plantings as small trees. The gravel driveway entrance to Oak Lawn was surfaced in asphalt sometime after 2015.

Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Oak Lawn was the host to numerous family events such as weddings, birthday parties, and family reunions. In addition, Nancy O'Brien used Oak Lawn as a gathering place for Democratic candidates running for local and state-wide office. She felt that it was appropriate for Oak Lawn to be used to help raise funds for those proposing positive change for the City of Charlottesville and the broader region.<sup>209</sup>

Francis H. Fife transferred the Oak Lawn property to the Francis H. Fife Trust in 2008, listing himself as trustee.<sup>210</sup> Francis H. Fife died in October of 2015 and was buried in the Fife Family Cemetery at Oak Lawn. In his will, Francis H. Fife left Oak Lawn to his second wife Nancy K. O'Brien and David Jones as co-trustees of the Francis H. Fife Trust.<sup>211</sup> SunTrust Bank, and subsequently the Expedition Trust Company, joined Nancy K. O'Brien as co-trustees of the Francis H. Fife Trust in 2016 and 2017 respectively.<sup>212</sup>

Following discussions between the Fife family and the City of Charlottesville School Board, in August of 2015, a new 40-foot-wide cemetery access easement was surveyed along the Buford Middle School entrance drive adjacent to the western and southern boundaries of Oak Lawn. The easement between Nancy K. O'Brien and the Expedition Trust Company and the School Board of the City of Charlottesville was formalized in 2017. The easement established "a non-exclusive perpetual easement of right of way forty feet in width. ... The easement shall only be for the purposes of ingress to and egress from the family cemetery located on the lands of the Grantee

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207. Ibid.

208. Ibid.

209. Ibid.

210. CCDB 2008:2445, May 27, 2008.

211. CCWB 2015:638, November 25, 2015.

212. CCDB 2016:4358, November 10, 2016; 2017:1991, May 10, 2017.

## OAK LAWN

and labelled Fife Family Cemetery.” The purpose of the easement was limited to future burials and family visitation. As part of its responsibilities, the Fife family was required to “install and maintain, at its own expense, a gate with a lock in the existing chain link fence that separates the Buford Middle School property and the family cemetery” (Figure 66).<sup>213</sup>

Later in the same month, in anticipation that Oak Lawn might be sold out of the Fife Family and to ensure that the family members could continue to be buried in the family cemetery if they so chose, Nancy K. O’Brien and the Expedition Trust Company issued a declaration specifying the Fife Family rights in and to the burial ground at Oak Lawn. The declaration stated that all descendants of James Fife and his wife Margaret W. Fife and the partners of such descendants reserved the right to be buried in the Fife Family cemetery, to have perpetual access to the cemetery, and to visit and maintain the same.<sup>214</sup>

Nancy K. O’Brien moved out of Oak Lawn in 2022 and the residence stood vacant for just over a year.<sup>215</sup> In March of 2023, the co-trustees of the Francis H. Fife Trust placed the 5.20-acre Oak Lawn property on the market. Seven months later in October of 2023, the University of Virginia/University of Virginia Health purchased Oak Lawn.<sup>216</sup>

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213. CCDB 2017:3469, July 12, 2017.

214. CCDB 2017:3470, July 28, 2017.

215. Nancy K. O’Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.

216. CCDB 2023:2347, October 18, 2023.



# OAK LAWN

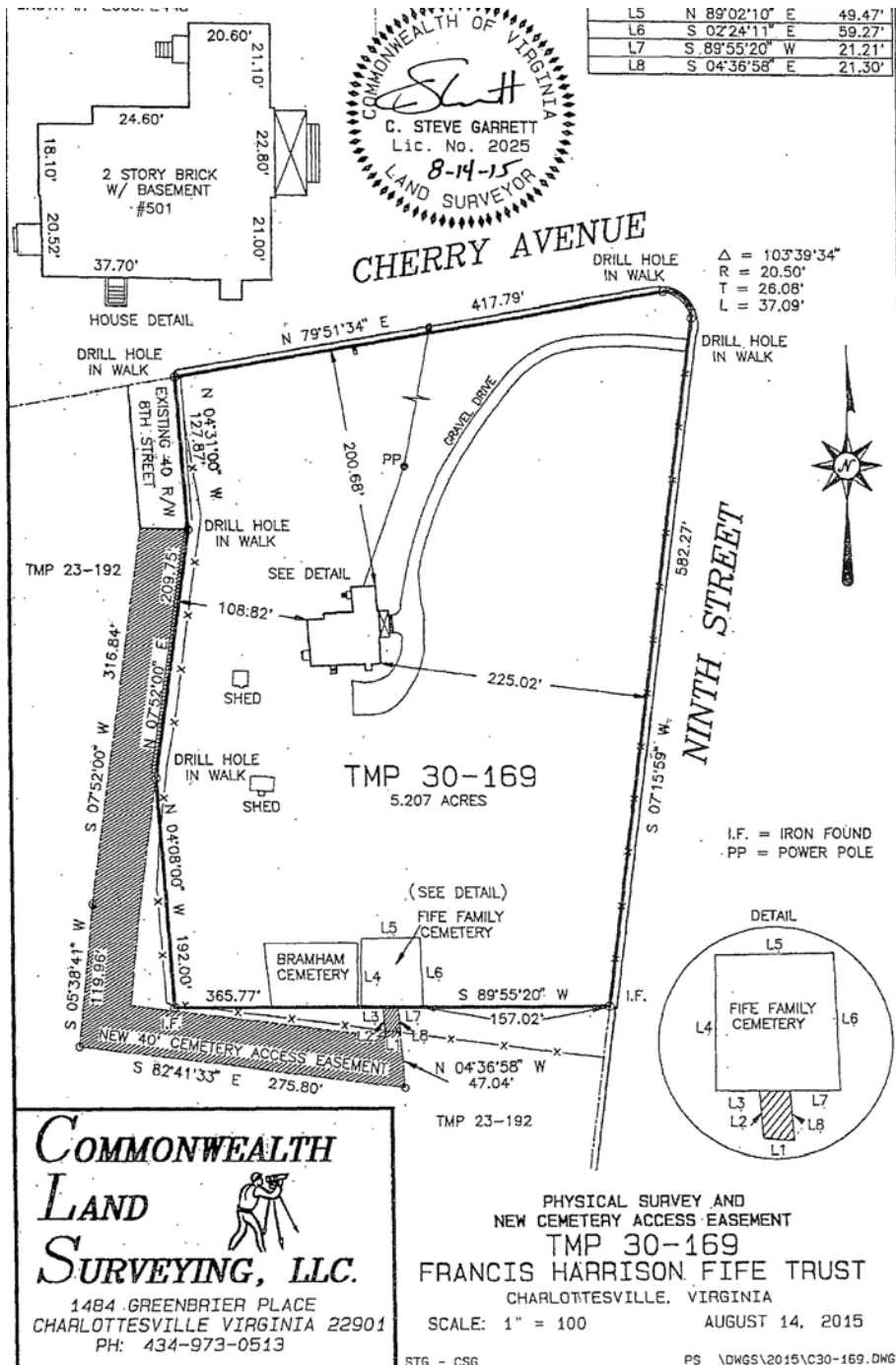


Figure 66. Plat showing new cemetery easement through Buford Middle School allowing access to the Fife Family Cemetery.

# OAK LAWN

## CHRONOLOGY

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
Circa 15,000 BCE–900 CE	Indigenous peoples are known to have visited and occupied the region, taking advantage of available resources, sometimes seasonally.		
Circa 900–1000 CE	During this, what archaeologists refer to as the Late Woodland period, a culturally distinct group of Indigenous people—the Monacan Nation—is known to have been living in central Virginia.		
1600s	The Monacan people are associated with traditional lands within the Piedmont, Blue Ridge, and Ridge and Valley physiographic provinces west of the fall line in Virginia. European exploration and European American settlement lead to the movement of Monacan people out of the area to the west. Those choosing to stay locate to their ancestral home in the mountains of present-day Amherst County.		
Circa 1750s	Historic maps document the presence of both the Monacan and Tuscarora people in what are now Amherst and Bedford counties, Virginia.		
1765	The land containing present-day Oak Lawn is first purchased by Joel Terrell, Jr. based on a 328-acre Land Office patent issued by the Governor of Virginia. Terrell did not live on the land but may have cultivated the property.		
1774	Joel Terrell, Jr. dies.		
1784	Micajah Chiles acquires the property.		
1799	Micajah Chiles dies. A portion of the property is sold to Menan Mills, but as a result of non-payment, the transaction ends in dispute and the Oak Lawn property may have sat idle or been leased to an unknown tenant.		
1806			Bramham purchases property on Court Square and opens a merchant store, less than two miles from the future university site.
1815	Henry West Alberty (also known as Henry Chiles, the son of Micajah) acquires the property. Alberty soon sells the portion of the property that would later become Oak Lawn to Jesse Winston Garth.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1817			<p>Jefferson, along with Joseph C. Cabell and John Hartwell Cocke, look at possible sites for Central College.</p> <p>Board of Visitors approves purchase of land for the college and adopts Jefferson's layout; board approves design of Pavilion VII and adjoining student rooms.</p>
1818	Jesse Winston Garth sells 394 acres to Col. Nimrod Bramham. The property borders the south side of what is now Jefferson Park Avenue and extends to the branches of Moore's Creek at present-day Cleveland Avenue.		Jefferson meets with James Dinsmore to discuss plans for the construction of Pavilion III. Pavilions VII and III under construction.
1818–1845	Bramham engages in agricultural production on the property as a source of income. His farming of the property depends on the labor of enslaved African Americans. Bramham is known to have joined other planters, including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Mann Randolph, William Meriwether and others as members of Agricultural Society of Albemarle in articulating and implementing best farming practices.		
1819			<p>Virginia House of Delegates and then the Senate pass legislation stipulating that Central College be the site of the new university. Construction begins for the Academical Village in 1819.</p> <p>By October, seven pavilions (two nearly completed) and three dozen dormitories (15 nearly completed) are under construction.</p>
1820			Board of Visitors approves construction of final three pavilions and the hotels.

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1822		Bramham sets about constructing a residence on his land soon after acquiring it. Tax records suggest that the house was completed in 1822. Records also suggest that additional buildings are built near the house. Bramham refers to the property as Oak Grove likely due to stands of mature oak trees near the house.	The Academical Village (except for the Rotunda) is substantially completed. Financing holds up construction on the Rotunda, and opening of the University is postponed until the Rotunda is completed.
1823			Construction begins on Rotunda.
1825			University opens on March 7, 1825.
1830–1844	Bramham sells several small parcels from his Oak Grove estate, including 2.25 acres to Professor George Blaetterman in 1830; a parcel totaling “3 or 4 acres” to Allen W. Hawkins, a brick mason, in 1840; and 2.5 acres to James Lobban, another brick mason, sometime prior to 1844. Each of the parcels was located at the western end of Oak Grove, adjacent to the University of Virginia.		
1834	A family cemetery is established on the Oak Grove property to the south of the dwelling based on the death of Dr. Horace W. Bramham, Nimrod's oldest son. The cemetery remains in use for several decades and is the final resting place of many Bramham family members, including the offspring of Nimrod and Margaret Bramham's daughters with names that include Bibb, Garland, Hamner, Pinkard, Simpson, and Slaughter.		
1840		An increase in the tax valuation of Bramham's property suggests either an alteration to the residence or the construction of one or more outbuildings on the property.  At some point after the construction of the house, a porch is built along the west wall of the south wing.	
1845	Nimrod Bramham, Sr., dies in June, while wife Margaret Bramham dies in July.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1847	Bramham's son-in-law, William A. Bibb, sells the Oak Grove property, totaling 388 acres, to Rev. James Fife. The deed provides an exception from the sale for the 60 by 210-foot family burying ground.		
1847–1865	Records indicate that Fife, like Bramham, is an active farmer who engages in agricultural production on the property as a source of income. Fife also relies on the labor of enslaved African Americans to operate his farm. Fife conveys his knowledge about agriculture to other local and regional farmers, while penning many articles for <i>Southern Planter</i> and other agricultural periodicals.		
1848		<p>Fife describes the house at Oak Grove as in a state of ruin and begins to undertake repairs to the residence and grounds.</p> <p>It may have as part of these repairs that the fireboxes on the first floor are made smaller; new mantels with cast-iron surrounds are installed. The entrance hall receives a decorative plaster ceiling treatment. Doors are installed in the two second-floor stair openings.</p>	
1850s	A 6.5-acre parcel of the Oak Grove property is condemned for construction of a new rail line by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad extending from Charlottesville to Lynchburg, Virginia.		
1851	Fife farm records note the presence of a stable on the property.		
1853	Fife farm records note the presence of a machine shed and barn on the property.		
1854	Fife farm records note the presence of a smoke house and kitchen building on the property.		
1857	An increase in the tax valuation of the property suggests that a small addition or a new outbuilding is built on the property. Fife begins referring to the property as both Oak Grove and Oak Lawn. Eventually, it is known principally as Oak Lawn.		



## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
Late 1850s–mid-1860s	James Fife sells off small portions of the property, including a 2.75-acre parcel to Mary Daniel; a 0.4-acre parcel to Virginia Shackelford; a 4-acre parcel to Thomas Harris, a 17.75-acre parcel to George D. Harris; and a 15.1-acre parcel to John T. Barksdale and John Fry. All of these parcels are located at the western end of the property, north of the Orange and Alexandria railroad line and south of Wheeler's Road (present-day Jefferson Park Avenue) in the vicinity of present-day University Hospital.		
1860s	A series of four north-south oriented terraces separated by earthen rises are established on the east-facing slope between the residence and the family cemeteries. The date of origin of the terraces, and their purpose, has not been revealed through available documentation, but likely date to the antebellum period.		
1861-1865			University buildings conscripted for use as hospital space (1861-1865).
1863–1865	During the Civil War, crops grown at Oak Lawn are used to support Confederate forces after the Confederate government passes a tax-in-kind law that requires farmers to donate 10 percent of their crops to support the war effort. Following the Confederate surrender, James Fife is given amnesty in August of 1865 and is pardoned for his role in supporting the rebellion by President Andrew Johnson.		
1865	Following the end of the Civil War, farming at Oak Lawn was supported by paid labor, including some individuals believed to have been enslaved by Fife previously. Records document that Fife's hands are kept busy cleaning out the barn and stable, fertilizing and plowing fields, preparing for and conducting harvest, planting and tending a kitchen garden, repairing fences, and tending to the livestock.		
1867	The environs of the house and collection of stately oaks are described by Sarah Fife, who married James and Margaret's son, Robert Herndon Fife, as reminding her of an English property.		
1869	Documents indicate that "old cabins," possibly quarters previously used to house enslaved laborers on the property, are razed.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1870	William J. Fife, son of James Fife and Elizabeth Jones Miller (Fife's first wife) . Fife may have been the first family member buried on the property.		
1870–1897	Buildings documented as present or built on the property beginning in 1870 include a pig pen and ice house in 1870, a hen house in 1871, a stable in 1874, a new stable in 1888, and a new carriage house in 1897. A hen house and smoke house are also noted as present in 1897.	At some point in the late nineteenth century, a new southwest porch is built, extending along the west wall of the south wing and the south wall of the central block; no photographic views take in the kitchen addition. The porch has a decorative scroll-cut wood railing and a shed roof; it is built on brick piers. A wide set of steps at the south end of the porch descend to grade.  New covered south entrance built.	
1873	A barn at Oak Lawn burns in a reported arson event. It is eventually rebuilt.		
1874	The first description of a cemetery on the property notes it as a “large enclosed square of ground covered in periwinkle.” The description refers to the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery.		
1876	Rev. James Fife dies and is buried in the Fife family cemetery on the property.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1877	An inventory of property indicates that Oak Lawn contains 340 acres. Valued at \$17,000, the property inventory lists only one building, a granary, even though other records indicate that other buildings were likely present at the time. A drawing prepared during the twentieth century by Frederick Nichols records Ella Fife's memories of the property at the time. The buildings, depicted as either south or west of the primary residence, include a kitchen structure; a well; the Cook's House; a "shed" containing a smokehouse, privy, and shelter for chickens and roosters; two large agricultural buildings; a large stable; a large log barn; a log corn granary; and a log structure used to house machinery. A single structure located northeast of the residence and west of a farm lane and sited at an unusual angle relative to other structures, was a 'quarters for 19 slaves.' Geo-registration of the Nichols' sketch map documents that only the kitchen, shed with smokehouse, privy and chicken coop, and stable are likely located within the current boundaries of the Oak Lawn property. All of the other outbuildings and structures would likely have been located west of Oak Lawn, on what is now the Buford Middle School property owned by the City of Charlottesville.		
1879–1887	A chancery suit is filed when the receiver of the Charlottesville National Bank sues the executors and heirs of Rev. James Fife's estate for non-payment of debts. The Court orders portions of the Oak Lawn estate to be sold to satisfy the family's debts, including up to 30 acres on the northern end of the property and 7 acres adjacent to and south of the Virginia Midland Railroad's tracks. Court-appointed commissioners are authorized to sell as much as 200 acres on the western end of the property in 1883. Between 1881 and 1887, many parcels north and east of the Oak Lawn residence are sold for development as residential lots.		
1884	Margaret Fife dies following a period of managing the property with her son Robert Herndon Fife.		
1887	Robert Herndon Fife and Mary C. Fife bring a chancery suit against non-resident Fife heirs, including William J. Fife and his wife Mary Fife.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1888–1895	Portions of Oak Lawn continue to be divided, platted into streets and blocks, and sold as individual lots. Maps of the property show present-day Ninth Street SW as the “mansion road” and a curvilinear drive leading to the north façade of the residence.		
1890	The courts agree to the opening of a street or road through the Fife property toward Frys Spring that is likely present-day Cherry Avenue.		
1891–1907	Robert Herndon Fife and Mary C. Fife sell several tracts west of the Oak Lawn residence to corporate entities such as the Jefferson park Company as well as individual real estate investors such as A.M. Brechin and R.L. Carter.		
1895			Rotunda and Annex destroyed by fire in 1895.
1896	Oak Lawn is recorded as 225.5 acres in size.		
1896-1898			Reconstruction of Rotunda, to a design by Stanford White, 1896-1898.
1897	Robert Herndon Fife mentions an “old negro grave yard” on the property in a letter to his son, without specific reference to its location.		
1900	Mary C. Fife dies. Living on the property at the time are Robert Herndon Fife, his wife Sarah, five of their children, an African American cook, and a servant.	Around this time, an antebellum brick kitchen south of the residence is demolished and a new brick kitchen constructed adjacent to and abutting the western façade of the west elevation. The kitchen is built of reused brick, presumably from the earlier kitchen.	
1901			First building of the University of Virginia Hospital opens.

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1907	<p>Robert Herndon Fife is required to deed Oak Lawn in trust to secure his debts. He deeds 24.5 acres "on which is located the Fife mansion," as well as 60 unsold lots, to secure payment on five separate bonds.</p> <p>Photographs of the house at the time show the east façade covered in ivy with two board fences flanking either side of the columned front porch.</p> <p>A gravel surfaced road appears in front of and abutting the eastern façade of Oak Lawn by this time.</p> <p>Several frame barn and stable-like structures are shown in a north-south oriented alignment south of the Cook's House along the present-day western boundary of the Oak Lawn property. Views during this period looking in a northeast direction towards Charlottesville show an unobstructed perspective looking out onto new residential neighborhoods.</p>	<p>The 1907 photographs are the first to show the nineteenth-century southwest porch and the south bulkhead entrance into the cellar of the south wing. Pockets in the south wall of the central block for the earlier porch are visible in the photographs.</p> <p>The Cook's House is depicted with a frame shed addition to the west.</p>	
1910	<p>Oak Lawn is recorded as 45 acres in size. Robert Herndon Fife again deeds the 24.5-acre parcel to secure payment of a \$4,000 debt.</p>	<p>A wood-framed, shed-roofed bathroom is built onto the southwest porch, against the south wing. This work includes creating a doorway from an original window opening, retaining the upper sash as a transom. The new bathroom has an exterior doorway and window in the west wall.</p> <p>At this time, the south leg of the southwest porch is enlarged to accommodate the bathroom. Part of the balustrade is moved to the south end of the porch.</p> <p>Another bathroom is installed in a second-floor "closet."</p>	
1919–1920	<p>Robert Herndon Fife dies intestate and is buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn. His widow, Sarah Graves Fife, dies the following year and is also buried in the family cemetery, which is surrounded by fencing at this time, likely to exclude livestock similar to the fencing used around the exterior of the house. An arched trellis on the north side marks the gate entry into the burial ground.</p>		



## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1920	Fife's heirs, including his five children—Robert Herndon Fife Jr., James D. Fife, Daisey Rinehart, Madge F. Tucker, William O. Fife, Shelton S. Fife and Ella K. Fife—establish the Oak Lawn Land Corporation to manage their land holdings. The company is used to continue to sell off remaining land, which included 29 unsold platted lots in Fifeville.		
1920–1921	The Oak Lawn House is rented to a tenant. This arrangement does not work out, and the house is again occupied by Fife family members the following year. Shelton S. Fife and wife Mildred H. Fife resided on the property with young son S. Douglas Fife and a white servant named Lottie Butter. Son Francis H. Fife was born later and joined the household.		
1920s	Fife family members establish a 0.4-acre vegetable garden south of the house.		
1920s–1930s	The Fife family leases out grazing lands on peripheral acreage.	The south end of the southwest porch is screened in as a “sleeping porch.”	
Circa 1925–1950s	During the second quarter of the twentieth century, the family hires Josephine McDaniel to cook and perform household chores for the family and to care for Mildred H. Fife in her old age. Josephine and her son Joseph appear in many family photographs.		
1929			Addition added to hospital to house the School of Medicine.
1930s	Cut flowers are grown on the terraces southeast of the house based on historic photographs from the period. Francis Fife later recalls he and Shelton selling cut flowers grown at Oak Lawn in downtown Charlottesville.		
1930s		During the Great Depression, Ella K. Fife Freudenberg and her husband Richard and daughter Anne boarded at Oak Lawn. They lived in the second story. Sons S. Douglas and Francis Fife slept in a ‘hallway,’ possibly the enclosed sleeping porch west of the south wing.	
1937	Shelton S. Fife dies and is buried in the Fife family cemetery.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1940s	Records indicate that the core of the Oak Lawn property contains the Oak Lawn House and four outbuildings. An oblique aerial photograph dated 1940 depicts the house with the western kitchen addition and southern porch (which was enclosed at some point between 1937 and 1967), the Cook's House, as well as several agricultural-related outbuildings located along what is now the western boundary of Oak Lawn: a frame structure immediately west of the brick Cook's House; a small, white-painted structure; a large frame building, possibly a stable or barn; and 4) a large frame building, also possibly a stable or barn. Immediately south of the Oak Lawn residence is a large, plowed field, or garden. An informal north-south oriented road connects the agricultural outbuildings to Cherry Avenue. A large open field devoid of vegetation and defined on both the north and west by what is now Cherry Avenue, likely serves as pasture for livestock at Oak Lawn.	By the 1940s, the southwest porch extends across the kitchen addition, and is fully screened in.	Five building campaigns expand and modernize the hospital complex.
1947	With only 3 unsold platted lots left, the family dissolves the Oak Lawn Land Corporation. The remaining property is deeded to family members, including James D. Fife, William O. Fife serving as trustees of the 24.1-acre core and Fifeville lots 5, 10, and 11.		
1948	Executors of the estate sell 5.56 acres including the Oak Lawn House to Mildred H. Fife, widow of Shelton S. Fife. The property is nearly consistent with the present-day property configuration. The sale reserves the right of the descendants of James Fife to access and use the Fife family cemetery.		
1950s	A small 0.5-acre field is established adjacent to Ninth Street SW and used to grow potatoes. Land west of the house was used as pasture. The family continued to stable two ponies on the property.	<p>Shelton Fife begins raising chinchillas on the property, locating their cages in the basement.</p> <p>At some point, the southwest porch is enclosed with clapboard and screens. The steps at the south end of the porch are removed, and windows installed in the south wall of the porch.</p> <p>A new heating system with cast-iron radiators is installed in the 1950s or 60s.</p>	
1960			New hospital building completed.

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1964	A parcel totaling approximately 18.868 acres of Oak Lawn is condemned by the City of Charlottesville for the construction of a new public school. The condemned land is located west of the Oak Lawn House. The City purchases the land and uses it to construct a new public school. Oak Lawn outbuildings on the land were demolished to make way for the school, including two unidentified structures west of and adjacent to the Cook's House, and a large frame stable or barn near the cemeteries. The right-of-way for Tenth Street SW was used as an access road for the school.		
1973		Oak Lawn is listed in the Virginia Landmarks Registry and National Register of Historic Places for the significance of the architecture of the house.	
1976	A narrow strip of Oak Lawn property totaling 0.256 acres along Ninth Street SW is purchased by the City of Charlottesville in support of a proposed road widening project.		
1977	Mildred H. Fife dies and is buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn. She leaves the property to her two sons.		
1983	S. Douglas Fife, Sr. dies intestate and is buried in the Fife family cemetery at Oak Lawn. His interest in the property passes to his wife, Gail G. Fife.		
1980s		The Oak Lawn property is entered into the City of Charlottesville's Landmark Survey based on the significance of the architecture of the house.	
1989			The construction of a new university hospital is completed in 1989. The hospital complex extends back to the railroad tracks, the north border of Fifeville.
1997	Gail G. Fife sells her interest in the Oak Lawn property to Francis Fife, who becomes the sole owner of the 5.2-acre parcel. Fife and his second wife, Nancy O'Brien, decide to move to the property following plans to renovate the house.		

## OAK LAWN

YEAR	SITE	OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE AND COOK'S HOUSE	UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
1997–1998	A prefabricated shed was added southwest of the house at the time to store lawn and garden tools and equipment. The driveway was extended to the south, with a trellis added at the end and flower beds planted nearby and along the southern edge of the house. Fife and O'Brien also planted evergreen trees to screen views toward Ninth Street SW to the east and Cherry Avenue to the north.	Fife and O'Brien renovate the house and the Cook's House. A new addition replaces the southwest porch. A new first-floor bathroom/ laundry room is installed in the location of the 1910 bathroom. The kitchen receives new finishes, window sash, and equipment. A new central air system is installed. In the basement, the east windows in the north room are truncated and replaced with new sash. A new concrete areaway below the southwest addition accesses the west basement room.  The Cook's House is stabilized, with some of the walls rebuilt to prevent the structure from falling down.	
2008	Fife transfers Oak Lawn to the Francis H. Fife Trust, listing himself as trustee.		
2008–2009	The Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District is listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. Oak Lawn is listed as a contributing resource of the district.		
2015	Francis Fife dies and is buried in the Fife family cemetery. He leaves the property to David Jones and O'Brien as co-trustees of the trust.		
2017	A 40-foot-wide access easement is established along the Buford Middle School entrance drive adjacent to the western and southern boundaries of Oak Lawn for use by family members to visit the cemetery.		
2022		Nancy O'Brien moves out of Oak Lawn.	
2023	The Fife family places Oak Lawn up for sale in March.		The University of Virginia acquires the Oak Lawn property in October.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 67. View toward the principal façade of Oak Lawn, 2022. Virginia Department of Historic Resources.*



# OAK LAWN

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

#### PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Oak Lawn is a historic estate in Charlottesville, Virginia. Before being sold to the University of Virginia in 2023, the property was owned by only a handful of families. The last private owners, Francis Fife and wife Nancy O'Brien, followed several generations of Fifes residing on the property after 1847. The centerpiece of the property is a stately brick home built in 1822 by the previous owner, Nimrod Bramham. The house, which reflects a Jeffersonian Palladian style of architecture, is considered one of the finest houses in Charlottesville (Figure 67).<sup>217</sup>

In anticipation of adaptive use of the Oak Lawn property by University of Virginia/University of Virginia Health (UVA/UVA Health), the University engaged a team of preservation specialists, led by John G. Waite Associates (JGWA) of Albany, New York, that included Liz Sargent HLA (LSHLA) and Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC (RAS), of Charlottesville, Virginia, to prepare a Historic Structure Report and Cultural Landscape Report intended to guide appropriate treatment of the historic property.

#### PROJECT SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY

##### SCOPE OF WORK

Liz Sargent of LSHLA and Ben Ford of RAS prepared a scope of work for the Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) portion of the project. The scope notes the primary goal of the CLR as providing the University of Virginia with an understanding of the Oak Lawn property sufficient to protect its historic features and associations. The understanding was to be based on historic documentation, existing conditions documentation, National Register of Historic Places (National Register) significance evaluation, integrity assessment, and the identification of historic characteristics and features of the landscape. This foundational information was to serve as the basis for the preparation of a treatment plan, composed of landscape management zoning that identifies historically sensitive areas as well as less sensitive areas that might be suitable for future adaptive use, along with management and maintenance recommendations and guidelines for care of historic resources. The treatment plan was intended to guide appropriate interventions related to meeting accessibility and other contemporary needs. The project was supported by the completion

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217. K. Edward Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson County; Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 148.

## OAK LAWN

of a land survey of the property by Lincoln Surveying, which located extant features as well as the property's metes and bounds, along with legal land ownership and planning boundaries. The CLR was considered part of a larger report that included the findings of the Historic Structure Report (HSR) prepared by JGWA. As such, the report presents a single shared site history section, which would traditionally be included in a CLR. The site history, based on research at local repositories in Charlottesville and Richmond, Virginia, provides narrative and graphic depiction of the evolution of the property over time, beginning with what is known about Native American use of the region, and continuing to the present day.

Materials prepared as part of the CLR combine narrative and graphic information in order to depict the evolution of the property through time and as it currently exists in accordance with the guidance afforded in the National Park Service's *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (1998). The CLR contains five principal chapters, as follows, supported by a bibliography and appendices of supplemental information:

**INTRODUCTION:** This chapter articulates the project purpose and need, defines the study area, and summarizes the findings of investigations and analysis conducted as part of the project.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS DOCUMENTATION:** The existing conditions documentation chapter is based on field investigations conducted on the property and its environs. The chapter describes the environmental and cultural context and setting of Oak Lawn, the layout and configuration of the property as a whole, and the way in which landscape characteristics such as topography, vegetation, and circulation together establish a unique sense of place at Oak Lawn. The context and setting, overall property, and suite of individual landscape features are illustrated with contemporary maps and photographs.

**SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION AND INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT:** This chapter presents the National Register listing status of Oak Lawn and provides suggestions for potential updates to the understanding of the property's significance based on the work conducted on behalf of the CLR. This section also suggests to what degree the property continues to convey its historic associations with the period during which the property is considered significant.

**ANALYSIS:** This chapter describes the evolution of Oak Lawn over time using a framework of landscape characteristics. It results in a table identifying which features contribute to the property's National Register significance.

**TREATMENT:** This chapter offers treatment recommendations and guidelines for protecting historic resources and values, while identifying areas that are sensitive to change and others that might be more suited to adaptive use.

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## METHODOLOGY

The CLR for Oak Lawn was prepared in accordance with guidance offered in the most recent versions of various federal historic landscape preservation standards documents, executive orders, policies and guidelines, as well as applicable state, local, and national building and life safety codes, including:

- National Park Service, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (1998)
- *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (1996)
- Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS)
- National Register Bulletin: *Guidelines for Documenting and Evaluating Rural Historic Landscapes*
- National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources Section 106 consultation and State Project Review procedures
- City of Charlottesville *Architectural Design Control Districts Design Guidelines* (City Code Section 34-271 to Section 34-291)

In addition, the methodology used in preparing each component of the CLR is described in detail below.

## KICK-OFF TEAM CONFERENCE CALL

On May 2, 2024, representatives of the University of Virginia met with project team members from JGWA, LSHLA, RAS, and Mount Ida Press to kick-off the project. During the meeting, the team discussed several topics, including the University of Virginia's goals for the project, an overview of the National Register significance of the property, and the scopes of work for the CLR and HSR components of the report.

The goals for the project articulated by the University of Virginia were as follows:

- The CLR and HSR should be combined into one overall book even if they are treated as separate documents.
- The reports should recognize that the site was purchased by UVA/UVA Health with the intent of constructing a new building or buildings on site. This document should help inform and guide the placement of new facilities.

## OAK LAWN

- Team members should look for opportunities/areas where the historic house could be made accessible without compromising the historic integrity of the structure or the landscape.
- The CLR should identify sensitive zones within the landscape.
- Research should include information about the historic outbuilding referred to as the Cook's House, while also focusing on the identification of enslaved individuals, especially immediately before emancipation.
- Residents of the surrounding neighborhood are interested in the development of the property and its history; information should be provided in a way that can be shared with local residents.
- The HSR component of the report will serve as an important guide for future maintenance of the historic building since UVA/UVA Health does not manage any other historic buildings.

### BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

The CLR team received various files provided by the University of Virginia, collected during the period when acquisition of the property was under consideration. These materials included National Register-related documentation, the site file available from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, a report documenting an archaeological assessment of the property conducted in 2023 when the University of Virginia was considering acquiring the property, and LiDAR imagery. Team members subsequently conducted online investigations to add to the available materials by locating U.S. Geological Survey mapping, soil survey information, and aerial photography.

In support of data collection and research, Benjamin Ford of RAS visited several local and regional repositories that had the potential to contain information relevant to the project. These repositories included the Shannon Library and the Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia, Clerk's offices of the Charlottesville and Albemarle County Courthouses and the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society in Charlottesville, Virginia, along with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources Library and Archives and the Library of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia. Numerous online databases were also reviewed and primary source data including historic newspapers, maps, census data, and state birth and death records relevant to Oak Lawn and its occupants obtained. Ford also met with three Fife family members to conduct interviews on behalf of the project. Additionally, Ford worked with family members to identify photographs of the property in their private collections that might be made available for use in the report.

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## FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

CLR team members Liz Sargent, Jane Jacobs, and Christina Osborn visited Oak Lawn for an initial site visit on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. During the site visit, the team members walked the majority of the property, taking photographs of landscape features, annotating a base map, and noting issues related to condition. A second site visit was conducted on May 18, 2024, to complete the initial survey, verify field conditions, and review the land survey by Lincoln Surveying. Team members met with Benjamin Ford onsite on June 18, 2024, to learn about Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) work being conducted to determine the potential for any additional sensitive areas north and northwest of the house. CLR team members also visited Oak Lawn in October to consider treatment issues, such as accessibility, with HSR team members, and again in November of 2024 to record the locations of grave markers in the two family cemeteries in support of developing detailed mapping of each.

## HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE DOCUMENTATION AND SITE PHYSICAL HISTORY DEVELOPMENT

Team members drafted the site history portion of the report that serves both the HSR and the CLR following review of all materials collected as part of the various research efforts. Important dates associated with the physical development of the site were organized into a historical chronology. The chronology served as a way to establish a series of discrete historic periods associated with the site's evolution. The team described each historic period using a combination of historical narrative, historic maps and photographs, and other illustrations.

The CLR team prepared period plan maps in support of the Site History. These cartographic diagrams depict Oak Lawn in a series of snapshot moments in history. The period plans show how the property was subdivided over time. Sources used to prepare the period plans include archival maps, narratives, and aerial photographs.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS DOCUMENTATION

The CLR team documented existing conditions within the Oak Lawn landscape through compilation of base mapping, data collected during field investigations, and review of available cultural and natural resource documents. The existing conditions documentation is presented using cross-referenced narrative, graphic, and photographic information organized in accordance with the framework established in the National Park Service *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*. Sections describing the environmental and cultural context for the property introduce site-specific existing conditions documentation, arranged by the following landscape characteristics:



## OAK LAWN

- Natural systems and features
- Topography
- Spatial organization
- Land use
- Circulation
- Vegetation
- Buildings and structures
- Views and vistas
- Small-scale features
- Archaeological sites

### EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The CLR includes an evaluation of the significance of the property based on current National Register designation of the property and consideration of any additional aspects of the history that merit consideration for future nomination amendments or updates. The significance evaluation draws from the 1973 National Register nomination for the property, a 2008 amended nomination, as well as the 2009 nomination for the Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District, which lists Oak Lawn as a contributing property. Recommendations for updating the nomination based on the findings of the CLR follow the guidance afforded in the appropriate National Register bulletins.

### INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

Integrity is assessed to determine whether the characteristics and features that defined a property during an identified period of significance are present, retain their historic qualities, and continue to convey their historic associations. Historic landscapes must retain integrity to be eligible for listing in the National Register. The CLR assesses the overall integrity of Oak Lawn as well as its integrity in accordance with the seven aspects—location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association—discussed in the National Register Bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

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### ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF CONTRIBUTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE FEATURES

In order to better understand the relationship between the existing Oak Lawn property and the character of the landscape during the identified period of significance, the CLR team prepared a comparative analysis of historic and existing landscape conditions.

The three primary goals of the comparative analysis were to:

1. Understand which features survive from the period of significance.
2. Support the integrity assessment.
3. Provide an understanding of the similarities and differences between historic and existing conditions that would contribute to the development of a well-grounded treatment plan for the cultural landscape.

Although the analysis focuses on features that remain extant on the Oak Lawn property, it also discusses to a lesser degree the manner in which lands associated with the once much larger property supported lifeways at Oak Lawn. The changes that have occurred within the larger landscape are considered for how they affect historic integrity and have become part of Charlottesville's urban fabric that serves as the setting for the present-day property. The analysis results in a table that summarizes whether landscape features contribute to the significance of the historic property. Contributing features survive from the period of significance with integrity and are associated with a significant historic context; non-contributing features either originated after the period of significance, have lost integrity, or are not associated with a significant historic context. The analysis also identifies as possible features that are missing from the historic property based on review of historic documentation. This information may serve as the basis for future research, archaeological investigations, and/or interpretation of the property.

### TREATMENT

The CLR culminates in a discussion of appropriate treatment of the property in recognition of its historic significance and in support of protecting contributing historic resources. The treatment section offers guidelines for future adaptive use of the property that endeavors to protect its most historic qualities and features, including views and vistas, while accommodating future use by UVA/UVA Health. The treatment chapter also identifies zones of sensitivity to help guide future change.

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Figure 68. Context map showing the location of the City of Charlottesville within the Commonwealth of Virginia. LSHLA.



Figure 69. Location map showing the location of Oak Lawn within the City of Charlottesville. LSHLA.

## OAK LAWN

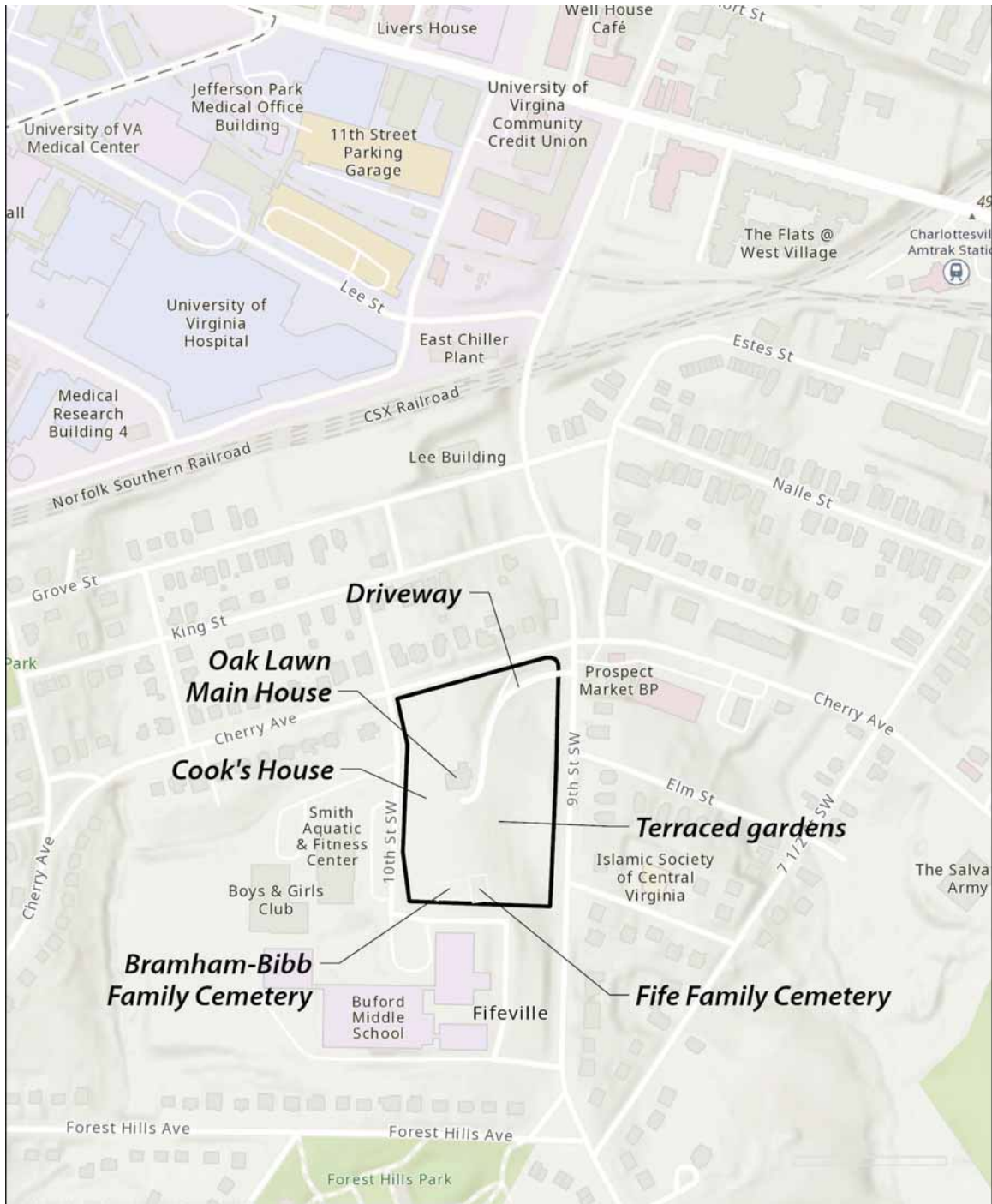


Figure 70. Oak Lawn and its setting within the City of Charlottesville. LSHLA.

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Oak Lawn is located at 501 Ninth Street SW within the City of Charlottesville, Virginia (Figures 68-70). Listed on tax map 30 as parcel 169, the property is edged to the north by Cherry Avenue, to the east by Ninth Street SW, and to the south and west by Buford Middle School. Located to the west of the Oak Lawn property boundary and to the east of Buford Middle School is a right of way for Tenth Street NW. This 40-foot-wide public right of way is edged to the east by a sidewalk. The sidewalk and right of way connect with a 40-foot-wide cemetery access easement along Oak Lawn's southern boundary that allows family members to reach the Fife family cemetery in perpetuity.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Oak Lawn was listed in the National Register in 1973 for the architecture of the main house, described as a notable example of Jeffersonian Classicism. In 2008, the National Register nomination was amended to indicate the presence of three additional contributing features on the property—the Cook's House and the two family cemeteries. The amended nomination also articulated the ways in which the main house had been altered since the 1973 nomination, while recognizing the role of the property in establishing the surrounding Fifeville neighborhood. The following year, the Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District was listed in the National Register. The historic district nomination describes Oak Lawn's role in providing the land and name for the Fifeville neighborhood, while articulating several aspects of significance related to the property that are potentially applicable to Oak Lawn. These include significance under Criteria A (associated with an event in American history) and C (possessing distinctive characteristics of design or construction or having great artistic value, the work of a master) in the areas of Architecture, Community Planning & Development, and Ethnic Heritage: African American. The Oak Lawn property is listed as contributing to the historic district but also recognized for how subdivision of the larger property led to the establishment of the Fifeville neighborhood, which became home to many of Charlottesville's important African American citizens. The nomination provides a period of significance for the larger historic district that extends from the construction of Oak Lawn in 1822 to 1957 when build-out of the Fifeville and Tonsler neighborhoods was generally completed.

The CLR suggests that the significance of Oak Lawn be similarly understood as connected to the criteria, areas, and period of significance represented in the Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District. Beyond the contributing features recognized in the 2008 National Register nomination amendment—the Cook's House and two family cemeteries—the CLR recommends that additional historic resources on the property be considered contributing. These include a series of hand-dug garden terraces, the entrance drive, carved splash blocks, and a concrete watering trough believed to reflect historic farm uses of the property. The CLR also



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articulates the local importance of the last two residents of the property—Francis Fife and Nancy O’Brien—for their contributions to the Charlottesville community.

The CLR addresses the University of Virginia’s goals for the property in a treatment plan featured in the concluding chapter of the report. The CLR recommends protection and maintenance of the features identified as contributing to the significance of the property and identifies protocols for maintaining the contributing historic landscape features. In addressing the University’s interest in adaptive use of the property, the CLR suggests conceptual zones for the property that identify areas more and less sensitive to change. These zones are intended to help protect contributing resources and their setting such that adaptive use has the least impact on the property’s heritage values. The recommendations and guidelines provided in the treatment plan meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. As such, they allow the University of Virginia to meet the requirements of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and City of Charlottesville for designated historically significant properties.

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## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### EXISTING CONDITIONS DOCUMENTATION

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes, through narrative text, photographs, and labeled base mapping the current conditions and context for the Oak Lawn property and its setting. The existing conditions documentation forms the basis for the comparative analysis that follows the significance evaluation chapter.

This chapter is comprised of four sections. The first—Environmental Context and Setting—depicts the character and configuration of the landscape surrounding the Oak Lawn property. The second—Cultural Context and Setting—places the property within the larger context of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, the University of Virginia, and other nearby cultural attractions. The third—Overall Property Description—provides an overview of the arrangement of features within the Oak Lawn cultural landscape. The fourth presents an overview of the property by landscape characteristic. Landscape characteristics are the tangible and intangible aspects of a property that collectively convey its historic character and aid in understanding its cultural importance.<sup>218</sup> Landscape characteristics range from large-scale land use patterns and relationships to site details and materials and include the following categories:

- **NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES** are the environmental resources and qualities that have influenced the development and physical form of a landscape. They include the underlying landform and topography, soils, and water resources, as well as attendant native plant communities.
- **TOPOGRAPHY** encompasses the way in which landform, grading, and the ground plane contribute to spatial qualities within the landscape.
- **SPATIAL ORGANIZATION** reflects the three-dimensional organization of physical forms and visual associations in a landscape, including the articulation of ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create space.
- **LAND USES** are the principal cultural activities in a landscape that form, shape, and organize it, and are often derived from site-specific environmental conditions.

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218. Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert, and Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports; Contents, Processes, and Techniques* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998).

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- **CIRCULATION** includes the spaces, features, and applied material finishes that constitute the systems of movement in a landscape.
- **VEGETATION** includes the deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and herbaceous plants that have been introduced in a landscape by cultural activities.
- **BUILDINGS** are elements constructed primarily for sheltering any form of human activity in a landscape. **STRUCTURES** are elements constructed for functional purposes other than sheltering human activities.
- **VIEWS** are locations that afford expansive and panoramic prospects of the landscape and can be either naturally occurring or designed. **VISTAS** are deliberate directed views often meant to orient the gaze to a linear feature or focal point.
- **SMALL-SCALE FEATURES** are landscape elements providing detail and diversity for both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in a landscape. Utilities are addressed within this landscape characteristic.
- **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES** are the traces or deposited artifacts in a landscape, evidenced by the presence of either surface or subsurface features.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT AND SETTING

### PHYSIOGRAPHY

The city of Charlottesville and much of Albemarle County fall within Virginia's Piedmont physiographic province, a landform characterized by rolling topography underlain by deeply weathered bedrock. Virginia's Piedmont physiographic province ends to the east at the Fall Line, where harder unweathered rock meets the unconsolidated material associated with the Coastal Plain and forms the inland limit of large vessel navigation on many rivers. To the west, the Piedmont transitions to the Blue Ridge physiographic province marked by the upland topography of the Blue Ridge Mountains (Figure 71).

Topographically, elevations within Albemarle County, range from a high point of approximately 3,200 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) at Loft Mountain, to a low point of approximately 250 feet AMSL near the confluence of the Rivanna and James Rivers.

### GEOLOGY

Oak Lawn sits within a geologic formation referred to as the Blue Ridge Anticlinorium (Figure 72). The formation is associated with the southeasternmost ridge of the Appalachian Mountains. Unlike the majority of the Appalachian Mountains, composed primarily of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks originally deposited beneath an inland sea and later folded during orogenic processes, the

## OAK LAWN

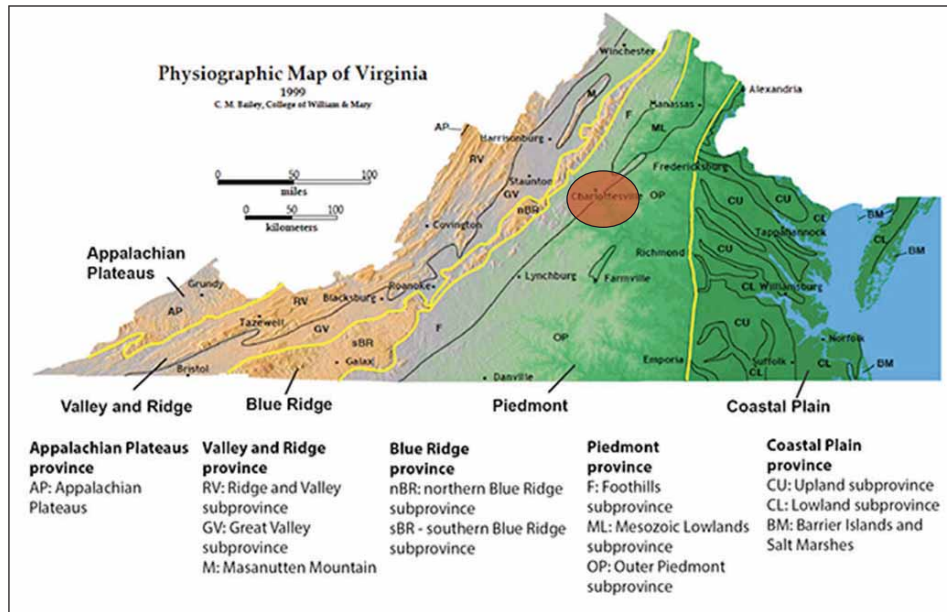


Figure 71. Map showing the physiographic provinces associated with the Commonwealth of Virginia. The region in which Oak Lawn falls is highlighted with a red oval. College of William and Mary geology website.

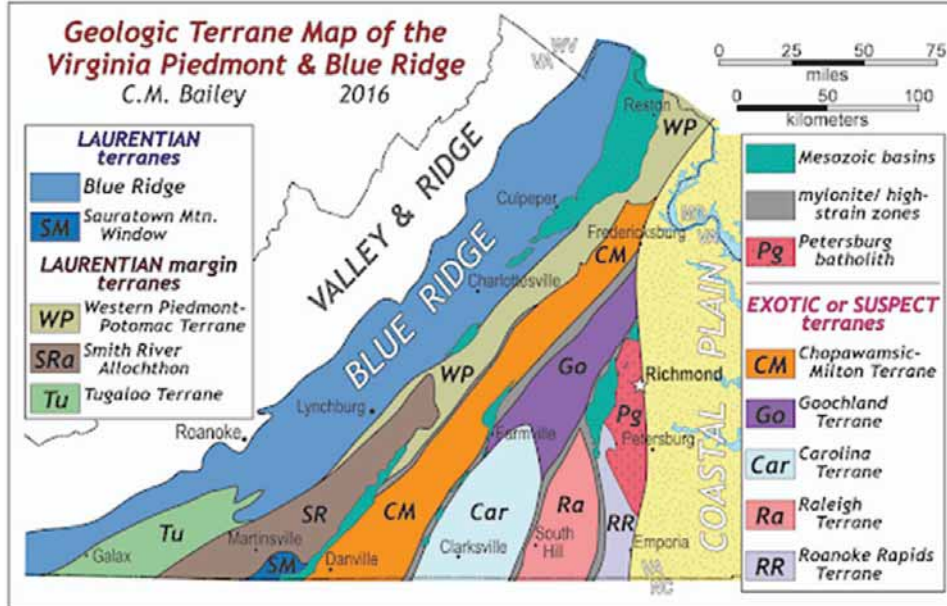


Figure 72. Map of the Geologic Terrane of the Virginia Piedmont and Blue Ridge, with Charlottesville marked. College of William and Mary.

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Blue Ridge Anticlinorium is a geologically complex, irregular chain of hills and peaks stretching from Lynchburg, Virginia, to southern Pennsylvania.<sup>219</sup>

The Anticlinorium features a basement complex of some of the oldest rocks in the Appalachian Mountains, consisting of granitelike gneisses formed approximately 1.1 billion years ago. In the central section of the Anticlinorium, where the project area is located, this basement complex is overlain by the Lynchburg Group of the Charlottesville Formation. The Lynchburg Group consists of schistose siltstone and mudstone with isolated outcrops of medium to coarse-grained amalgamated sandstone beds.<sup>220</sup>

## SOILS

Oak Lawn falls within the general soil association known as the Elioak-Hazel-Glenelg, characterized by deep and moderately deep, well drained and excessively drained soils that have a clayey or loamy subsoil, and were formed in material weathered from quartz mica schist (Figure 73).<sup>221</sup> Soils are derived primarily from rock weathered in place or washed from higher elevations through the overland flow of stormwater. Many of the soils within the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County region are well suited to a large number of crops.

## HYDROLOGY

Charlottesville falls within the Rivanna River watershed (Figure 74). The Rivanna River is a 42-mile-long tributary of the James River that flows through Central Virginia before emptying into the Chesapeake Bay. The waterway originates in the eastern slopes of the Ridge Mountains and drains a region extending from Stanardsville, Virginia, to the north, and an irregular area south of Charlottesville to the south. The river has two main branches, the North Fork and South Fork Rivanna Rivers, which join about 4 miles northeast of Charlottesville. The section of Charlottesville where Oak Lawn is located is drained by Moore's Creek, which empties into the Rivanna River approximately 2.5 miles to the southeast.

Streams within the Piedmont physiographic province are generally dendritic in form, which means that they form a network that resembles the branching pattern of tree roots, with small

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219. Chronicle Heritage, "Phase I Archaeological Survey for the Oak Lawn Property, Charlottesville, Virginia" (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia, December 2023), 1.

220. Chronicle Heritage, "Phase I Archaeological Survey," 1; and U.S. Geological Survey, "Geologic Unit: Charlottesville," *National Geologic Map Database*, [https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Geolex/UnitRefs/CharlottesvilleRefs\\_989.html#:~:text=Charlottesville%20Formation%20assigned%20to%20Lynchburg,of%20cobble%20conglomerate%20are%20present](https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Geolex/UnitRefs/CharlottesvilleRefs_989.html#:~:text=Charlottesville%20Formation%20assigned%20to%20Lynchburg,of%20cobble%20conglomerate%20are%20present) (accessed August 8, 2024).

221. John B. Carter, *Soil survey of Albemarle County, Virginia* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1985); Chronicle Heritage, "Phase I Archaeological Survey," 1; and U.S. Geological Survey, Geologic Unit: Charlottesville.



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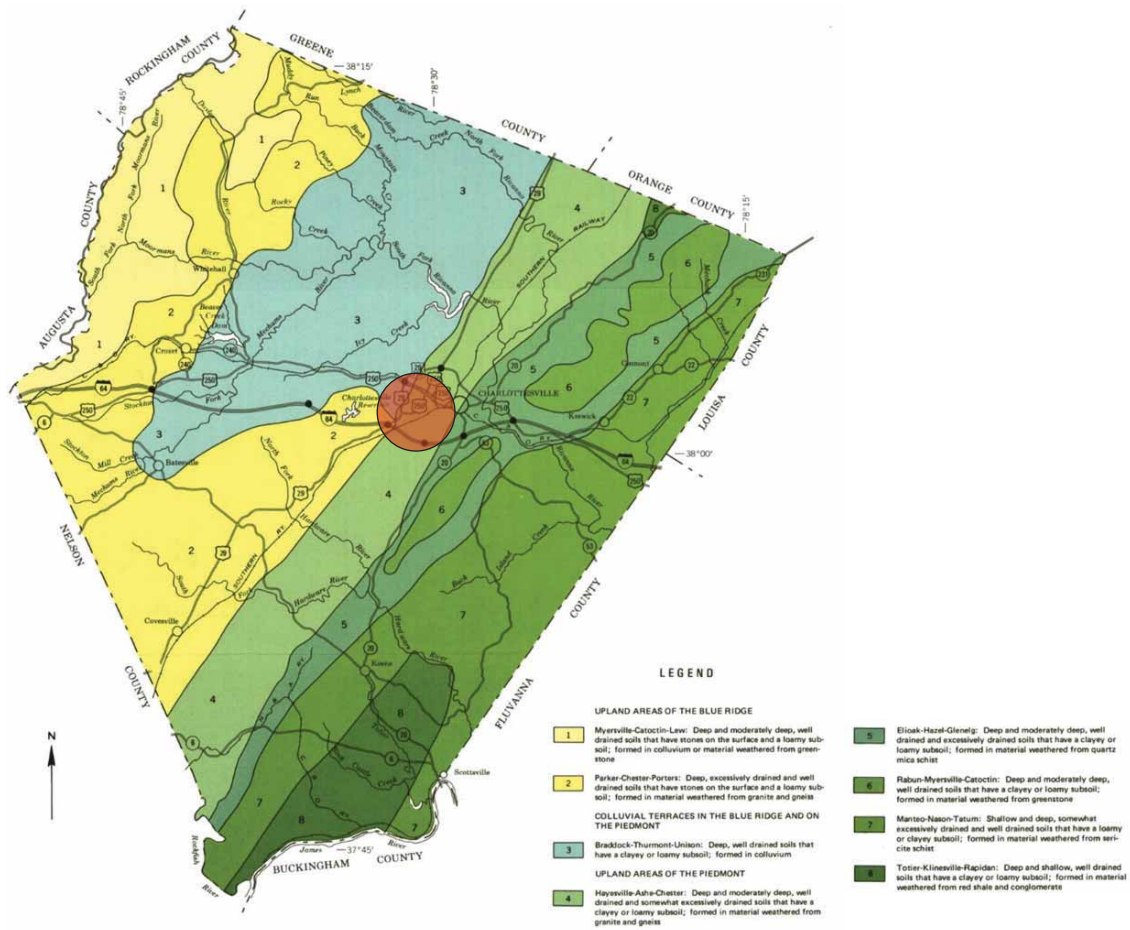


Figure 73. Map of soil associations within Albemarle County. Charlottesville is marked by a red circle. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1982.

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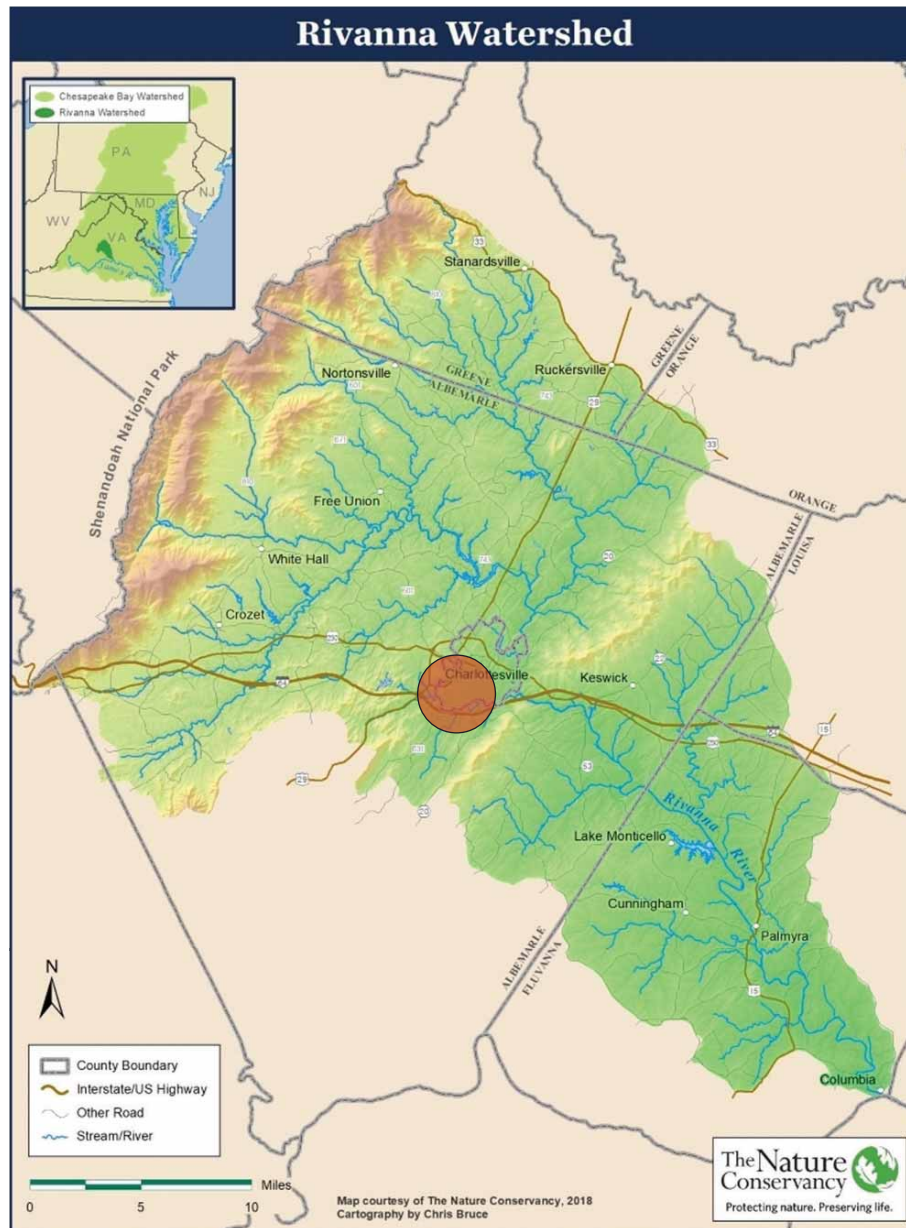


Figure 74. Map showing the Rivanna River watershed. The region in which Oak Lawn falls is highlighted with a red circle. College of William and Mary geology website.

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feeders emptying into larger streams, that in turn feed larger branches or trunk systems. Streams within the Charlottesville region follow this pattern.

### NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES

Eastern deciduous woodland likely extended over much of the county prior to clearing for agriculture during the period of European American settlement. Prior to European American settlement, the landscape was likely influenced by an anthropogenic use of fire by Native American groups that served to aid hunting, movement, and limited crop cultivation. Today, the landscape of the region is a patchwork of farm fields, pasture, and post-agricultural successional woodland that includes mixed upland woods and pine stands. Oak Lawn falls within the urban area of the city of Charlottesville. As such, the landscape is highly developed and contains few examples of woodlands, farm fields, or pastures. Where land is not highly managed, vegetation tends to undergo a process known as secondary succession whereby abandoned fields and open spaces slowly become wooded. Because of the extent of disturbance that has occurred within the urban environment, successional woodlands often feature a quite different composition than undisturbed native stands and are heavily influenced by non-native volunteer trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, some of which are classified as invasive.

### CULTURAL CONTEXT AND SETTING

Oak Lawn falls within the City of Charlottesville, which serves as the seat of Albemarle County (Figure 75). Albemarle County is part of the Central Virginia region along with Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Madison counties. The major road corridors providing access to Charlottesville include Interstate 64, which generally follows a northwest to southeast alignment and connects the city with Virginia's capital city of Richmond to the southeast. Passing through Charlottesville in a northeast to southwest direction is U.S. Route 29, which offers the most direct connection to Interstate 66, located in the Northern Virginia region, and Danville near the North Carolina border. Present-day U.S. Route 250 passes through Charlottesville as an important east-west travel route. The road, which was routed through Charlottesville in 1948, follows the alignment of the Three Notch'd (also Three Chop'd) Road, a major colonial-era route established in the 1740s, between Short Pump to the east and Staunton to the west.

Oak Lawn is located near the center of the City of Charlottesville along Cherry Avenue and abuts the neighborhood of Fifeville, formed from portions of the Oak Lawn property. Fifeville is edged to the northwest and north by the CSX rail line, to the east and southeast by Fifth Street SW, and to the south and southwest by Johnson Village. Oak Lawn is located approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the city's downtown area (Figure 3-6) and less than a quarter-mile south of the University of Virginia Medical Center. The University of Virginia's core campus is located approximately 1.5 miles to the northwest. Interstate 64 passes to the south of Oak Lawn in



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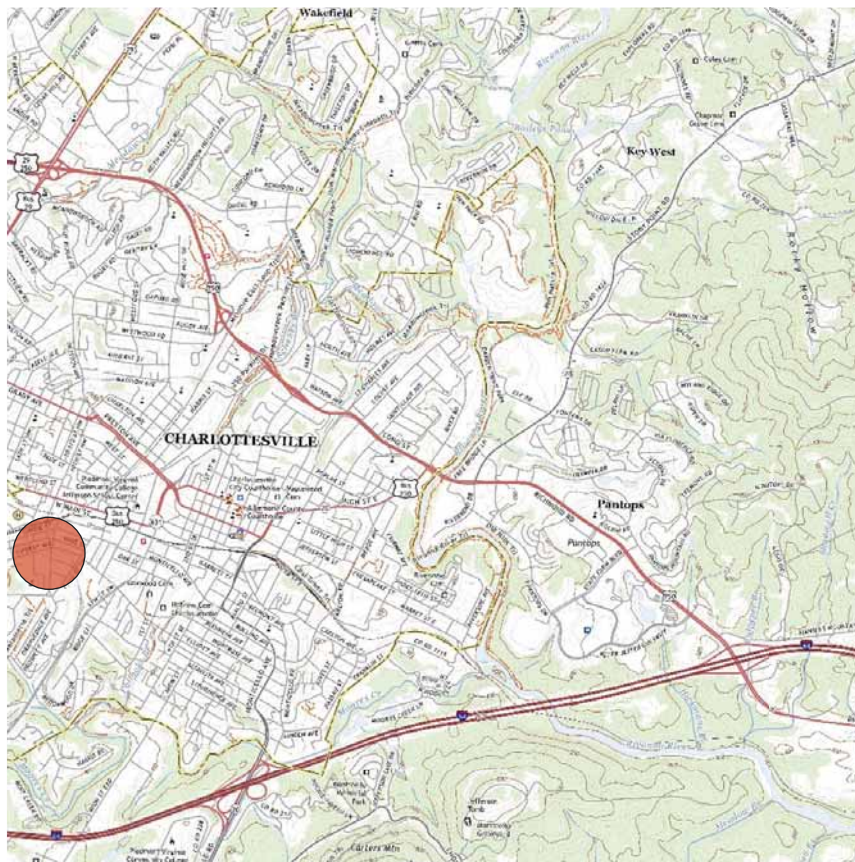


Figure 75. (Above) Map showing counties within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Albemarle County is highlighted with a red circle. MAPR, <https://www.mappr.co/counties/virginia-counties-map>.

Figure 76. (Left) U.S. Geological Survey "East Charlottesville" 1:24,000 quad map, with Oak Lawn highlighted with a red circle. U.S. Geological Survey, Charlottesville East, VA, 2022.

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a southwest/northeast direction, while the U.S. Route 29/250 bypass extends to the north of the property in a northwest to southeast direction. A popular attraction, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, is located approximately 4.5 miles to the southeast.

Oak Lawn is one of several notable properties built during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries within Charlottesville (Figure 77). Among the notable residential properties that survive within Charlottesville and Albemarle County today built during the late eighteenth century include:

- Monticello (1769-1809)
- Redlands (1783-1813)
- Monroe Hill (1790)
- Edgemont (1796)
- Bellair (1794)
- Sunnybank (1797)
- Highlands (Ash Lawn) (circa 1799)<sup>222</sup>

Notable residential properties that survive within Charlottesville and Albemarle County built during the Federal period that extends between 1800 and 1830 include the following:

- Arrowhead (circa 1800)
- Farmington (1802)
- Tallwood (in ruins, circa 1803, circa 1826)
- William Walker House (1803–1805)
- Mountain Grove (circa 1803)
- Midway (1807)
- Clifton (circa 1810)
- East Belmont, 1811
- Carrsbrook (1812)
- Brookhill (circa 1815)
- University of Virginia (1817–1826)
- Birdwood (1819)
- Esmont (circa 1819)
- Montebello (1819–1820)
- Morven (circa 1820)

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222. Lay, *Architecture of Jefferson County*, various entries, 297.



## OAK LAWN

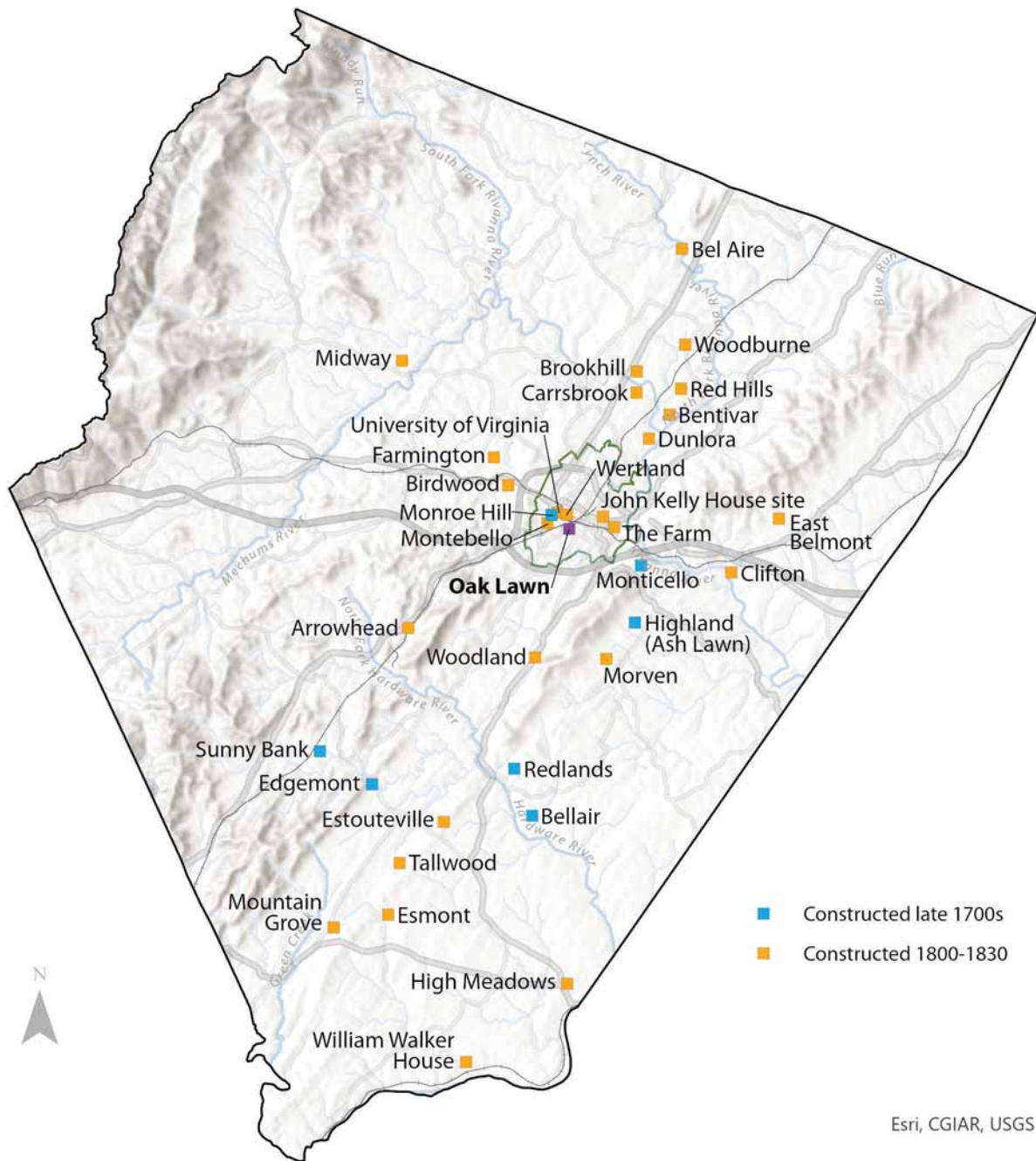


Figure 77. Notable properties built during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries within Charlottesville. LSHLA.

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- Woodland (circa 1820)
- Bentivar (rebuilt 1820s)
- Wertland (1820s)
- Woodburne (1820s)
- Red Hills (circa 1797, circa 1821)
- Bel Aire (circa 1825)
- The Farm (1825–1827)
- Estouteville (1827–1830)
- Dunlora (1828)
- John Kelly House (1828)
- High Meadows (1829–1833)<sup>223</sup>

### OVERVIEW DESCRIPTION OF THE OAK LAWN PROPERTY

*Refer to Figure 78 (Map of Existing Conditions, 2024).*

Until it was acquired in 2023 by UVA/UVA Health, the 5.2-acre Oak Lawn property was one of the largest residential parcels remaining within City of Charlottesville boundaries. Despite its generous size, the interior of the property, including the house, is barely visible from the surrounding roads and adjacent properties due to the density of the woodland that edges each of its boundaries along Cherry Avenue to the north, Ninth Street SW to the east, and Buford Middle School to the south and west. The dense woodland is composed of mature shade trees, ornamental plantings, screen plantings, and successional growth that includes several invasive species.

Access to Oak Lawn occurs in three locations. The primary entrance is an asphalt-paved driveway that extends west and then southwest toward the main house from Ninth Street SW near its intersection with Cherry Avenue. The driveway passes through a break in the chain link fencing that edges the property on three sides—along Ninth Street SW to the east and Buford Middle School to the west and south. The second entrance is a pedestrian stair that rises from the sidewalk along Cherry Avenue near the midpoint of the property’s northern boundary. A social trail extends towards the north and west sides of the main house from the stair. The third entrance occurs along the easement that extends from the Tenth Street SW right of way on the Buford Middle School property and follows part of Oak Lawn’s southern boundary. The easement leads to a gate in the perimeter chain link fence near the Fife family cemetery.

Within the property interior, the Oak Lawn main house, built in 1822, is the most prominent feature. The house occupies a high point near the center of the property. The principal façade of

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223. Ibid.





## OAK LAWN

the house faces east. The driveway passes in front of the main entrance into the house, marked by a porch set within the central two-story section. Across the driveway is a lawn panel framed by shade and ornamental tree plantings. A lamp post is located along the east side of the driveway across from the porch and the entrance into the dwelling. To the southeast of the driveway is a wooden stair, salvaged from the former southern porch structure. As noted by a family member during interviews conducted on behalf of the CLR, the stair was placed alongside the driveway for whimsical interest but serves no particular purpose today. Directly south of the main house, the driveway widens to accommodate parking for up to three cars. A wooden arbor edges the parking area and spans a path marked by stepping stones that lead to the rear yard. Planting beds are at the base of the arbor and wooden post and rail fencing that extend to either side of the structure. Ornamental plantings also edge the foundation of the house along the eastern and southern façades. These include mature boxwoods that frame the stairs leading to the front porch and a mix of perennials and shrubs along the foundation of the southwest addition that forms part of the southern façade.

Beyond the lawn panel to the east of the house, the landscape is composed of a mixture of turf lawn, ornamental and shade trees, successional growth, and evergreen screen plantings that occupy terrain that descends from the high point of the house toward Ninth Street SW. The driveway ascends the rising topography as it approaches the house. Near the dwelling, the driveway is edged to the north by a steeply sloped embankment. The driveway itself was graded to allow the road to follow a relatively gentle slope as it approaches the main house.

To the north and west of the driveway, the property is generally wooded. Mature shade trees rise above younger successional woodlands. Much of the ground plane is covered with English ivy (*Hedera helix*). Visible to the north and northwest of the main house is evidence of the former route of the driveway.

The land to the south of the main house is a relatively level open lawn panel edged by woody vegetation, vines, and groundcovers to the east, south, and west. Set within the lawn panel are two buildings—the Cook's House, a modest brick structure that may date to the nineteenth century, and a contemporary prefabricated shed. Where the land falls away to the east of the south lawn is a series of four constructed earthen terraces. The terraces are linear, relatively level areas that generally extend in a north-south direction edged by steeply-sloped banks of earth. The terraces fall within a stand successional woodland, while English ivy covers much of the ground. A row of trees edges the lawn panel near where the topography begins to descend. The trees include several mature Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*). A grove of trees at the southern end of the lawn panel marks the location of two side-by-side family cemeteries associated with the Bramham-Bibb and Fife families. The Fife family cemetery is located to the east of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery and enclosed by a metal picket fence. Both cemeteries feature several stone head- and footstones as well as vaults. Some of the graves within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery are marked by fieldstones. The Fife family cemetery features hosta (*Hosta* sp.) plantings, while periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) is present within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery.

## OAK LAWN

Smaller features present on the property include a small concrete watering trough that may reflect former agriculture and pasturing use of the property located in the successional woodland near the prefabricated shed, privacy fencing along the western property boundary near the Cook's House, yard hydrants and splash blocks near the house, and bird houses in the southern lawn panel.

### DOCUMENTATION BY LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTIC

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES

Natural systems and features typically considered for documentation in a CLR include native geology, native soils, hydrology, and native plant communities. While native geology underpins the Oak Lawn property and has influenced its landform, soil composition, and hydrology, there are no outcroppings or other features visible within the landscape that are expressive of the native geology.

The native soils that have been mapped in the area based on soil surveys and encountered as part of archaeological investigations conducted to date are primarily upland soils classified as Elioak loam, udorthents, and urban land soils.<sup>224</sup> The majority of the property is underlain by the Elioak-urban land complex; a smaller part of the property is underlain by udorthents (Figure 79). Hydrologically, there are no springs or streams, either intermittent or perennial, known to fall within the Oak Lawn property.

Native woodland plant communities are present that include older native deciduous oak and hickory trees, along with younger successional overstory and understory trees and shrubs (Figure 80). There are also several areas that have been planted with evergreen screen trees and ornamental species. Areas of successional woodland growth is heavily impacted by colonization by invasive species such as Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), tree-of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), mulberry (*Morus alba*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinensis*), wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), English ivy (Figure 81), and periwinkle.

#### TOPOGRAPHY

The Oak Lawn property features a central high point, which, as noted above, is occupied by the main house. The high point reaches an elevation of approximately 490 feet AMSL. The landform associated with the property declines in all directions. While the land slopes relatively steeply to the northeast, east, and southeast, the land to the south of the house is relatively level. To the southwest, west, and northwest, the land declines more gently. As noted, a portion of the steeply-

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224. Web Soil Survey 2023, <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx> (accessed November 10, 2024).



## OAK LAWN

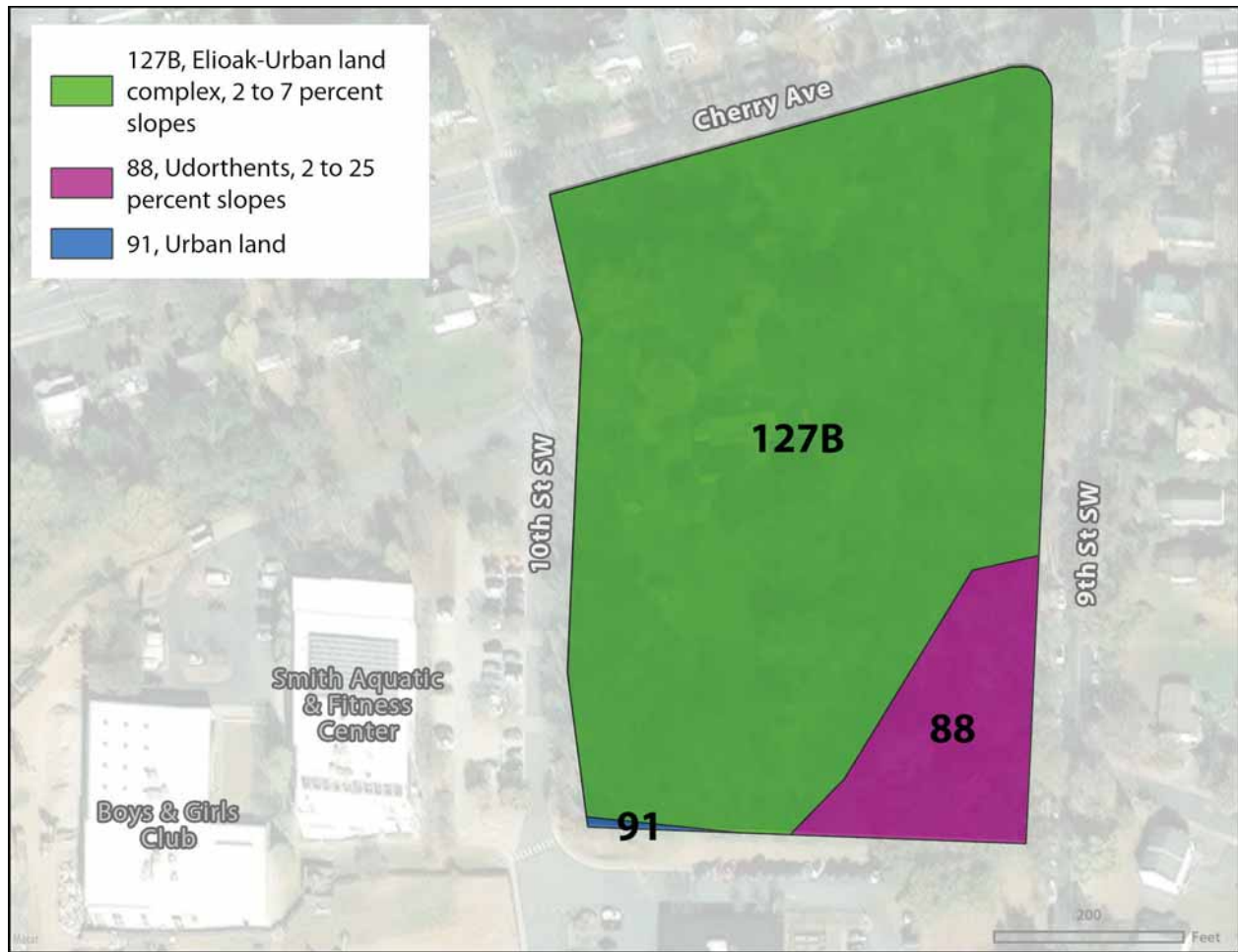


Figure 79. Map of the soil types associated with Oak Lawn. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2014.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 80. Successional woodland with extensive stands of English ivy covers much of the ground plane. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 81. English ivy covers much of the ground plane in the woods around the main house. LSHLA, 2024.*





*Figure 82. The lawn panel south of the main house is relatively level. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 83. The terraced garden area descends from the south lawn toward Ninth Street SW. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 84. A steep slope edges the driveway as it approaches the main house that is the result of grading to level out the road corridor. LSHLA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

sloped terrain east of the lawn panel that forms the yard south of the house (Figure 82) has been modified into a series of terraced landforms (Figure 83). Grading of the steeply sloped terrain northeast of the house is evident in association with the driveway as it approaches the house (Figure 84). Slopes mapped across the property range from 2 to 25 percent.

### SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The Oak Lawn property is nearly rectangular in form, with the longer dimension extending north-south between Cherry Avenue and Buford Middle School. The northern boundary is angled slightly where it follows the alignment of Cherry Avenue. Although much of the western property boundary is generally aligned north-south, the northwestern corner has a short, angled section. The boundaries of the property are marked on three sides (east, south, and west) by chain link fencing (Figure 85). Sidewalks edge the property along Cherry Avenue to the north, Ninth Street SW to the east, a portion of the Buford Middle School property to the south, and Tenth Street SW to the west.

Within Oak Lawn, the main house sits atop a high point near the property's center. The driveway that enters from the northeast corner of the property forms a sweeping arc that continues to the porch in front of the main entrance into the house before continuing around the south side of the dwelling where it ends in a parking area. The majority of the property is wooded with the exception of linear lawn panels that parallel the evergreen screen plantings along Ninth Street SW (Figure 86), the lawn panel south of the house, and a framed lawn east of the house (Figure 87). Two small buildings frame the south lawn panel along its western edge while a row of trees edge the panel to the east. A grove of trees edges the lawn panel to the south that overhangs the two family cemeteries. The Fife family cemetery is marked by a metal picket fence (Figure 88).

### VIEWS AND VISTAS

As of 2024, much of the Oak Lawn property is internally focused, with few opportunities to view beyond the boundary from within, and into the property from outside. Views are limited as a result of the extent and density of successional woodland and evergreen screen plantings. Views of Buford Middle School are afforded from the family cemeteries near the chain link fence that marks the property's southern boundary (Figure 89). Privacy fencing along the western property boundary limits views of the school from the environs of the main house and the lawn panel to the south for the most part to the west.

Internal views afforded within the property take advantage of clearings in the woods that occur on axis with the front of the house to the east (Figure 90) and across the lawn panel south of the house between the cemeteries and the house and Cook's House (Figure 91).





*Figure 85. (Above left) View west into the property along the driveway as it passes through boundary fencing and dense woodlands.*

*Figure 86. (Above right) View from the driveway of lawn to the south edged by evergreen screen plantings that follow the Ninth Street SW boundary.*

*Figure 87. (Center left) View across the east lawn toward the main house.*

*Figure 88. (Lower left) View of the Fife family cemetery framed by a fenced enclosure. All images LSHLA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN



*Figure 89. View toward Buford Middle School and associated parking from near the Fife family cemetery.*



*Figure 90. View east from the porch of the main house toward open lawn framed by ornamental plantings.*



*Figure 91. View from the Fife family cemetery across the south lawn. All images LSHLA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

### LAND USE

While Oak Lawn was originally designed to serve residential use, it is currently not occupied. The only land use currently associated with the property is burial as it pertains to the two family cemeteries.

### CIRCULATION

Circulation features at Oak Lawn are minimal. The only vehicular circulation feature is the paved driveway (Figure 92) and the parking area at its terminus (Figure 93). Pedestrian circulation is composed of a concrete stair that enters the property from Cherry Avenue (Figure 94), a stepping stone path that leads through the arbor at the end of the driveway (Figure 95), and social trails that extend from the concrete stair at Cherry Avenue toward the house (Figure 96) and leading around the fence associated with the Fife family cemetery toward a gate on the south side.

### VEGETATION

Vegetation at Oak Lawn associated with ornamental and cultural uses includes turf lawn associated with the east and south lawns (Figure 97) and linear areas that parallel Ninth Street SW (refer to Figure 86), foundation plantings that include mature boxwood along the principal façade and the south façade of the main house (Figure 98), planting beds along the foundation of the 1997–1998 southwest addition (Figure 99), planting beds at the base of the arbor and post and rail fencing to either side (Figure 100), vines trained on the arbor (Figure 101), hosta plantings in the Fife family cemetery (Figure 102), periwinkle in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery (Figure 103), and evergreen screen plantings along Ninth Street SW composed of Leyland cypress (*Cupressus x leylandii*) and white pine (*Pinus strobus*) (Figure 104). There are also several mature shade trees, including a mature oak north of the house that recalls the historic name for the property (Figure 165)

### BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Buildings on the property include the Oak Lawn dwelling, the Cook's House, and a storage shed. Structures include a remnant wooden stair and arbor.

**MAIN HOUSE:** The Oak Lawn main house faces east toward the city of Charlottesville. The driveway into the property approaches the principal façade parallel with the front porch. Boxwoods serve as foundation plantings to either side of the front porch, while a large deciduous shade tree is to the north of the house.

For a full description of the house, see the Historic Structure Report section of this study.



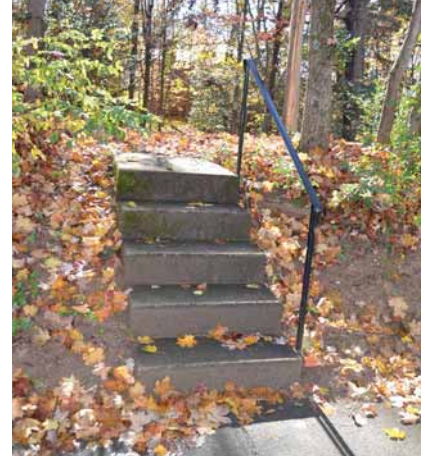


Figure 92. (Above left) View along the driveway as it approaches the main house.

Figure 93. (Center left) The small parking area at the end of the driveway.

Figure 94. (Above right) Concrete stair entry into the property from Cherry Avenue.

Figure 95. (Lower right) The stepping stone path through the arbor.

Figure 96. (Lower left) The social trail from the stair entry near Cherry Avenue toward the rear of the main house. All images LSHLA, 2024.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 97. Lawns south and east of the main house. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 98. Boxwood in front and along the side of the main house. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 99. Planting bed along the 1997–1998 southwest addition. LSHLA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 100. (Above)  
Perennial plantings  
around the arbor.*



*Figure 101. (Left) Vines  
trained on the arbor. All  
images LSHLA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 102. (Above left) Hosta plantings in the Fife family cemetery*

*Figure 103. (Above right) Periwinkle in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery.*

*Figure 104. (Left) Screen planting of white pines and Leyland cypress along Ninth Street SW. All images LSHLA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 105. View toward a large oak north of the main house that is the only apparent survivor of the oak grove that suggested the initial name for the property. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 106. Privet occurs as a large shrub in the south lawn and is found as a volunteer in the woods. LSHLA, 2024*

## OAK LAWN

**COOK'S HOUSE:** The Cook's House is a single-story, one-bay brick structure located west of the Oak Lawn main house. See the Historic Structure section of this report for a full description.

**STORAGE SHED:** Located to the south of the Cook's House is a prefabricated storage shed that was installed by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien to serve as storage space for gardening tools and other property care equipment (Figure 107).

**WOODEN STAIR:** At the edge of the driveway near the house is a wooden stair that formerly was on the south side of the house and led to a porch that preceded construction of the southwest addition. The staircase was removed as part of the renovation work conducted by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien in 1997–1998.

**ARBOR:** An arbor marks passage from the end of the driveway in the side yard of the main house. The arbor is edged to either side by relatively short sections of post and board fencing (Figure 109).

### SMALL-SCALE FEATURES

There are several small-scale features located on the Oak Lawn property.

**FENCES:** The most prevalent small-scale features are fences. These include chain link fencing along the property boundary on three sides (Figure 110), privacy fencing along a portion of the western margin of the property (Figure 111), metal picket fencing around the Fife family cemetery (Figure 112), and post and board fencing to either side of the arbor (Figure 113).

**CEMETERIES:** The two family cemeteries each contain several grave markers classified as small-scale features. These range from vaults to monuments, upright headstones and footstones, and unmarked field stones.

The Bramham-Bibb family cemetery is the older of the two burial grounds located along the southern property boundary. It is composed of several rows of graves marked by fieldstones, upright carved headstones and smaller footstones, and vaults (Figure 114 and Figure 115). Periwinkle is growing among the grave markers. The seventeen burials associated with the cemetery include:

- Henry Nimrod Bibb. b. September 21, 1821. d. July 23, 1881.
- Sarah A. Bramham Bibb. b. October 31, 1800. d. November 12, 1869.
- William Asbury Bibb. b. November 4, 1790. d. September 12, 1865.
- Willie A. Bibb. b. February 22, 1854. d. April 26, 1865.
- Dr. Horace Bramham. b. August 5, 1798. d. March 18, 1834.
- Margaret "Peggy" Marshall Bramham. b. July 1, 1776. d. July 6, 1845.
- Nimrod Bramham. b. February 28, 1769. d. June 18, 1845.
- Raymond Bennette Doughty. b. not known. d. March 21, 1844.





*Figure 107. The prefabricated shed. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 108. The wooden stair located adjacent to the driveway southeast of the dwelling. LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 109. The arbor adjacent to the parking area. LSHLA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 110. (Above left) The chain link fencing along the southern property boundary.*

*Figure 111. (Above right) The privacy fencing that edges a portion of the western property boundary.*

*Figure 112. (Center left) The metal picket fencing that encloses the Fife family cemetery.*

*Figure 113. (Lower left) The post and board fencing that edges the arbor to either side. All images LSHLA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN



*Figure 114. Grave markers in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. LSHLA, 2024.*

- Mrs. Elizabeth Austin Hamner Garland. b. June 2, 1767. d. November 1, 1840.
- Mary Jane Brand Pinkard. b. May 28, 1813. d. December 23, 1868.
- Richard N. Pinkard. b. 1737. d. not known.
- Richard N. Pinkard. b. July 9, 1807. d. September 15, 1840.
- John Simpson. b. September 6, 1787. d. December 16, 1869.
- Lucy Bramham Simpson. b. August 8, 1806. d. January 12, 1883.
- Elizabeth Ann Slaughter. b. May 30, 1821. d. May 7, 1841.
- Robert Harrison Slaughter. b. March 11, 1823. d. June 30, 1840.

The Fife family cemetery is located to the east of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery along the southern property boundary. As noted, the burial ground is surrounded by a metal picket fence entered through a gate in the center of the southern extent of the fence. The cemetery contains upright carved headstones and footstones as well as vaults. Several hostas have been planted around the graves and along the fenceline (Figure 116 and Figure 117).

The twenty-three graves associated with the Fife family cemetery include:

- Francis Harrison Fife. b. October 1, 1920. d. October 16, 2015.
- Reverend James Fife. b. 1793. d. 1876.
- James Douglas Fife. b. January 26, 1874. d. September 17, 1959.
- Katherine Mae Reynolds Fife. b. September 1, 1874. d. March 3, 1959.
- Margaret Whiteley Herndon Fife. b. 1811. d. 1884.
- Mary Catherine Fife. b. 1837. d. 1900.
- Mary Elizabeth Herndon Fife. b. February 4, 1824. d. July 5, 1899.
- Mildred Irving Hill Fife. b. June 4, 1886. d. April 11, 1977.
- Norma Gail Goode Fife. August 15, 1930. d. February 1, 2011.
- Robert Herndon Fife. August 24, 1843. d. August 19, 1919.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 116. Grave markers in the Fife family cemetery. LSHLA, 2024.*

- Dr. Robert Herndon Fife. b. November 18, 1871. d. August 1, 1958.
- Sarah Ann Graves Strickler Fife. b. 1845. d. 1920.
- Shelton Douglas Fife, Sr. b. February 1, 1919. d. September 5, 1983.
- Shelton Strickler Fife. b. October 2, 1889. d. February 5, 1937.
- William J. Fife. b. March 24, 1826. d. July 12, 1870.
- William Ormond Fife. b. October 3, 1884. d. December 31, 1950.
- Anne Eugenie Herndon Freudenberg. b. August 14, 1928. d. December 30, 2006.
- Ella Katherine Fife Freudenberg. b. December 17, 1886. d. January 3, 1975.
- Ann Garland Fife Marshall. b. November 20, 1920. d. July 13, 2010.
- Judge David Barhydt Marshall. b. June 22, 1919. d. June 7, 2009.
- Francis Curtis Morgan. b. July 4, 1867. d. January 10, 1955.
- Mary Graves “Daisy” Fife Morgan. b. January 23, 1870. d. February 19, 1952.
- Mary Woodson. b. unknown. d. March 14, 1896.

**MISCELLANEOUS SMALL-SCALE FEATURES:** Additional small-scale features at Oak Lawn include a concrete watering trough behind the shed (Figure 118); two lamp posts—one along the driveway east of the main house (Figure 119) and a second to the south of the parking area; bird houses (Figure 120); and yard hydrants and splash blocks (Figure 121, Figure 122, Figure 123). A remnant wood post is along the social trail leading into the property from the concrete stair at Cherry Avenue (Figure 124), while a metal post that appears to be part of a former fence associated with one of the cemeteries is just outside the present-day Fife family cemetery fence (Figure 125).

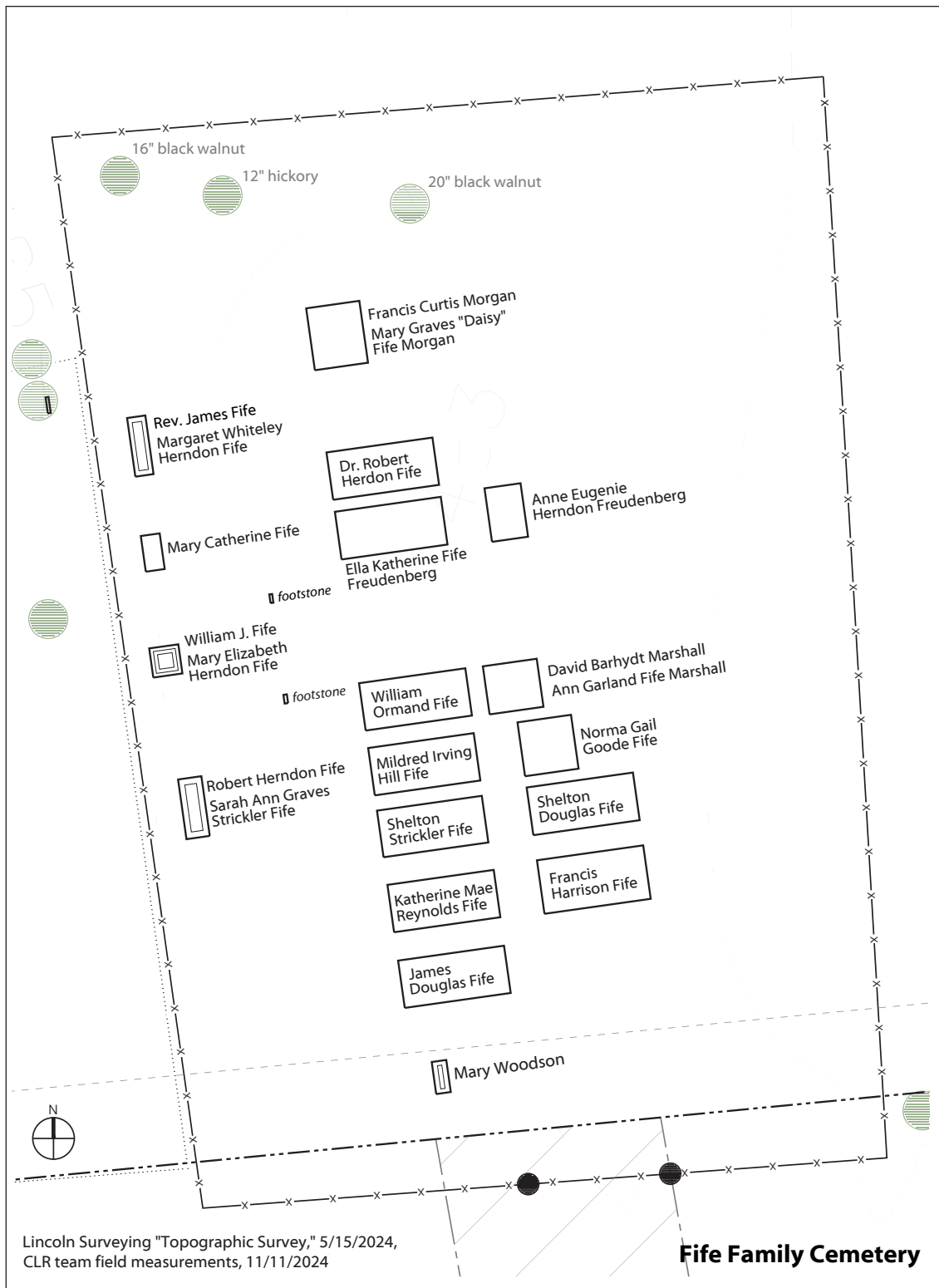


Figure 117. Map of the Fife family cemetery. LSHLA, 2024.



# OAK LAWN

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

### RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Little archaeological research has occurred at Oak Lawn until recently. Prior to the University of Virginia's purchase of the Oak Lawn property in September of 2023, Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC in association with NAEVA Geophysics, Inc. conducted a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey of a limited, approximately 0.12-acre, area surrounding the northern side of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery and the northern and eastern side of the Fife family cemetery. The goal of the GPR survey was to determine the presence or absence of human graves outside of and adjacent to the fenced enclosure of the Fife cemetery, and the visible boundaries of the adjacent Bramham-Bibb family cemetery to the west (Figure 126).

Wherever possible, the GPR project area extended out at least 30 feet from the fenced enclosure or visible boundary of the burial grounds. The survey was limited, however, to the close-cropped turf and areas that were unobstructed. The GPR survey did not extend into the formal cemeteries themselves, or their overgrown and vegetated boundaries. Transects were conducted at 0.5-meter intervals in a north-south orientation. No GPR-identified grave anomalies were identified within the project area during the survey. A large, circular-shaped feature, believed to represent the location of a former tree, was identified north of and within 25 feet of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery (Figure 127).

In October of 2023, Chronicle Heritage conducted a Phase I archaeological survey at Oak Lawn that targeted a 3.08-acre wooded strip fronting the south side of Cherry Avenue and the west side of Ninth Street SW. The goal of the Phase I survey was to document the presence or absence of archaeological resources within the project area and to determine their significance and eligibility for listing in the National Register. A total of 83 shovel test pits were excavated, 46 at 50-foot intervals, and an additional 37 at 25-foot radials.

Based on the recovery of seventy-five artifacts from twenty-one shovel test pits and limited surface finds, an approximately 1.25-acre archaeological site, 44AB0736, was identified. Artifacts recovered from the survey included architectural materials (brick, nails, pane glass), domestic ceramics (pearlware, whiteware, yellow ware, ironstone salt-glazed stoneware, hard-paste porcelain), as well as mold-blown and machine-made container glass, and animal bone. A single probable quartz flake was also recovered from the survey. The artifacts were found to generally conform to the known occupation of the Oak Lawn property by the Bramham-Bibb and Fife families. Across much of the Phase I project area (Figure 128), stratigraphy was characterized by the presence of natural soils as well as disturbed soils associated with the construction of fences, roads, and gardening. No subsurface features were identified during the Phase I investigations.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 118. (Above) The small concrete trough in the woods behind the shed.*

*Figure 119. (Left) One of the two lamp posts on the property. This one is located along the driveway near the entrance into the main house.*

*Figure 120. (Below left) One of several bird houses on the property.*

*Figure 121. (Below right) One of the yard hydrants on the property. This one features a splash block at the base. All images LSHLA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN



Figure 122. (Left) A splash block stored near the northwest corner of the main house.

Figure 123. (Lower left) A yard hydrant set within the large privet shrub in the south lawn.

Figure 124. (Upper left) A wooden post near the concrete stairs and social trail leading into the property from Cherry Avenue.

Figure 125. (Lower right) A metal post associated with former fencing near the present-day Fife family cemetery fence. All images LSHLA, 2024.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 126. GPR survey at Oak Lawn, September 2023. Rivanna Archaeological Services.*

Site 44AB0736 (Figure 129) was not recommended eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion D due to the low density of the assemblage, a lack of stratigraphic integrity, and a lack of cultural features.<sup>225</sup>

In the spring of 2024, the University of Virginia learned that a Fife family descendant was told by another family member that an area near the primary residence was thought to be a burial ground for enslaved African Americans. In July of 2024 Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC again teamed with NAEVA Geophysics, Inc. to conduct a GPR survey of the suspected area. As generally defined by the family member, the area was located adjacent to and northwest of the primary residence and was composed of approximately 0.19-acres. The area lay on a gently west-sloping hillside and was covered in English Ivy and numerous small trees (Figure 130). Transects were conducted at 0.5-meter intervals in a north-south orientation, avoiding standing trees and other large vegetation. No GPR-identified grave anomalies were identified within the project area during the survey. It was determined that the GPR project area was not a burial ground.

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225. Cynthia V. Goode, Anne M. O'Donnell, and Charles E. Goode, "Phase I Archaeological Survey for the Oak Lawn Property, Charlottesville, Virginia" (Chantilly, Virginia: Chronicle Heritage, prepared for the Office of the Architect, University of Virginia. 2023)..



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 127. Plan showing the red-outlined GPR survey area north and east of the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries at Oak Lawn and the circular shaped remains of a tree.  
NAEVA Geophysics, Inc., September 2023.*

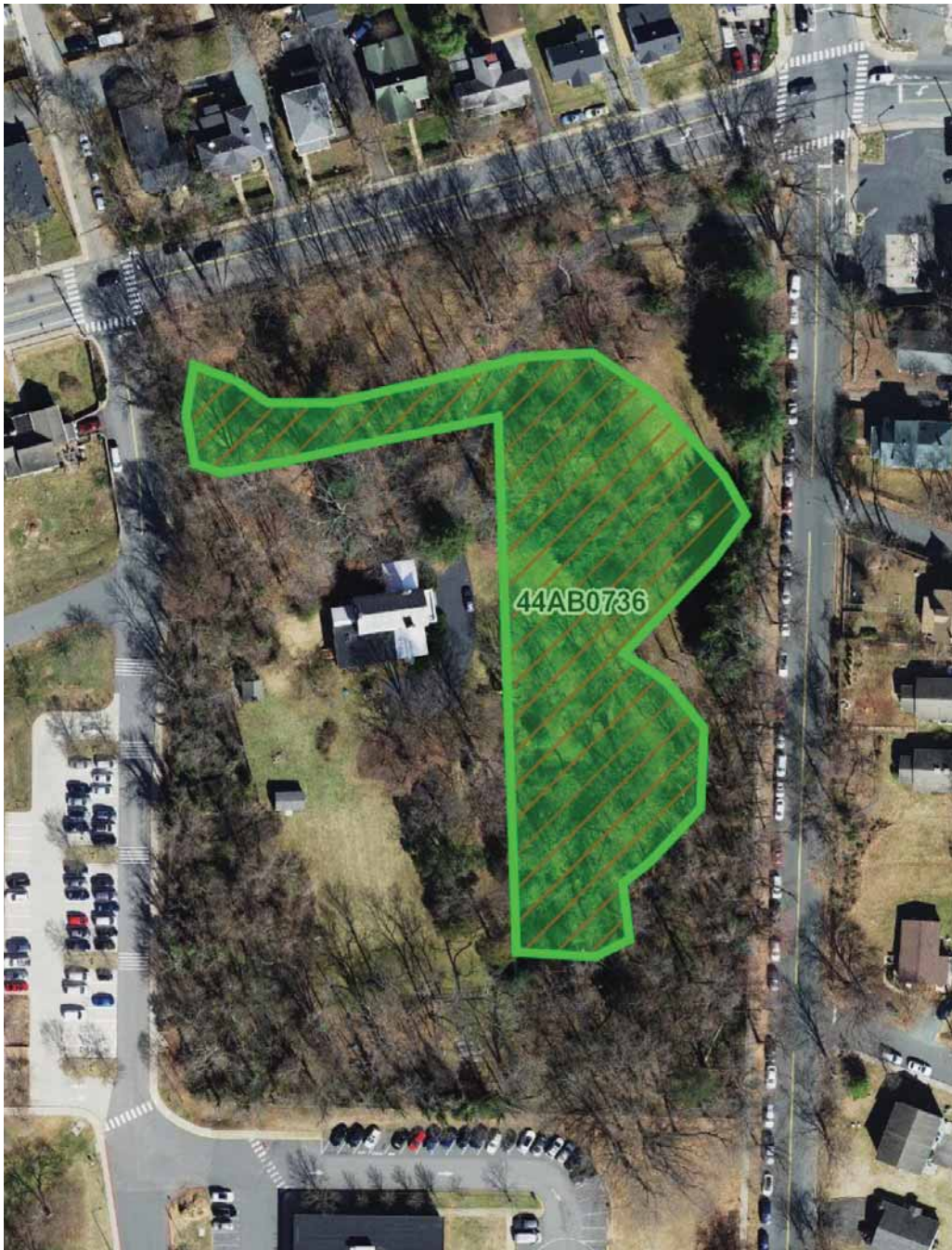
# OAK LAWN



Figure 128. Map showing the Oak Lawn Phase I survey project area and location of excavated positive and negative shovel test pits. Chronicle Heritage, December 2023.

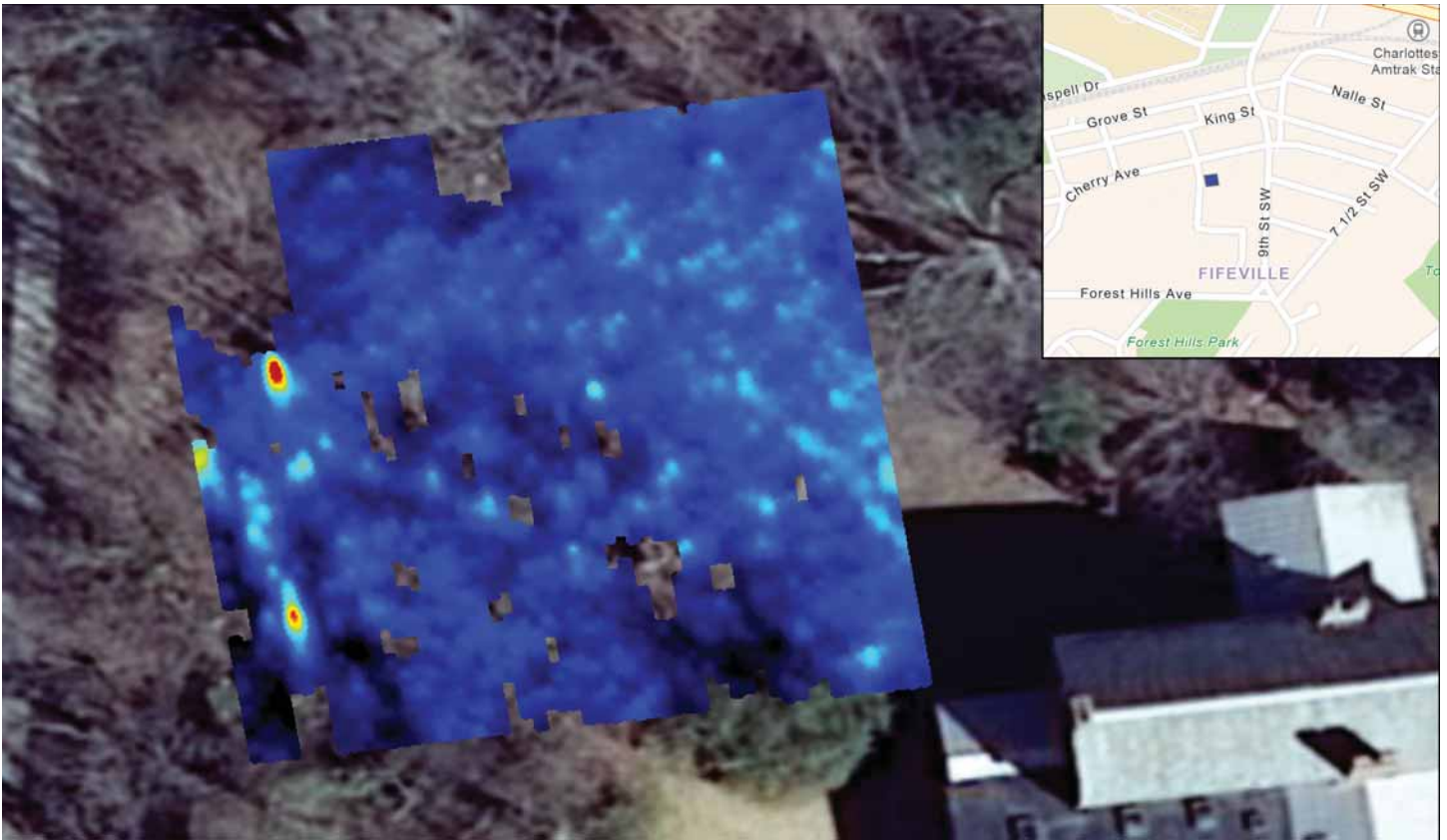


## OAK LAWN



*Figure 129. Location and extent of 44AB0736 identified at Oak Lawn. Chronicle Heritage, December 2023.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 130. A 2024 GPR survey focused on the area shaded in blue, northwest of the main house (lower right).  
Rivanna Archaeological Consulting, 2024.*



# OAK LAWN

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION AND INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains two sections: an evaluation of the significance of the Oak Lawn cultural landscape and an assessment of its integrity.

The significance evaluation section identifies the property's important historical associations over time, as well as its architectural, archeological, and social value in accordance with National Register criteria. The property's significance is tied to a discrete period of time in which its important contributions were made. The property is also evaluated based on relevant historic contexts, which are patterns and trends in history and prehistory that can be used to understand a specific occurrence, property, or site, and to make clear its meaning and importance.

The integrity assessment section summarizes to what degree the property retains its ability to convey its historic associations with the period of significance identified in the significance evaluation section.

#### SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

##### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

In order for a property to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register, it must possess significance under one of four criteria. The Criteria for Evaluation for listing in the National Register state:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- D. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- E. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- F. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that

## OAK LAWN

represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

- G. That has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.<sup>226</sup>

In addition, the National Register Criteria for Evaluation identify the following Criteria Considerations:

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years are not considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- h. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- i. A building or structure removed from its original location, but which is primarily significant for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- j. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building associated with his or her productive life; or
- k. A cemetery that derives its primary importance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- l. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- m. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- n. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.<sup>227</sup>

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226. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60, "The National Register Criteria for Evaluation," <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-60>.

227. Ibid.

# OAK LAWN

## CURRENT NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS OF OAK LAWN

### OAK LAWN NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

Oak Lawn was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register on April 17, 1973, and the National Register on May 25, 1973. The National Register-listed property centers around the architecture of the main house; the landscape is addressed only to the extent that it serves as the setting for the building. While the nomination notes the presence of a large shady lawn in the statement of significance, it otherwise does not refer to any specific landscape features as contributing resources. Because the nomination was prepared more than 50 years ago, it is representative of how nominations were prepared in the past and does not meet some of the standards used to evaluate properties today. For example, the nomination does not indicate a precise period of significance for the listed property but instead uses the check-box system that accompanied nominations at the time that lists periods of significance by century (in this case the nineteenth). Significance criteria are also not listed in early nominations, so there is no indication of whether the property meets the eligibility requirements under Criteria A, B, C, or D. The nomination does indicate the area of significance for Oak Lawn as Architecture.

The nomination, which was prepared by Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff, includes the following statement of significance:

Oak Lawn is a notable example of Jeffersonian Classicism with the Randolph-Semple House in Williamsburg being its design prototype. Built in 1822, the house is believed to have been constructed by workmen employed by Thomas Jefferson at the nearby University of Virginia. Many of these men, strongly influenced by Jefferson, went on to design and erect courthouses, churches, and houses throughout the state. Sequestered from Charlottesville by its large shady lawn, Oak Lawn is a skillful interpretation of Jefferson's architectural ideas.

The Oak Lawn tract was part of a patent granted to Joel Terrell and David Lewis in the 1730s. Micajah Chiles came into the possession of the property in 1784 and it was inherited by his son, Henry West Alberty (alias Henry Chiles). Alberty sold the tract in 1815 to Jesse Winston Garth, who sold 394 acres to Colonel Nimrod Bramham in 1818.

James Fife, business man, farmer and Baptist minister, bought the house and property in 1847 and changed the name from Oak Grove to Oak Lawn. Although lots were sold from farmland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Fife family retained the house and a core of land. Today only five acres remain with Oak Lawn after the city of Charlottesville condemned the remaining acreage for Buford Junior High School in the late 1960s.<sup>228</sup>

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228. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff, National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "Oak Lawn" (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, May 25, 1973), Section 8.

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### OAK LAWN AMENDED NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

In 2008, based on work conducted on behalf of preparing a National Register nomination for the adjacent Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District that includes Oak Lawn, an amendment was made to the 1973 nomination and attached to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources file for Oak Lawn (104-0031). The amendment expands on the architectural description of the main house, notes changes made to the main house, including the replacement of the southern porch with the southwest addition in 1997–1998, and recognizes the Cook's House and two family cemeteries as contributing to the significance of the property. The amendment notes the following:

Constructed in 1822, this 2-story, three-part brick dwelling is an accomplished example of Jeffersonian Palladianism and was constructed by builders who worked for Jefferson on the academic village at the University of Virginia. James Dinsmore, a Scots-Irish builder who worked for Jefferson, is believed to have designed the house and also worked on its construction. The house is comprised of a 2-story, 3-bay, gable-end central brick block flanked by slightly recessed, 1-story, 2-bay brick wings with side gable roofs. The brick walls are laid in Flemish bond above a water table of 3-course American bond with molded quarter-round bricks. The roofs are clad in standing seam metal. Exterior brick chimneys are located between the main block and each of the side wings. An additional interior brick chimney is located at the west end of the main block. The 1-story, 3-bay front portico with Tuscan-column supports and a plain entablature, has a flat roof with a wooden railing of turned balusters. Other details include 9/6- and 9/9-sash wood windows with louvered wooden shutters, a boxed cornice, a lunette window in the front pedimented gable-end, a 6-panel front door, two square 4-light attic windows in the west gable end, and a large glassed-in rear 1-story wing constructed in 1998.<sup>229</sup>

Oak Lawn, the earliest historic resource in the proposed Fifeville-Castle Hill Historic District, stands at the southwest corner of the intersection of 9th Street SW and Cherry Avenue. Originally stretching from Fry Springs on the west to Ridge Street on the east, the remaining parcel of land is approximately 5 ½ acres; however, the setting of Oak Lawn remains surprisingly rural despite its urban location. Constructed in 1822, the main house is an accomplished example of Jeffersonian Palladianism. Built for Col. Nimrod Bramham, a Charlottesville merchant who served in the House of Delegates, the design and construction of Oak Lawn are attributed to James Dinsmore, a Scots-Irish master carpenter who worked on Monticello and the University of Virginia after being brought to Charlottesville by Thomas Jefferson, and is a skillful interpretation of Jefferson's Classical architectural ideas. Bramham died in

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229. Maral Kalbian, Additional Documentation, National Register of Historic Places nomination: "Oak Lawn" (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 23, 2008), Continuation Sheet 7 - 2.



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1847 and was buried in a cemetery on the property, at which time the property was sold to James Fife, a Baptist minister, farmer, and businessman. Fife was active in the Charlottesville area for nearly 30 years, and it was his name that came to be identified with this area. He died in 1876 and, after an impressive funeral service at his home, was buried in a second cemetery on the property. It was not until 1888 that the land was subdivided into Fife's Lots. The remaining acreage is still owned by members of the Fife family and includes the main house, a brick cook's cottage, and two family cemeteries.<sup>230</sup>

### FIFEVILLE AND TONSLER NEIGHBORHOODS HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register on March 20, 2008, and the National Register on June 18, 2009. Oak Lawn is included in both listings as a contributing resource.

The Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District is indicated as significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture, Community Planning & Development, and Ethnic Heritage: Black. The period of significance indicated in the nomination extends from 1822 with the construction of Oak Lawn to 1957 when the development of the two neighborhoods is considered to have been substantially complete. Significant dates are indicated as circa 1822 (construction of Oak Lawn); 1888 (incorporation of Charlottesville); and 1912 (segregation ordinance).<sup>231</sup>

The following passages from the nomination summarize the role that Oak Lawn played in the establishment of the Fifeville neighborhood in Charlottesville:

The district is eligible for nomination to the National Register at the local level under Criterion C as a remarkably intact collection of vernacular dwellings that draws from a variety of popular architectural styles and building traditions, with very few non-contributing resources (mostly modern outbuildings). A relatively unchanged grid pattern and streetscape contribute to the district's integrity. The district is also eligible under Criterion A as it exemplifies the history of a vibrant African-American community alongside a working class white neighborhood following the Civil War, while retaining a collection of antebellum brick dwellings belonging to the original slave-holding residents. It is also significant for its association with the expansion and growth of Charlottesville with the period of significance from circa 1822 to 1957.<sup>232</sup>

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230. Kalbian, Additional Documentation, "Oak Lawn," Continuation Sheet 8 - 3.

231. Maral S. Kalbian, National Register of Historic Places nomination: "Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District" (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, June 18, 2009). Virginia Department of Historic Resources Property File 104-0213.

232. Kalbian, "Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District," 8 - 81-8 - 82.

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From a historic perspective, the district is divided into two areas that developed differently, although both were once large rural tracts located on the edge of Charlottesville. The western portion, eventually known as Fifeville, developed systematically in a relatively short period of time in the late 1880s, when it was subdivided into lots from a portion of the farm known as Oak Lawn [104-0031; 104-0213-0050]. The eastern boundary of the subdivision, known originally as Fife's Lots, ran along the rear property lines of the parcels along the east side of 7½ Street, a thoroughfare depicted as Fry's Street on the 1888 plat. The main streets running east-west through Fifeville are Grove, Estes, King, and Nalle and the major north-south routes are 9th and 7½ streets. The area east of 7½ Street was not laid out into lots all at one time, but evolved over several decades of the mid and late 19th century, explaining their somewhat irregular sizes. Although not as regularized as the western portion, this eastern area retains a grid pattern of streets that include 4th, 5th, 6th, 6½, and 7th streets running north-south, and Oak, Dice, and Delevan streets running east-west.<sup>233</sup>

The Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District, located south of the main railroad tracks and the primary retail and business thoroughfare in the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, is significant as a remarkably intact collection of primarily modest 19th- and early-20th-century dwellings associated with the development of the central Virginia community. So named for a large property owner, James Fife, whose estate in the western portion was ultimately subdivided for residential use in 1888 and for Benjamin Tonsler, long-time area resident, educator, and beloved principal of Jefferson School, the district stretches from 4th Street on the east to Spring Street on the west, incorporating the early development of one of Charlottesville's peripheral suburbs between downtown and the University of Virginia. The northern boundary is essentially the railroad right-of-way and the southern line is Cherry Avenue. The district well represents the typical evolution of agricultural land that bordered small 19th-century communities into planned and unplanned neighborhoods of mostly modest dwellings on small lots that ultimately were absorbed by the City. Several imposing 19th-century dwellings that were homes to early landowners in the area are scattered throughout the district. The district also retains a large collection of houses sited on small lots that served the middle-class blue collar workers who labored on the railroad in varying capacities as well as small business managers, and provided manpower for the service, building and manufacturing industry in Charlottesville.<sup>234</sup>

A number of enterprising African-Americans lived at the eastern end of the district throughout its history. Their presence defined much of the area from the

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233. Ibid., 7 - 2.

234. Ibid., 8 - 81.

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period when they were enslaved and continuing through Reconstruction, recovery and well into the 20th century. African-Americans who resided at the eastern end of the district included Mr. Tonsler, many of Jefferson School's teachers, business owners and preachers, along with laborers, craftsmen and many who listed their occupation as "laundresses" or "washer women." Included within the district's boundaries is the 1877-1883 First African Baptist Church (Delevan Church), the only surviving institutional building in the district, whose congregation in its formative years was led by William Gibbons, a former slave and a preacher who attained national recognition and whose well-attended funeral was from Delevan following his death in Washington in 1886.<sup>235</sup>

The Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District's history is particularly illuminating when considering the evolving relationship between the white and African-American communities in Charlottesville during the last years of the 19th and the first three decades of the 20th century. Examination of local land and population records and city ordinances reveal the initiation of Jim Crow laws and efforts to legalize residential segregation, a movement that was mirrored in other areas of Virginia and the South between 1890 and 1930. In addition to residential use, the district also features a few commercial structures and the site of a former brick yard. Only a scattering of commercial buildings stand in the district, the small number resulting from most enterprises such as "eating houses," barber shops, hotels, and grocery stores, being located along Charlottesville's primary mercantile street, just north of the district in Vinegar Hill.<sup>236</sup>

### CLR SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION OF OAK LAWN

The findings of the Oak Lawn CLR generally concur with the significance evaluation for Oak Lawn presented in the 1973 nomination, the 2008 amendment, and the 2009 Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District nomination. Considered collectively, these documents indicate Oak Lawn to be significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture, Community Planning & Development, and Ethnic Heritage: Black for its association with nineteenth-century plantation development, post-emancipation ongoing productive use as a farm property, and later subdivision to form the basis for an extensive residential neighborhood by 1957. While the 2008 amendment to the Oak Lawn individual property nomination suggests the addition of the Cook's House and two family cemeteries as contributing resources, along with the prefabricated shed as a non-contributing resource, the CLR recommends that consideration be paid to including the terraced gardens southeast of the main house, the driveway, two splash blocks, and the concrete watering trough in the list of contributing features.

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235. Ibid., 8 - 81.

236. Ibid., 8 - 81.

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### PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The CLR also recommends that the period of significance for the Oak Lawn property be expanded from the current date of 1822 to include a longer extent of historical associations for the property. A logical end-date for the period of significance would be 1957 to concur with the Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District period of significance.

### ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT ASSOCIATIONS OF THE PROPERTY

Future consideration might be paid to recognizing the importance of Oak Lawn for its association with its last two residents—Francis Fife and Nancy O’Brien—both notable figures in the Charlottesville community. Both Fife and O’Brien served as mayors of the city of Charlottesville—Fife from 1972 to 1974 and O’Brien, from 1976 to 1978. O’Brien was also the first woman mayor of the city. Francis Fife served on Charlottesville City Council from 1970 to 1978, making affordable housing one of his focus areas while in office. In 1968, Fife joined with Delegate Mitch Van Yahres, Thomas J. Michie, Jr., and Robert Stroud to establish the Charlottesville Housing Foundation (now the Piedmont Housing Alliance). Fife also helped to establish the Rivanna Trails Foundation, served as Chairman of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and chair of the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority during the early 1980s. Additionally, Fife served on the board of several government agencies and non-profit organizations, such as the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Ivy Creek Foundation, and Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population.

Nancy O’Brien contributed similarly to the Charlottesville community in numerous ways. She has served on the board of the League of Women Voters, as chair of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, on the board of Citizens for a United Community, and as a member of the Planning Commission, Department of Housing Authority and Community Development Board, and Virginia Housing Development Authority Board. She has also served as chair of the Advisory Committee for the Virginia Community Capital Bank. Finally, O’Brien founded the Leadership Legacy political action committee to assist women to run for state and local office. O’Brien often invited Democratic candidates for local and regional office and other supporters of political action to Oak Lawn for meetings. Nancy felt that it was appropriate for Oak Lawn to be used to help raise funds for those proposing positive change for the City of Charlottesville and the broader region.<sup>237</sup>

### INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

According to the National Register, integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and the authenticity of its historic identity as a result of the survival of physical characteristics present during the period of significance. Historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities or

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237. Nancy O’Brien, personal communication, July 29, 2024.



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aspects that include: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Historic properties either retain integrity or they do not. Retention of a majority of the qualities or aspects of integrity is necessary for a property to convey its significance. However, not all seven qualities need to be present for a property to retain integrity.

### OVERALL INTEGRITY

The integrity of the present-day 5.2-acre Oak Lawn property as a historic residential and agricultural property, established in 1822 and evolving over 200 years of ownership by only two families until sold to the University of Virginia in 2023, is assessed herein. Overall, Oak Lawn retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic associations due to the ongoing presence of contributing features such as the main house, Cook's House, family cemeteries, terraced landforms, and driveway. Although the property has been reduced in size many fold since the mid-nineteenth century, the core dwelling precinct and several landscape features survive from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that recall earlier uses and character and help to convey integrity to the period of significance. Due to changes made to the main house and the Cook's House since the mid-twentieth century, as well as conditions associated with the property's setting, some individual aspects of integrity are diminished. These are discussed below.

### INTEGRITY BY QUALITY

#### LOCATION

*Location is the place where the cultural landscape was constructed or the landscape where the historic event occurred.*

Oak Lawn, particularly the main house and dwelling precinct and other core aspects of the property, retains integrity of location for the fact that it survives in its original site.

#### DESIGN

*Design is the combination of elements that create form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape.*

The original siting of Oak Lawn atop a narrow high ridge overlooking Charlottesville and the design of the main house, potentially by craftspeople brought to Charlottesville by Thomas Jefferson to work on construction of the Academical Village, and its relationship to the surrounding landscape and dwelling precinct as represented by the Cook's House and the two family cemeteries, survive on the property to convey integrity of design. Diminishing integrity of design is the loss of many of the other outbuildings that comprised the dwelling precinct and a

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nearby farm precinct, which was in turn supported by agricultural fields that have been lost to the development of Fifeville and Buford Middle School.

### SETTING

*Setting is the physical environment of the cultural landscape.*

The setting for the current Oak Lawn property is diminished greatly by the presence of Buford Middle School to the south and west and urban developments along Cherry Avenue, such as a service station to the northeast of the property near the intersection of Cherry Avenue and Ninth Street SW. A widening of Ninth Street SW by the city of Charlottesville resulting from the transfer of a narrow strip of land from the Fife family to the city in 1976 has also altered the property's setting. During the 1990s, Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien planted a stand of evergreen trees to screen views to and from the road, resulting in limited visual access to the land beyond Oak Lawn, which has diminished integrity of setting as well.

### MATERIALS

*Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during the particular period(s) of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form the cultural landscape.*

Oak Lawn possesses integrity of materials due to the ongoing presence of historic materials. The historic use of brick to construct Oak Lawn and the Cook's House remains in evidence on the property today. Also present are the original materials used in the fabrication of grave markers within the two family cemeteries as well as turf lawn east and south of the house. Also present are numerous mature trees that date to the period of significance. Diminishing integrity of materials has been the introduction of contemporary fencing materials such as chain link along the property boundaries to the west, east, and south, metal picket fence around the Fife family cemetery, T-111 siding associated with the shed, and large glass windows within the southwest addition. Based on information provided by the Fife family, the present-day asphalt driveway constitutes a relatively recent change to the formerly gravel road surface. The driveway likely remained gravel until at least 2015. This change also diminishes integrity of materials.

### WORKMANSHIP

*Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during a given period in history or prehistory.*

The original workmanship used to build the main house, potentially by craftspeople brought to Charlottesville by Thomas Jefferson to work on construction of the Academical Village, and the portion of the Cook's House that has not been rebuilt, as well as the garden terraces and the family

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cemeteries, remain in evidence at Oak Lawn today. As such Oak Lawn possesses integrity of workmanship.

### ASSOCIATION

*Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a cultural landscape.*

Primarily due to the presence of the two family cemeteries on the property, Oak Lawn possesses integrity of association with the two owners that resided on the property over the past 200 years—the Bramham-Bibb and Fife families.

### FEELING

*Feeling is a cultural landscape's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular time.*

Despite the loss of a substantial extent of the original plantation and farm property, the presence of the historic Oak Lawn main house and Cook's House as well as the terraced gardens, several mature trees, and the two family cemeteries help to convey integrity of historic feeling on the property. The current size of Oak Lawn, which is more than 5.2 acres, also helps to convey integrity of feeling as one of the largest residential properties presently located within the City of Charlottesville.

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## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

#### INTRODUCTION

The section that follows is composed of a comparative analysis of historic and existing landscape conditions focusing on each of the landscape characteristics that comprise the Oak Lawn cultural landscape (natural systems and features, landform and topography, spatial organization, views and vistas, land use, circulation, vegetation, buildings and structures, and small-scale features). It draws from the significance evaluation and period of significance presented in the previous section. The comparative analysis explores change over time within the cultural landscape and identifies features originating during the period of significance that retain integrity (contributing resources), those postdating the period of significance, not associated with one of the significant historic contexts of the property, or that have lost integrity (non-contributing resources), and those that existed during the period of significance but no longer survive (missing features). The assessment of each of the features discussed below is summarized in a table that follows. Figure 131 illustrates the features contributing to the significance of the property.

#### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

*Refer to Table 9: Assessment of Oak Lawn Landscape Features, at the end of this chapter, and the Map of Contributing Features (Figure 131).*

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES

The natural systems and features associated with the Oak Lawn property include native geology, native soils, hydrologic features, and native plant communities. The 5.2-acre property exhibits limited evidence of the underlying native geology in the form of rock outcroppings or the use of native stone as a construction material. Soils on the property do not appear to be as productive as the soils that were on portions of the original property now developed as Fifeville and Buford Middle School. While stormwater flows across the property, as currently configured the 5.2-acre property does not contain evidence of any springs, seeps, or intermittent or perennial streams. Native plant communities present on the property are the result of secondary succession that has occurred where the land has been allowed to return to woody conditions following cultivation and the pasturing of livestock. The successional woodlands on the property, however, are also heavily impacted by invasive plant species, the extent of which has expanded exponentially since



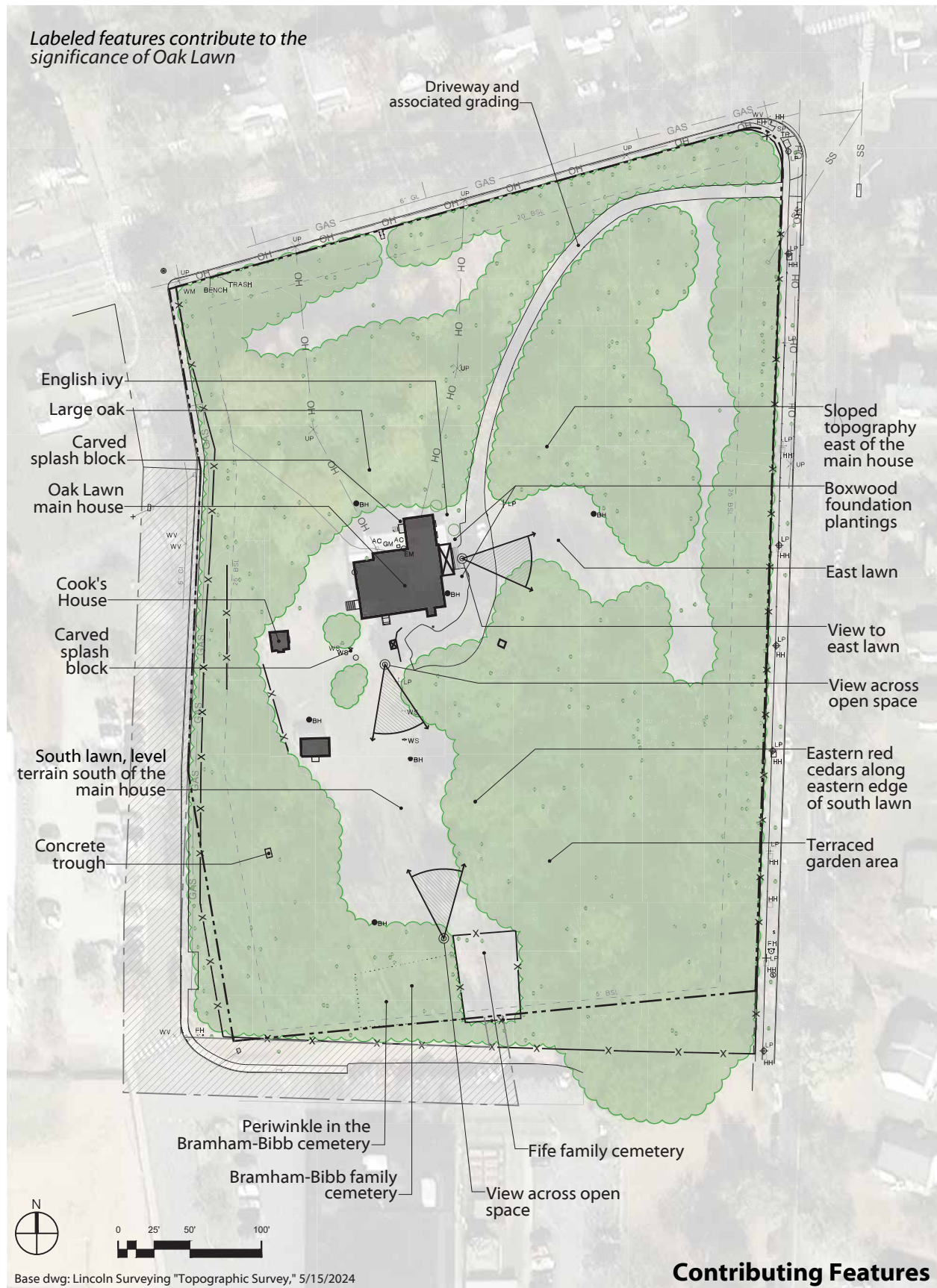


Figure 131. Map of Contributing Features. LSHLA, 2024

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the mid-twentieth century. Despite diminished integrity of natural systems and features, these elements of the property contribute to Oak Lawn as part of the story of its evolution and use as a residential property supported by agricultural pursuits and activities. The extensive colonization of the property by invasive plant species is assessed as non-contributing.

**NATIVE GEOLOGY.** Oak Lawn falls within the Blue Ridge Anticlinorium geological formation, and more specifically within the Lynchburg Group of the Charlottesville Formation. The native geology is not in evidence on the property as there are no rock outcroppings or other examples of bedrock visible aboveground. The underlying geology that served to structure the current arrangement of upland areas, knolls, ridges, and sloped terrain was present in 1822 at the time the main house was constructed, and the property began to serve as the Bramham family plantation. The native geology of the property thus contributes to the historic setting of Oak Lawn.

**NATIVE SOILS.** Underlying geologic formations also led to the development of native soils where bedrock has weathered in place. As noted in the 2023 archaeological survey report, soils mapped within the Oak Lawn property are primarily upland soils characterized as Elioak loam, udorthents, and urban land.. None of these soils are classified as prime farmland.

Within the 5.2-acre parcel, cultivation was generally limited to use of the south lawn to establish a 0.4-acre household kitchen garden in the 1920s and a 0.5-acre area adjacent to Ninth Street SW to grow potatoes in the 1950s. While records also indicate the presence of a kitchen garden on the property in 1865, the location of the garden is not currently known. All other cultivation took place on the larger surrounding property that is now encompassed by Fifeville and Buford Middle School. The native soils present on the property today continue to reflect those present during the period of significance. As such, native soils contribute to the historic setting of Oak Lawn.

**HYDROLOGY.** Hydrologically, there are no springs, wells, or perennial stream corridors on the present-day Oak Lawn property. Springs are known to have existed on the original 394-acre property acquired by Col. Nimrod Bramham, and James Fife's account book in 1856 refers to 4 acres of fields he had sown west of the road leading to the spring, suggesting the presence of at least one spring on the property. The Bramham property originally extended to the branches of Moore's Creek at present-day Cleveland Avenue, suggesting a connection to a water source at one time (see Figure 8). The main house, which was located approximately 2,750 feet north of the drainages, overlooked the lower lying valleys where streams flowed both to the east and west.

The drinking water needs of the Oak Lawn household would have been supported by the digging of a well near the house. This would have served as the primary source through much of the nineteenth century until the City of Charlottesville began to supply water to residents. It is possible that Nimrod Bramham may have considered the availability of well sites when he sited the house originally. The memory map prepared by Frederick Nichols based on Ella Fife's recollections of the property during the nineteenth century (see Figure 12 and Figure 13) includes a well

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located west of the out kitchen. Records indicate that James Fife paid Thomas Farrow, a free black tradesman, for a well pump in 1850. To date, the former well has not been relocated.

**NATIVE VEGETATION.** The Oak Lawn property contains both successional woodland and introduced ornamental vegetation. The majority of the property was farmed at one time and thus cleared of native vegetation except where woodlots may have existed. Woodland trees, shrubs, and saplings present today are representative of post-agricultural secondary succession heavily impacted by non-native and invasive species and past cultural uses and activities. In addition to the native species arising from succession, there are also examples of evergreen plantings added to screen views into and out of the property, and ornamental plantings around the dwelling and in the family cemeteries. These plantings are addressed below under Vegetation.

Tree species observed within the successional woodland include sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), dogwood (*Cornus florida*), American beech (*Fagus americana*), American holly (*Ilex opaca*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), pear (*Prunus* spp.), white oak (*Quercus alba*), scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), Canadian hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and American elm (*Ulmus americana*).

While much of the property was likely cleared for crop cultivation and pasture during the early nineteenth century, records kept by the family indicate the presence of woodland on the property in 1869 when Robert Herndon Fife notes: “The regular hands employed are Bob, Buckner, Jacob Spooner, and Willis Fife. This morning two of them Bob, Jake are laying the fence between the stable and the corner of the woods.”

Little is known about the extent of the wood, although historic photographs show family members visiting the woods circa 1907. The woods appear to contain numerous pine trees suggesting that they are young and growing on former agricultural fields (Figure 132).

As parcels were sold off beginning in the late nineteenth century, and agriculture became less of a focus of the owners, the area around the main house appears to have become increasingly wooded. The first aerial photograph that shows Oak Lawn in 1937 indicates the rural nature of the larger Oak Lawn property in relation to the developed residential neighborhoods north of Cherry Street and east of Ninth Street SW; Oak Lawn is shown as a wooded core, with land to the north and east remaining relatively open (Figure 48). By 1957, the open areas to the north and east had become more wooded (Figure 51). As such, the successional woodland that appears over much of the property has been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES.** There are numerous examples of non-native plant species present on the property that are characterized as invasive. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation defines invasive plants as species intentionally or accidentally introduced by human activity into a region in which they did not evolve and cause harm to natural resources, economic

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Figure 132. Circa 1907 photograph illustrating family members James ("Jamie") Douglas Fife on the left and his younger brother William ("Willie") Fife on the right (with unidentified women), standing in some woods on the property. The woods contain numerous pines, suggesting that it has grown up on former agricultural land. Courtesy of the Fife family.

activity or humans. The Department's Division of Natural Heritage currently identifies ninety invasive plant species that threaten or potentially threaten our natural areas, parks and other protected lands in Virginia. The invasive plants found at Oak Lawn are non-contributing.

Examples found on the Department's list, and their ranking in terms of the level of threat posed (high, medium, and low) to natural communities and native species, include:

- Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) [medium]
- Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) [high]
- Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*) [medium]
- Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) [high]
- Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) [high]
- English ivy (*Hedera helix*) [medium]
- Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) [high]
- Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) [high]
- Mulberry (*Morus alba*) [low]
- Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) [low]
- Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) [medium]



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## TOPOGRAPHY

The Oak Lawn property continues to reflect topographic conditions present at the time it was acquired by Col. Nimrod Bramham in 1818. Bramham chose to site his home and domestic precinct atop the elevated knoll that constitutes a high point on the property, while using the undulating terrain that surrounded the house for crop cultivation, and less productive land for pasture, or as a woodlot to supply fuel and construction materials. Areas that appear to have undergone topographic modification on the property include the driveway, where sloped terrain was graded to establish a relatively level travelway, and an enclave of four garden terraces southeast of the main house.

**LEVEL TERRAIN SOUTH OF THE MAIN HOUSE.** Within the larger 394-acre tract purchased by Nimrod Bramham from Jesse W. Garth in 1818, Bramham elected to build his home on a relatively narrow north-south oriented lobe of high ground overlooking unnamed drainages of Moore's Creek. The house occupies a high point, which would have been desirable for a command of the surrounding landscape and to allow for breezes to reach the house. A broad expanse of relatively level terrain edges the main house to the south. This level area was used to develop a collection of outbuildings supporting the needs of the household as well as some farming operations. The level terrain south of the main house was also used to site both the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery and the Fife family cemetery during the nineteenth century, as well as a large kitchen garden during the early twentieth century (Figure 133). This level terrain has been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**SLOPED TOPOGRAPHY EAST OF THE MAIN HOUSE.** To the east of the level terrace, the land drops away more steeply, affording views from the main house entrance to the east. The area was topographically altered either during the Antebellum period by enslaved labor, or later, by the early twentieth century, when a photograph shows terraces being planted in ornamentals (Figure 38). The sloped topography that descends east of the main house has been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**GRADING ASSOCIATED WITH THE DRIVEWAY.** The driveway that provides access to the main house at the entrance along the eastern façade appears in maps and aerial photographs by the early twentieth century. As it approaches the main house, the driveway extends through a steeply sloped section. The grade of the slope to the northwest of the driveway has clearly been graded to establish the relatively level road corridor (Figure 133). Aerial and ground photographs from the 1930s show the current alignment of the driveway and the appearance of the grading on the uphill side (see Figure 44 and Figure 48). The graded slope along the northwest side of the driveway has been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**TERRACED GARDENS.** Located to the east of the level lawn south of the Oak Lawn dwelling, a portion of the declining terrain has been graded to form four terraced garden spaces oriented north-south and separated by sloped banks (Figure 133). The terraces are heavily presently

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*Figure 133. A LiDAR survey of the property shows the topographic modifications of the graded driveway and terraced gardens.*

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overgrown with English ivy and often difficult to discern. The date of origin of the terraces is not currently known. However, it is likely that they were built using enslaved labor prior to emancipation. The terraced gardens appear in a historic photograph from the early twentieth century planted in ornamentals (Figure 38). The terraced gardens have been present since the period of significance and contribute to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**MISSING TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES.** A LiDAR survey of the property (Figure 133) appears to show a section of a former road and part of the driveway in the northwest corner of the property that is missing today. It is possible that the missing road was an internal lane on the Oak Lawn property associated with outbuildings or fields.

## SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Spatial organization on the Oak Lawn property includes a dwelling precinct, composed of the main house set in a clearing edged by mature shade trees to the north and the Cook's House to the south; the driveway corridor, which is a linear space that cuts through the wooded area that characterizes the northern portion of the property; open lawns to the east and south of the main house, both of which are edged by successional woodlands; and the rectangular reservations associated with the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries. These patterns of spatial organization are relics of a more expansive developed core and a once larger agricultural property. The integrity of setting has been impacted by the development of much of the original 394-acre parcel to accommodate travel and transportation corridors, residential neighborhood development, and a city school, altering in particular views from the main house and other parts of the property. The main house, which sits generally near the east-central portion of the property, formerly commanded agrarian views to the east and northeast. Until the 1880s, the dwelling precinct was also edged to the north and west by fields and pasture until development of residential lots that became the neighborhood referred to as Fifeville (Figure 8). Agricultural uses continued on the remaining open land to the west until the 1960s when Buford Middle School was constructed. Changes along the perimeter of the property led to the planting of evergreen trees and construction of privacy fencing along the east and west boundaries.

**DWELLING PRECINCT.** The dwelling precinct dates to circa 1822 with the construction of the main house. The house, which occupied the high point of a relatively level knoll, was approached via a driveway from the northeast that extended to the north and west of the house, and later to its east. Historic accounts and maps illustrate that the house itself was encircled by oak trees (Figure 18 and Figure 20) and edged to the south and southwest by outbuildings that supported household and agricultural uses as shown on the map prepared by Frederick Nichols based on Ella Fife's recollections of the property during the nineteenth century (Figure 12). The sketch, prepared in the 1970s, shows a rectangular out kitchen oriented east-west and a well to the west of the main house. Further south was a long shed, also oriented east-west, indicated as containing a

## OAK LAWN

smokehouse, privy, and shelter for chickens and roosters. Southwest of the primary residence were two large agricultural buildings, a large stable, and a large log barn. The stable contained a room for carriages as well as stalls for horses, and a room for fodder. The barn contained stalls for horses and cows, and two shed additions, one for pigs. West of the primary residence and Cook's House was an ice house, two small log houses 'on stilts,' one a corn granary, and a second for machinery. A single structure located northeast of the residence and west of a farm lane and sited at an unusual angle relative to other structures, was a 'quarters for 19 slaves.'<sup>238</sup> A geo-referenced version of Nichols's map (Figure 13) suggests that the quarters, ice house, machinery and corn and wheat sheds, log barn, shed with stalls, pig shed, and pig trough were located on land currently occupied by Buford Middle School, while the stable, Cook's House, well, out kitchen, and shed with chicken coop were located on the present-day Oak Lawn property.

Although not shown on the Nichols map, fencing appears in historic photographs as a component of the spatial organization of the dwelling precinct, used to separate the outbuilding complex from fields and pasture to the west. Fencing also appears to have enclosed the Fife family cemetery that has since been replaced with a contemporary fence.

A circa 1940 oblique aerial photograph of Charlottesville (Figure 49) shows the Oak Lawn property from the west looking east. The photograph shows the primary residence with western kitchen addition and southern porch, the white-painted brick Cook's House, as well as several agricultural-related outbuildings located along what is now the western boundary of Oak Lawn. Immediately south of the Oak Lawn residence, and between it and the Fife and Bramham-Bibb family cemeteries appears a large, plowed field, or garden. At least four outbuildings appear to be present that include, from north to south, 1) a frame structure immediately west of the brick Cook's House, 2) a small, white-painted structure; 3) a large frame building, possibly a stable or barn; and 4) a large frame building, also possibly a stable or barn.

Today, the dwelling precinct continues to reflect some aspects of historic spatial conditions such as the siting of the house on a high point, edged to the north by mature shade trees, and approached by the driveway, with the Cook's House and open lawn to the south. As such, it contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**DRIVEWAY CORRIDOR.** The driveway corridor extends from the northeast corner of the property along Ninth Street SW near its intersection with Cherry Avenue to the east of the main house, terminating in a parking area south of the building. The driveway initially passes through the chain link fencing that marks the eastern property boundary before entering a wooded area. Breaks in the woods are visible to the south as mown turf corridors. The driveway corridor continues through the deep shade of the woods north of the main house before entering the open space of the east lawn. After passing the house, the driveway corridor continues to a parking area at the edge of the south lawn.

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238. "Plat of Buildings Originally at Oak Lawn." In Frederick D. Nichols, "Oak Lawn," n.d. [Pre-1973]. Material collected by Frederick D. Nichols.



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Drawings dated 1888 (Figures 19-22) show the driveway similarly entering the property from Ninth Street SW. Instead of passing to the east of the house, the driveway ends on the north side of the building. A light pencil line, however, shows an extension to the east of the building that also appears on a 1907 drawing (Figure 26). The 1907 drawing suggests that the driveway continued at the time around the west side of the house and behind the Cook's House toward the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. Ground photographs from the 1930s show the current alignment of the driveway corridor and the appearance of the grading on the uphill side similar to that present today (Figure 45). The driveway corridor thus contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**EAST LAWN.** The east lawn is a small clearing in the generally wooded area between Ninth Street SW and the driveway. The east lawn, semi-circular in form, is maintained in mown turf and framed by ornamental trees and larger deciduous shade trees. Set within the east lawn is a lamp post and a remnant wooden stair. The east lawn is axially tied to the main house entrance. Although the east lawn has taken on a more enclosed feeling since screen plantings were added along Ninth Street SW, it appears on the 1937 aerial (Figure 48). The east lawn contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**SOUTH LAWN.** The south lawn is a relatively large, rectangular, open space set between the main house and the family cemeteries. The Cook's House and prefabricated shed edge the space to the west. Row of trees, including several eastern red cedars, edge the space to the east. A grove of deciduous trees that overhangs the family cemeteries edge the south lawn to the south. Privacy fencing and successional woodlands frame the space to the west. Based on the Nichols drawing, buildings once sat within this space. Many of the buildings were likely gone by the 1930s when a large part of the south lawn was used as a vegetable garden. The 1937 aerial photograph (Figure 48) and the 1940 oblique aerial (Figure 49) suggests a similar configuration of open space to the south of the house with a row of trees to the east. The kitchen garden appears to encompass much of the space in the 1937 aerial photograph. The south lawn contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**BRAMHAM-BIBB FAMILY CEMETERY.** Located south of the south lawn, the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery occupies a space near the property's present-day southern boundary. The Fife family cemetery is directly to the east of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. The cemetery contains twelve marked burials; grave markers vary, and include head- and footstones, vaults, fieldstones, and an obelisk. The cemetery was noted as reserved from the sale of the property from the Bramhams to Rev. James Fife in 1847. The reservation was noted as 60 by 120 feet in size. The area that currently contains graves is much smaller than the reservation included in the deed of sale. It is believed that the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery was established circa 1834 following the death of Dr. Horace W. Bramham who is buried there. An 1874 description of the property by James Alexander noted the fact that the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery was enclosed at the time; the cemetery is not contained by a fence today. The character of the burial ground has likely become increasingly wooded over time. Although no longer enclosed with fencing, the grave markers,

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*Figure 134. View toward the two family cemeteries with trees and ornamental shrub plantings nearby, circa early twentieth century. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 135. The former Fife family cemetery fence and gate, circa early twentieth century. The fencing is strings of barbwire, likely to restrict access by cows and horses. A large shrub arches over the gate. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

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arranged into rows, help to define the space. The Bramham-Bibb family cemetery contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**FIFE FAMILY CEMETERY.** Located adjacent to the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery is the Fife family cemetery. The cemetery post-dates Fife family acquisition of the property in 1847 but was likely established by circa 1870, the year of the first burial. Several generations of the family are buried in the cemetery. Historic family photographs appear to show the presence of open turf dotted with trees and ornamental shrubs around both the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries during the early twentieth century (Figure 134), as well the presence of an enclosing post and wire fence likely used to exclude livestock. A central pedestrian entrance, composed of an arched trellis covered in vines and a wood or iron picket gate, was present to the north of the cemetery (Figure 135). The historic fence has been replaced with a contemporary metal picket fence that dates to the late twentieth century. The burial ground has also become more wooded over time. Despite the addition of the contemporary fence and shade trees, the Fife family cemetery contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**MISSING SPATIAL ORGANIZATION.** As noted, the integrity of setting of Oak Lawn today is impacted by the reduction of the property over time from approximately 394 acres to 5.2 acres. The agrarian landscape of the larger property that contained cultivated fields and pastures has been replaced with residential subdivisions, a public school, and commercial development. Family photographs illustrate the expansive views once afforded from the dwelling precinct of pastoral open space (Figure 136 and Figure 137).

## VIEWS AND VISTAS

The Oak Lawn property as currently configured contains few examples of views and vistas into or out of the property. Views approximating those present during the period of significance include the view east from the porch toward the east lawn and a reciprocal view between the main house and the family cemeteries. The construction of Buford Middle School impacted the views from the south lawn due to the proximity of the school building and associated parking to the property. Missing are the expansive views that once extended east across the declining topography and north and west across cultivated fields and pasture. Today, views toward the surrounding streets and properties are limited due to the addition of privacy fencing and screen plantings of evergreen trees along Ninth Street SW and the western edge of the south lawn.

**VIEW EAST FROM THE FRONT PORCH.** The east lawn affords opportunities to view a clearing from the front porch of the house. This view contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.



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*Figure 136. Views of cows in former fields near the dwelling precinct showing fencing and an Oak Lawn building in the background. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*



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*Figure 137. A large expanse of field potentially in the “back yard” (west) of Oak Lawn, circa early twentieth century. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*



*Figure 138. Undated photograph of one of the historic outbuildings, no longer extant, likely the smokehouse/privy/rooster and chicken coop. Views beyond the building are of open farmland where Buford Middle School is located today. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

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**VIEWS ACROSS THE OPEN SPACE SOUTH OF THE HOUSE.** The south lawn affords opportunities for viewing a large expanse of open space from the environs of the main house and Cook's House, while also allowing for views towards the main house from the family cemeteries. This view contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**VIEWS TOWARDS THE MAIN HOUSE FROM CHERRY AVENUE.** From Cherry Avenue, particularly near the intersection with Tenth Street SW and where breaks in the dense vegetation and topography allow, there are periodic opportunities to glimpse the main house. These views contribute to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**RECIPROCAL VIEWS BETWEEN OAK LAWN AND BUFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL.** From the margins of the property views are also afforded through or over the chain link fence toward Buford Middle School and associated parking facilities. From the Buford School property, glimpses of the family cemeteries, the south lawn, the main house, Cook's House, and shed are also afforded. The privacy fencing west of the Cook's House limits these reciprocal views in specific locations. These views postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**MISSING VIEWS.** Missing today are the expansive views once afforded east toward the city of Charlottesville from the domestic precinct due to the declining topography and to the west across the large expanse of cultivated fields and pasture. The views to the east and north began to change in 1888 as portions of the Oak Lawn property were developed as residential areas. Expansive views toward open farm land remained in evidence until the construction of Buford School in 1964 (Figure 138).

## LAND USE

The Oak Lawn property is currently unoccupied and does not serve a particular use, although this is expected to change. The only land use currently associated with the property is burial, which is associated with the two family cemeteries. Historically Oak Lawn also served residential and agricultural uses. Both of these land uses are missing from the property today.

**BURIAL.** The Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries have been present on the Oak Lawn property since the early to mid-nineteenth century. The sale of the property to Reverend James Fife in 1847 excepted from the sale a 60- by 210-foot family burying ground. Similarly, the Fife family cemetery remains accessible to the Fife family through the provision of a perpetual easement established in 2017.

**MISSING LAND USES.** Residential land uses associated with Oak Lawn are believed to have begun on the property with the construction of the main house circa 1822. The house appears to have been continuously occupied as a residence until the property was sold to the University of Virginia

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in 2023. Although the property does not currently support residential use, the house remains standing and residential uses could be reintroduced in the future.

During the antebellum period, both the Bramham and Fife families owned enslaved persons who also lived on the property in several modest quarters or cabins. Many of the cabins are recorded as being removed in 1869. Some of the quarters may have continued to house formerly enslaved persons or hired hands who worked for wages as farm hands and in other positions for the Fifes following emancipation. With the possible exception of the Cook's House, for which a definitive date of origin has not been determined, none of the quarters survives on the property today. Historic photographs from the early twentieth century appear to indicate modest dwellings continued to be located to the south of the Cook's House at the time (Figure 30).

Agriculture was an important land use associated with Oak Lawn that continued until at least the 1930s. Although much of the agriculture occurred beyond the present-day 5.2-acre parcel, farming of fields nearby impacted the dwelling precinct and the present-day property through the presence of outbuildings and fencing related to livestock and other features. Although much of the cultivation had ended by the 1940s and 1950s, the Fifes continued to own and pasture horses, which were kept in a barn near the house.

Although primarily known as a merchant, Nimrod Bramham was also a planter who farmed the land he owned. Like many of his wealthy peers, Bramham relied upon agricultural production as a source of income. Bramham was a founding member of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle along with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and other notable residents of the region. He also served as the treasurer for the organization, which was dedicated to agricultural reform and published the *American Farmer*. The Albemarle Agricultural Society had a significant impact on agricultural practices in the Commonwealth.<sup>239</sup> Agricultural production at Oak Lawn could not have taken place without the labor of enslaved African Americans. Federal census records indicate that in 1830 Bramham owned twenty-seven enslaved individuals. By 1840, when Bramham would have been in his 70s, he owned nineteen enslaved individuals, with six recorded as 'employed in agriculture.'<sup>240</sup> An inventory and appraisal of the Nimrod Bramham estate in 1845 documents the presence of farming implements used in both tobacco and grain production. Bramham also held a large number of livestock on the property in support of the plantation.

James Fife was also engaged in agriculture after acquiring the property in 1847. In 1851, he is recorded as having 113 acres under cultivation. Like Bramham, Fife relied on enslaved labor to manage the farm. Like Bramham, Fife was also involved in scientific agriculture and authored several articles for the *Southern Planter* and other agricultural periodicals between the 1840s and 1870s. He was a great proponent of the use of fertilizer to obtain the most productive yields from his fields, experimenting with different options on his fields. Agricultural use of the property

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239. Rodney H. True, "Early Days of the Albemarle Agricultural Society," 246–247. Agricultural History Society Papers, Vol. 1 (1921): 243–259; G. Harold Williams, "Agricultural Society of Albemarle County, Virginia," iii–iv. Master of Arts Thesis, 1965, University of Richmond.

240. Fourth U.S. Census, 1820. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; Fifth U.S. Census, 1830. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia; Sixth U.S. Census, 1840. Population Statistics, Albemarle County, Virginia.

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*Figure 139. Chickens, ducks, and cows at Oak Lawn. Chickens, ducks, and cows were part of the agricultural legacy no longer in evidence at Oak Lawn. Pictured in the photograph of the cows is Shirley Harlow who was probably a neighbor. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*



*Figure 140. Oak Lawn was also used to grow a variety of crops, in addition to fruits and vegetables for home consumption. This photograph illustrates a strawberry bed once on the property with Katherine Fife, wife of James Fife, and Willie Fife picking fruit. Courtesy of the Fife Family.*



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continued after the Civil War. To operate the farm, Fife hired some formerly enslaved individuals as hired hands, in addition to other laborers. After his death in 1876 the property remained in agricultural production, but slowly declined in productivity, including after 1888 as parcels began to be sold off for residential lots. During the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, dairy and poultry products gained increased economic significance for local farmers, resulting in the raising of chickens, ducks, and dairy cows (Figure 139). Later fruit and truck farming became more lucrative, and fields were planted in a variety of products (Figure 140). By the 1920s and 1930s, the Fifes were leasing their land for grazing rights.

Fife is known to have supported the Confederate cause through contributions of agricultural products. In April of 1863, the Confederate government passed a tax-in-kind law that required farmers to donate 10 percent of their crops to support the war effort, after reserving for themselves a supply of wheat, corn and potatoes. In December of 1863, James Fife was given a receipt for the crops from Oak Lawn that he turned over to the Confederate States that notes Fife delivered “100 bushels of corn, 500 pounds of hay, 400 bounds of blade fodder 800 pounds of top fodder 400 pounds of shucks, and 600 pounds of straw” to R. F. Mason, agent for the Confederate government in Charlottesville.<sup>241</sup> Although most of the residents of Charlottesville and Albemarle County were Confederate supporters, it was likely due to the enforcement of the tax that led the Fifes to contribute the requisite percentage of their agricultural production to the cause.

## CIRCULATION

Circulation features on the Oak Lawn property are limited. Vehicular circulation includes the driveway and associated parking, while pedestrian circulation includes a flagstone path at the end of the driveway and two social paths. When the property was larger and operated as a plantation and farm there were additional internal farm roads that are no longer in existence today. Missing within the 5.2-acre Oak Lawn property today is a portion of the original driveway that led to the north side of the house, before continuing around the main house and Cook’s House to the west toward the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. A farm road also appears to have led across the northwestern portion of the current property toward the fields west of the main house.

**DRIVEWAY.** The driveway associated with Oak Lawn is an asphalt paved road corridor that measures 8 feet 6 inches in width. The narrow corridor is edged by mown turf and woodland. The driveway appears on 1888 plats and maps entering the property from the northeast corner of the parcel as it continues to do today (Figures 19-22). As shown on the 1888 plats, the driveway formerly extended north of the house; the current alignment is penciled in and appears to have been a secondary route that extended off the main driveway to the east of the house. A 1907

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241. University of North Carolina, “Tax and Assessment Acts, Confederate States of America,” *Documenting the American South*, [www.docsouth.unc.edu/imlss/taxasses/taxasses.html](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/imlss/taxasses/taxasses.html), accessed June 24, 2024; Papers of the Fife Family, Mss 5943, Box 5, James Fife Receipts, 1863.

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*Figure 141. View towards the porch of the main house with a car parked in front. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

map also shows the road continuing around the main house toward the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery (Figure 26). The driveway leading to the eastern façade of the house appears in ground photographs as a more primary route by the 1920s and 1930s. Several family photographs indicate that cars parked in front of the house during this time (Figure 141). The driveway as it exists today was paved with asphalt circa 2015. The driveway survives with diminished integrity of materials and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**PARKING.** The driveway terminates south of the house in a wide asphalt-paved landing large enough to accommodate three cars. The parking area cannot specifically be discerned in historic ground and aerial photographs, although one image dated 1971 shows a car parked to the south of the main house (Figure 61). The existing parking area is believed to have been added by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien after their acquisition of the property in the late 1990s. It postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

**STEPPING STONE PATH THROUGH THE ARBOR.** A wooden arbor edges the parking area at the end of the driveway. It connects the driveway with the rear yard via a path composed of flagstone stepping stones. The arbor and path are believed to have been added by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien after their acquisition of the property in the late 1990s. The path postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

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**CONCRETE STAIR AT CHERRY AVENUE.** A concrete stair leads into the Oak Lawn property from the sidewalk along the south side of Cherry Avenue. The stair measures 2 feet 8 inches in width. There are five risers, 6-1/2 inches in height, set between the 1-foot-wide treads. A handrail rises 2 feet 11 inches in height along the west side of the stair that is 5 feet 1 inch in length. The date of origin of the stair is currently undetermined. It appears to postdate the period of significance, however, and is non-contributing.

**SOCIAL TRAIL NEAR CHERRY AVENUE.** Visible from the concrete stair at Cherry Avenue is a narrow hard-packed earth social trail that extends toward the rear of the main house. It formed following the addition of the concrete stair. As such, it is non-contributing.

**SOCIAL TRAIL NEAR THE FIFE FAMILY CEMETERY.** Just visible within the open wooded grove along the eastern margin of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery is a social trail that leads around the outside of the metal fence surrounding the Fife family cemetery to a gate in the southern side. The social trail appears to have formed since the metal picket fence was built circa 1990s. As such, it is non-contributing.

**ADJACENT CIRCULATION FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH OAK LAWN.** Some of the property divisions that led to the decrease in the size of the original Oak Lawn property and occurred beyond the present-day parcel related to circulation routes. These included railroad lines as well as Cherry Avenue and Ninth Street SW.

In 1860, the Orange and Alexandria Railroad passed through the northern portion of James Fife's lands following condemnation of 6.5 acres of Oak Lawn by court commissioners between 1856 and 1857. When portions of Oak Lawn to the north and east of the present-day parcel were platted for development in 1888 to allow the Fife family to pay off debts, maps of then property show a road to the east referred to as Mansion Road. This road, built on former Oak Lawn property, eventually became known as Ninth Street SW. Cherry Avenue was similarly established after May 1890 when the court ruled that a street "or road way [be opened] through the lands of James Fife's estate toward and in the direction of Frys Spring."<sup>242</sup> Also adjacent to the present-day 5.2-acre Oak Lawn property is the formal entrance road into Buford Middle School. The road follows the city's right-of-way for Tenth Street SW that parallels Oak Lawn's western boundary. It was built with Buford School in the mid-1960s. A narrow strip of Oak Lawn property was sold to the City of Charlottesville in 1976 to address a proposal to widen Ninth Street SW.

In 2015, a 40-foot-wide cemetery access easement was surveyed along the Buford Middle School entrance drive adjacent to the western and southern boundaries of Oak Lawn. The easement was formalized in 2017, establishing a perpetual 40-foot easement of right-of-way for the family to access the Fife family cemetery for future burials and family visitation. The Fife family was required to "install and maintain, at its own expense, a gate with a lock in the existing

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242. ACChO 16 (1888–1890):568.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 142. Sallie Fife in front of a large oak tree near the house, circa early 1900s. The photograph also shows English ivy growing on the walls of the house. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

chain link fence that separates the Buford Middle School property and the family cemetery.”<sup>243</sup> The gate is present today.

**MISSING CIRCULATION FEATURES.** A circa 1940 oblique aerial photograph of Charlottesville shows the Oak Lawn property from the west looking east. The photograph clearly shows the primary residence with western kitchen addition and southern porch, the white-painted brick Cook’s House, as well as several agricultural-related outbuildings located along what is now the western boundary of Oak Lawn. The photograph also shows an informal north-south oriented road connected to Cherry Avenue that leads to a cluster of agricultural structures. This road, located on the present-day Buford Middle School property, is no longer extant. The earlier driveway that formerly approached the house from the north is also missing today.

## VEGETATION

Vegetation features on the Oak Lawn property include examples of ornamental and cultivated plantings added by the former residents. Some of the older trees may date to the Bramham period of ownership, but most likely date to the Fife period. Family photographs dating to the early to mid-twentieth century show more extensive examples of flower gardens and ornamental plantings than are present today in the vicinity of the house and dwelling precinct as well as the cemeteries. Boxwood plantings like those present today appear around the eastern and southern foundations of the house in family photographs as early as 1907. Another ornamental planting on the property is periwinkle, which appears in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery today. It is described as

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243. CCDB 2017:3469, July 12, 2017.



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*Figure 143. (Above left) View of Oak Lawn circa 1930s showing small boxwoods and ivy present as foundation plantings. Missing today are a small tree adjacent to the left side of the porch and a larger tree in the foreground of the photo.*

*(Center left) The principal façade in 1940 with boxwood plantings around the foundation.*

*(Lower left) By 1964, the tree to the left of the porch had been lost, while the other plantings remained similar. A bed of daffodils appears to the left in the photo. All images courtesy of the Fife family.*

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*Figure 144. View towards the porch of the main house with English ivy growing on the walls of the house. Pictured are Doug Fife, Anne Freudenberg, and Francis Fife. Anne is the daughter of Ella Fife. The boys are her first cousins. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

present in the cemetery by 1874. Other ornamental plantings present today were added by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien after they acquired the property in the late 1990s.

**OAK GROVE.** Oak Lawn continues to feature large oak trees in the vicinity of the main house, although it is unlikely that these trees date to the early nineteenth century. The trees, however, help to recall why Oak Lawn was originally named Oak Grove. In 1867, James and Margaret's oldest son Robert Herndon Fife married Sarah Ann Graves Strickler who recorded her impressions of Oak Lawn soon after their marriage "I must tell you about my new home—it is very sweet, the trees around it are oak & it reminds me of an English residence."<sup>244</sup> Drawings dating to the late nineteenth century (Figure 18 and Figure 20) and early twentieth century (Figure 26) show the house surrounded by trees that are likely oaks. Several large oaks appear to have continued to frame the house well into the twentieth century based on review of historic family photographs (Figure 142), although the presence of stumps today around the building suggests that many have since been lost. At least one surviving mature oak tree north of the main house (Figure 105) appears to have been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**TURF LAWN.** Oak Lawn features expanses of turf lawn set within the generally wooded property. A large span of turf lawn is south of the main house, while a smaller one is east of the front porch. To the south of the driveway are clearings in the woods that are maintained in mown turf. Historic family photographs suggest a greater extent of turf lawn within the dwelling precinct during the early twentieth century (Figure 143). Turf lawn continues to characterize the dwelling precinct today, although the area maintained in turf is diminished in size. Turf has been present since the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

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244. *Diary of Sara Ann Graves Strickler Fife, 1861–1902*. Mss 5633. Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; Anne Freudenberg, "Oak Lawn," Material Collected by Anne Freudenberg, n.d., n.p.

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**BOXWOOD FOUNDATION PLANTINGS.** Several large American boxwoods (*Buxus sempervirens*) are located to either side of the front porch and around the southeastern corner of the main house. Several historic photographs of Oak Lawn illustrate the presence of boxwood edging the principal façade of the main house beginning in the 1930s (Figure 143). The shrubs, however, are much smaller than those present today. Boxwood continues to be present along the principal façade and at the southeast corner of the building today and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**OTHER FOUNDATION PLANTINGS.** Also located along the foundation of the main house in front of the southwest addition are planting beds that contain rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) shrubs, trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*) vines, and lavender (*Lavandula* sp.) plants. These plantings were added following completion of the southwest addition in 1998. As such, they postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**ARBOR ORNAMENTAL PLANTINGS.** The arbor at the end of the driveway is planted with vines and garden ornamentals. The vines and climbing plantings include wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), roses (*Rosa* sp.), trumpet creeper, and grape (*Vitis* sp.). The plantings at the base of the arbor and adjacent fence include artemisia (*Artemisia* sp.), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), lavender, coreopsis (*Coreopsis* sp.), and caryopteris (*Caryopteris* sp.) Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien added these plantings after acquiring the property in 1998. As such, they postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**OTHER ORNAMENTAL PLANTINGS.** Ornamental plantings are found in limited locations along the driveway, near the house, and near the family cemeteries. Species of ornamental plantings observed during field investigations conducted in 2024 include azaleas (*Rhododendron* sp.), flowering cherry (*Prunus* sp.), privet, elaeagnus (*Elaeagnus* sp.), daffodils (*Narcissus* sp.), liriope (*Liriope* sp.), pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*), and peony (*Paeonia* sp.). The dates of origin of these plantings have not been determined.

**ENGLISH IVY.** English ivy is pervasive throughout the property as an escaped ornamental planting that has spread and colonized much of the woodland area, including the landscape along the driveway, in the northwest corner of the property, and over the sloped terrain southeast of the house including the terraced gardens. Several family photographs record English ivy growing over much of the brick exterior of the house during the first three decades of the twentieth century (Figure 142 and Figure 144). Although the ivy was later removed from the walls of the main house, it continued to be planted along the driveway to the north of the house. It is likely that the ivy that was planted near the house has spread over much of the property and should be considered invasive everywhere except near the main house. The use of ivy near the house is contributing, while elsewhere it is non-contributing.

**CEMETERY PLANTINGS.** Within the area that contains the two family cemeteries there are several relatively large deciduous shade trees. Historic photographs indicate that the cemeteries were once much more open. The existing trees, which include hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) and black

## OAK LAWN

walnut (*Juglans nigra*), are likely volunteers and not purposefully planted. Both cemeteries also feature ornamental plantings as ground covers. Hosta (*Hosta* sp.) is present within the Fife family cemetery while periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) is present within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. Periwinkle is described as present within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery. As such, it is contributing. The date of origin of the hosta plantings in the Fife family cemetery has not been determined, but they are likely later additions and non-contributing.

**ROW OF TREES ALONG THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE SOUTH LAWN.** Several mature trees edge the south lawn to the east. Several of these trees, the eastern red cedars, appear to be similar in age and may have been planted. They appear to date to the period of significance and are contributing.

**SCREEN PLANTINGS.** As noted previously, the property boundary along Ninth Street SW was planted with white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) trees to screen views of the road from the house and into Oak Lawn from the road. Based on review of aerial photographs, these trees were planted after the 1980s. As such, they postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**PRIVET.** A large privet shrub is located to the southwest of the main house. Privet is also found colonizing areas of the successional woodlands around the house. Another engulfs a copper yard hydrant near the Cook's House. A privet hedge also edges the property boundary at Cherry Avenue. Like English ivy, privet is an invasive species that has likely spread and colonized areas where it was not originally planted. As such, it is non-contributing.

**MISSING VEGETATION.** Additional historic family photographs record ornamental plantings no longer present at Oak Lawn. These include large boxwood located near the family cemeteries and flower gardens. A photograph of the boxwood with Francis Fife in the foreground may show one of the eastern red cedar trees beyond (Figure 145). Another group of photographs illustrates the presence of a flower garden on the descending terraces east of the south lawn and within the rear yard near the main house (Figure 39). Flowers visible in the gardens appear to include roses, iris, and foxgloves. Another photograph of a flower garden shows a picket fence beyond (Figure 146).

## BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

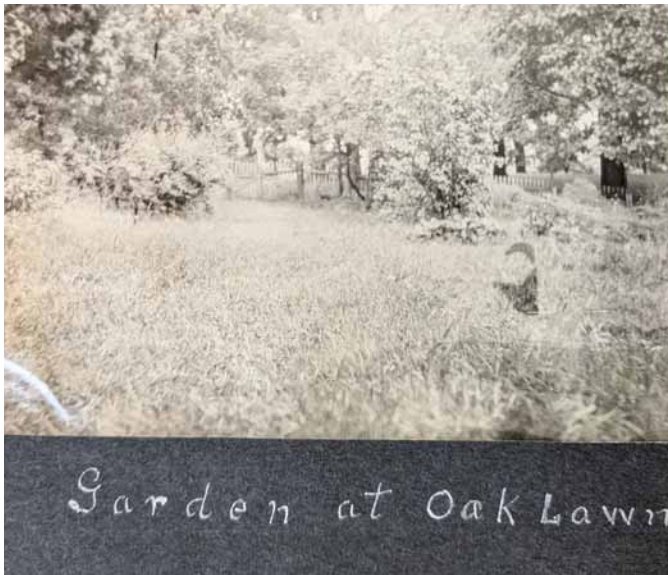
The Oak Lawn property features two historic buildings—the main house and the Cook's House—and one contemporary building—a prefabricated storage shed. Documentary records, sketches, and photographs illustrate that there were numerous additional dwellings and outbuildings present at Oak Lawn after 1822 that are no longer extant today. Some of these were located on the current 5.2-acre property, while others were located on parcels that have been developed, particularly the land to the west used to build Buford Middle School. While the buildings that were located on the current Oak Lawn property may be represented in the archaeological record,



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*Figure 145. (Above)  
View of Francis Fife  
standing in front of a  
large boxwood with  
an eastern red cedar  
beyond near the family  
cemetery. Courtesy of  
the Fife family.*



*Figure 146. (Left)  
View of a garden  
at Oak Lawn in  
an undetermined  
location. Courtesy of  
the Fife family.*

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they have not as yet been located, while evidence of those located on other parcels has likely been destroyed or compromised.

There are also two features classified as structures on the Oak Lawn property. One is a wooden stair that once provided access to the south porch of the house, while the other is a contemporary arbor.

## BUILDINGS

**OAK LAWN MAIN HOUSE.** See the Historic Structure section of this report.

**COOK'S HOUSE.** See the Historic Structure report section of this report.

**SHED.** Located to the south of the Cook's House is a prefabricated storage shed. The single-story, gable-roofed building is clad with T-111 siding painted a dark gray-blue. The low-pitched gable roof has asphalt shingles. The building has a double door opening in the south façade accessed by a wood ramp. A window is in the left side of the south façade. The building measures 12 feet 2-1/2 inches in depth by 19 feet 8 inches in width across the principal façade. The double door measure 7 feet 6 inches by 12 feet 7 ½ inches. The ramp is the same width as the doors. A spotlight is attached to the roofline of the building. Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien added the shed to the property to store garden tools after moving to Oak Lawn in the late 1990s. The shed postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

**MISSING BUILDINGS.** Associated with the larger property were several outbuildings, many of which were located on the land now occupied by Buford Middle School. Buildings that would have supported the household and farming activities included quarters for enslaved workers during the antebellum period, barns for the livestock and to store feed, stables for horses, privies, smokehouses, icehouses, and chicken houses. As noted above, the buildings that appear to have been located on the present-day 5.2-acre parcel based on a geo-referenced version of the Nichols map with a contemporary aerial photograph that shows the extent of the Buford Middle School development (Figure 13), buildings missing today on the property include a well, kitchen, shed with coop, and stable. Buildings that were likely located along present-day Tenth Street SW include the quarters for enslaved workers and an ice house, while further west were a machinery shed, a corn and wheat shed, a shed with stalls, a log barn, a pig shed, and a pig trough. Historic photographs illustrate the character of some of these buildings (see Figure 147 and Figure 148 for examples).

Records regarding specific outbuildings remain somewhat inconclusive for the Antebellum period. As noted previously, little is known about outbuildings at Oak Grove built by Nimrod Bramham. Tax records from 1840 suggest that a new outbuilding or an addition was built on the house at that time. At the time of Bramham's death in 1845 an inventory of the property identified three outbuildings by name: at least two stables, one described as 'nearest' but also implying a

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 147. (Above) View of a wood frame outbuilding at Oak Lawn surrounded by oak trees with Doug Fife pictured, circa late 1930s. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 148. (Left) View of what looks like the Cook's House on the right with post and rail fencing to the left of the building. Pictured are Robert Herndon Fife and his grandson, Robert ("Bob") Herndon Fife III, son of James Douglas Fife, circa 1917. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN

second ‘farther’ stable, both presumably where livestock were housed and fed; and at least one barn, likely where grain and other agricultural products may have been processed and stored.<sup>245</sup>

The next records of interest are the account books of James Fife from 1851 that suggest the presence of a stable, a machine shed and barn, a smokehouse, and a kitchen building. Although not noted in documents earlier, one record from 1869 notes that an individual named Burton was hired to tear down the “old cabins,” which presumably were the quarters used to house enslaved workers prior to Emancipation. Another record from 1873 discusses the loss of a barn to fire, believed to have been arson. An inventory of the Oak Lawn property prepared in 1877 following the death of James Fife notes only the presence of a granary on the property other than the main house.

At some time around the turn of the twentieth century, a pre-emancipation brick kitchen located immediately south of the Oak Lawn residence was demolished and a new brick kitchen constructed adjacent to and abutting the western façade of the dining room. Various references to the ‘old’ kitchen notes that it was a functioning structure as late as 1896. However, sometime in her youth, Ella K. Fife recalled witnessing that a “wall of the kitchen fell in,” a structural failure that likely led to the loss of the pre-emancipation building.

An oblique aerial photograph dating to the second quarter of the twentieth century (circa 1940) shows the Oak Lawn property from the west looking east (Figure 49). The photograph shows the primary residence with western kitchen addition and southern porch, the white-painted brick Cook’s House, as well as several agricultural-related outbuildings located along the present-day western boundary of Oak Lawn. Immediately south of the Oak Lawn main house, between it and the Fife and Bramham-Bibb family cemeteries, was a large, plowed field, or garden. At least four outbuildings appear to be present along the space (from north to south), 1) a frame structure immediately west of the brick ‘cook’s house,’ 2) a small, white-painted structure; 3) a large frame building, possibly a stable or barn; and 4) a large frame building, also possibly a stable or barn.

A 1966 aerial photograph of Oak Lawn (Figure 52) documents the completion of the new Buford Junior High School facilities. The same image shows the Oak Lawn main house, and the northernmost of two large stables or barns first identified in a 1940 aerial photograph. As a result of the construction of the school and a new access road along the Tenth Street SW right-of-way, several outbuildings were demolished. By the time a 1980s aerial photograph was taken (Figure 65) the large stables or barn is also no longer extant, suggesting its demolition.

## STRUCTURES

The two structures present on the property today appear to be contemporary additions or features that have lost integrity. These include the arbor at the end of the driveway, which appears to be late twentieth century in origin, and the wooden stair, as noted above, may have been salvaged from

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245. “An Inventory & Appraisement of the Estate of Col. Nimrod Bramham, dec’d made on the 28th of August 1845.” ACWB 19:90, August 4, 1845. Clerk’s Office, Albemarle County Courthouse, Charlottesville, Virginia.



## OAK LAWN

the earlier porch when the southwest addition was built in 1997–1998 and placed alongside the driveway.

**REMNANT STAIR.** At the edge of the driveway near the house is a wooden stair that formerly provided access to the southern porch prior to its replacement with the present-day southwest addition by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien in 1997–1998. The stair is 4 feet 4 inches wide. Handrails are to either side of the stairs. The treads are 4 feet in width and composed of 1x6 planks. There are five treads, each 11 inches wide, and five risers, each 7 inches in height. The overall stair measures 6 feet 4 inches in height. The handrails are supported by 4x4 wood posts at the top and bottom to which are nailed 2x6 boards. The stairs are supported with a wood stringer. Based on its relocation and changes made to the porch that it once served, the wooden stair has lost integrity and is non-contributing.

**ARBOR.** An arbor marks passage from the end of the driveway in the side yard of the main house. The arbor is constructed with four 4x6 wood posts forming the corners. The posts are set 4 feet 5 inches apart. Lattice is nailed to the posts to frame the interior space. At the base is a 2x4 wood rail. At the top are two 2x4 wood rails. The top of the arbor is arched and set on cut 4x4 wood posts that support 1x1 wood cross pieces. The arbor was added during the period when Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien lived at Oak Lawn. As such, it postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

## SMALL-SCALE FEATURES

The Oak Lawn property as currently configured contains few examples of small-scale features. These include fencing, grave markers, a concrete watering trough, yard hydrants, splash blocks, lamp posts, bird houses, a single metal post, and a single wood post. All of the fencing present on the property today is contemporary; none of the fencing that was associated with the property historically survives today. Similarly, garden features that appear in historic photographs are missing. The small-scale features that survive from the period of significance at Oak Lawn today are the grave markers in the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries, the concrete watering trough, and carved splash blocks. All of the other features are contemporary additions or features not associated with a significant historic context.

## FENCING

The current fencing, composed of chain link fencing marking the property perimeter and decorative metal picket fencing around the Fife family cemetery is contemporary and not historic.

Photographs indicate that historically there were several fence types associated with the property that are no longer represented. These include post and rail fencing around fields, board and wire fencing along the base of the main house and forming enclosures for ducks and chickens,

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 149. (Upper left) Wood post and board fencing at Oak Lawn in an undetermined location.*

*Figure 150. (Center and lower left) Views toward the main house showing fencing around the base potentially to protect against livestock. Pictured in the center photograph are Sarah Gildersleeve Fife (Robert Herndon Fife's first wife), Ella Fife, Sallie Fife, and Madge Fife. All images courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN

and a wire and wood post fence that contained the Fife family cemetery. One photograph shows a picket fence but is not sufficiently clear to indicate its location on the property.

**BOARD FENCING TO EITHER SIDE OF THE ARBOR.** Two sections of wooden post and board fencing edge the arbor. These fencing panels were added with the arbor by Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien after 1997. They postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**PRIVACY FENCING ALONG WESTERN PROPERTY BOUNDARY.** Privacy fencing occurs in two parallel rows along the western boundary of the property to screen views of the adjacent Buford Middle School from the south lawn. Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien likely built the privacy fencing after moving to the property in the late 1990s to screen views toward Buford Middle School from the south lawn. It postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

**CHAIN LINK FENCING ALONG THE EASTERN, SOUTHERN, AND WESTERN PROPERTY BOUNDARIES.** Chain link fencing has been added to the property since the construction of Buford Middle School. The chain link fencing has been added since the mid-twentieth century to mark property boundaries established with the widening of Ninth Street SW and the construction of Buford Middle School. As such, it postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

**METAL PICKET FENCING AROUND THE FIFE FAMILY CEMETERY.** A metal picket fence surrounds the Fife family cemetery that appears to be a contemporary addition. Nancy O'Brien may have added the decorative metal fencing around the Fife family cemetery as part of the establishment of the access easement in 2017.. The fence postdates the period of significance and is non-contributing.

**MISSING FENCING.** Several historic fence types appear to have been used on the property historically over time, all of which are missing today. Historic fencing is visible in several family photographs of the property provided by the Fifes. These photographs indicate that fields and pastures were contained by wooden post and rail fencing (Figure 148). Post and board fencing appears in photographs of a barnyard with a horse (Figure 149). Board and wire fencing appears in several photographs of the house placed along the foundation, potentially to protect plantings from livestock (Figure 150). Historic photographs of other properties in the region similarly show fencing protecting the area around the house, suggesting that the potential for farm animals to be in the vicinity of the residential precinct may not have been unusual.

Board and wire fencing is also seen in association with the yards used for chickens and ducks (Figure 139). A post and wire fence, inset with a wooden gate, is shown containing the Fife family cemetery in one historic photograph (Figure 135). A photograph of gardens in an undetermined location on the property shows a picket fence in the background that may have contained a vegetable garden or one of the cemeteries (Figure 39). Posts likely associated with a fence also appear in a historic photograph of the Cook's House (Figure 148).

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### OTHER SMALL-SCALE FEATURES

**GRAVE MARKERS IN THE BRAMHAM-BIBB FAMILY CEMETERY.** The Bramham-Bibb family cemetery is the older of the two burial grounds located along the southern property boundary. It is composed of several rows of graves marked by fieldstones, upright carved headstones and smaller footstones, and vaults. Overall, there are three vaults, nine headstones, ten footstones, and approximately nine fieldstones that may mark graves. The grave markers all date to the period of significance and contribute to the significance of Oak Lawn. Further investigation into the possible association of the fieldstones with graves is warranted.

The Bramham-Bibb family cemetery was established as early as 1834 based on the dates of death recorded on the grave markers. The first family member buried was Dr. Horace Bramham in 1834. Use of the cemetery for family burials clearly continued following acquisition of the property by James Fife in 1847 with several individuals buried in the cemetery after 1847. The final date of death recorded on the grave markers in the cemetery list Lucy Bramham Simpson in 1883. Both Nimrod Bramham and his wife Margaret “Peggy” Bramham, who died within months of each other in 1845, are buried in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery.

**GRAVE MARKERS FIFE FAMILY CEMETERY.** Located east of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery along the southern property boundary is the Fife family cemetery. The cemetery contains upright carved headstones and footstones as well as vaults. There are twenty grave markers within the cemetery, with one upright monument, four headstones, two footstones or small grave markers, nine large vaults, and four smaller vaults. The earliest burial in the cemetery dates to 1870. The last burial was that of Francis Fife in 2015. The grave markers contribute to the significance of Oak Lawn, however.

The Fife family cemetery was established as early as 1870 based on the dates of death recorded on the grave markers. The first family member buried was William J. Fife. Use of the cemetery for family burials has continued for more than 150 years. The last person buried in the cemetery was Francis Harrison Fife in 2015. The family has reserved the right to continue use and of and access to the cemetery in perpetuity. Reverend James Fife who purchased Oak Grove in 1847 and died in 1876 is buried in the cemetery.

**CONCRETE WATERING TROUGH.** Located in the successional woodlands near the western boundary with Buford Middle School is a small concrete trough. No records exist regarding the concrete trough; however it appears to relate to livestock watering use on the property and is located near the site of a former stable. The trough appears to date to the period of significance and contributes to the significance of Oak Lawn.

**COPPER YARD HYDRANT.** Located within the center of a privet shrub is a copper yard hydrant marked as manufactured by the American Foundry and Manufacturing of St. Louis, Missouri. The date of origin of the hydrant is not currently known. It is not associated with a particular historic context, and is non-contributing.



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*Figure 151. View of buildings in the environs of the main house referencing "Quarters" and showing an arched structure that appears to have been used to train ornamental plantings. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 152. A fox near a bird bath that is no longer extant. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

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**YARD HYDRANTS.** There are also two yard hydrants composed of metal poles with orange handles and pumps on top located in the south lawn and near the main house. These yard hydrants appear to be of a relatively recent vintage. As such, they postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**SPLASH BLOCKS.** The metal yard hydrant with an orange top near the house has a carved splash block below it. Although the other does not, there is a second carved splash block stored along the northwest corner of the main house that may have once been associated with the second yard hydrant. These carved stone splash blocks are similar to several at the University of Virginia. Although the date of origin of the splash blocks remains undetermined, they appear to date to the first half of the twentieth century and are indicated herein as contributing.

**LAMP POSTS.** Located at the edge of the lawn east of the main house and south of the parking area are two lamp posts. The metal features have Colonial revival style luminaires with peaked caps. The lamp posts appear to postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**BIRD HOUSES.** There are several wooden bird houses set on metal poles within the south lawn area and around the main house. The bird houses appear to postdate the period of significance and are non-contributing.

**METAL POST NEAR CEMETERIES.** Located adjacent to the social trail near the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery fence is a metal post associated with former fencing. The date of origin of the post is undetermined. The post is non-contributing due to a loss of integrity but might prove useful in determining where fencing might have once enclosed the cemetery.

**WOOD POST MARKING FORMER GATE AT PATH FROM CHERRY AVENUE.** A round wood post along the social trail leading from the concrete stair at Cherry Avenue toward the house may be associated with a former gate or chain used to limit trespasser access to the property. The post is non-contributing.

**MISSING FEATURES.** Little is known about additional small-scale features present on the property historically except for where ground photographs illustrate the presence of wooden trellis and arch near the house that appears to have been used to train ornamental plantings (Figure 36 and Figure 151), a yard hydrant indicated on the Nichols map behind the log barn, and a concrete birdbath that appears to be a more contemporary feature (Figure 152).

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TABLE 9: ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
<b>Natural Systems and Features</b>				
Native geology	By 1822		Geology served as a driver for the landform and topography that influenced the arrangement of fields and pastures, road alignments, and the elevated terrain on which the main house was sited.	Contributing
Native soils	By 1822		Native soils present on the site influenced the ability of owners to cultivate crops and grow food for the household.	Contributing
Hydrology	By 1822		A well was used to secure drinking water for the household within the environs of the main house until the late nineteenth century.	Contributing
Native plant communities	By 1822		Native oak trees provided the genesis of the name for the property. Successional woods appear in family photographs from the early twentieth century. The 5.2-acre property appears relatively wooded by 1937 when the first aerial photograph is available for review.	Contributing
Invasive plants	Some of the invasive species were introduced in the nineteenth century.	Invasive species have become increasingly problematic since the second half of the twentieth century.		Non-contributing
<i>Well</i>	<i>Circa 1822</i>	<i>James Fife procured a pump for a well in 1850</i>		<i>Missing</i>

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FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
<b>Landform and Topography</b>				
Level terrain south of the main house	By 1822	There have likely been some modifications associated with agricultural use, including the cultivation of this area.		Contributing
Sloped topography east of the main house	By 1822	Portions may have been graded in association with construction of Ninth Street SW and the establishment of the garden terraces.		Contributing
Grading associated with the driveway	By 1930s		The driveway as it approaches the house, with the north side graded, is visible in historic family photographs by the 1930s.	Contributing
Terraced gardens	Likely by 1865		Now overgrown with English ivy, the best way to understand the terraces is with LiDAR imagery.	Contributing
<i>Initial driveway route and internal farm road</i>	<i>Late nineteenth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<b>Spatial Organization</b>				
Dwelling precinct	By 1822	Outbuildings have come and gone along with trees and other ornamental plantings, fencing, and other features in the vicinity of the main house.	The main house, driveway, Cook's House, and east and south lawn survive today to recall the historic main house dwelling precinct.	Contributing
Driveway corridor	By 1930s	The margins of the road have become more densely wooded.		Contributing
East lawn	By 1930s		Little is known about the landscape east of the house during the nineteenth century, but photographs indicate that there was open space east of the house during the twentieth century.	Contributing



## OAK LAWN

FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
South lawn	By 1930s		Little is known about the landscape east of the house during the nineteenth century, but photographs indicate that there was open space south of the house during the twentieth century that was edged by additional outbuildings no longer present.	Contributing
Bramham-Bibb family cemetery	By 1845	The character of the cemetery setting has changed since 1964 with the addition of Buford Middle School, the addition of a chain link fence to the south, and additional successional woody growth.		Contributing
Fife family cemetery	By 1876	The character of the cemetery setting has changed since 1964 with the addition of Buford Middle School, the addition of a chain link fence to the south, and replacement of an earlier wire fence and arched gate with a metal picket fence.		Contributing
<i>Agricultural outbuildings, fields, and pasture and associated fencing on land no longer included in the Oak Lawn property</i>	<i>Nineteenth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<b>Views and Vistas</b>				
Views east from the front porch	By 1822	These views are limited by vegetation and topography.		Contributing
Views across open space south of the main house	By 1847			Contributing

## OAK LAWN

FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
Views towards the main house from Cherry Avenue	Circa 1900s	These views are limited by vegetation and topography.		Contributing
Reciprocal views between Oak Lawn and Buford Middle School	1960s	These views have been heavily impacted by successional woodland growth and the addition of screen plantings along Ninth Street SW.		Non-contributing
<b>Land Use</b>				
Burial	1834			Contributing
<i>Residential</i>	<i>1822</i>	<i>Continued until 2022</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Agricultural</i>	<i>1822</i>	<i>Continued until the 1940s</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<b>Circulation</b>				
Driveway	By 1888	The route in front of the house was formalized by 1937. It was paved with gravel until 2015, when it was paved with asphalt.	The road formerly extended behind the house to the west.	Contributing
Parking	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
Stepping stone path through the arbor	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
Social trail from Cherry Avenue	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
Social trail near the Fife family cemetery	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
<i>Driveway and road north of the main house</i>	<i>By 1888</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<b>Vegetation</b>				
Oak grove	Circa 1822	Present-day oaks likely date to the early to mid-twentieth century.		Contributing
Cemetery plantings of periwinkle, Bramham-Bibb family cemetery	By 1874		Periwinkle is described as growing within the cemetery in personal accounts.	Contributing

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FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
Boxwood foundation plantings	By 1930s		Appear in historic family photographs	Contributing
English ivy	By 1930s		Appears growing around and on the house as early as the 1930s.	Contributing near the main house. Non-contributing elsewhere
Turf lawn	By 1930s		Appears in historic family photographs.	Contributing
Row of eastern red cedar trees	Undetermined. Appear to date to circa 1930s			Contributing
Other ornamental plantings	Undetermined			Undetermined
Cemetery plantings of hosta, Fife family cemetery	Undetermined			Undetermined
Screen plantings of white pine and Leyland cypress along Ninth Street SW	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Arbor ornamental plantings	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Other foundation plantings at the base of the southwest addition	Post 1997			Non-contributing
<i>Additional ornamental plantings</i>	<i>Early to mid-twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Additional boxwood plantings</i>	<i>Early to mid-twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<b>Buildings and Structures</b>				
Oak Lawn main house	1822	Porches have been removed, replaced, and removed. Southwest addition built in 1997–1998.		Contributing
Cook's House	Undetermined, nineteenth century	A lean-to addition, once on the rear of the building, has been removed. Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien stabilized the building to prevent it from falling down.	The south gable has been rebuilt, with the bricks laid in a stretcher bond against concrete masonry unity visible on the interior.	Contributing
Shed	Circa 1998			Non-contributing

## OAK LAWN

FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
Wooden stair	Circa early twentieth century	The stair was removed and placed next to the driveway as part of the construction of the southwest addition, circa 1997.	The stair has lost integrity.	Non-contributing
Arbor	Post 1997			Non-contributing
<i>Quarters for 19 slaves</i>	<i>Prior to 1865</i>	<i>Possibly adapted for later use as quarters for tenant farmers and hired hands</i>	<i>Some documentary records suggest they were removed in 1869. Others may have been located on the site developed for Buford School circa 1964.</i>	<i>Missing</i>
<i>Ice house</i>	<i>Nineteenth century</i>	<i>Demolished during construction of Buford School circa 1964.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Kitchen</i>	<i>Nineteenth century</i>	<i>Demolished during the early twentieth century when the new kitchen was built along the west side of the house.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Well</i>	<i>Nineteenth century</i>	<i>Little is known about the well.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Stable</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>	<i>Demolished by the 1980s.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Shed with coop</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>	<i>Demolished by the 1980s.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<i>Chicken house</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>	<i>Demolished by the 1980s.</i>		<i>Missing</i>
<b>Small-scale Features</b>				
Grave markers in Bramham-Bibb family cemetery	Circa 1834–1883			Contributing
Grave markers in Fife family cemetery	Circa 1870–2015			Contributing
Concrete trough	Undetermined, circa 1930s			Contributing
Copper yard hydrant within privet shrub	Undetermined, circa 1930s	Not associated with a significant historic context.		Non-contributing
Board fencing to either side of the arbor	Post 1997			Non-contributing



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FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
Chain link fencing along the eastern, southern, and western property boundaries	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Privacy fencing along the western property boundary near the rear yard	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Decorative metal fencing around the Fife family cemetery	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Metal yard hydrants with orange handles	Undetermined, but late twentieth century			Non-contributing
Splash blocks	Undetermined. Circa 1930s		One of the yard hydrants is set above a carved stone splash block. A second splash block is stored behind the house. These may be older features.	Contributing
Lamp posts	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Bird houses	Post 1997			Non-contributing
Remnant metal post near the family cemeteries likely associated with a former fence	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
Wood post near the social trail from Cherry Avenue	Undetermined. Likely second half of the twentieth century			Non-contributing
<i>Wooden post and rail fencing</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Wooden post and board fencing</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Board and wire fencing</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Post and wire fencing with a wooden gate around the Fife family cemetery</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Picket fencing</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Wooden trellis</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>

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FEATURE	DATE OF ORIGIN	ALTERATIONS	NOTES	CONTRIBUTING STATUS
<i>Wooden arch</i>	<i>First half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>
<i>Concrete bird bath</i>	<i>Undetermined, likely second half of the twentieth century</i>			<i>Missing</i>

# OAK LAWN

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### TREATMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

Preservation treatment of cultural landscapes is a strategy for management and maintenance of important properties, intended to direct physical work so that the distinguishing characteristics and features that contribute to the property's historical significance and integrity are preserved and protected. Treatment also focuses on accommodating contemporary uses within a cultural landscape in ways that are sensitive to historic resources and associations. Treatment recommendations and guidelines for cultural landscapes can address such contemporary management goals as enhancing physical accessibility, reducing maintenance, and accommodating a new use as well as historic preservation goals such as repair, maintenance, and replacement in kind protocols for contributing features. Treatment can also consider a suite of issues ranging from environmental rehabilitation and restoration to sustainability and resiliency.

The treatment chapter that follows is intended to provide UVA/UVA Health with an overall vision for the care and management of contributing resources located on the Oak Lawn property even as contemporary uses are considered to accommodate the needs of UVA/UVA Health. In addition to recommendations and protocols related to protection of contributing features, the treatment chapter identifies zones on the property related to its sensitivity to change. This information is intended to guide future plans for adaptive use based on its designation as an individually protected property under the City of Charlottesville's historic preservation ordinance, its listing in the National Register, and the desire on the part of UVA/UVA Health to be good stewards of the historic property.

The treatment chapter is organized around the following four sections:

- **MANAGEMENT GOALS, ISSUES, AND CONCERNS** describes the issues raised during scope development and during the team's meetings with UVA.
- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDANCE** describes the federal, state, and local preservation entities and associated review processes associated with oversight of designated historic properties.
- **TREATMENT PHILOSOPHY AND VISION** describes an overarching treatment philosophy and vision for Oak Lawn based on the findings of the CLR that sets the stage for the specific treatment recommendations to follow. This section provides an assessment of potential zones on the property that articulate relative levels of sensitivity to change within the property as UVA/UVA Health endeavors to accommodate new uses at Oak Lawn.

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- **TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES** provides treatment recommendations that consider protection of historic contributing features, their long-term care and management, and considerations related to the addition of contemporary additions to accommodate proposed programming such as accessibility on the property along with guidelines for implementation of the recommendations.

### MANAGEMENT GOALS, ISSUES, AND CONCERNS

Several management goals, issues, and concerns related to the future use and treatment of Oak Lawn emerged from the project kick-off meeting held in May 2024. During the meeting, UVA personnel expressed an interest in the CLR team considering the following when devising treatment recommendations and guidelines for the property:

- The CLR should recognize that the site was purchased with the intent of constructing a new building or buildings on site. This document should help inform and guide placement of new program elements.
- Team members should look for opportunities/areas where the main house could be made accessible without compromising the historic integrity of the structure, the landscape, or archaeological resources.
- The CLR should identify zones of sensitivity within the landscape.
- Residents of the surrounding neighborhood are interested in the development of the property and its history, suggesting that treatment recommendations afford methods for apprising the community of the future of the property.
- The HSR will serve as an important guide for future maintenance of the historic building since UVA Health does not manage any other historic buildings.

The CLR treatment recommendations address these issues with an approach that is consistent with standards for historic preservation and that reflects a coherent vision and philosophy for future adaptive use of Oak Lawn.

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDANCE

Oak Lawn is listed on both the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). The City of Charlottesville has also designated Oak Lawn an individually-protected property. As such, it is important that proposed changes to the property meet review requirements associated with federal, state, and local guidelines.

At the federal level, guidance is afforded in the form of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes. Based on UVA/UVA Health's goal of adaptive use of the property, the CLR recommends that



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Rehabilitation be considered the appropriate treatment option from the four outlined by the Secretary of the Interior. Rehabilitation is defined as the act of process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. There are ten Rehabilitation standards outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties have been applied to the development of treatment recommendations as part of the CLR to encourage compatibility with this federal guidance.<sup>246</sup>

At the state level, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources is the agency that oversees both the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register for properties located within the Commonwealth. The Historic Resources Review and Compliance Division is responsible for reviewing projects that may impact historic and cultural resources and provides recommendations for protecting and preserving these resources.<sup>247</sup> The CLR treatment plan is intended to provide guidance that promotes protection of historic and cultural resources while allowing for adaptive use in appropriate locations.

At the local level, properties, structures, and sites designated as individually-protected properties or that fall within Historical Preservation/Architectural Design Contrail Historic District are subject to design review.<sup>248</sup> The City's historic preservation program strives to preserve these resources that represent the individuals, events, trends, and designs that formed city's history and built environment.<sup>249</sup> The Board of Architectural Review reviews all projects which affect the exterior appearance of any locally designated property. The Board evaluates the project based on a number of criteria including its economic feasibility and compatibility of the proposed construction/alteration with the site and other properties in the design control district. The Board also ensures that the proposed rehabilitation work complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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246. For more information, see *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (1996), <https://home.nps.gov/subjects/culturallandscapes/references.htm> (accessed November 15, 2024); National Park Service, "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Rehabilitation as a Treatment and Standards for Rehabilitation," <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm> (accessed November 15, 2024).

247. For more information, see Virginia Department of Historic Resources, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/> (accessed November 15, 2024).

248. For more information, see City of Charlottesville, "Historic Preservation & Design Review," <https://www.charlottesville.gov/264/Historic-Preservation-Design-Review> (accessed November 15, 2024).

249. City of Charlottesville, "Historic Preservation & Design Review."

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### TREATMENT PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

*Refer to Figure 153, Zones of Sensitivity to Change*

Oak Lawn is a small part of a once larger historic property that served as a plantation during the Antebellum period and a farm postbellum before much of the property was subdivided and converted to residential neighborhoods. Until 2023 when it was acquired by UVA/UVA Health, the present-day 5.2-acre property was among the largest private residential lots within the city of Charlottesville. The property is significant for the architecture of the main house and for the long-standing ownership of two families, represented through the ongoing presence of associated family cemeteries on the property. Additional historic features surviving on the property include the landform and topography connected with the original siting of the main house along with a series of garden terraces, open areas referred to herein as the east and south lawns, older trees including a mature oak north of the house, a row of eastern red cedar trees along the eastern edge of the south lawn, boxwood plantings along the east and south foundations of the main house, the Cook's House, historic driveway corridor, and a concrete watering trough and carved splash blocks. Much of the remaining landscape is now cloaked in successional woodland that contains limited evidence of former cultural uses other than examples of ornamental and screen plantings and non-native species that have naturalized within the woods. There remains the possibility that archaeological evidence of additional outbuildings and landscape features are present on the property, particularly in the vicinity of the main house and between the house and the two family cemeteries. Archaeological investigations have not yet examined the potentially sensitive areas of the Oak Lawn property.

Based on these parameters, goals for treatment of the Oak Lawn property as it is considered for adaptive reuse include protection and maintenance of features contributing to the National Register significance of the property, establishing sufficient buffer land between the historic features and proposed new features that the heritage values are neither overshadowed nor lost due to new programming, and establishing management and maintenance protocols to care for the individual needs of contributing features, such as the grave markers in the two family cemeteries, the topographic signature of the garden terraces, historic views, and control of invasive vegetation. The treatment plan also considers appropriate locations for the siting of new program that respects the contributing features while accommodating desired adaptive use, with the understanding that determinations about what the new program will require in terms of space have not yet been made. In support of these efforts, the CLR provides an identification of zones of sensitivity to change to guide the most suitable areas for considering future development of the property.

Adaptive use is also anticipated to include a new program for the main house. In support of this need, the CLR, in concert with the HSR, considers appropriate accessibility improvements related to parking and building entry with the least physical and visual impact on the building and its environs.



Figure 153. Zones of Sensitivity to Change. LSHLA, 2024.

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### TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

*Refer to Figure 154. Treatment Plan*

The treatment recommendations provided below are organized into a series of categories ranging from historic resource protection, to repair and maintenance, and guidance related to contemporary interventions.

#### PROTECT CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

- Protect and maintain all contributing resources, including:
  - Oak Lawn main house and associated landform and topography
  - Cook's House (although the integrity of the building is diminished due to the extent of changes that have been made to it)
  - Driveway and associated grading
  - Terraced gardens
  - Views to the east from the principal façade of the main house
  - Reciprocal views between the main house and the family cemeteries
  - Large oak tree near the house
  - Turf grass associated with the east and south lawns
  - Boxwood foundation plantings and boxwood at the margin of the south lawn near the Fife family cemetery
  - Row of eastern red cedar trees along the eastern edge of the south lawn terrace
  - Bramham-Bibb family cemetery, associated grave markers, and periwinkle plantings
  - Fife family cemetery and associated grave markers
  - Concrete watering trough and carved splash blocks
- Carefully review all proposed adaptive use programming to ensure that heritage values are respected to the degree possible.

#### ADDRESS PRESERVATION NEEDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FAMILY CEMETERIES

The two family cemeteries located on the Oak Lawn property now owned by UVA/UVA Health are private burial grounds and may be subject to deed restrictions in terms of care. The deed transferring the property from the Bramham-Bibb family to the Fife family reserved an area approximately 60 by 120 feet in size, denoting metes and bounds that are difficult to plot today. The area encompassed by the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery has never been accurately defined.



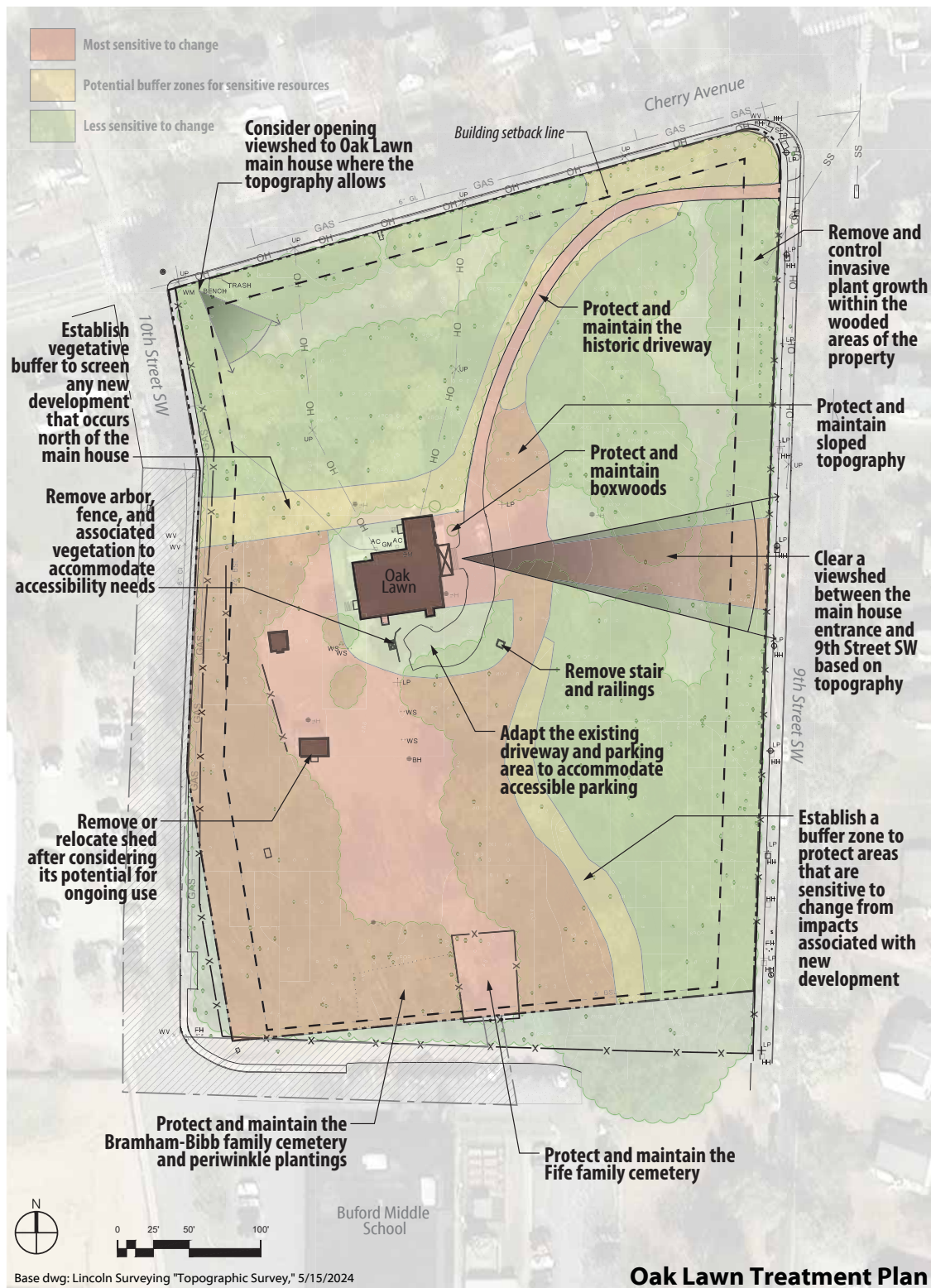


Figure 154. Treatment Plan. LSHLA, 2024.

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It is not clear who is responsible for care of the cemetery today. In contrast, the Fifes have a specific agreement as to care and responsibility of their family cemetery, but it is not clear how this may evolve over time. Further investigation is needed to determine the role that UVA will play in future maintenance and care of the family cemeteries. The recommendations below are intended to guide care should it be determined to be the responsibility of UVA or become the University's responsibility in the future..

- Conduct an archaeological investigation of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery to determine the limits of the burial ground and whether extant fieldstones mark burials (Figure 155). While a previous GPR survey verified that there are likely no burials in the turfed area immediately north of and adjacent to both cemeteries, the extent of the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery remains unclear. Defining the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery to accurately understand where there are graves, and where there are not, is a primary recommendation, given the as of yet undefined Bramham to Fife reservation, and the possibility of fencing and formally defining it in the future to aid in the maintenance of the cemetery (see recommendations to follow).
- Inventory the grave markers and other surface features within both cemeteries. Record the materials used for each grave marker and identify their types, such as upright headstones, footstones, obelisks, vaults, and slabs on grade. Documenting the grave markers will help guide repairs that involve resetting, rebuilding, or material repair.
- Develop an inventory of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers within both the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries, as well as trees, shrubs, and groundcovers located in close proximity to the fencing that encloses the Fife family cemetery. Use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to record the inventory information in a Geographic Information System (GIS) database that can be used to record vegetation management activities related to protection of the burial sites and markers over time.( The inventory should include a photograph or photographs of the plant material along with species identification, diameter at breast height (DBH), and condition assessment.
- Engage a certified arborist to evaluate trees growing within the vicinity of the two family cemeteries annually to ensure that any hazardous conditions with the potential to damage the cemeteries are addressed.
- Consider enclosing the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery using a simple, contemporary, compatible fencing material similar to that which encloses the Fife family cemetery (Figure 155). Fencing would support appropriate care of the burial ground.
- Prepare a detailed condition assessment of the grave markers in each cemetery prior to planning for any repair or other treatments. The condition assessment is recommended as part of the process of documenting these historic resources, along with preparing appropriate responses to threats or observed repair needs. Assessment records can become an important resource for future reference as pertains to recommendations for monitoring and repair.

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*Figure 155. The Fife family cemetery is enclosed by decorative black metal fencing. A similar fence should be considered to enclose the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery to protect it from access and define the area of care and maintenance (left image). The extent of the cemetery should be further investigated prior to determining the location of a fence enclosure (right image). LSHLA, 2024.*

Threats to grave markers observed during field investigations conducted in 2024 include tree growth around individual grave markers, groundhog burrowing in the vicinity of and underneath individual grave markers, tree root growth, overhanging branches with the potential to fall and cause damage, colonization by invasive plant species, and soiling, staining, biological growth, cracking, chipping, and delamination of masonry features (Figure 156).

- Based on the assessment, prioritize treatment of grave markers and removal of threats. Immediate treatment should focus on removal of trees and ground hog burrows that threaten grave markers (Figure 157 and Figure 158) and repair of any conditions that may result in masonry deterioration or breakage.
- Remove invasive plant material to the extent possible within the cemeteries and their immediate environs, particularly English ivy (Figure 159). Within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery, however, the periwinkle that is present should be retained as a historic feature of the burial ground. Retain but contain the periwinkle within the limits of the burial ground rather than removing it. Hosta plantings in the Fife family cemetery may need to be relocated away from grave markers if they are found to be causing damage to the masonry (Figure 160).
- Maintain the Fife family cemetery in turf grass. Once a defined boundary has been established for the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery, maintain periwinkle as an alternative to turf grass.



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*Figure 156. Condition issues of concern apparent within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery include staining and biological growth associated with the markers (left) and encroachment of trees and tree roots (right). LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 157. Tree growth has engulfed one of the headstones in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery (left), while a ground hog has burrowed beneath one of the vaults in the Fife family cemetery (right), threatening the stability and condition of these grave markers. LSHLA, 2024.*



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*Figure 158. (Above left) Tree growth has already displaced and damaged a grave marker within the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery, while another is located in close proximity to the tree trunk and associated roots as shown in this photograph. The tree may be a candidate for removal in order to safeguard the burial markers and the adjacent Fife family cemetery fence.*

*Figure 159. (Above right) English ivy seen growing on a vault in the Bramham-Bibb family cemetery is an invasive species with the ability to displace other vegetation and cause damage to trees and structures. It should be removed from the burial grounds when observed.*

*Figure 160. (Lower left) Where plantings located around grade markers are found to be holding moisture that is damaging to the masonry, they should be removed but could be replanted nearby. All images LSHLA, 2024.*

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### GRAVE MARKER REPAIR GUIDELINES

- When considering repairs to the grave markers, it is important to choose a repair that will address both immediate and long-term needs. The repair work should correct the immediate problem while reducing the potential for additional deterioration in the future and not introducing additional problems. Repair work should be conducted using a conservative approach that entails undertaking small repairs first and monitoring the results before moving on with additional work. Ideally, repairs and treatments should be reversible.
- Undertake repairs by engaging professionals with proven experience in the preservation of historic grave markers.
- Document all repair work and ensure that records are maintained and accessible to those that need them in order to evaluate additional needs for repair work in the future.
- Consider the use of organic methods rather than chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers around historic grave markers.
- Clean markers only to reveal the original colors and other qualities of a stone, uncover inscriptions that are hidden by biological growth and dirt, or remove accumulated material that could lead to stone deterioration in marble and limestone.
- Avoid cleaning marble, limestone, or sandstone more than once every eighteen months. Each cleaning removes some of the face of the stone. However, occasionally rinsing with clean water to remove bird droppings and other accretions is acceptable.

### ADDRESS MAINTENANCE NEEDS ASSOCIATED WITH VEGETATION

- Complete an inventory of the vegetation present on the property beyond the limits of the family cemeteries. Use GPS technology to record the inventory information in a GIS database that can be used to record vegetation management activities. The inventory should include a photograph or photographs of the plant material along with species identification, diameter at breast height (DBH), and condition assessment.
- Engage a certified arborist to regularly inspect and evaluate trees within the Oak Lawn landscape to identify care and pruning needs and address hazardous conditions. Work with a certified arborist to undertake recommended tree care. Ensure that the arborist and all tree care practices adhere to the most current International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) standards and follow current American National Standard Practices (ANSI) for Tree Care Operations—Tree, Shrub, and other Woody Plant Maintenance (ANSI A3000) and other

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sections as relevant. Also ensure that the arborist engaged to conduct work within Oak Lawn is accredited with the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA).

- Prepare a prioritized program of tree care and vegetation management.
- Consider implementing efforts to control invasive species immediately, particularly English ivy (Figure 161 and Figure 162). Consult an archaeologist prior to initiating control measures to ensure that the work does not disturb potential archaeological resources.
- Utilize hand-pulling or small tools to remove unwanted vegetation in close proximity to historic features.
- Address pruning and hazard tree and limb removal needs that have been identified through evaluation by an arborist, particularly where removal protects historic resources (Figure 163).
- Utilize appropriate pruning methods for reducing the size of the boxwoods along the foundation of the main house to limit problems caused by moisture.
- Avoid using chemicals for vegetation control in the vicinity of historic materials that can be absorbed by stone and brick and cause deterioration.
- Consider removing the stumps that are present in the vicinity of the main house (Figure 163). Evaluate stump removal options with an archaeologist to ensure that the process avoids impact to potential archaeological resources. Backfill any holes created by stump removal to ensure that the ground is level upon completion of the process.
- Manage and maintain vegetation to establish a clear sight line between the principal façade of the main house and Ninth Street SW, which is part of a historic viewshed (Figure 164). Tree growth is currently encroaching on the view.
- Consider that the northwest corner of the main house can be seen near the intersection of Tenth Street SW and Cherry Avenue, a viewshed that could be perpetuated depending on future adaptive use of the land bay north and northwest of the main house.
- Protect existing vegetation that is desirable to remain, especially the oak north of the main house (Figure 165), in areas that may be impacted by new construction or programming related to adaptive use of the property (Figure 166), and closely monitor protected vegetation throughout the disturbance period. Tree roots typically extend well past the drip line of the tree. At a minimum, the area within the drip line should be protected from soil compaction from heavy equipment, which will inhibit air and water penetration to the root zone and threaten the health of the tree.
- Manage and maintain the turf grass associated with the east and south lawns. Plant an alternative ground cover in areas of deep shade, including beneath large trees, where turf is currently missing or not likely to thrive (Figure 167).



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*Figure 161. (Left) English ivy has colonized many parts of the property and is one of the invasive species recommended for control measures.*

*Figure 162. (Below left and right) English ivy is also growing on the trunks of trees (left) and on the walls of the Cook's House (right). All images LSHLA, 2024.*





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*Figure 163. Dead and diseased trees will likely require removal for the safety of visitors and protection of historic resources (left), while stumps near the house should be removed under the guidance of an archaeologist (right). LSHLA, 2024.*



*Figure 164. The view east from the principal façade of the main house is partially blocked by trees. A reciprocal view between the road and house is recommended to be established through the removal of some of the trees visible in the photograph. LSHLA, 2024.*

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### VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Initiate an invasive plant-control program for Oak Lawn that considers the fact that while eradication of the invasives is a desirable goal, it can be difficult to accomplish given the constant influx of germ material through transport by wind, water, and animal dispersal. Thus, control rather than eradication may be the focus of the invasive plant-control program. Early detection and treatment, the use of appropriate control measures for the life cycle of each species, the establishment of native plant cover following invasive control, and follow-up monitoring are all critical components of successful invasive plant control.
- Utilize appropriate mowing equipment in the vicinity of gravestones in the Fife Family cemetery such as string trimmers with nylon string that will not damage masonry.
- When undertaking tree removal, field check conditions with an archaeologist to determine any threats related to ground disturbance. Avoid felling trees wherever possible. Instead, section and lower the trunk and limbs to the ground to avoid damage to resources and gouging the ground. Cut trees to be removed flush with the ground and allow stumps to rot naturally as possible. Avoid uprooting stumps as this may disturb archeological resources. Also remove felled trees and large shrubs without dragging, which can gouge the ground surface.
- Avoid the use of heavy equipment when undertaking vegetation management that will result in compaction or rutting of the ground plane, damage grave markers, or exacerbate erosion. Where heavy equipment is needed, first protect the ground with plywood, construction mats, or another material that can spread the load of the weight of the equipment.

### ADDRESS STORMWATER MANAGEMENT NEEDS ON THE PROPERTY

- Analyze and evaluate drainage patterns on the property to determine whether there are locations undergoing erosion or other damaging conditions. Consider measures for spreading drainage across lawn areas to promote infiltration and avoid the channelization that leads to erosion. Where erosion is found to be occurring on sloped terrain, consider designing new drainage systems that correct the existing problem. In particular assess the condition of the terraced gardens once the English ivy is removed to determine whether stormwater management systems are needed to protect the historic feature from erosion or other damage. If conditions call for it, consider preparing a site-wide stormwater management plan by a qualified civil engineer and historical landscape architect.



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*Figure 165. (Left) View northeast from the west façade of the main house toward a large oak recommended for protection should construction occur on the Oak Lawn property.*

*Figure 166. (Center images) Large trees on the property should be considered for protection during any new construction.*

*Figure 167. (Lower images) Turf grass extends south of the house to the environs of the two family cemeteries (left) and is the principal ground cover within the Fife family cemetery. Turf care within the cemetery should be undertaken in such a way as to protect the grave markers from damage. All images LSHLA, 2024.*



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## GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTIVE USE

### ARCHAEOLOGY

A sketch map produced by University of Virginia architect Frederick D. Nichols prior to 1973 and derived from the memory of Ella K. Fife that was passed down to her daughter Anne Freudenberg in 1964, depicts a rear yard to Oak Lawn that was full of functional buildings and structures (Figure 12). This concentration of buildings and structures extended primarily to the south and west of the primary residence, and between it and the Bramham-Bibb and Fife family cemeteries. To the southwest of the residence was the Cook's House. To the south of the residence was the former brick kitchen and behind it a well. Further south and southwest were a combination chicken house/smoke house/privy, and a carriage house and large stable with horse stalls. Further west, on what is now Buford Middle School grounds, was an ice house, a large log barn with stalls for cows and horses with a pig shed addition, and a log corn house, a log machine shed, and a quarters for enslaved African Americans.

Although the Nichols' sketch plan is schematic in the sense that it shows the general location, dimension, and materials of structures as remembered, the fact that most of the structures appear to be south or west of the Fife residence and to its rear fits in with what might be expected for a typical pre-emancipation plantation. An oblique aerial photograph from 1940 also appears to confirm the locations of a number of agricultural structures located along the western boundary of the current Oak Lawn parcel. Likewise, during construction of the southwest addition in the late 1990s, Nancy O'Brien recalled that the electricians encountered a brick foundation believed to be associated with the former brick kitchen during trenching for the erection of a light post.

Due to the cartographic and material evidence for significant functional activity associated with several extant and former structures in the yard area south and west of the primary residence, this area should be considered one that may contain sensitive and potentially significant archaeological resources. As an area that has never been archaeologically investigated, it is recommended that pre-construction survey work be undertaken prior to any future development.

- Ensure that all areas that have the potential to be impacted by construction activities, and that have not yet been archaeologically investigated, be assessed for their impact to known and/or previously unidentified cultural resources. For those areas that have the potential to impact cultural resources, it is recommended that an appropriate level of archaeological investigations occur prior to any ground disturbance and in association with construction activities.
- Consider conducting a GPR survey of the south lawn and western property margin to understand the potential for evidence of former cultural resources to be present. This area is particularly sensitive due to the likelihood that outbuildings were present. Consider following up the GPR survey with excavation of some large unit areas based on the GPR results and the likely location of some features, such as the old brick kitchen that once stood near the main house, based on documentary and graphic evidence.



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### SITING AND VIEWSHEDS

- Consider historic viewsheds in the siting of new built features and consider options for reducing their visual impact on key views.
- Utilize landform and topography to advantage when siting new features to help screen them and diminish their impacts on historic views.
- Consider appropriate locations for establishing viewsheds into the property from adjacent public roads that work with the topography and do not impact mature vegetation.
- Investigate options to introduce new interpretive and wayfinding sign systems that are visually unobtrusive and provide succinct information for both the public and regular site users. Consider options for siting signs at the perimeter and interior of the property.
- Consider options for introducing new landscape uses into sensitive historic garden spaces. New landscape program and related design interventions should be compatible with the historic garden character and scale, should retain the open views across the south lawn space between the house and family cemeteries, and should not result in major disturbance of subsurface conditions. Avoid the introduction of large new structures. Consider adaptive reuse, and relocation as appropriate, of the existing contemporary shed if the building supports an appropriate new use. New flower or vegetable gardens, children's play areas, picnic tables, and other easily reversible interventions are appropriate for these areas.
- Establish suitable screen buffers between historic features and proposed new programmatic elements that consider visual impacts related to their distance from the historic feature and their height such that the buffers do not overly impact the setting of the historic feature.

### NEW DESIGN WITHIN THE HISTORIC SETTING

- Protect scenic, natural, and cultural features that are part of the character of the Oak Lawn historic landscape.
- Retain and maintain historical materials, features, finishes, construction techniques, spaces, and spatial relationships when interventions within the Oak Lawn cultural landscape are considered.
- Ensure that new design interventions are as unobtrusive as possible while allowing for accessibility and meeting safety codes and regulations.
- Ensure that new construction is limited to the least impactful alterations and additions necessary to accommodate visitor access, maintenance, and management of the property.
- Site new buildings and structures either out of key viewsheds, or in such a way as to complement the spatial organization of the Oak Lawn property.

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- Situate new buildings and structures to lie lightly on the land, minimizing soil disturbance, particularly cut and fill. If extensive excavation is required, ensure the work is preceded by thorough archaeological investigations or construction-period monitoring.
- Limit the footprints of new buildings and structures by optimizing use and flexibility of both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Consider the zones of sensitivity in siting new interventions.
- Design and site new interventions or alterations to the landscape in such a way that they do not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the cultural landscape.
- Ensure that new interventions are a product of their time, and compatible with historic resources in materials, size, scale, proportion, roof form, and massing. Ensure that new buildings are designed with sufficient detailing and with a muted palette that they blend with their surroundings and that they are sympathetic to local traditions.
- Differentiate new work from existing historic resources.
- Maintain human scale in order to preserve the sense of place at Oak Lawn.

### VEHICULAR ACCESS

- Consider options for new vehicular access systems that are compatible with the character and scale of the historic driveway. Minimize the number of new site vehicular entrances or exits. Design new circulation systems to be as narrow as possible and to follow a route that is within areas with low sensitivity to change or that require minimal land disturbance and loss of mature vegetation, and no loss of contributing landscape features.

### ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS RELATED TO THE MAIN HOUSE

- Consider appropriate locations for establishing accessible parking in coordination with an accessible route for entry into the main house.
- Establish the accessible parking spaces so that they meet ABAAS guidelines and seamlessly connect to an accessible walk leading to an accessible building entrance.
- Consider providing an accessible entrance into the main house at the southwest addition, which is a non-contributing feature, rather than the eastern entrance.

# OAK LAWN

## HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

### JAMES DINSMORE AND OAK LAWN

James Dinsmore's name has been associated with the Oak Lawn property in Charlottesville, Virginia, for many decades. Various sources indicate that there were many opportunities for Dinsmore and for Nimrod Bramham, the owner of the property, to have known each other or certainly to have known of one another and their construction projects in Charlottesville. While Dinsmore had worked closely for many years with Thomas Jefferson at his residences at Monticello and Poplar Forest, Bramham was also known to Jefferson through their business transactions.

#### JAMES DINSMORE, "HOUSE CARPENTER"

James Dinsmore emigrated from Ireland to America in the 1790s. His naturalization petition to become a U.S. citizen was approved by a Philadelphia court on June 5, 1798. In the petition, Dinsmore identified himself as a "House Carpenter." In support of the petition, Thomas Carstairs of Philadelphia declared that he "hath been well acquainted with James Dinsmore the foregoing petitioner for the space of two years now last past and upwards."<sup>250</sup> Carstairs, about twelve years older than Dinsmore, had described himself in 1784 as an "Architect and House-Carpenter," who had "lately arrived" from London.<sup>251</sup>

In a June 1801 letter, Jefferson stated that Carstairs had "procured" Dinsmore "for me in Philadelphia about 3. or 4. years ago," describing Dinsmore then as being "a valuable friend & companion." In this same letter, which dealt with work then needed to be done at Monticello, Jefferson asked for help finding a replacement for a worker who had suffered a scaffolding accident; Jefferson explained that "I will give the person you shall engage the same, with board and lodging. [H]e will have a black man under him to rough out the work."<sup>252</sup>

Meanwhile, on April 5, 1798, Jefferson, then in Philadelphia, the nation's capital, had written to his daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph that "I have engaged a fine housejoiner here to go

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250. James Dinsmore (hereafter, JD) Naturalization Petition, U.S. Court for the District of Pennsylvania, June 5, 1798, Ancestry.com, accessed July 20, 2024.

251. Roger Moss and Sandra L. Tatman, "Carstairs, Thomas," [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org), accessed July 27, 2024. Frank Edgar Grizzard, *Documentary History of the Construction of the Buildings at the University of Virginia, 1817-1828*, online at University of Virginia Library, 25. Carstairs was elected to the Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia in 1788, and Jefferson would ask him about securing a copy of the company's price book then and again twenty years later. Moss and Tatman, trans., announcement by Thomas Carstairs in *Pennsylvania Packet*, Feb. 5, 1784.

252. Thomas Jefferson (hereafter TJ) to Daniel Trump, Feb. 21, 1801, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-30-02-0169> (hereafter, *Founders Online*).

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with me.”<sup>253</sup> Dinsmore was soon on his way south, having secured his American citizenship and purchased carpentry tools on Jefferson’s behalf. Dinsmore would work with Jefferson at Monticello for a decade and at his Poplar Forest retreat, often with John Neilson, another Irish house carpenter.

### ENGAGING JAMES DINSMORE TO WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

When Nimrod Bramham purchased the property now known as Oak Lawn in the spring of 1818, work on the nearby grounds of what became the University of Virginia had been underway for just a year, but the scale of the entire project must have been of interest to the merchants and residents of Charlottesville. On July 19, 1817, Jefferson reported to another member of the Board of Visitors that “our squares are laid off, the brick yard begun, and the levelling will be begun in the course of a week.”<sup>254</sup> The cornerstone of the first pavilion, Pavilion VII, was laid that fall.<sup>255</sup>

Thomas Jefferson was determined to see that his architectural plans and the actual construction of the university move forward as quickly and as architecturally accurately as possible. His decentralized scheme of pavilions and dormitories linked by colonnades was finally adopted by the Board of Visitors in May 1817. To bring the work forward, Jefferson invited James Dinsmore to oversee and undertake construction work. Writing on April 13, 1817, Jefferson outlined the opportunity to Dinsmore:

We are about to establish a College near Charlottesville on the lands formerly Colo Monroe’s, a mile above the town. we do not propose to erect a single grand building, but to form a square of perhaps 200 yards, and to arrange around that pavilions of about 24. by 36.f. one for every professorship & his school. they are to be of various forms, models of chaste architecture, as examples for the school of architecure to be formed on. we shall build one only in the latter end of this year, and go on with others year after year, as our funds increase. indeed we believe that our establishment will draw to it the great state university which is to be located at the next meeting of the legislature. the College, the immediate subject of this letter, is under the direction of 6. visitors, mr Madison, Colo Monroe, Genl Cocke mr Cabell, mr Watson of Louisa, & myself, and we are to meet on the 6th of May to put it into motion. I suppose the superintendence of the buildings will rest chiefly on myself as most convenient. so far as it does I should wish to commit it to yourself and mr Ne[i]lson, and while little is called for

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253. “From Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 5 April 1798,” *Founders Online*.

254. TJ to John Hartwell Cocke, July 19, 1817, trans., Cocke Family Papers, Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia (hereafter, SSCL).

255. Richard Guy Wilson and Sara A. Butler, *The Campus Guide: University of Virginia* (New York: Princeton University Press, 36-37. John G. Waite Associates, Architects, *Pavilion IX, University of Virginia Historic Structure Report* (Charlottesville: John G. Waite Associates, Architects, and University of Virginia, 2010), 23-25.



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this year which might disturb your present engagements, it will open a great field of future employment for you. will you undertake it? if you will, be so good as to let me hear from you as soon as you can, and I would rather wish it to be before the 6th of May . . . tender my esteem to mr Nelson & be assured of it respectfully yourself.<sup>256</sup>

Dinsmore, who was then based in Petersburg, Virginia, made up his mind quickly, replying to Jefferson on April 22, 1817:

your favour of the 13th Inst was duly received, and I beg leave to return you my most Sincere thanks for your Continued attention to my Interests—the proposition you make is most agreeable to me and I with pleasure accept of it, as I prefer that Neighbourhood to any I have yet lived in—tho in a pecuniary point of view this is the preferable place—we expect to finish our present engagements here in about two months but if it is Necessary I Should have no objection to make a trip up there at anytime Called on—it is probable mr Neilson will also move up the Country when we finish here.<sup>257</sup>

Dinsmore added a postscript, writing that “mr Neilson Sends his best wishes.”<sup>258</sup> Dinsmore accepted Jefferson’s offer, and Neilson would also.

After Dinsmore and John Neilson, a “joiner who had worked for Jefferson since 1804,” left Monticello in 1809, they had worked for several years at Montpelier, the home of James Madison, and later at Upper Bremo. In 1816, shortly before Jefferson invited Dinsmore to move to Charlottesville, he and Neilson had rented “a carpenter’s shop in Petersburg,” Virginia, where they worked to rebuild the city after a devastating fire in 1815.<sup>259</sup>

## PROGRESS AT THE UNIVERSITY

In November 1818 Jefferson was able to report on substantial progress with the construction work at the university: two pavilions were “nearly ready and as many will be erected the next summer as workmen can to procured to execute.”<sup>260</sup> Dinsmore had been working at the site at this time. Like other Charlottesville merchants, Nimrod Bramham, who had purchased the Oak Lawn property in 1818, must certainly have been aware of this work. In time, the construction of the university would become as a source of revenue for his Charlottesville mercantile firm.

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256. TJ to JD, April 13, 1817, trans., *Founders Online*.

257. JD to TJ, April 22, 1817, trans., *Founders Online*.

258. JD to TJ, April 22, 1817, trans., *Founders Online*.

259. [encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/dinsmore-james-\(1771-or-1772-1830\)](https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/dinsmore-james-(1771-or-1772-1830)), accessed Jan. 31, 2024.

260. Board of Visitors, Minutes, July 18 and Oct. 17, 1817; March 31, 1821. William Bainter O’Neal and Frederick Doveton Nichols, “An Architectural History of the First University Pavilion,” *The Magazine of Albemarle County History*, 15 (1955-1956), 36.

## OAK LAWN

### A SHORTAGE OF SKILLED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Jefferson's comment about securing sufficient skilled workers for the 1819 building season proved prescient. Dinsmore complained to Jefferson in March 1819 about "the difficulties we face herein securing good workmen."<sup>261</sup> Concerned about this situation, the university placed advertisements in newspapers published in several cities. The advertisement that appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer* on March 12, 1819, was headlined "Workmen Wanted—for the buildings at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville to wit: Brick Makers and Brick Layers, stone masons, House Carpenters and Joiners, Plasterers Painters and Glaziers." Proposals were to be sent to the proctor of the university "with as little delay as possible."<sup>262</sup> Dinsmore, along with brickmason John Perry, submitted a new proposal in April 1819 since they expected more financial competition as a result of the advertisement.<sup>263</sup> In a March 27, 1819, letter to Jefferson, Dinsmore mentioned that he had "fixed myself with a work Shop and other convenincys [sic], for Carrying on work at the Central College and have declined other jobs."<sup>264</sup>

The publication of the newspaper advertisements for contractors for the university had brought a flurry of responses: in July 1819 Jefferson wrote that once the new group of construction workers arrived from Philadelphia, "we shall then have about 100 persons at work on the different buildings."<sup>265</sup> In December 1819 Jefferson was able to report that the "walls of the 7 pavilions and 37 dormitories" were completed and that "their roofs were in forwardness to be put up in due time. Their inner and outer furnishings will be the work of the ensuing year."<sup>266</sup>

### JAMES DINSMORE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Dinsmore arrived in Charlottesville in 1817 and assisted Jefferson in staking out the foundations for Pavilion VII, the first to be erected. Dinsmore would become the "principal master carpenter for four pavilions, many dormitories, and later with John Neilson, the Rotunda and the Anatomical Hall."<sup>267</sup>

Dinsmore also became a land speculator in Charlottesville, purchasing a 35-acre plot from Henry Chiles in 1818, buying hundreds of acres of other land, and building houses along West

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261. JD to TJ, March 27, 1819; TJ Papers, University of Virginia.

262. *Richmond Enquirer*, March 12, 1819.

263. Dinsmore and John Perry to Nelson Barksdale, April 1, 1819, TJ Papers, University of Virginia.

264. Dinsmore to Jefferson, March 27, 1819, trans., William B. O'Neal, "The Workmen at the University of Virginia, 1817-1826, With Notes and Documents," *The Magazine of Albemarle County History* 17 (1958-1959), 29. One wonders whether Oak Lawn was one of the projects that Dinsmore rejected.

265. TJ to Thomas Cooper, July 11, 1819, TJ Papers, University of Virginia, SCCL.

266. Board of Visitors, *Annual Report*, Oct. 4, 1819; Dec. 1, 1819.

267. Wilson and Butler, 31, 34, 36, 38.

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Main Street in the 1820s.<sup>268</sup> Dinsmore's name appears among the listings of early subscribers to the university; with his contribution of \$200, he was among the larger donors, perhaps an indication of his growing prosperity in Charlottesville.<sup>269</sup>

An 1820 U.S. census enumerator in Charlottesville recorded on August 7 that Dinsmore's household then consisted of twelve people, of whom six were enslaved persons: one male child, one man aged 26 to 44, three girls, and one female aged 26 to 44. Others in the household were one "free colored" man, four "free white" men aged 16 to 25, another "free white" man aged 14 to 25. Only one person was "Engaged in Agriculture," but six were "Engaged in Manufactures."<sup>270</sup> It may be that some of these men were apprenticed to Dinsmore; when Jefferson initially offered the work at the university to Dinsmore, he mentioned, for instance, that "there is a person here who wishes to offer you two very fine boys, his sons, as apprentices."<sup>271</sup>

When he drafted his will in 1813, Dinsmore stated that it was his wish that "my negro woman Silla & her children" should, upon his death, "live with my brother John, but in case she should object to going with him, she is to be at liberty to choose her master." He bequeathed a set of "bench tools & three saws to my boy John Boles," apparently one of his enslaved males. Dinsmore listed James Leitch, a Richmond hardware merchant, as temporary executor, suggesting that Dinsmore greatly valued their relationship.<sup>272</sup>

Dinsmore died on May 13, 1830, by drowning in the Rivanna river. Five months later, his "personal property" was scheduled to be sold at auction. A notice for the auction published in the *Virginia Advocate* listed among the property "Twelve or Thirteen Negroes, Men, Women, and Children," along with "all his Household and Kitchen Furniture; his "Library of well selected Books," horses, a cow, agricultural equipment, and crops."<sup>273</sup>

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268. K. Edward Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country, Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 96-97.

269. "Master List of Subscribers to Central College. [After 7 May 1817]," *Founders Online*.

270. U.S. Federal Census, 1820, Ancestry.com, accessed July 26, 2024. One wonders if some of those listed were apprenticed to Dinsmore.

271. TJ to JD, April 13, 1817, trans., *Founders Online*. Apprenticeship records may contain more information.

272. James Dinsmore, Will, March 29, 1813, trans., Sharp Family History Papers, MSS16822, Box 3, SSCL. James Dinsmore, Will, March 29, 1813, *Ancestry.com*, accessed July 26, 2024; the Ancestry.com transcript lists "John Bolls" as an "Enslaved Person."

273. Advertisement, *Virginia Advocate*, Oct. 8, 1830.

## OAK LAWN

### THOMAS JEFFERSON AND NIMROD BRAMHAM

Nimrod Bramham, the new owner of the Oak Lawn property, was known to Jefferson and may have looked to him to recommend a suitable builder for the residence for his estate.<sup>274</sup> Jefferson recommended Dinsmore to other property owners who needed design and construction services, and he may well have made such a suggestion to Bramham. In a letter of February 1816, for instance, a mutual acquaintance reported that Jefferson had mentioned Dinsmore's name to John Hartwell Cocke, who was then developing his Upper Bremo estate, explaining to Cocke that "Dinsmore who is now in Petersburg he recommends to you as a good and faithful workman."<sup>275</sup>

As noted in the History section of this report, Bramham was a "popular" man, "highly esteemed for his commercial skill and energy." He established a store in Albemarle County, where he sold nails to Thomas Jefferson; he later, in 1806, set up a merchant store in the heart of Charlottesville, on Court Square, less than two miles from the future location of Jefferson's university and with ready access to the artisan and business community.<sup>276</sup>

Jefferson corresponded with Bramham. In one letter he called Bramham "a gentleman of truth & candour."<sup>277</sup> In addition, Jefferson's accounts show payments made to Bramham or his mercantile firm. One payment, made in 1812, was for settling "an account at his store."<sup>278</sup> Jefferson also knew Bramham through his problems with the Rivanna River Company, of which Bramham was a director. Jefferson had built "very expensive manufacturing and grist mills on the Rivanna river," near Monticello, along with a canal. Jefferson claimed that the company wished to "use this canal for navigation" without his permission and without proper protection for the mills. Included in Jefferson's surviving correspondence is a letter dated January 1813 to Bramham seeking help to protect Jefferson "in my just rights" related to this lawsuit.<sup>279</sup>

Jefferson may also have known of Bramham's involvement with the university's practices in awarding construction contracts. As construction work was underway at the university in 1819, merchants in Charlottesville realized that orders for building materials were being given to firms in Richmond, rather than to local firms. Charlottesville merchants "expressed some

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274. Oak Lawn was in its early years known as Oak Grove.

275. Fiske Kimball, "The Building of Bremo," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (no.1), Jan. 1949, 8; accessed through JSTOR, May 14, 2024.

276. James Alexander, ed. Mary Rowlings, *Early Charlottesville, Recollections of James Alexander, 1828-1874*, reprinted from the Jeffersonian Republican by the Albemarle Historical Society (Charlottesville: The People's National Bank of Charlottesville, 1942), 4. Mary Rowlings, *Ante-bellum Albemarle, Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville: The People's Bank of Charlottesville, Va. [1935]), 53.

277. TJ to Phillip Barbour, Jan. 4, 1813, *Founders Online*. Note to entry of July 14, 1797, from memo book [to be amended].

278. "Notes on Expenses," [circa May 1, 1812], *Founders Online*.

279. TJ to NB, Jan. 5, 1813, *Founders Online*.



## OAK LAWN

dissatisfaction,” for example, at “Mr. Leitch’s having the exclusive privilege of furnishing the University with the Iron mongary &c.”<sup>280</sup>

In the spring of that year, the university reviewed its policies for purchasing building materials from merchants in Richmond. Bramham and his partner Jones took note. In May 1819 the university’s bursar invited “local merchants to submit proposals for ‘furnishing the university.’”<sup>281</sup> Among the respondents was the firm of Bramham & Jones. They “agreed to ‘furnish such Merchandise as may be wanting for the use of said buildings at ten per cent On the costs, and Charges of getting the Materials to Charlottesville.’”<sup>282</sup> Concerned about construction costs and very interested in building materials and systems, Jefferson may well have been interested in the merchants’ responses to the bursar’s invitation, including that from Bramham & Jones. The accounts kept by the university’s proctor and treasurer, Alexander Garrett, between 1819 and 1821 indicate that many payments were made by the university during those years, both to Nimrod Bramham and to the firm of Bramham & Jones.<sup>283</sup> Like Dinsmore, Nimrod Bramham also responded generously to an early appeal for donations to the university, committing to a gift of \$500.<sup>284</sup>

### ATTRIBUTING OAK LAWN TO JAMES DINSMORE, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

While it is clear that Dinsmore and Bramham both knew Jefferson, archival documents directly linking Dinsmore with Bramham have not yet been located. However, it seems highly likely that the two men would have at least known of each other. When Dinsmore arrived, Charlottesville was still a relatively small but growing community. Incorporated as a town in 1801, by 1810 the town had 45 houses, a courthouse, a jail, and an academy.<sup>285</sup> The courthouse area, where Nimrod Bramham’s store was located, was annexed in 1818. It was the construction of the university that spurred Charlottesville’s growth, offering jobs and opening opportunities for commercial

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280. Alexander Garrett to Arthur Spicer Brockenbrough, May 12, 1819; note: 12th is correct date, not 17th. “Mr. Leitch was likely the same James Leitch that acted as Dinsmore’s temporary executor.

281. Bramham & Jones, Proposal, May 16, 1819, Proctors Papers, SSCL, cited in Grizzard, p. 66; the proposal itself was not located.

282. Bramham & Jones, Proposal, May 16, 1819, Proctors Papers, SSCL, cited in Grizzard, p. 66.

283. Alexander Garrett’s Account with the University of Virginia, Sept. 30, 1819; April 3, 1820; March 31, 1821; Nov. 27, 1821; *Founders Online*.

284. “Master List of Subscribers to Central College. [After 7 May 1817],” *Founders Online*.

285. Charlottesville and Albemarle County Courthouse District, Kate Kuranda and Karen Lang-Kummer, Nomination Form. [https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR\\_to\\_transfer/PDFNoms/104-0072\\_CharlottesvilleAndAlbemarleCountyCourthouse\\_HD\\_1980-1995\\_Amendment\\_Final\\_Nomination.pdf](https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/104-0072_CharlottesvilleAndAlbemarleCountyCourthouse_HD_1980-1995_Amendment_Final_Nomination.pdf), retrieved November 13, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

enterprises. Even with that impetus, one estimate numbers the population at just 600 by 1824; presumably, this number does not include enslaved people.<sup>286</sup>

Given Dinsmore's financial position and prominence as a builder within the Charlottesville community, Bramham certainly must have known of Dinsmore. Furthermore, Jefferson is known to have suggested contractors to his acquaintances. Dinsmore and Bramham working together to create Oak Lawn thus seems to be to a reasonable possibility.

The design and scale of the construction work at the university that was underway beginning in 1818, when Bramham had acquired his property, may have impacted Bramham's plans to erect a residence for his family. Given the reported shortage of skilled construction workers in 1819, would Bramham have been able to engage a designer and first-class workers for his project? Instead of hiring a designer, did Bramham rely on features of the university buildings then being erected? Did some workers at the university also work on Oak Lawn at times? While Dinsmore was busy with his contracts with the university and with his own residential projects, would he have been able to develop the design for Oak Lawn and also oversee its construction, even though it was located nearby?

It may also be relevant that the 1820 federal census counted 33 enslaved people as belonging to Nimrod Bramham; this total included 14 enslaved males between the age of 14 and over the age of 45. While 18 people were listed in the census as being "Engaged in Agriculture," would some of them or others on the property have been available at times to assist with the construction of Oak Lawn and overcome the problems with finding other workers?<sup>287</sup> In addition, perhaps James Dinsmore's enslaved people and any apprentices may have also been available to work on Oak Lawn.

The earliest published attribution of Oak Grove to Dinsmore may be a March 6, 1964, article in *The Daily Progress*, a local newspaper. The article reported on a talk given the previous evening at the winter meeting of the Albemarle County Historical Society by Charlottesville architect Frederick D. Nichols.<sup>288</sup> The article stated that "Nichols gave a historical sketch of 'Oak Lawn,' the old Fife house, saying that it was built about 1822 and probably by James Dinsmore and John Neilson, two of Jefferson's one time carpenters."<sup>289</sup>

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286. Works Progress Administration, *Jefferson's Albemarle: A Guide to Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville*, 45. For remembrances of downtown Charlottesville in 1828 (including Bramham's store), see Mary Rawlings (ed.) and the Albemarle County Historical Society, *Early Charlottesville: Recollections of James Alexander, 1828-1874*. For an overview of the industries and enterprises in Charlottesville at that time, see John Hammond Moore, *Albemarle: Jefferson's County, 1727-1976*.

287. U.S. Federal Census, 1820, Ancestry.com, accessed Aug. 10, 2024.

288. In July 2024 the online copies of *The Daily Progress* were searched for references for both "Dinsmore" and "Oak Lawn."

289. *The Daily Progress*, March 6, 1964. Nichols had also prepared a detailed but undated report on Oak Lawn; in it he wrote that "little is actually known about the particular circumstances in which the house at Oak Lawn was constructed, for its designer and builder are unknown at this time." Since Nichols did not attribute the house to a particular builder, this report may date from prior to his 1964 lecture. Frederick

## OAK LAWN

### OTHER CRAFTSMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY

Dinsmore and Neilson were only two of many craftsmen in Charlottesville who could have been part of the construction of Bramham's house. John M. Perry, a local master brickmason, owned property neighboring Bramham's holding. It was Perry who sold two parcels of land for what would become the Academical Village, with the agreement that he would receive the contract for the construction, and he went on to build four of the pavilions as well as hotels and student rooms. Another local master builder and brickmason, Allen Hawkins, worked on the Lawn and then constructed homes nearby, including his own house on 5<sup>th</sup> street in 1832, presumably on the "3 or 4 acres" that he purchased from Bramham in 1840.<sup>290</sup> Other brickmasons at the university included William B. Phillips, Curtis Carter, and Abiah B. Thorn.<sup>291</sup>

Richard Ware came to Charlottesville from Philadelphia as a master carpenter. He supervised the construction of three pavilions and Hotel F, as well as student rooms. He stayed in the area until 1823.<sup>292</sup> George Wilson Spooner, Jr., another carpenter, married Perry's daughter and made Charlottesville his home.<sup>293</sup>

In addition to these craftsmen, vast numbers of enslaved men built the Academical Village. They brought essential skills to the construction site, including carpentry, masonry, and metalworking. These men were often leased from local slaveholders. While no university accounts list Bramham as a source for enslaved laborers, it is likely that he took advantage of a skilled labor force and leased them from others to make and lay the brick, craft the woodwork, and install the plaster and other finishes that defined his home.<sup>294</sup>

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D. Nichols, "Oak Lawn, Material Collected by Frederic. D. Nichols," n.d., copy available at <https://weblink.charlottesville.org/Public/0/fol/650802/Row1.aspx>. While undated, this report may date from prior to 1973, when the National Register of Historic Places nomination was prepared. A brief report by Nancy O'Brien for the Works Progress Administration, dated Feb. 19, 1936, did not mention a designer or builder.

290. Maral S. Kalbian, National Register of Historic Places Nomination: "Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District" (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, June 18, 2009). Virginia Department of Historic Resources Property File 104-0213.

291. K. Edward Lay, "Charlottesville's Architectural Legacy," *Magazine of Albemarle County History*, Vol. 46, Charlottesville, May 1988, pp. 29-95. <https://www2.iath.virginia.edu/schwartz/cville/Lay.html>

292. "Ware, Richard," *Carpenters' Company Digital Archive & Museum*, <https://archive.carpentershall.org/items/show/26032>.

293. K. Edward Lay, "Charlottesville's Architectural Legacy."

294. Memorial to Enslaved Laborers website. <https://mel.virginia.edu/history>

OAK LAWN

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

OAK LAWN AND THE TRIPARTITE  
FARMHOUSE IN VIRGINIA

When Nimrod Bramham built his “Oak Grove” in 1822, he chose a building type familiar in the Virginia landscape: a central two-story block, “its gable facing forward to form a temple-like pediment,” flanked by one-story wings.<sup>295</sup> Sometimes referred to as a “Palladian” form, but more accurately as a “tripartite” or center-blocks-with-wings house, this form had developed for decades by 1822, expanding beyond the original English pattern-book influences to become a vernacular architectural type as well as “an architectural shorthand for wealth, political influence, and status.”<sup>296</sup>

ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENTS

Thomas Jefferson is credited with introducing the type to Virginia, drawing from English and European pattern books. His first design for Monticello, circa 1770, featured a central two-story pedimented block with double porticos. One-and-one-half story wings were anchored at the ends with one-story bays. The Marquis de Chastellux, who visited Jefferson in 1782, described the early iteration of the house:

This house, of which Mr. Jefferson was the architect, and often one of the workmen, is rather elegant, and in the Italian taste, though not without fault; it consists of one large square pavilion, the entrance of which is by two porticoes ornamented with pillars... two small wings, with only a ground floor, and attic story, are joined to the pavilion... My object in this short description is only to shew the difference between this, and the other houses of the country; for we may safely aver, that Mr. Jefferson is the first American who has consulted the fine arts to know how he should shelter himself from the weather.<sup>297</sup>

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295. Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Virginia* (Savannah, GA, 1987).

296. Marlene Elizabeth Heck, “Building Status: Pavilioned Dwellings in Virginia.” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 6 (1997): 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3514362>. See also Dell Upton, “New Views of the Virginia Landscape.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 96, no. 4 (1988): 403–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249035>.

297. Francois Jean, Marquis de Chastellux and George Grieve, *Travels In North-America, In the Years 1780, 1781, And 1782, Volume II* (London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1787) 41–42. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073766746&sseq=9>



## OAK LAWN

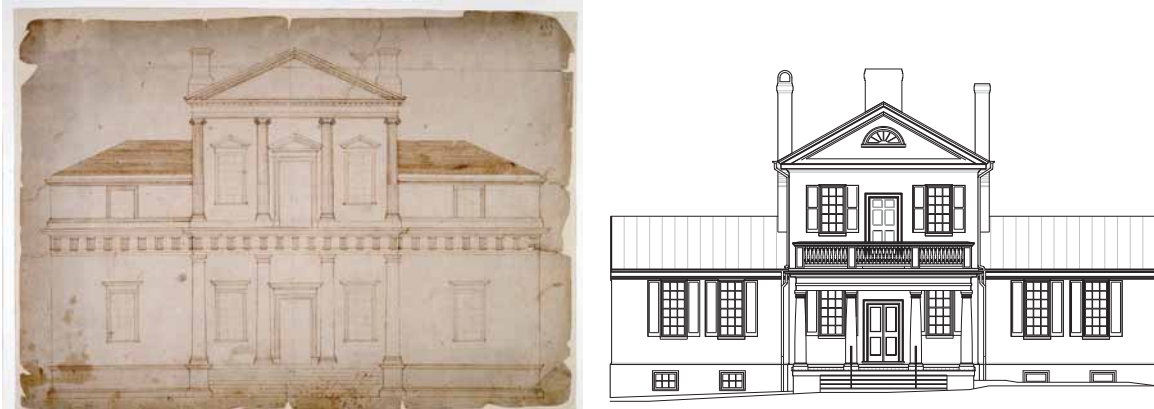


Figure 168. (Left) Thomas Jefferson, elevation of the first version of Monticello, probably before March 1771; and a thumbnail of Oak Lawn's east elevation (right). Coolidge Collection of Thomas Jefferson Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society, N48; K23; JGWA, 2024.

Jefferson may also have been involved in the design of the William Finnie House (also known as the James Semple House) in Williamsburg, Virginia. Built by 1782, the house “stands out as being a design well in advance of, or in rebellion against, the native or typical Williamsburg houses. For this and other reasons, the Semple House has been traditionally attributed to the hand of Thomas Jefferson.”<sup>298</sup> The wood-framed structure is among the first homes in Virginia to have the pedimented, two-story block and two-bay-wide single story wings.

The plan of the Finnie House established a pattern for future tripartite houses:

The ground floor arrangement includes a large, almost square center hall, or entrance salon, which is flanked by an equally large room to the west and by a smaller room and stair hall to the east. Two large chimney breasts flank the central room, becoming an integral part of the walls which divide this space from the end rooms. Two small second story bedrooms and a hall occupy the space over the entrance salon and within the upper portion of the pedimented pavilion.”<sup>299</sup>

298. Norman D. Askins, *William Finnie House Architectural Report, Block 2 Building 7, 1971-72*. (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series - 1016, 1990). <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/view/index.cfm?doc=ResearchReports%5CRR1016.xml&highlight=>

299. Askins, *William Finnie House Architectural Report*.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 169. The William Finnie (James Semple) House in Colonial Williamsburg, VA. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 170. Bon Aire before the mid-twentieth-century renovations that added a two-story portico and dormers to the wings. <https://cabell.com/bon-aire/>.*



*Figure 171. Montebello. Calder Loth, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2005.*

## OAK LAWN

### THE FLOOR PLAN

As the plan of the tripartite house—a central hall opening to all of the first-floor rooms—developed, the form provided clear benefits in the Virginia climate: plentiful natural light and cross-ventilation in every room. At Oak Lawn, each of the primary first-floor rooms had an exterior entrance and at least three windows. The second-floor bedrooms had four windows each, with additional openings in a closet and in what is now a passage between the bedrooms.

However, the entrance hall, the central hub of Oak Lawn, lacks that amenity. The only exterior openings are in the east wall, so there is no cross-ventilation in what was the most public room in the house. This plan deviates from the Virginia tradition of a central hall that extended from the front to the back of the house. By the time Oak Lawn was built, the central hall in Virginia homes was treated as another living space that took advantage of the fresh, cooling air flowing through the space.<sup>300</sup>

The traditional Virginia hall featured decorative treatments that marked it as an important public room.<sup>301</sup> The ornamental plaster ceiling treatment in the Oak Lawn hall, most likely installed after the Fifes purchased the house, distinguishes this room from the other rooms in the house. The Oak Lawn entrance hall also fulfills a crucial role of the central passage: it separates private spaces from public spaces. The north and south wings could be used as bedchambers or as semi-private parlors or offices. Presumably, the west wing, with its proximity to a kitchen and other outbuildings, was used as a dining room, another important public space in a Virginia country house.<sup>302</sup>

### OAK LAWN AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

At Oak Lawn, the interpretation of the tripartite form was overlaid with influence from the nearby construction of the University of Virginia. The pavilions on the Lawn are more academically and elegantly detailed, but their impact on the design of Oak Lawn is unmistakable, particularly in the use of brick, laid in Flemish bond, with penciled mortar joints, and in the pediment gable and its fanlight.

Many of the farmhouse types used a small pediment porch at the main entrance. The builder of Oak Lawn used a front porch that extended the full width of the central block, with Tuscan columns supporting a balcony at the second floor. This treatment echoes the porticos and porches at the pavilions on the Lawn as well as grander homes of its time.

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300. Mark R. Wenger, "The Central Passage in Virginia: Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Living Space." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 137–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3514325>.

301. Ibid.

302. Wenger, Mark R. "The Dining Room in Early Virginia." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 3 (1989): 149–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3514301>.

## OAK LAWN

That Oak Lawn is a local interpretation of the University of Virginia buildings is all the more apparent when compared with other surviving buildings of this type in Virginia (see chart). These examples are often wood-framed structures. One exception is Bon Aire, a brick home built in 1812 for Dr. George Cabell, Jr., in Nelson County, Virginia. In its original form, when a one-story porch extended across the central block, Bon Aire was a clear precedent for Oak Lawn, although more detailed and academic in its detailing. Another precedent was John M. Perry's Montebello, built in 1819-1820 on his property near Bramham's land. While not of the same proportions as Oak Lawn, Montebello's three-bay-wide, one-story porch is supported by four Tuscan columns that match those of Oak Lawn and the Jeffersonian Precinct colonnades. Like Oak Lawn, there are no corresponding engaged columns or pilasters on the Montebello porch.

### OAK LAWN DETAILS

Oak Lawn's simplification of the classical detailing seen at the University of Virginia, and the idiosyncrasies in its plan, add to its character. The front elevation of the house appears to be symmetrical, but in fact is not: the central doorways and flanking windows are set slightly to the north. Within the house, there are doorways positioned so close to the walls that only part of the architraves could be used.

The pair of enclosed winding stairs, mirroring each other at the center of the house, is perhaps the most unique feature of the Oak Lawn plan. The north stair ascends to the east bedroom; the south stair to the west bedroom. Two sets of stairs is a common feature in these houses, with one used for the family (and sometimes visitors) and the other as a service stair. Bon Aire, for instance, had stairways on either side of the entrance hall; one led to the second floor, and the other to the cellars. At Oak Lawn, the symmetrical treatment of the stairs and their similar finishes give the impression that they were intended for the same audience.







These unusual interpretations of the traditional tripartite house set Oak Hill apart as a significant record of the architectural type and of the influence of the buildings at the University of Virginia.










## OAK LAWN

TABLE 10: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF TRIPARTITE HOUSES IN VIRGINIA

*The following information and photographs are drawn from the online databases of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov>); the Society of Architectural Historians (<https://sah-archipedia.org>); and the Library of Congress.*

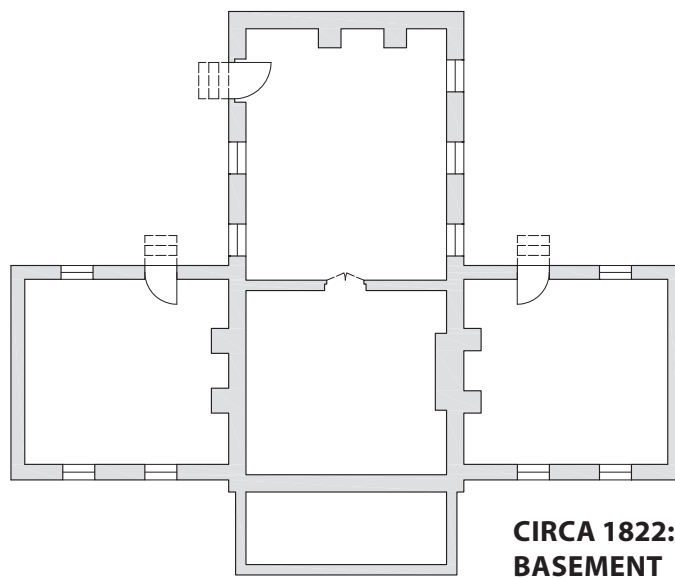
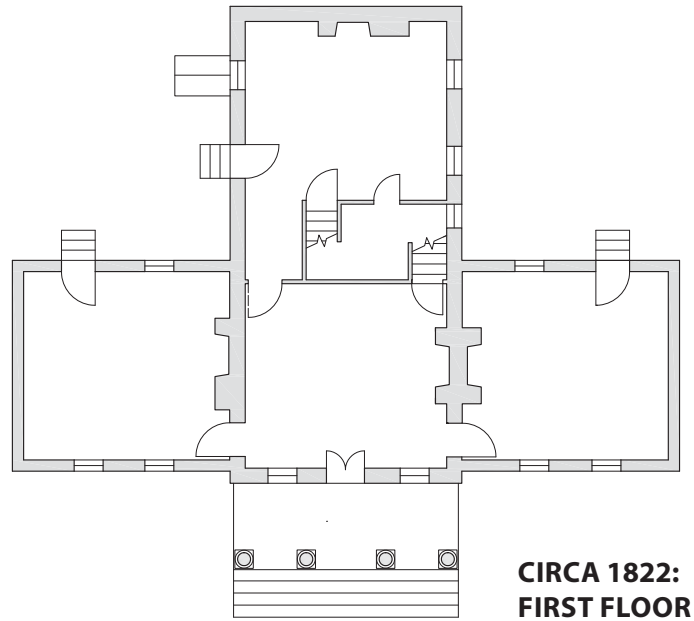
	Brandon Plantation	circa 1756; remodeled early 19th century	Spring Grove, Prince George, VA
	William Finnie/James Semple House	before 1782	Williamsburg, VA
	Federal Hill	1782	Forest, Campbell, VA
	Belnemus	1783-1799	Powhatan, Powhatan, VA
	Mountain Grove	1803-1804	Esmont, Albemarle, VA
	River Bluff	circa 1785, enlarged circa 1810	Wintergreen, Nelson, VA

## OAK LAWN

	Bon Aire	circa 1812  two-story portico and dormers added 20th century	Wingina, Nelson, VA
	Woodburn	circa 1813	Charles City, Charles City, VA
	Stono	1818	Lexington, VA
	Montebello	1819-1820	Charlottesville, VA
	Redmoor	Early 19th century	Amelia Court House, Amelia, VA
	Fortsville	circa 1821	Emporia, Sussex, VA
	Oak Lawn	circa 1822	Charlottesville, Albermarle, VA.

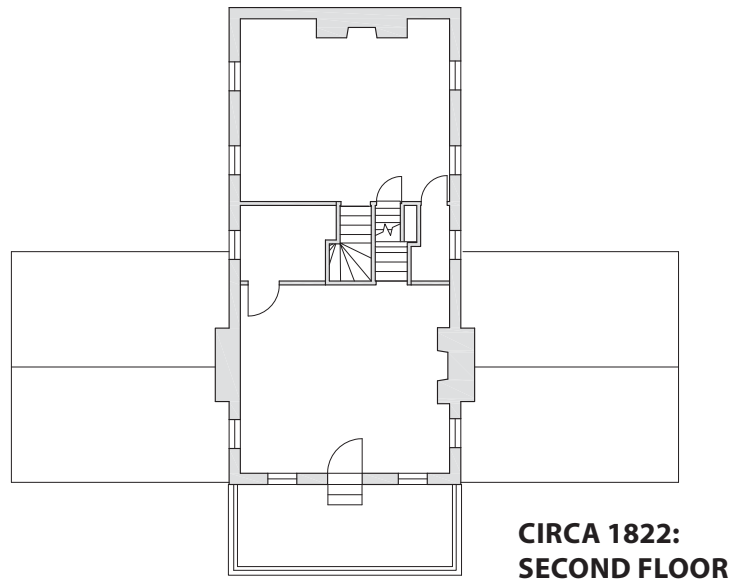
OAK LAWN  
HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT  
EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN HOUSE

## OAK LAWN





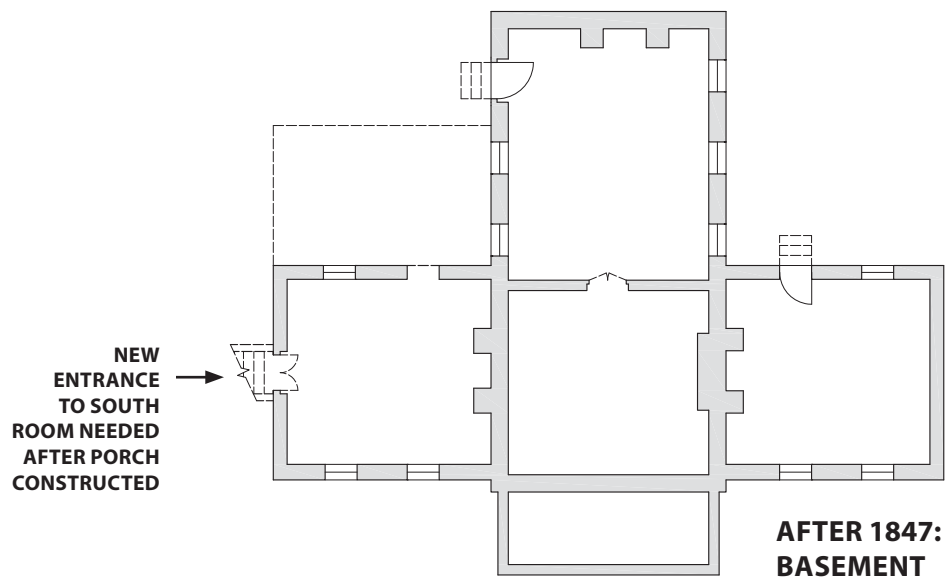
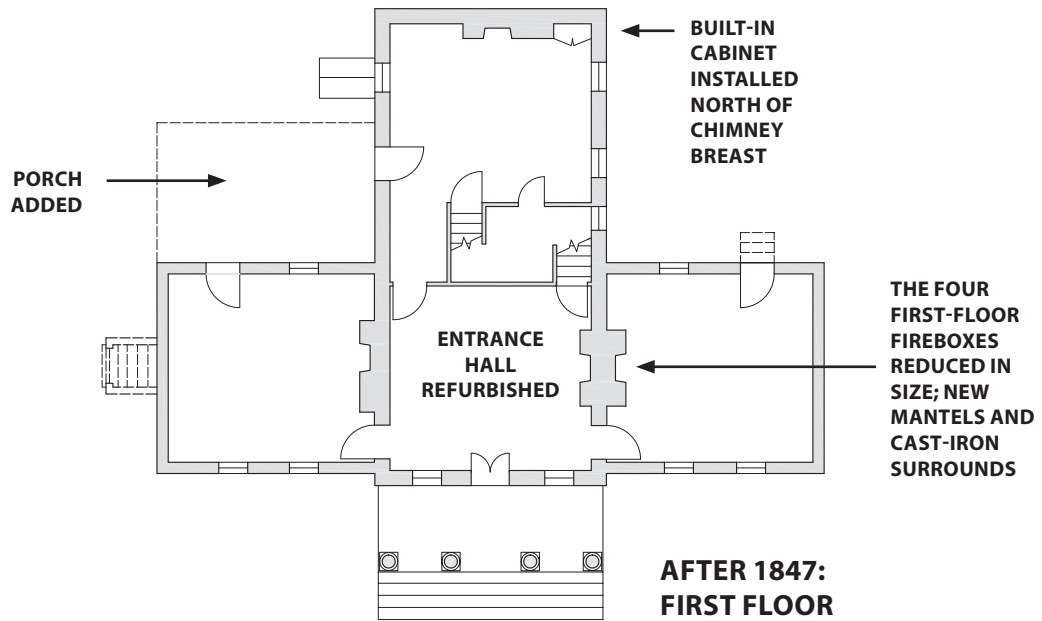
## OAK LAWN



*Figure 172. (Left and above) Floor plans of Oak Lawn as it appeared when first constructed, circa 1822.*

*When first constructed, the main house was simple in plan: four roughly square rooms on the first floor, each with an exterior doorway; cellar spaces below the north, south, and west rooms, presumably with steps leading down to the doorways; and two roughly square rooms on the second floor. A pair of enclosed winding stairs rose from the center of the first floor: one from the entrance hall up to the second-floor east room; and one from the west room up to the second-floor west room. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



## OAK LAWN

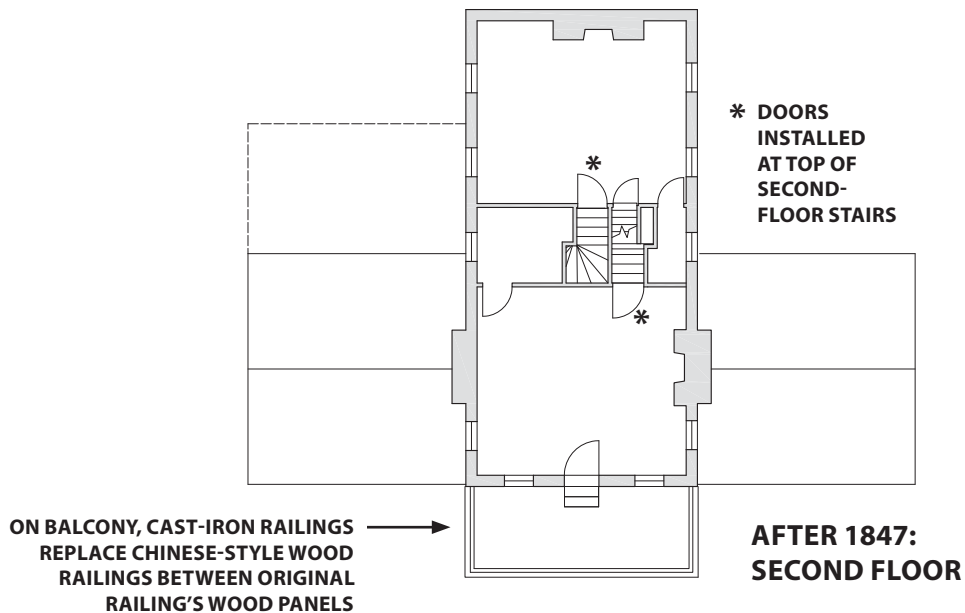
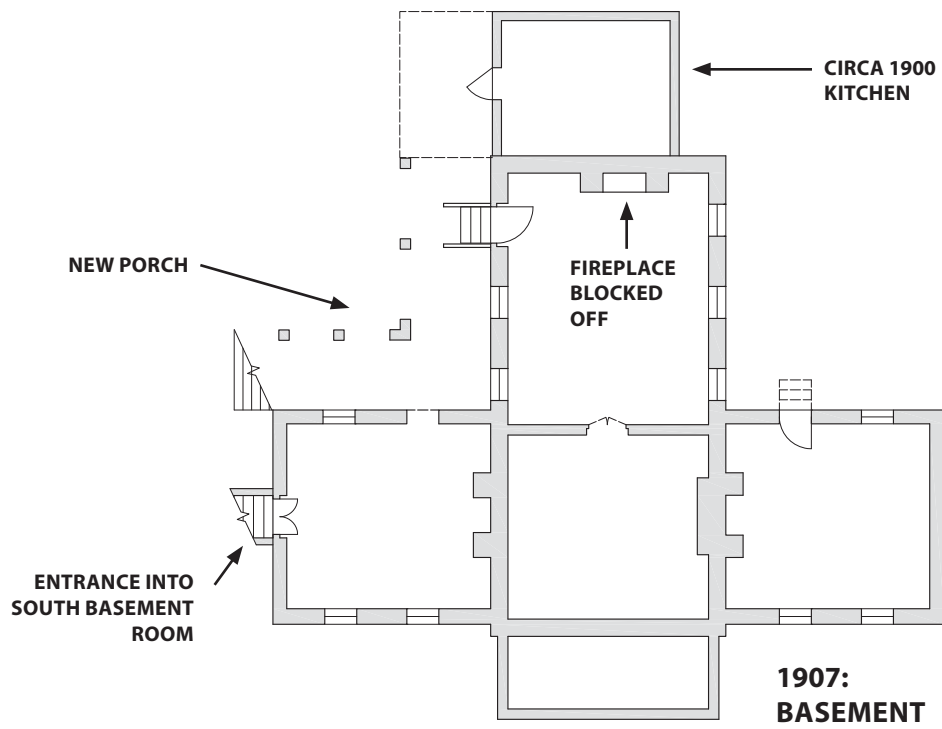
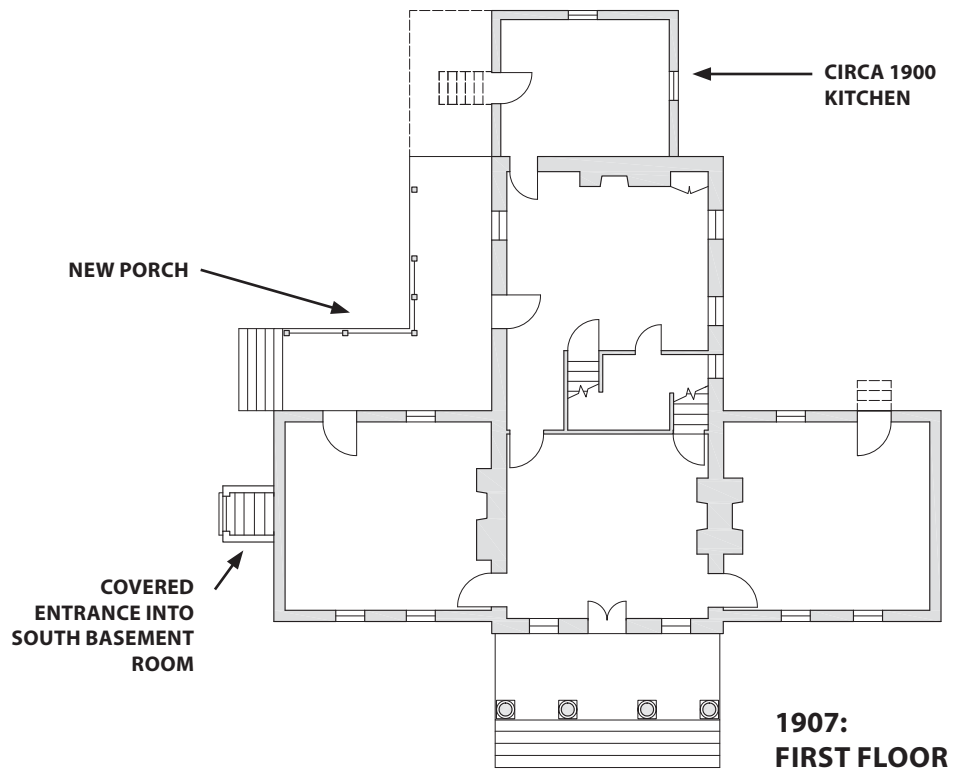


Figure 173. (Left and above) Floor plans showing changes to the main house after circa 1847 and before 1900.

*At some point later in the nineteenth century, presumably after Fife's purchase of the property, a southwest porch was installed; pockets for the framing of that porch can still be seen in the south wall of the central block. The porch blocked the west doorway into the south basement room, so some sort of new entrance was needed in the south wall.*

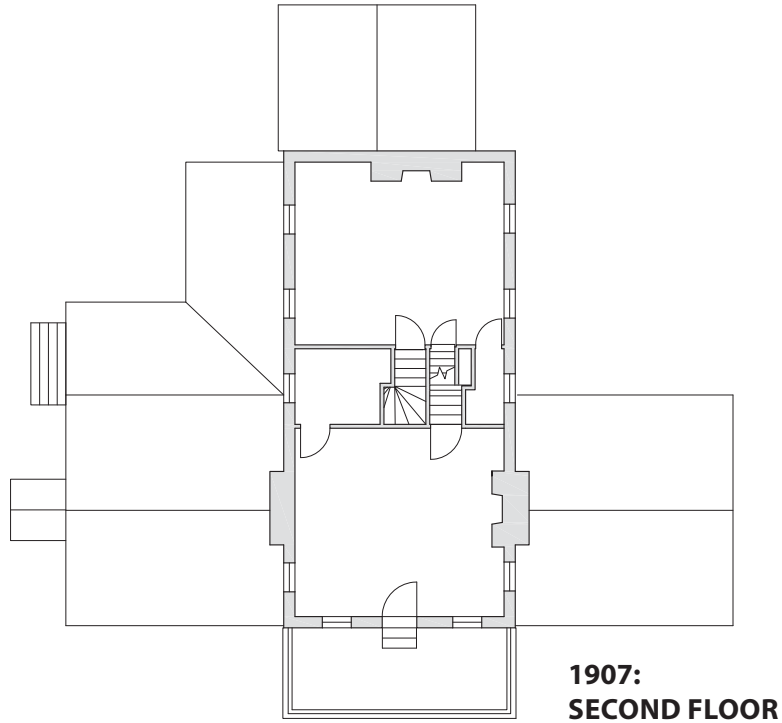
*On the first floor, the fireboxes on the first floor were reduced in size and new cast-iron surrounds installed. The existing wood mantels are different stylistically from the original second-floor mantels, and bear at least one fewer paint layers than the original trim, so it is possible that they replaced the original mantels. The entrance hall received a new ceiling treatment.*

*New doors were installed in the second-floor openings of the winding stairs. JGWA, 2024.*





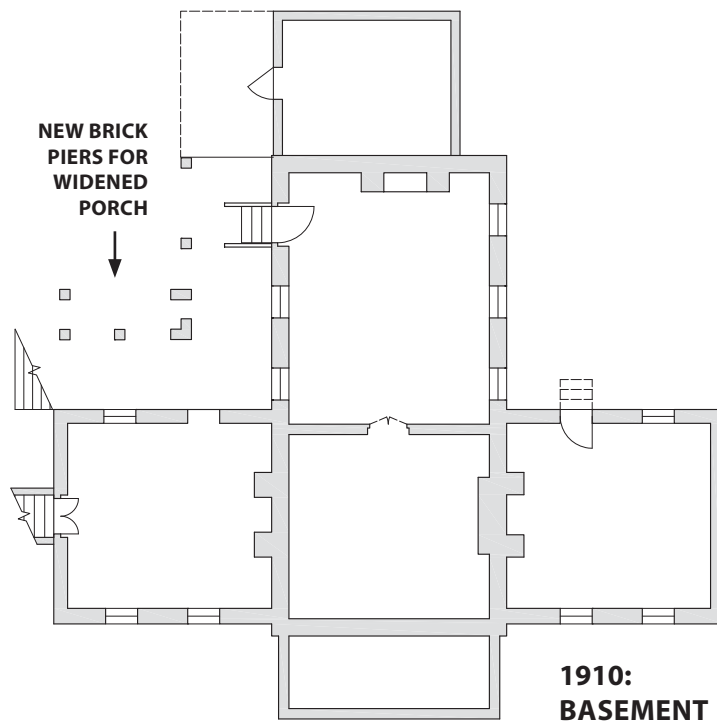
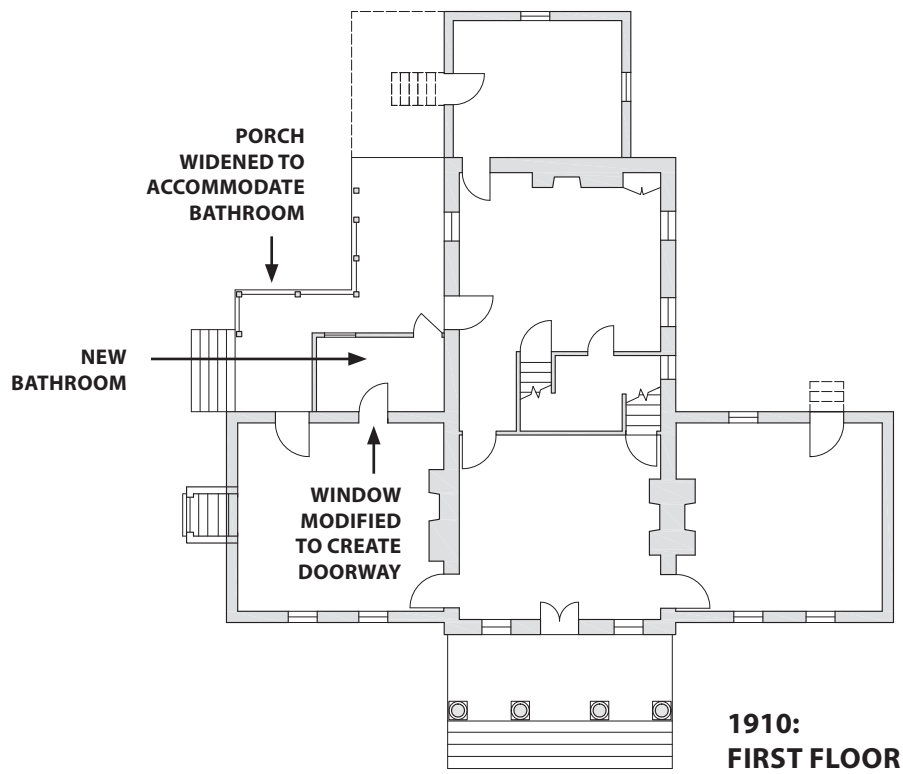
## OAK LAWN



*Figure 174. (Left and above) Floor plans showing changes to the main house by 1907.*

*In circa 1900, a kitchen was built onto the west end of the central block. Historic photographs show that by 1907, a new southwest porch had replaced the earlier one. This porch had a sawn wood balustrade; steps descended down to grade at the south end of the porch. The photographs do not reveal if the porch continued onto the kitchen addition.*

*The covered, gabled entrance to the south basement room can be seen in the 1907 photographs. It is likely that, with access to the west cellar room now beneath the porch, the fireplace was blocked off. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN

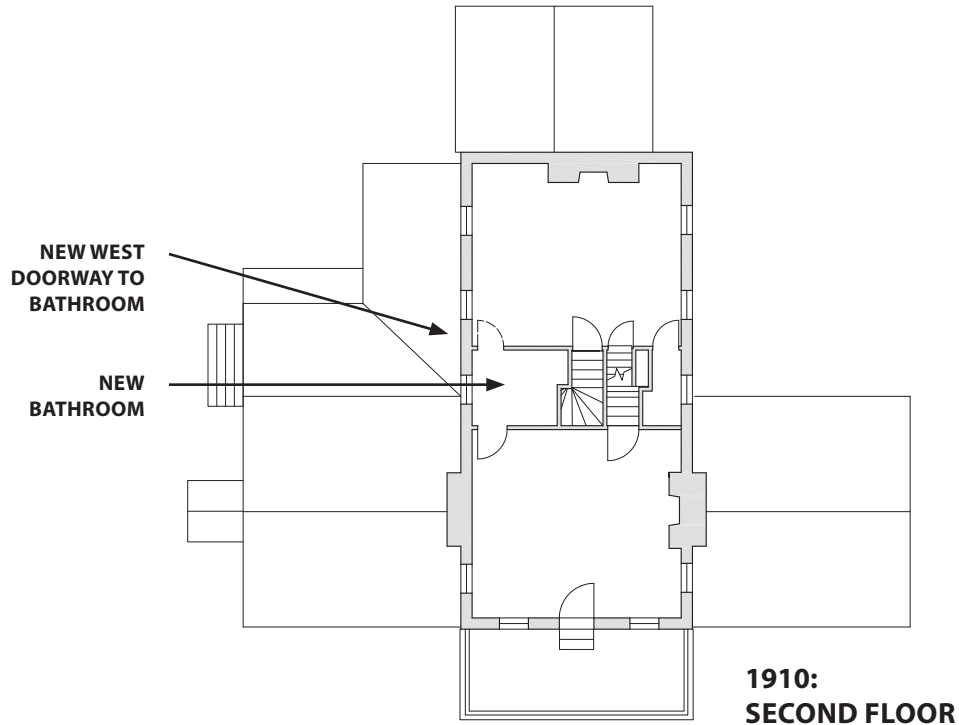
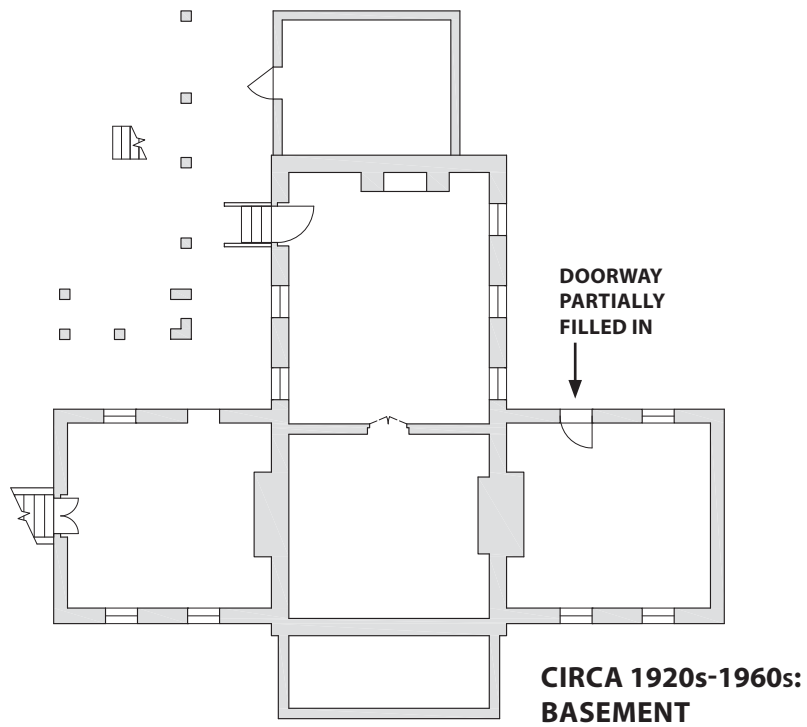
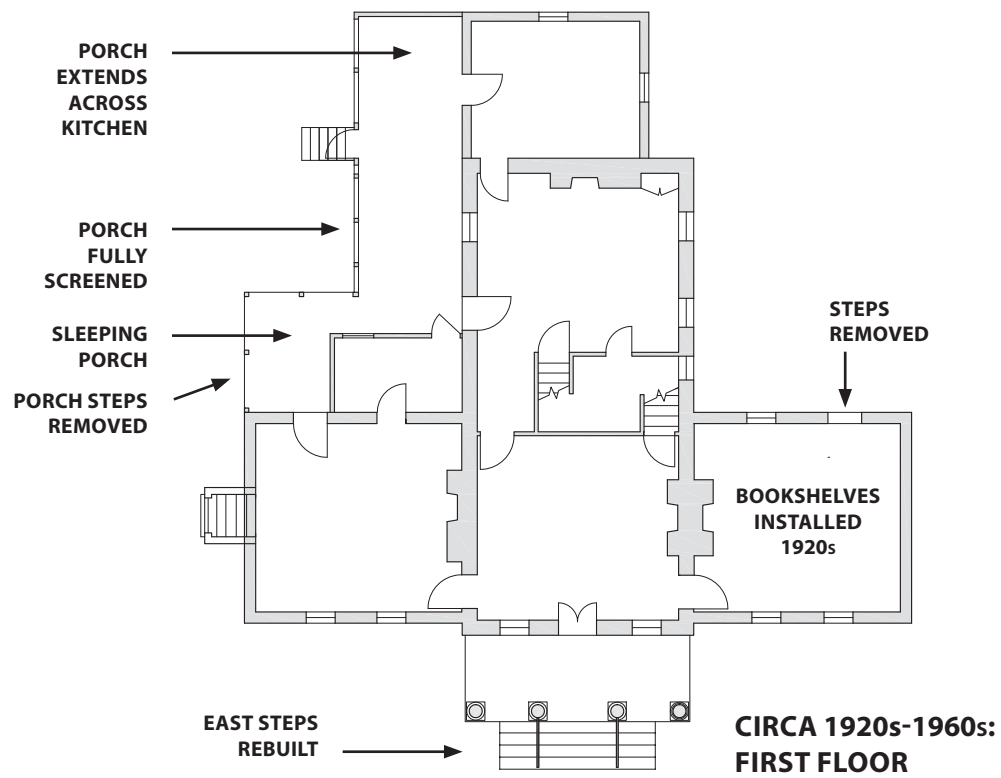


Figure 175. (Left and above) Floor plans showing changes to the main house in 1910.

*In 1910, the first indoor bathrooms were installed: one on the southwest porch, and one in a former closet space on the second floor. The south leg of the southwest porch was widened to accommodate the new first-floor bathroom.*  
JGWA, 2024.





## OAK LAWN

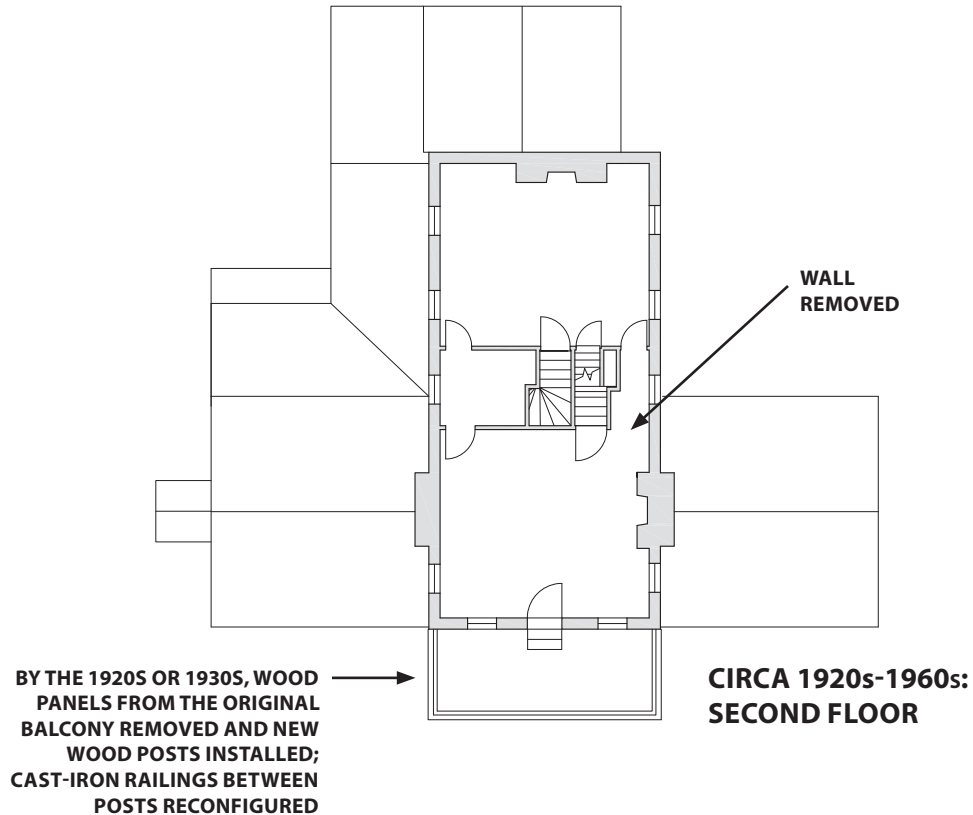


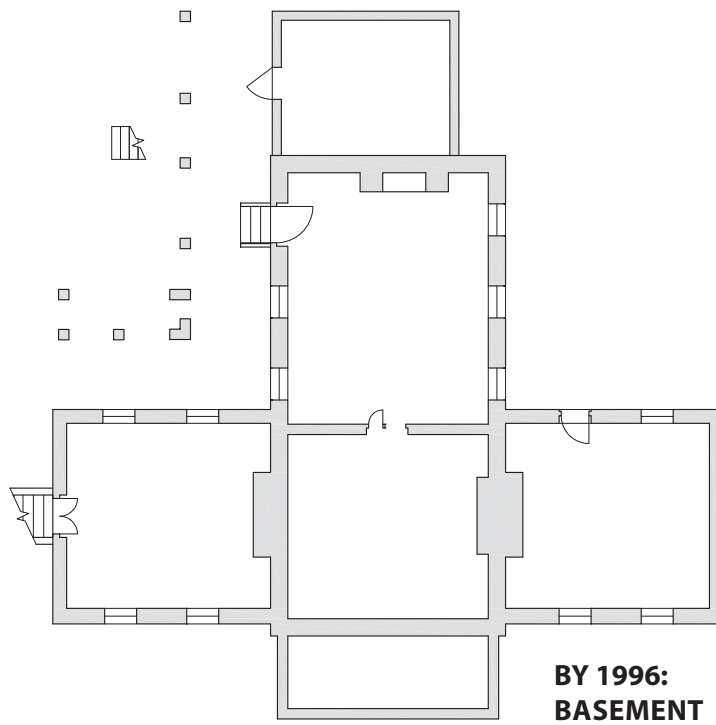
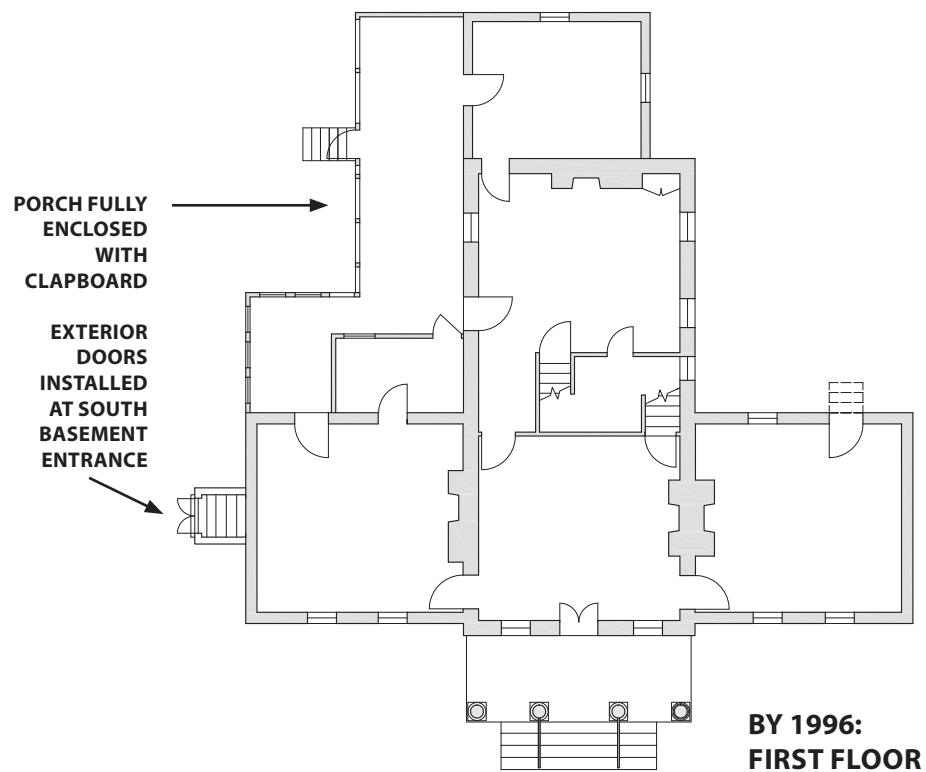
Figure 176. (Left and above) Floor plans showing changes to the main house by the 1960s.

*By the mid-twentieth century, the south end of the porch was screened in as a sleeping porch. Photographs show that the porch extended across the kitchen.*

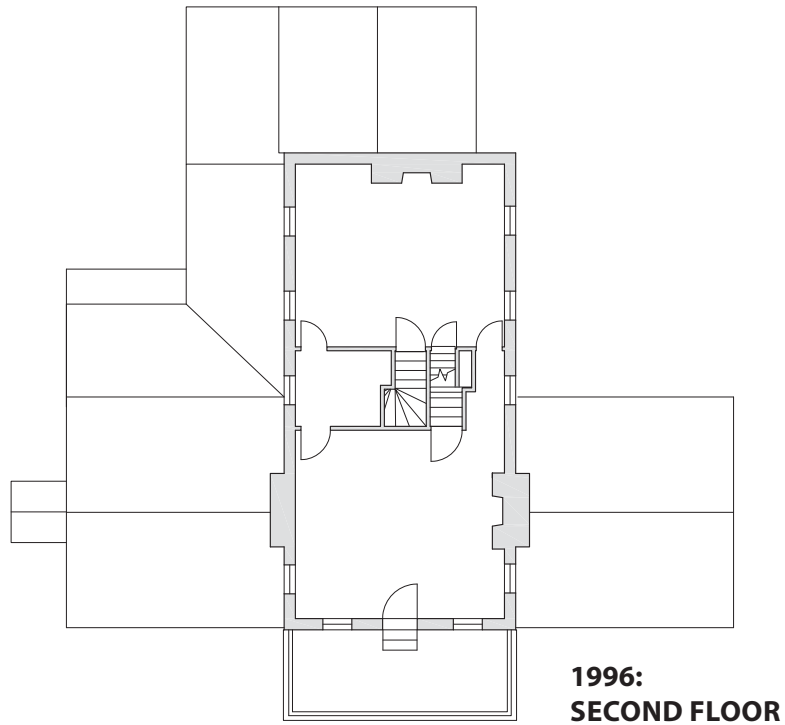
*In the basement, the fireboxes in the north and south rooms were closed up.*

*A photograph from the northwest reveals that there were no steps to the first-floor north room's exterior doorway.*

*A narrow section of wall separating the north ends of the second-floor bedrooms was removed. JGWA, 2024.*

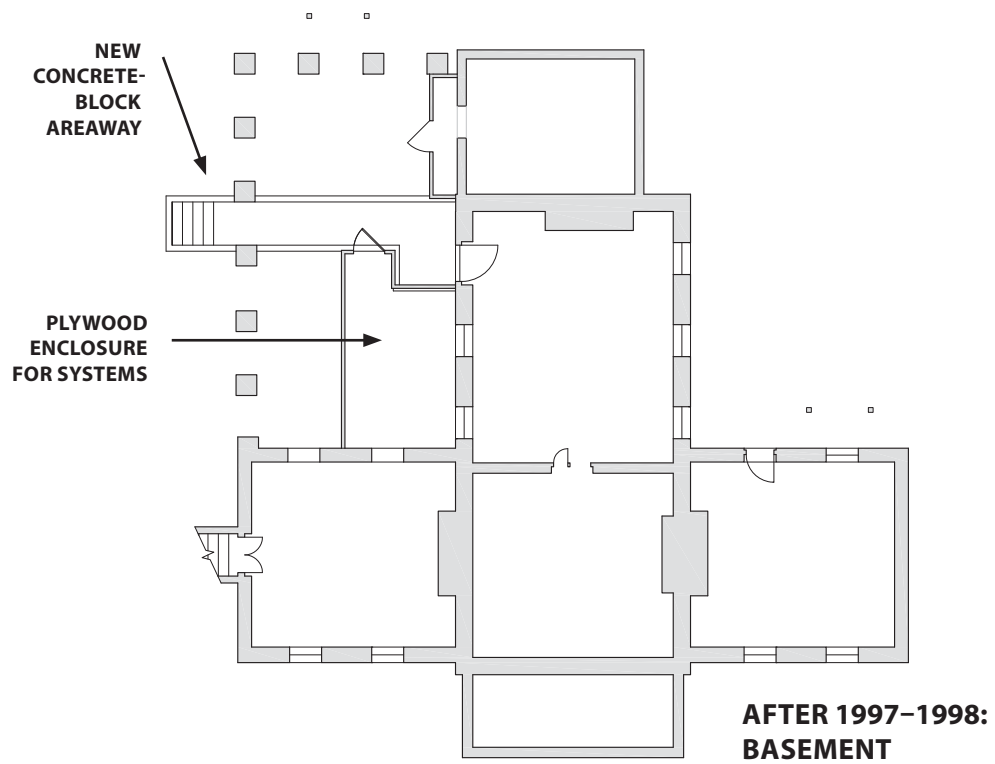
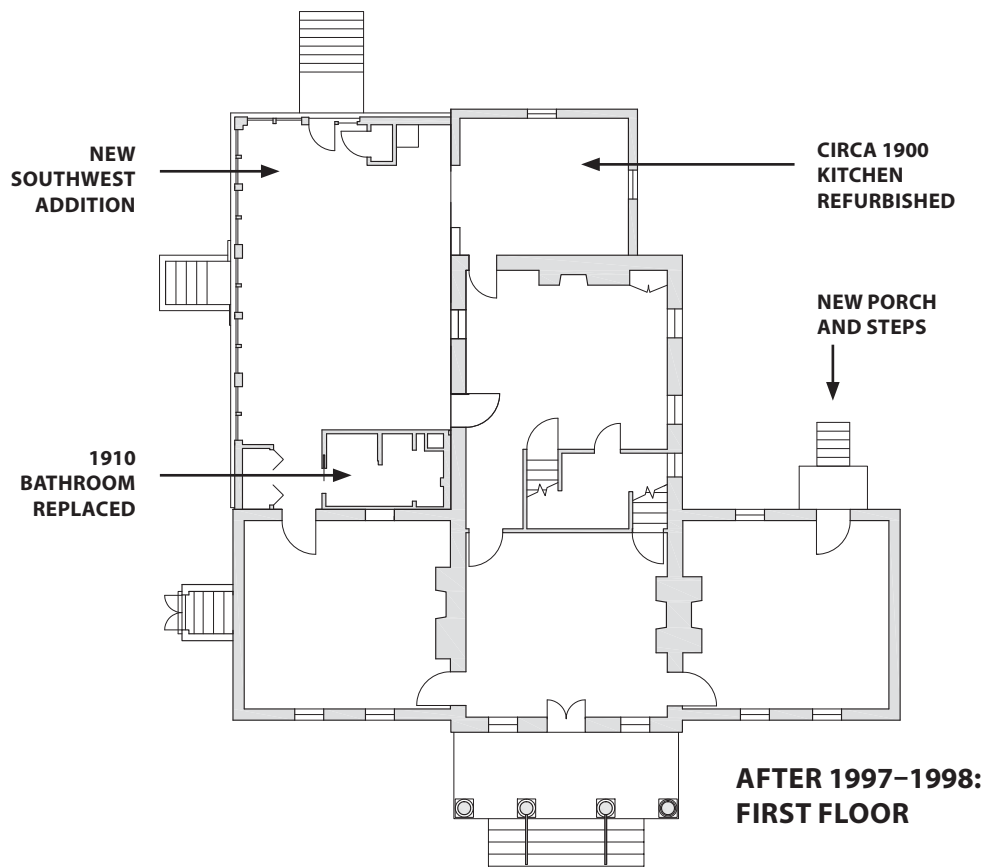


## OAK LAWN



*Figure 177. Floor plans showing changes to the main house by 1996.*

*By 1996, the southwest porch was fully enclosed with clapboard. The east steps were rebuilt and no longer extended across the full width of the east porch. JGWA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN

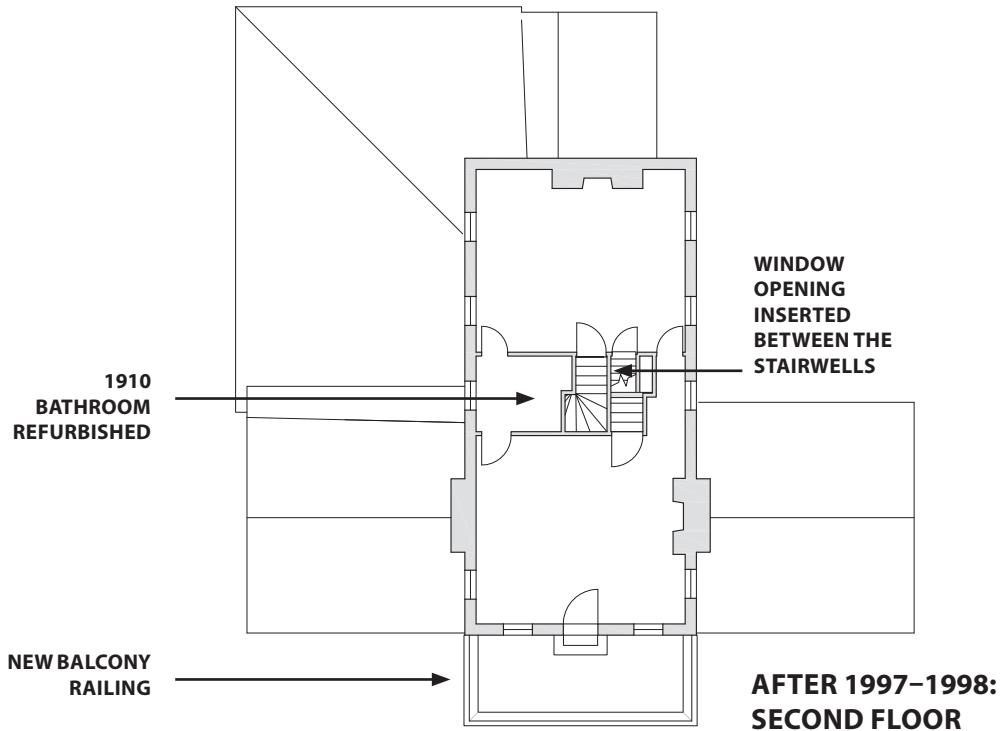


Figure 178. (Left and above) Floor plans of the main house after 1997-98 renovations.

*The 1997–1998 renovations removed the southwest porch and introduced a one-story sunroom addition. The balcony received a new railing*

*At the basement level, a new concrete areaway led to the west room.*

*The kitchen was refinished. The 1910 bathroom on the first floor was removed and replaced with a bathroom in the same location within the southwest addition.*

*At the second-floor level, the 1910 bathroom received new finishes and fixtures, keeping the historic bathtub. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 179. Point cloud image superimposed on 3D model. The measured drawings relied on laser scanning and on hand measurements. JGWA, 2024.*

# OAK LAWN

## HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The architectural investigation of Oak Lawn was conducted in 2024 by a team from John G. Waite Associates, Architects.

As part of the analysis and recording of the house, the architects produced a full set of record drawings, using a dual methodology: traditional hand measuring by JGWA supplemented with digital scanning by Berkshire Dimensions. The JGWA team reconciled the hand-measured field notes and digital point cloud to create AutoCAD Revit drawings.

Archival sources provided by the University of Virginia and uncovered by Benjamin Ford of Rivanna Archaeological Services informed the architectural analysis. The Fife family and Nancy O'Brien generously provided historic photographs that allowed the team to trace the architectural history of the house beyond the information available in other archival records. Members of the family also walked through the house with Ben Ford, sharing their memories.

The physical investigation of the house relied on visual analysis as well as selected removal of some of the finishes by the University of Virginia. A paint analysis, or finishes investigation, also added to the understanding of the evolution of the house.

## EXTERIOR

The main house at Oak Lawn, built in circa 1822, sits on the high point of the property, facing east. A small structure known as the "Cook's House" is located to the south of the main home. See the Cultural Landscape section of this report for a more thorough description of the site.

The house is composed of a two-story central block crowned with a pediment and flanked by one-story north and south wings set back from the east façade of the central block. All three sections have gabled roofs. As noted in the chronology, a one-story, gable-roofed kitchen was built onto the west end of the central block in circa 1900. A one-story addition built onto the southwest corner of the house in 1997–1998 is the latest in a series of structures in that location.

The following exterior description begins with the central block, then continues with the wings, the kitchen addition, and the southwest addition.

## CENTRAL BLOCK

The two-story central block of the circa 1822 house is three bays wide and five bays deep, built of common red bricks (as opposed to the oil-struck, smooth-faced bricks used for the front façades of the Lawn pavilions). The bricks (averaging 2-1/2" high x 7-3/4" long x 3-1/2" to 3-3/4" wide)

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 180. Oak Lawn from the east. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

are laid in a Flemish bond. Ten courses of brick are approximately 2' 6" high, including the joints. These joints were historically penciled: craftsmen painted white lines onto the joints to mimic finely struck mortar. Evidence for this treatment was encapsulated behind the nineteenth and twentieth-century southwest porches and is now visible within the 1997–1998 southwest addition.

No evidence survives of additional finishes, such as a red wash, on the exterior or the protected areas of brick. The façades have been sandblasted; this finish is apparent when comparing the face of the exterior brick to the bricks protected behind the shutters. The results of the sandblasting are seen most clearly on the second story of the south elevation, and the grain in the woodwork in that location is raised from the blasting.

A molded brick course (fillet, quarter-round, fillet) forms the water table between the first story and the basement. This profile matches the brick cornice at John Perry's Montebello (a Dinsmore building).

Below the water table, the bricks are laid in a common bond.

### CENTRAL BLOCK: EAST ELEVATION

The east elevation of the central block is the most decorative of the façades, featuring a pediment and a one-story porch that extends the full width of the façade. First and second-story central doorways are flanked by window openings. The elevation appears to be formally symmetrical, but it is not: at both stories, the doors and flanking windows are set slightly to the north. Moreover, there is an additional 7" (+/-) (approximately the width of a brick) between the doorways and the north window openings than between the doorways and the south openings. The east pediment is faced with painted tongue-and-groove boards.

Cornice: The wood cornice begins with a bed molding of a cavetto and cyma recta. A projecting fascia above the bed molding has a bead at the bottom edge. A crown molding at the top of the fascia includes an cavetto, fillet, and cyma recta.

Doors: The first-story entrance is trimmed with a 7-1/4" wide two-fascia wood architrave (fillet, cyma, fascia, fascia, bead) and fitted with a pair of circa 1822 stile-and-rail doors that originally had three tiers of panels; they were modified at an unknown date to the existing configuration of a glazed panel above a recessed panel.

At the second story, a 7-3/4" wide two-fascia architrave frames the doorway opening onto the balcony. The circa 1822 stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels. Two 1997–1998 wood steps lead down to the balcony floor.

Windows: The two circa 1822 first-story windows flanking the main entrance are framed by 3" wide plain two-fasciae architraves trimmed with an interior bead, set inside the masonry openings, and hold 9/9 wood sash. Iron pintles support pairs of louvered wood shutters at each opening; the shutters fasten with ring latches. The iron bean strap hinges average 1' 5" long.





*Figure 181. Oak Lawn east elevation. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 182. Oak Lawn north elevation. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 183. Oak Lawn west elevation. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 184. Oak Lawn south elevation. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

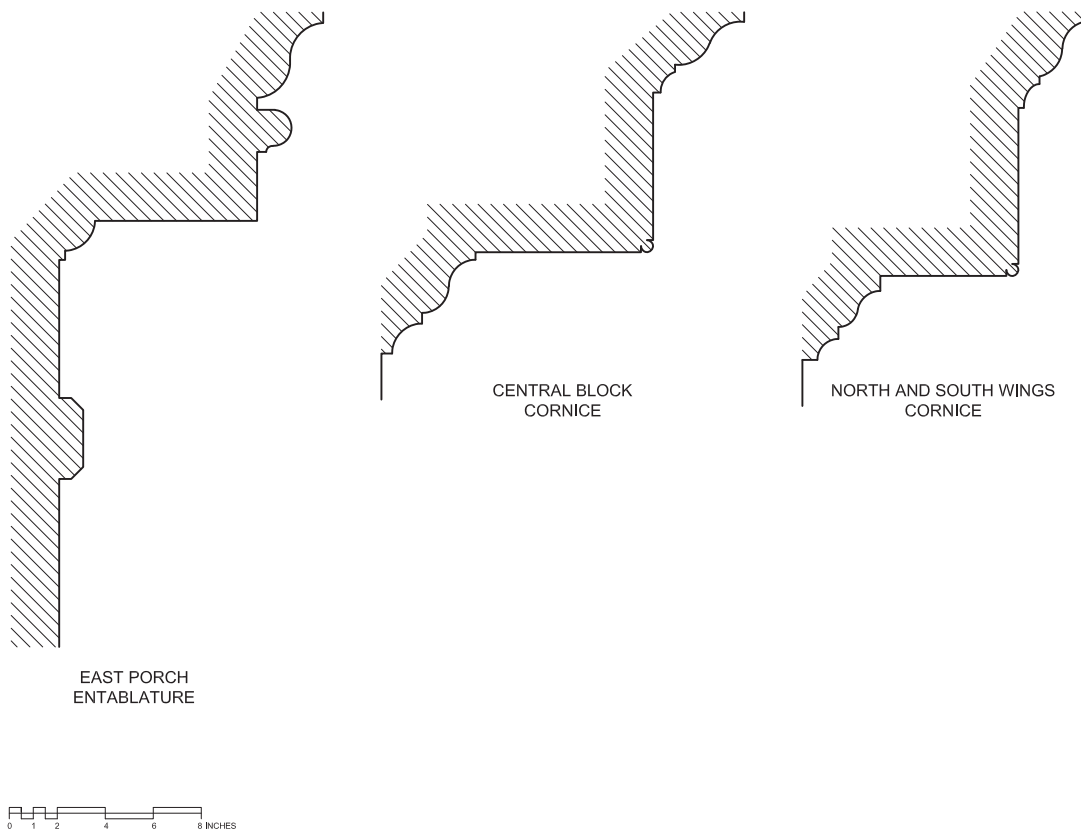


*Figure 185. East elevation of the south wing.  
JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 186. A molded brick course trims the top of  
the water table. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 187. Exterior profiles of exterior cornices and the east porch entablature. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

The two second-story windows are similar but have 9/6 wood sash.

A six-light wood fanlight, centered in the pediment, has a plain two-fasciae frame and sits above a sill trimmed with a bead at the bottom edge

**Porch:** The elegant east porch is three bays wide and one bay deep. Four Tuscan columns with stuccoed brick shafts and cut-stone capitals and bases support a 2' 1-1/4" high wood entablature. These columns match the ones used at the colonnades on the Lawn at the University of Virginia; they also match the columns at Montebello's porch (see Figure 284). There are no corresponding pilasters on the east façade on this porch or the Montebello porch, unlike the pavilions on the Lawn.

The entablature begins with a frieze divided horizontally by a beveled board, trimmed at the top with a fillet and ovolo. The projecting crown molding includes a fascia, a fillet and ovolo, and a cyma recta.

Above the entablature, a 1997–1998 wood railing includes bands of turned balusters set between paneled plinths, capped by a molded handrail. This is the last of a series of railings on this porch (Figure 188).

- It is not known what the circa 1822 railing looked like, but it is likely that it resembled the original Chinese-style railings on the Lawn pavilions. If it did match those railings, then there would have been a panel centered above each column that matched the width of the top of the column shaft. The delicate wood railings spanned between the panels.
- The earliest photographs of the railing show the original panels above the columns, but decorative cast iron railings have replaced the Chinese-style wood railings (Figure 1 and Figure 27). Cast-iron railings were also used at UVA when the wood railings failed.
- In a third iteration, in place by the 1920s or early 1930s (Figure 141), two cast-iron railings extended between three wood posts, creating a two-bay railing with a post centered on the porch. The cast-iron appears to match the earlier version, but, if so, must have been modified to accommodate the addition width.

The porch floor is made up of 5-3/8" wide x 1" thick boards laid east/west. The floor is not original; it appears to have been rebuilt at least once.

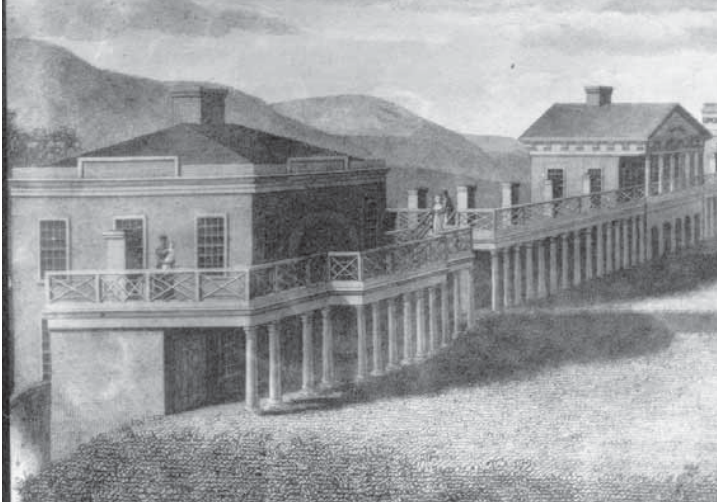
Five wood risers descend from the east side of the porch to grade. Iron handrails extend down from the two center columns. In early photographs (Figure 1) and as late as 1937 (Figure 41), the steps extended the full width of the porch. By 1967, the steps were narrowed to fit between the outer columns (Figure 54).

Tongue-and-groove beaded boards, approximately 11' 0" above the floor, form the porch ceiling (date unknown). At the west end of the ceiling, a wood cyma and fillet molding trims the brick façade. At the east end, at the top of the soffit, is a small wood cyma or ovolo. A beam at the south end of the porch supports a wicker chain-hung swing.

The floor of the balcony is finished in flat-seam metal, installed in 1997–1998.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 188. The historic porch railings.*



*(Above left) The first porch railing, circa 1822, likely matched the wood Chinese-style railings at the Lawn, seen in this detail of Pavilions VII and IX from Benjamin Tanner's 1826 engraving. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.*



*(Center left) The earliest railing to appear in photographs included cast-iron railings extending between panels centered over the porch columns. Detail from an undated photograph, courtesy of the Fife family.*

*(Below left) As early as the 1920s or early 1930s, the railing was modified or replaced, with cast-iron panels between wood posts. On the east side of the railing, there were three posts, with one post centered over the porch. Detail from E. Magruder, 1967. VDHR Library and Archives, 104-0031.*

## OAK LAWN



Figure 189. (Above left) The east balcony, looking north. JGWA, 2024.

Figure 190. (Left) The east porch, looking south.

Figure 191. (Above right) Remnant of the nineteenth-century balcony railing. JGWA, 2024.



## OAK LAWN

### CENTRAL BLOCK: NORTH ELEVATION

The five-bay-wide north elevation of the central block is the façade seldom seen by the public. The north wing covers part of the first story and cellar.

North chimney: A brick chimney, centered on the gable of the north wing, extends up the north elevation to a corbeled brick cap.

Cornice: The wood cornice is similar to the one on the east elevation.

Windows: All of the window openings on this elevation date to the original circa 1822 construction.

The three cellar window openings have plain wood frames and sills. The frames and sash were replaced in 1997–1998.

At the first story, a small window opening immediately west of the wing holds a four-light casement sash that provides light and air to the storage space beneath the winding stairs.

The two westernmost windows are typical circa 1822 openings, with plain two-fasciae trim and 9/9 wood sash. They retain pintles for shutter hinges; the shutters have been removed.

There is one second-story window east of the chimney, and three windows west. These windows have typical two-fasciae trim and 9/6 sash.

Systems: Most of the exposed exterior equipment for the house's systems are found on or near the north face of the central block, the area least seen by the public. This equipment includes two *Trane* air handlers; two telephone panels; the electrical main; an *Xfinity* telecommunications box, and the gas meter.

### CENTRAL BLOCK: WEST ELEVATION

The west gable end of the second block is partially covered by the circa 1900 kitchen addition. The original west wall now exposed within the kitchen does not show any evidence of circa 1822 window openings. A painted wood barge board extends along the gable edges.

Chimney: The south chimney is integral with the wall (unlike the east and west chimneys). It extends up from the peak of the gable roof to a corbeled cap.

Windows: Two circa 1822 window openings in the gable, each with a four-light sash, provide light to the attic. Both openings have single fascia architraves, trimmed with an inner bead and a small outer molding.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 193. Oak Lawn from the northwest (upper image) and the southwest (lower image).  
JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

### CENTRAL BLOCK: SOUTH ELEVATION

A 1997–1998 addition now covers the first story of the central block's south elevation, including a circa 1822 doorway and window (see description for room 109).

**Chimney:** A circa 1822 brick chimney extends up through the gable of the south wing, against the elevation, to a corbelled cap crowned with two arched brick caps.

**Windows:** The second-story fenestration pattern mirrors that of the north elevation: one window is placed east of the chimney, and three windows to the west of the chimney. All of these openings date to circa 1822. They have typical plain two-fasciae trim, 9/6 sash, and pintles for shutters (removed).

### CENTRAL BLOCK: ROOF

The gable roof is covered in what may be original slate shingles. A sheet-metal ridge cap is positioned at the top of the roof. Snow guards were installed in 1997–1998.

## NORTH WING

The two-bay-wide by one-bay-deep north wing is built of the same type of brick as the central block. The molded brick water table continues around the wing. The gable roof is covered in standing seam metal, installed in 1997–1998, and is equipped with snow guards. Nail patterns in the roof indicate that this roof originally had slate shingles.

### NORTH WING: EAST ELEVATION

**Trim:** The wood entablature at the top of the east wall of the wing begins with a bed molding of a cavetto and cyma recta, capped with a projecting crown molding (cyma reversa, fillet, cyma recta).

**Windows:** The two cellar windows on the east elevation have plain wood frames and sit below lintels of rowlock bricks. They have been truncated to adapt to a change in grade. The single-light sash date to the 1997–1998 renovation. The openings are partially below grade and face rectangular brick window wells.

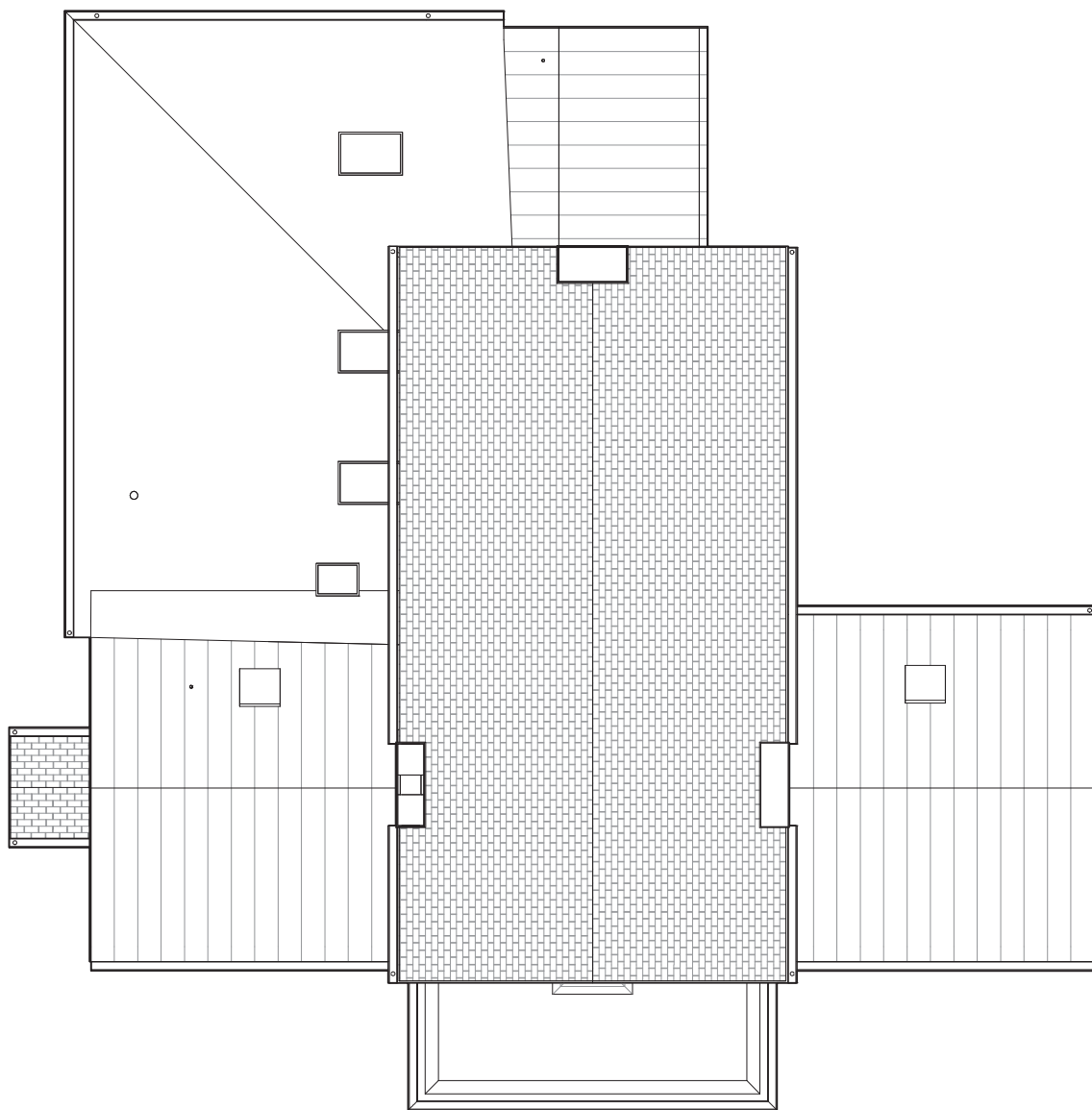
The two first-story window openings on the east elevation match the windows in the central block, with plain two-fasciae trim. These openings extend up to the entablature. In each pair of louvered wood shutters, one is missing its ring latch. The latches remaining are installed in two ways: with the ring pull on the outside, and the latch on the inside (the correct method); or with the latch on the outside, and the ring pull on the inside.



## OAK LAWN

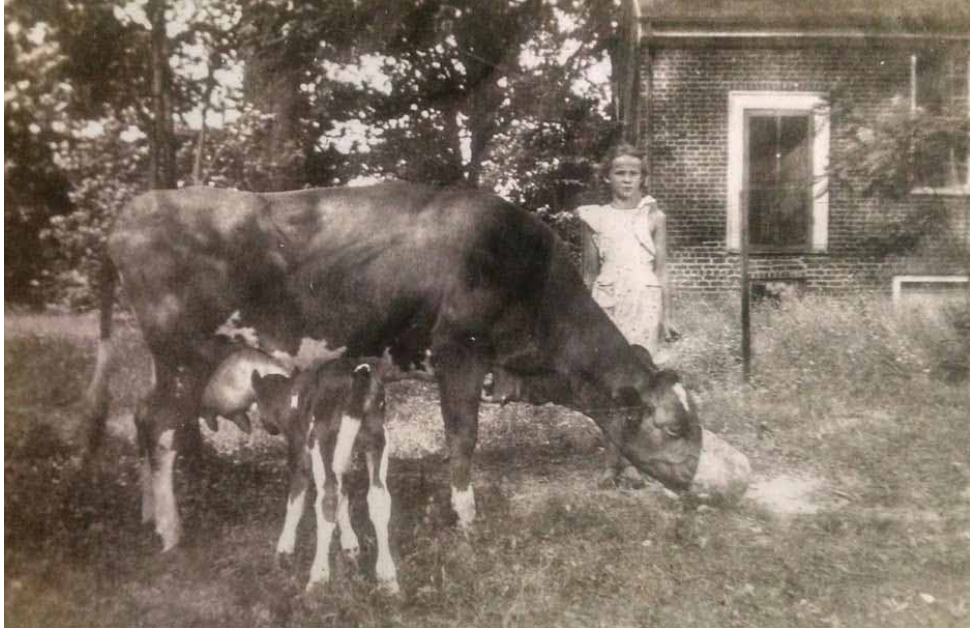


*Figure 194. Oak Lawn from the south. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 195. Roof plan.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 196. Undated historic view from the northwest; the girl is not identified. At this time, there are no steps to the doorway in the north wing. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 197. View from the northwest during the 1997–1998 work. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN

### NORTH WING: NORTH ELEVATION

The north elevation of the wing is uninterrupted brick, ornamented only with a barge board, composed of a plain fascia with a flush bead at the bottom edge and a cyma at the top edge. The board terminates at decorative wood brackets cut to cover the end profile of the east and west entablatures.

### NORTH WING: WEST ELEVATION

Trim: The trim of the west elevation matches that of the east elevation.

Doors: At the basement level of the west elevation, a partial-height door in the south bay opens into the cellar below the north wing. This doorway was originally a full-height door (as evidenced by brick infill visible in the basement). Steps and/or an areaway (now missing) would have descended to the original opening.

The doorway in the first story's north bay holds an original stile-and-rail door with four vertical recessed panels. Slightly angled rowlock bricks form a flat-arched lintel above the opening. While there must have been a wood stair to the door when originally built, by the first half of the twentieth century the entrance was no longer in use and there was no porch or stair (Figure 196). A stair was installed later in the twentieth century and was subsequently replaced by the existing 1997–1998 wood steps and porch.

Windows: An original cellar window opening in the north bay, hidden behind the porch and steps to the first-story doorway, has a six-light sash.

The first-story window in the south bay is similar to those of the east elevation. The architrave retains pintles for a pair of missing shutters.

## SOUTH WING

The two-bay-wide by one-bay-deep south wing was originally a mirror image of the north wing. A number of changes to the porches along the west elevation have modified that part of the wing (see Southwest Porches and Southwest Addition below). A bulkhead passage was added to the south elevation by 1907. The standing-seam metal roof on the south wing appears to date to circa 1900, based on the number of coatings on the roof. Nail holes in the wood sheathing indicate that this roof was originally covered in slate shingles.



## OAK LAWN

### SOUTH WING: EAST ELEVATION

The east elevation still mirrors that of the north wing, except that the fully exposed cellar windows retain their original height. They have plain wood frames and sills, and six-light casement sash that date to 1997–1998. The brick and entablature are the same as the north wing.

As in the north wing, in each pair of louvered shutters at the first-story windows, one is missing its ring latch. The latches remaining are installed with the latch on the outside and the ring pull on the inside.

### SOUTH WING: SOUTH ELEVATION

This elevation was originally a blank wall, like the north wing's north façade, with a matching bargeboard terminating at decorative cutout brackets.

Sometime before 1907, the installation of the porch on the west side of the wing made it difficult to access the south cellar room through the original west doorway. Instead, a brick gabled structure was constructed on the south wall for a new bulkhead doorway. There were no doors in the grade-level opening of the structure. Asphalt shingles now cover the roof.

### SOUTH WING: WEST ELEVATION

This elevation is now entirely covered by the 1997–1998 southwest addition. In circa 1822, the first story had a window opening in the north bay and a doorway in the south bay of the first story; the cellar had a doorway in the north bay and a window opening in the south bay. A series of modifications, beginning with the nineteenth-century porches, resulted in several changes to this elevation.

There are now two cellar window openings in the west elevation. A circa 1822 window with a six-light sash remains in the south bay. The north opening was originally a doorway, modified by filling the opening with brick up to grade when a porch was added. It is now filled with a heating duct.

At the first story, the original doorway remains, now opening into the southwest addition. The window that was north of that opening was changed into a doorway in 1910 for the new bathroom built onto the porch.

## KITCHEN

The one-story circa 1900 kitchen addition at the west end of the central block is one bay wide and one bay deep. The gable roof is covered in standing-seam metal.

The clearly reused bricks of the addition may have come from an earlier detached kitchen structure that collapsed in the late nineteenth century. The bricks measure 7-1/2" to 8-1/4" long,



## OAK LAWN

3-1/2" to 4" wide, and 2-1/4" high and are laid in a common bond with one header course every six to eight stretcher courses. They bear traces of whitewash surviving from their earlier use. Ten courses average 27-1/4" high, including the rough, wide mortar joints.

Doors: Until 1997–1998, there was a circa 1900 doorway in the south elevation of the addition. A plain frame trimmed the opening. The stile-and-rail door had six recessed panels.

A crawl space below the kitchen is accessed through an opening in the south wall (directly below the location of the circa 1900 doorway). In 1997–1998 photographs of the area before the southwest addition was built, a wood board covers the opening, which is now hidden behind a plywood enclosure for the kitchen systems.

Windows: Single window openings in the north and west elevations have plain two-fasciae trim, similar to the trim at the window openings in the circa 1822 parts of the house. The 6/6 wood sash, installed in 1997–1998, replaced the circa 1900 6/6 sash. There are marks on the north window frame for shutter hinges; marks are not visible on the west frame.

## SOUTHWEST PORCHES AND THE 1997–1998 SOUTHWEST ADDITION

In the over-two-hundred-year history of Oak Lawn, the southwest area of the house, formed by the intersection of the central block and south wing, has seen the most change. Initially, in circa 1822, there must have been steps that provided access to the south door to the central block and to the west door of the south wing. Pockets surviving in the south wall of the central block, now in the southwest addition, are evidence that a porch was built against the south wing in the mid-nineteenth century or earlier. That porch was removed before 1907 and replaced with a wood porch supported on brick piers. A decorative railing with scroll-cut balusters spanned between chamfered posts; the style of the railing indicates that the porch may have dated to the 1870s or 1880s. Wide steps at the south end of the south wing descended to grade. Photographs do not include the area south of the kitchen, so it is not known if that porch continued across the kitchen addition.

In 1910, the porch against the south wing was expanded to accommodate a bathroom built onto the south wing. The wood-framed, shed-roofed bathroom, covered in clapboard, had a doorway and window in the west wall, both trimmed in plain wood frames. The opening held a four-panel door and the window was fitted with a 6/6 wood sash. The railing was reused on the expanded porch.

At some point after 1910, the railing was removed, the porch screened in, and the area south of the bathroom became a sleeping porch. Twentieth-century photographs show the porch continuing onto the kitchen addition; the difference in the roof slopes indicate that this section of the porch was a later addition. Eventually, the Fifes added wood framing and clapboard to fully enclose these spaces.

## OAK LAWN

In 1997–1998, the southwest porch was removed to make way for a one-story addition. That structure extends to the west end of the kitchen addition and to the south end of the south wing. A new concrete areaway now leads to the cellar below the west room, and plywood walls enclose spaces to the east and northeast, used to house ductwork and piping for systems.

Bays of three-tier-high windows fill the south wall of the addition, extending from a latticed bay near the south wing. On the west elevation, wood steps lead to a glazed doorway set between a single-light sidelight and two bays of the three-tiers windows. Another latticed bay covers the section near the kitchen addition. Wood steps with wood railings ascend to the south doorway.

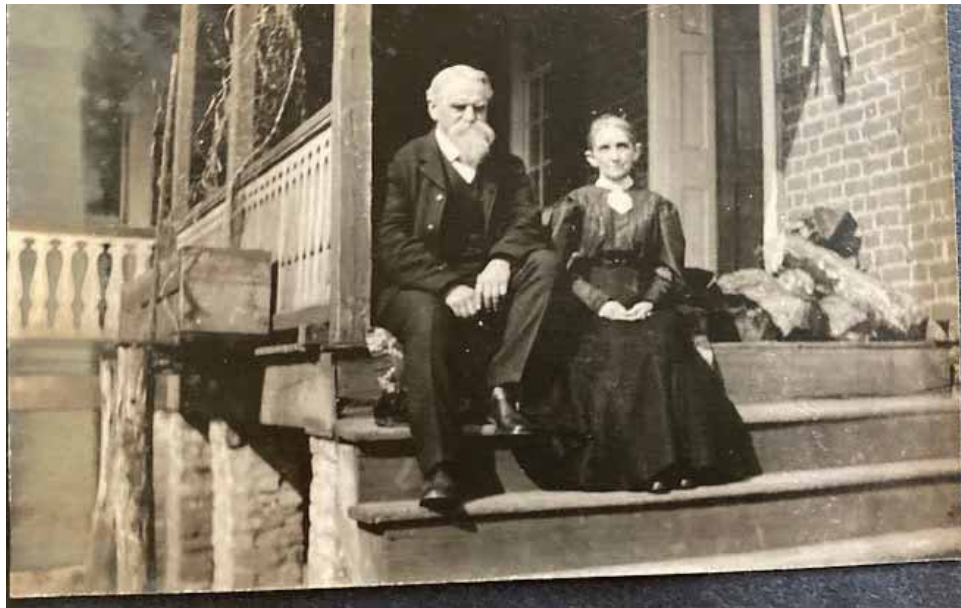
The nearly flat roof is covered in membrane. It overlaps the south plane of the kitchen addition roof and the west plane of the southwest wing roof. Three single-light skylights provide natural light to the addition.

In 1997–1998, the southwest porch was removed to make way for a one-story addition. That structure extends to the west end of the kitchen addition and to the south end of the south wing. A new concrete areaway now leads to the cellar below the west room, and plywood walls enclose spaces to the east and northeast, used to house ductwork and piping for systems.

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The nearly flat roof is covered in membrane. It overlaps the south plane of the kitchen addition roof and the west plane of the southwest wing roof. Three single-light skylights provide natural light to the addition.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 198. The southwest porch circa 1907. In the upper image are William O. Fife and Shelton S. Fife on horseback; two women, likely their sisters, stand on the porch. The lower image shows their parents, Robert Herndon Fife and Sarah (Sallie) Fife, with a clear view of the south wing before the bathroom was installed in 1910. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 199. (Left) Sarah (Sallie) Fife and one of her daughters on the southwest porch after 1910, when the bathroom was installed. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

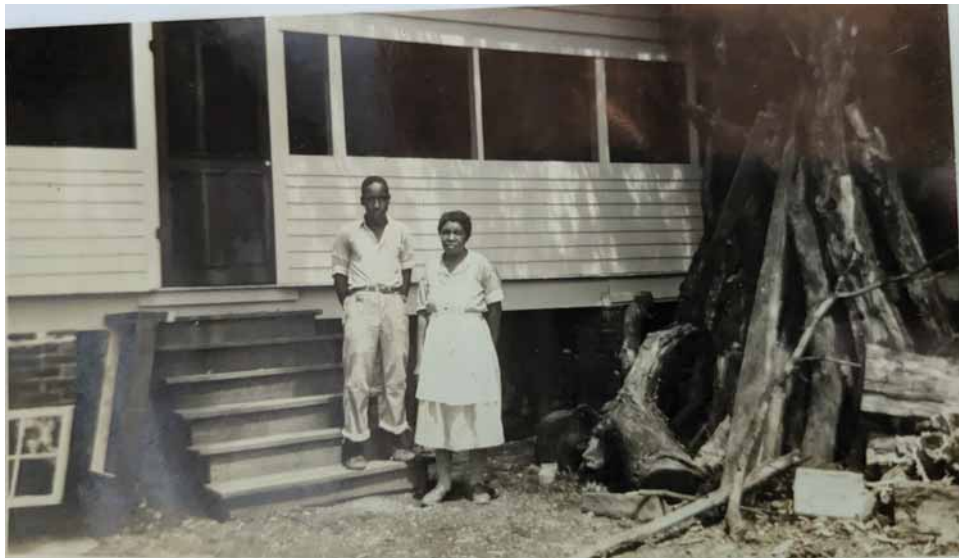
*Figure 200. (Below) Margaret W. (Madge) Fife and Shelton S. Fife on the south steps of the porch, after it was screened in as a sleeping porch. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 201. The southwest porch after it was partially covered in clapboard. Courtesy of the Fife family. .*



*Figure 202. Josephine McDaniel and her son, Joseph, near the porch at the kitchen addition. Courtesy of the Fife family*



## OAK LAWN

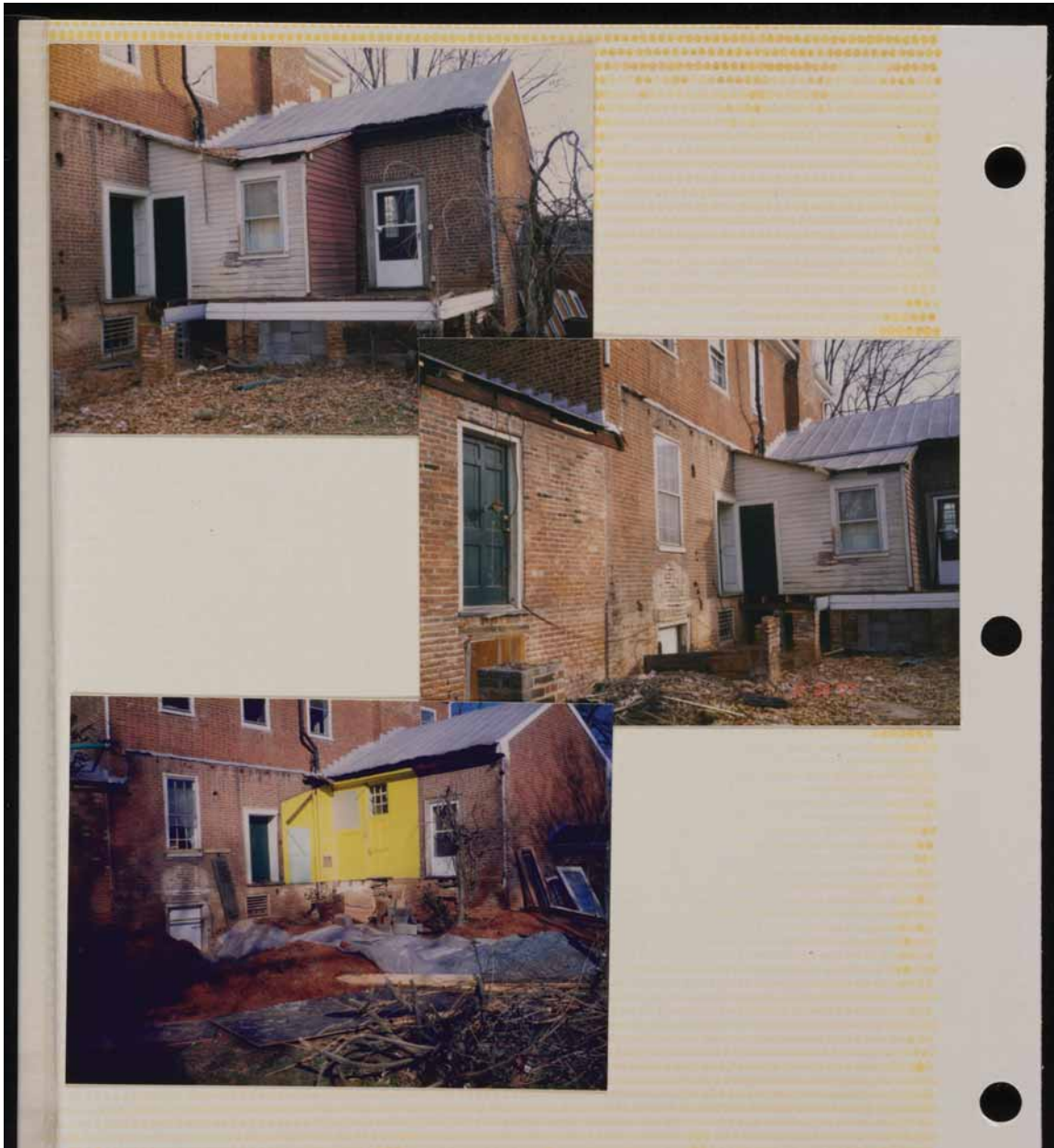


*Figure 203. Undated view of Oak Lawn from the south. Courtesy of the Fife family.*



*Figure 204. The southwest porch before the 1997–1998 work. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 205. The 1997–1998 demolition of the southwest porch and the 1910 bathroom. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*



Figure 206. Oak Lawn, section facing south. JGWA, 2024.

## INTERIOR

As originally built, the first floor of “Oak Grove” (Nimrod Bramham’s name for the estate) had four primary rooms: an entrance hall opened to large rooms to the north, south, and west. The second floor had just two rooms above the central block. All of these rooms are roughly the same size. A pair of mirroring winding stairs between the central block and west room ascended to the second floor. At the cellar level, there were three rooms—one below the south room, one below the north room, and one below the west room—all with separate entrances.

Later additions consisted of a kitchen built onto the west end of the house circa 1900, bathrooms inserted in 1910; and a southwest addition that replaced the southwest porch in 1997–1998.

The interior description, which begins in the basement of the original 1822 structure, follows the order of the room numbering system assigned by the University of Virginia, who also numbered the doors. Note that while much of the door hardware is antique, evidence of earlier hardware indicates that, in many cases, the locks, knobs, and hinges were moved or purchased as antiques for the house.

While most of the finishes and trims survive from the original construction, the four existing mantels on the first-floor level are believed to date after 1822, perhaps after the Fifes acquired the property in 1847. Although the design of these mantels would not have been the most up-to-



Figure 207. Oak Lawn, section facing west. JGWA, 2024.

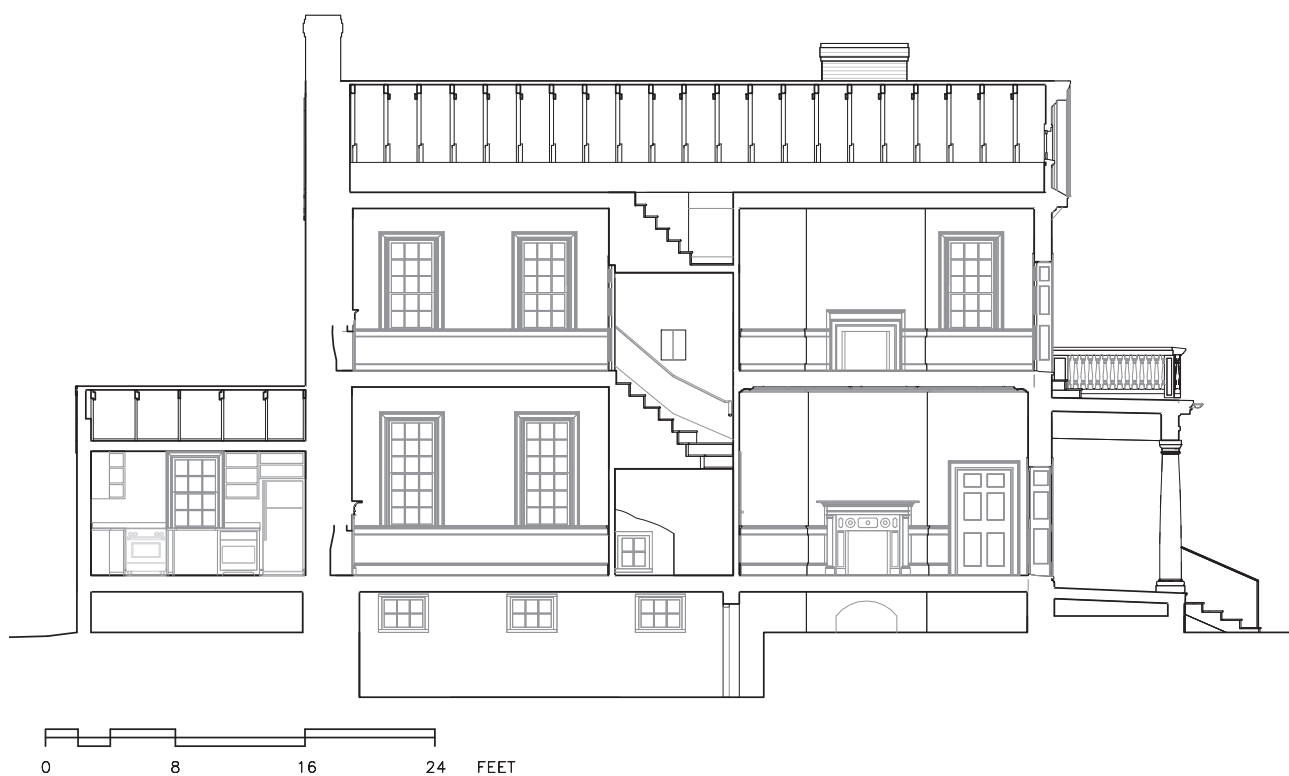


Figure 208. Oak Lawn, section facing north. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

date for the period, stylistically they match the cast-iron inserts that were installed at the time. Additionally, these fireplace surrounds (mantel and insert) differ both stylistically and functionally from the type originally employed, and still in place, on the second floor of Oak Lawn. This earlier type of mantel is comparable to what was installed in the pavilions on the Lawn during the same period at the University.

Paint analysis revealed that these mantels have one less layer of paint than the original trim in the rooms. Moreover, paint investigation of the chair rail on either side of the mantel in the south room (104) showed one less layer of paint as well, indicating that the chair rail was modified for the existing mantel.

In 2024, a probe removed the cast-iron insert from the fireplace in the north room (103). The outline of an earlier, larger, firebox could be seen. That firebox measured 4' 4" wide and 3' 7" high: the same height as the cast-iron insert, but 5" wider. The outline of the mantel in Room 104 can be seen in a construction photograph from 1997-98 (Figure 231). This image shows a bare brick wall behind the current mantel. The earlier mantel was likely large enough to cover this entire area.

## BASEMENT

### SOUTH BASEMENT (001)

The 19' 8" x 17' 10" cellar below the south room (104) includes a bulkhead entrance to the south and pairs of windows in the east and west walls. A chimney breast with fireplace (plastered over) projects from the north wall. The remnants of whitewash on the brick walls, the fireplace, and the marks for plaster and lath on the ceiling joists indicate that this room was intended for use, whether as housing or for more utilitarian purposes. More recently, the Fife family remembers remembered S. Douglas Fife raising chinchillas in this space.<sup>303</sup>

Floor: Concrete.

Walls: Circa 1822 brick, covered in cementitious render. In areas where the parging has worn away, the brick can be seen as laid in a stretcher bond, with three to four courses of stretchers between header courses.

Ceiling: The approximately 4" wide joists supporting the floor of 104 extend east/west, and are spaced 1' 11" to 2' 0" apart. Unfaced fiberglass batt insulation has been installed between the joists.

Doors: Evidence of infilled bricks in the west wall indicates the location of the original entrance to this space, mirroring the location of the doorway in the cellar below the north room. The bulkhead entrance in the south wall was added by 1907. Both two sets of doors in the bulkhead

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303. Interview with Millie Fife and Margie Fife Thomas by Ben Ford, June 13, 2024.



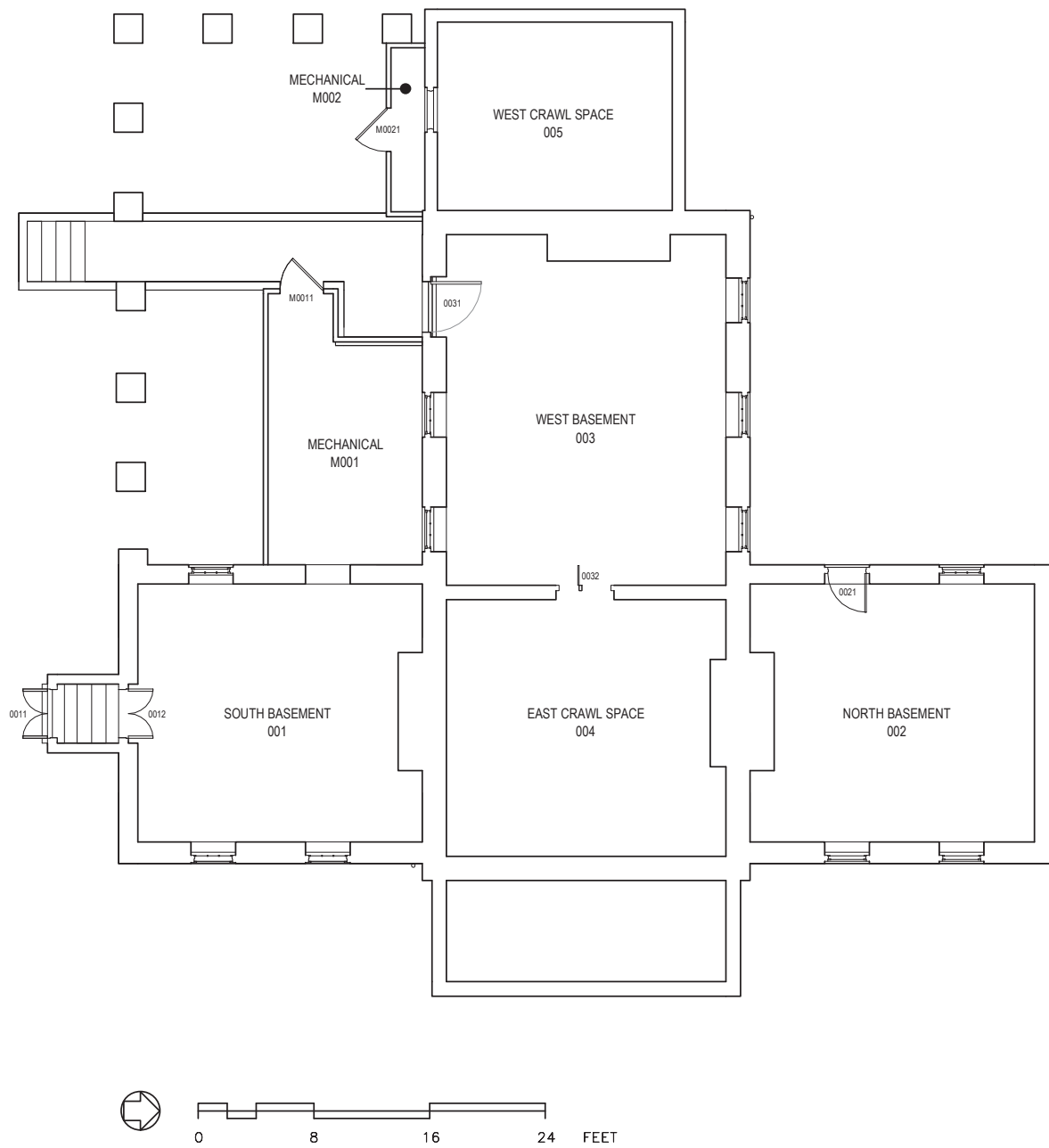


Figure 209. Oak Lawn basement plan. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 210. The south basement room (001), looking southwest (upper image) and northeast (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

entrance have plain wood frames; at the upper doorway, where the doors were added later, the frame is held with three iron/steel angles on each side. Above the doorway at the basement level is a brick rowlock course.

No. 0011 (grade level doors): The opening is fitted with a pair of doors, each 1' 8-1/2" wide x 5' 10-3/4" high x 1-3/4" thick. Each door has a single recessed panel and quarter-round/fillet panel moldings. These doors are a later insertion; a 1907 photograph (Figure 28) shows no doors at grade level. Hardware: The door hardware includes three 4" high butt hinges at each leaf; a 7-3/4" high mortise lockset with bronze knobs and a thumbturn latch; and a recent deadbolt.

No. 0012 (basement level doors): The late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century opening is fitted with a pair of doors, each 1' 9" wide x 5' 2" high x 1-1/2" thick. Each door has two recessed panels and quarter-round/fillet panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3-1/2" high butt hinges and a 2-1/4" high mortise lockset with brass knobs.

Windows: The pairs of masonry openings in the east and west walls have wood lintels and frames fitted with six-light casement sash. The east frames and sash were replaced in 1997–1998. Each of the six-light casement sash have 8" x 10" panes and 3/4" wide muntins. The sash hardware includes a pair of butt hinges and a hook-and-eye on each sash; the east sash have stainless-steel hinges, while the hardware on the original southwest sash is older and rusted. Horizontal bars extend across the exterior of the southwest opening; a heating duct fills the northwest opening.

Fireplace: The chimney foundation on the north wall has an arched firebox that has been infilled with brick and plastered over. Rowlock bricks form the arch.

Bulkhead: The bulkhead entrance to the room is enclosed with brick walls, finished in plaster. There are four brick risers, each three courses high; the treads are 10" to 1' 0" deep. Wood framing supports the gable roof.

Heating: The room houses a Trane air handler (TWE048C140B3). Ductwork exhausts through the northwest window into the crawlspace below the southwest addition (109) and extends into the north wall. Hot-water pipes near the ceiling feed the radiators in the south room above (104).

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by an incandescent porcelain utility fixture mounted to one of the ceiling joists. Other fittings include a surface-mounted receptacle and switch near the south doorway, and a surface-mounted receptacle on the east wall.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 211. The north basement (002), looking south (upper image) towards the arched support for the fireplace above; and northeast (lower image). Note the brick infill below the windows, indicating their original size. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN

### NORTH BASEMENT (002)

The 19' 8" x 17' 10" cellar below the north room (103) includes two window openings in the east wall, a window in the west wall, and a partial-height doorway high in the west wall. A chimney foundation projects from the south wall. Remnants of whitewash on the brick and lath and plaster on the ceiling joists indicate that this room was used historically.

Floor: Dirt, partially covered by concrete slab along the north wall and along the north half of the east and west walls. The slab aligns with the cement coating on the walls above.

Walls: Circa 1822 brick, covered in some areas in a thin coating of Portland cement. The 2-1/2" x 8" x 3-1/2" bricks are laid in a stretcher bond with three to four stretcher courses between header courses. Ten courses, with mortar joints, measure approximately 2' 6". The brick retains remnants of whitewash.

The chimney foundation for the fireplace in 103 projects from the south wall. Engaged brick piers support a segmental arch.

A wood post at the north end of the room provides additional support to the joists.

Ceiling: The 4" wide joists supporting the ceiling of the library (103) extend east/west, spaced 2' 0" to 2' 1" apart (on center). Insulation has been installed between the joists. The joists are approximately 6' 0" above the highest point of the floor.

Door: The doorway high in the west wall has a plain wood frame. The area below the current opening is filled in with brick, indicating that this was originally a full door and that there was once an exterior areaway or steps leading to the door.

No. 0021: The stile-and-rail door is covered by plywood on the exterior. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3-1/2" high butt hinges and a padlock hasp.

Windows: The two east window openings and the single east window opening have plain wood frames (replaced in 1997–1998). The east windows have been truncated; they originally matched the east windows in the south basement (001). The openings are fitted with 1997–1998 single-light sash; the west opening has an older six-light sash with 9-1/2" wide x 11" high panes and 5/8" muntins.

Heating: Hot-water pipes near the joists feed the radiators in 103.



## OAK LAWN

Lighting/electrical: The space is lit by an incandescent porcelain fixture mounted to one of the joists. Conduits lead to the floor and wall outlets in 103 above.

Finishes investigation: The bricks retain evidence of a whitewash finish, and the joists have marks for lath and plaster.

### WEST BASEMENT (003)

The 19' 4" x 24' 3" cellar below the west room (105) is accessed via a passage between concrete block retaining walls built below the 1997–1998 southwest addition. At the south end of the passage, five concrete risers ascend to grade. Wood framed partitions, covered with plywood, enclose ducts and plumbing lines in the northeast corner of the space below 109 and in the crawlspace below 108. Historically, there was a gable-roofed shelter above the doorway to the cellar; the ghost of that structure can be seen in the 1997–1998 construction photographs and on the north wall of the southwest addition (109). Remnants of a brick wall east of the doorway are visible in the 1997–1998 photographs.

The cellar includes a doorway and two window openings in the south wall, and three window openings in the north wall. An opening in the east wall provides access to the crawl space (004) below the entrance hall. A chimney breast with fireplace projects from the west wall. The stove flue above the firebox, render that survives in some areas of the brick walls, the evidence of plaster and lath on the ceiling joists, and the surviving ledgers that supported planks for soundproofing and fire protection, indicate that this room was historically used as the winter kitchen.

Floor: Dirt. Remnants of bricks near the doorway suggest that this room may have had a brick floor.

Walls: The circa 1822 brick walls are laid in a common bond. An opening in the east wall leads to the crawl space under the entrance hall. Three wood posts near the west end of the room provide supplemental support to the framing above.

Ceiling: The joists supporting the first floor average 3-3/4" to 4" wide and extend north/south. They are spaced approximately 2' 0" apart (on center). Modern batt insulation has been installed between the joists. There are marks for plaster and lath on the joists. The insulation masks historic wood ledgers used to support planks; between the planks and the first-floor boards, mortar fill provided soundproofing and fire protection.

Doors: The doorway in the south wall has a plain wood frame. In the opening in the east wall (to the crawl space below 101), a vertical wood post supports a wood lintel.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 212. The west basement (003) looking west (upper image) and east (lower image).  
James Zehmer, 2025.*

## OAK LAWN

No. 0031: The 3' 9-1/4" wide x 5' 4" high board-and-batten door consists of 3/4" thick boards fastened to Z battens. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 8" long strap hinges, a hasp for a padlock, and a staple grip.

No. 0032: Part of a stile-and-rail door, covered by plywood on the crawl space side, survives in the opening.

Windows: The two windows in the south wall retain their original frames, while the three windows in the north wall have 1997–1998 wood frames. All of the frames are set in masonry openings with brick reveals and sills. The center south opening is fitted with a six-light wood casement sash with 8" x 10" panes and 5/8" muntins. In the three north openings, similar six-light sash, dating to the 1997–1998 campaign, are fixed in place. The sash has been removed from the southwest opening. There are mortises in the south openings for horizontal wood security bars.

Fireplace: The chimney breast on the west wall has a firebox with an iron lintel below a rowlock course of bricks. Above the opening is a flue for a stove.

Heating: A concrete platform in the northwest corner holds a *Utica Gas Boiler* (DV200A), a *Whirlpool* dehumidifier, and an *Amtrol Extrol* expansion tank.

Plumbing: The room houses an *Everkleen* 50-gallon water heater near the chimney breast and a sump pump near the south wall.

Lighting/electrical: The space is lit by an incandescent porcelain utility fixture mounted to one of the joists. Other electrical elements include an electrical panel at the east end of the north wall; an Argo connector, switch, and duplex receptacle on a plywood panel mounted to the west end of the north wall (to service the nearby boiler, expansion tank, and dehumidifier); a switch and duplex receptacle near the south doorway.

## OAK LAWN

### FIRST FLOOR

#### ENTRANCE HALL (101)

The 19' 5-1/2" x 16' 11-1/2" central hall is at the heart of the house, providing access to all three of the original first-floor rooms and to the second-floor east room. This space includes the entrance doorway flanked by two window openings in the east wall, single doorways in the north and south walls, and two doorways in the east wall (one leading to the north stairway). A chimney breast projects from the north wall.

The room retains its original spacial character, overlaid with later nineteenth- and twentieth-century finishes and trims. According to the Fife family, this room was always referred to as the "Hall," and was used as a connecting space rather than a living space.

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/2" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid north/south. Along the west wall, the floorboards cant to the northeast.

Walls: The north, south, and east walls are brick masonry, finished in plaster. The west wall is a framed partition, finished in plaster and lath.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 11' 6-1/2" above the floor. With the exception of the cornice and the central medallion, the plaster was replaced in the 1997–1998 work.

Baseboard: The 9-3/4" baseboard includes a splashboard with a 1-3/4" cap (from the top, a bead, fascia, cyma, and fillet). This molding differs from the other first-floor baseboards. It is possible that it was replaced at some point, or that originally the more elegant profile set this entrance hall apart from the adjoining spaces.

Chair rail: The circa 1822 6-1/2" high wood chair rail is 3' 0" above the floor (from the top of the molding).

Picture Rail: No separate picture rail.

Cornice: The post-1847 cornice begins with a fillet and bead below an angled molding that extends up to shallow bands of plaster beads and fillets forming a decorative band along the perimeter of the ceiling. A band of three plaster beads, applied as an inner molding, curves out in a quarter-round at each corner; within the corner are paired fillets forming rectangles.

Doors: The five original doorways (single openings in the north, south, and east walls and two openings in the west wall) have two-fascia architraves that range from 5-3/4" wide (at the west openings) to 6-1/2" wide (at the east entrance). The southwest doorway is positioned so close to the south wall that only part of the architrave could be used. At the northwest doorway to the north stair, the opening is raised to the height of the first stair tread.

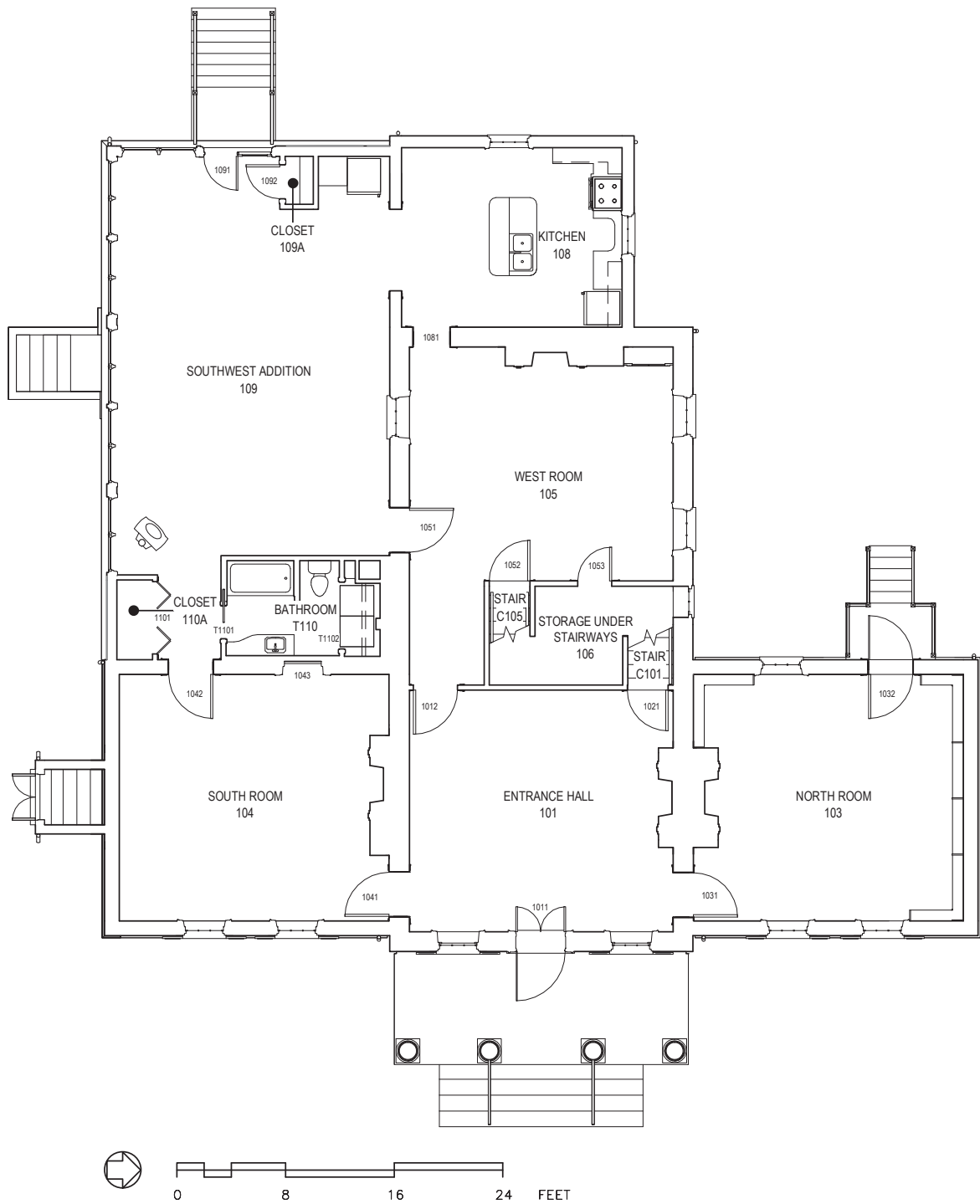


Figure 213. Plan of first floor.



# OAK LAWN

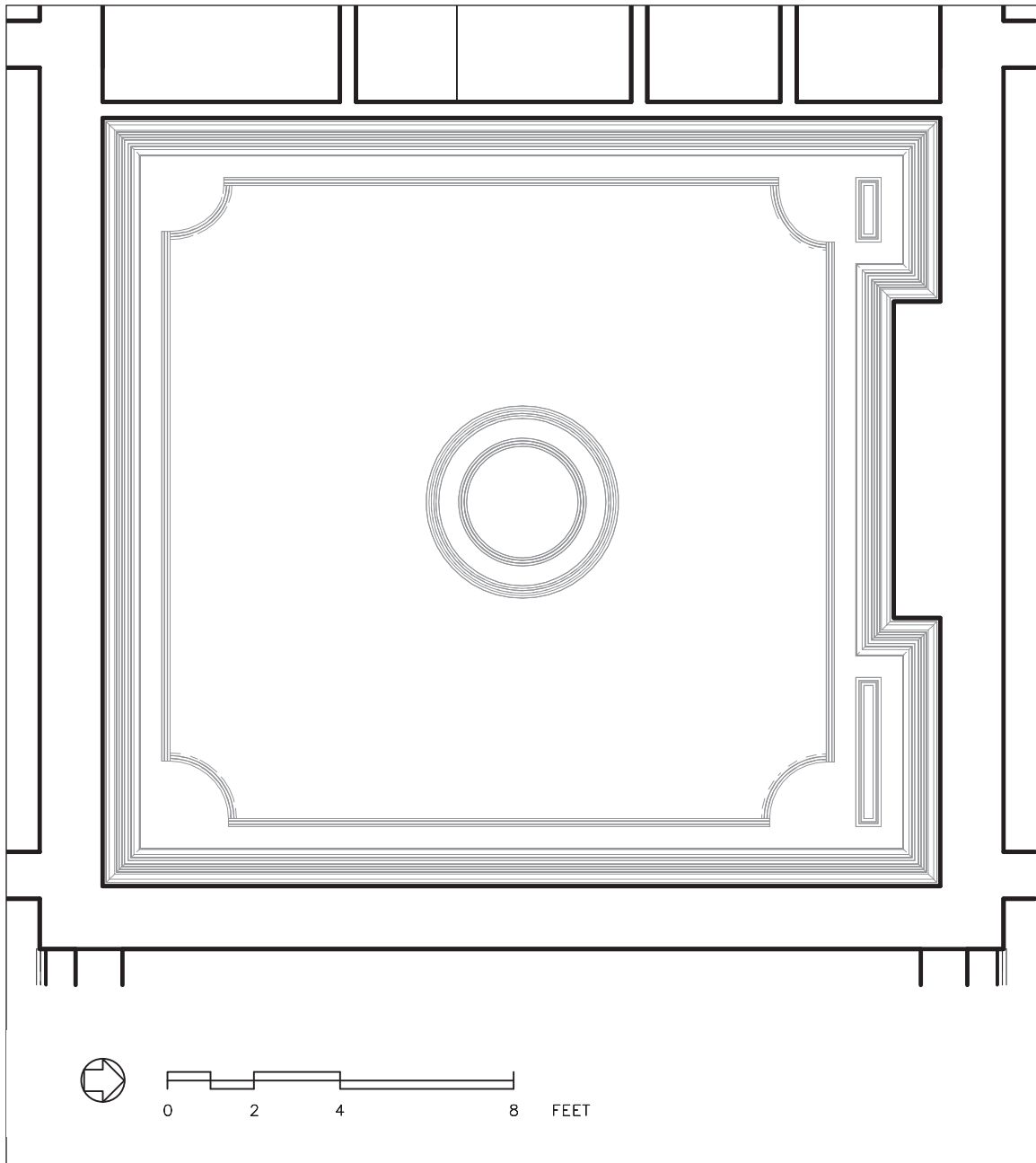
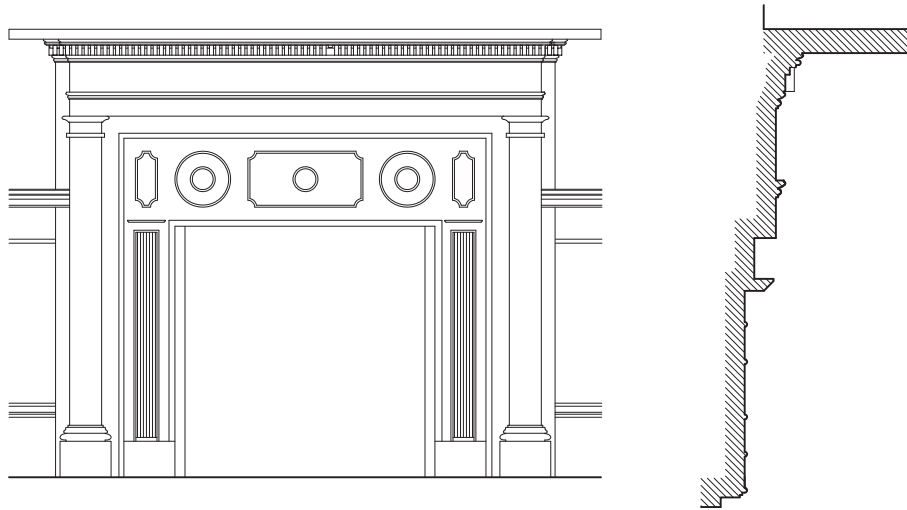
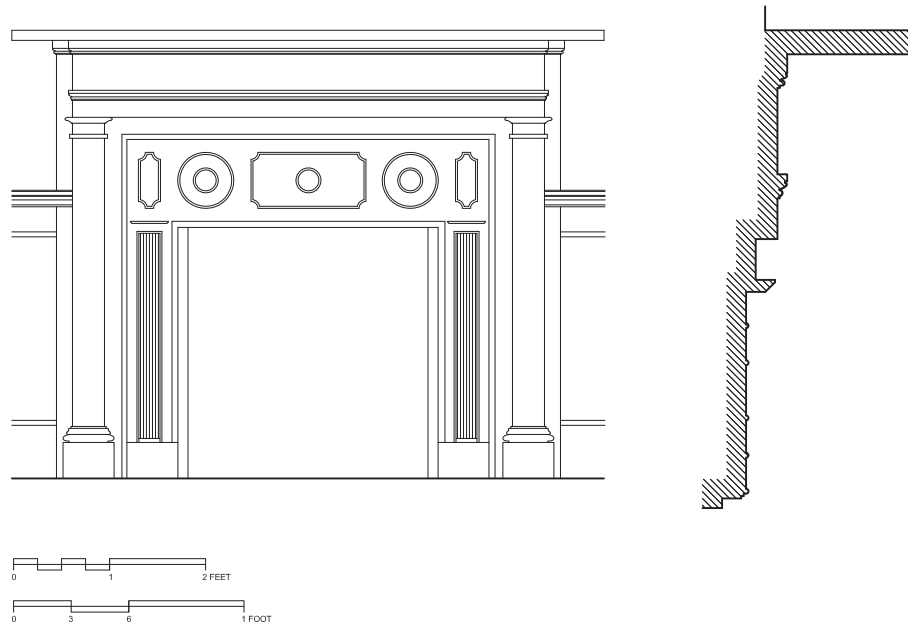


Figure 214. Entrance hall (101) reflected ceiling plan. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

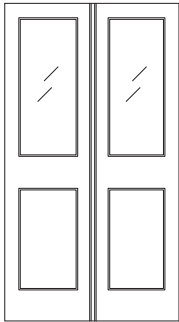


*Figure 215. Fireplace mantel type in the entrance hall (101) and south room (104). The south room mantel differs slightly, in that there are no dentils on the moldings at the side pieces. JGWA, 2024.*

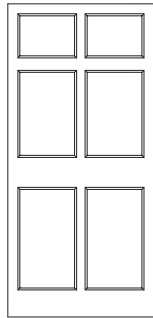
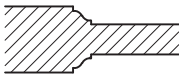


*Figure 216. Fireplace mantel type in the north room (103) and the west room (105). JGWA, 2024.*

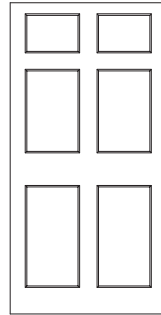
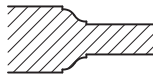
# OAK LAWN



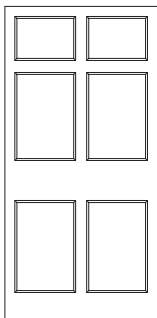
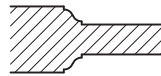
EAST ENTRANCE (1011)



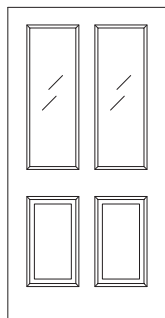
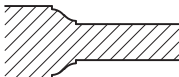
DOORS TO NORTH AND SOUTH STAIRS (1021, 1052);  
DOOR BETWEEN 101 AND 105 (1012)



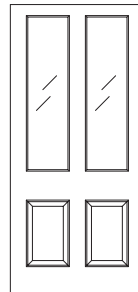
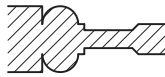
TYPICAL CIRCA 1822 INTERIOR DOOR  
(1041, 1032, 1051)



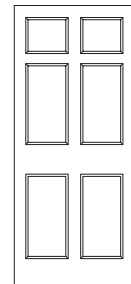
LATER DOOR IN OPENING BETWEEN  
ENTRANCE HALL AND NORTH ROOM (1031)



1042



CIRCA 1910 DOOR (1043)



DOOR TO STORAGE UNDER  
STAIRS (1053)

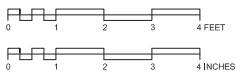
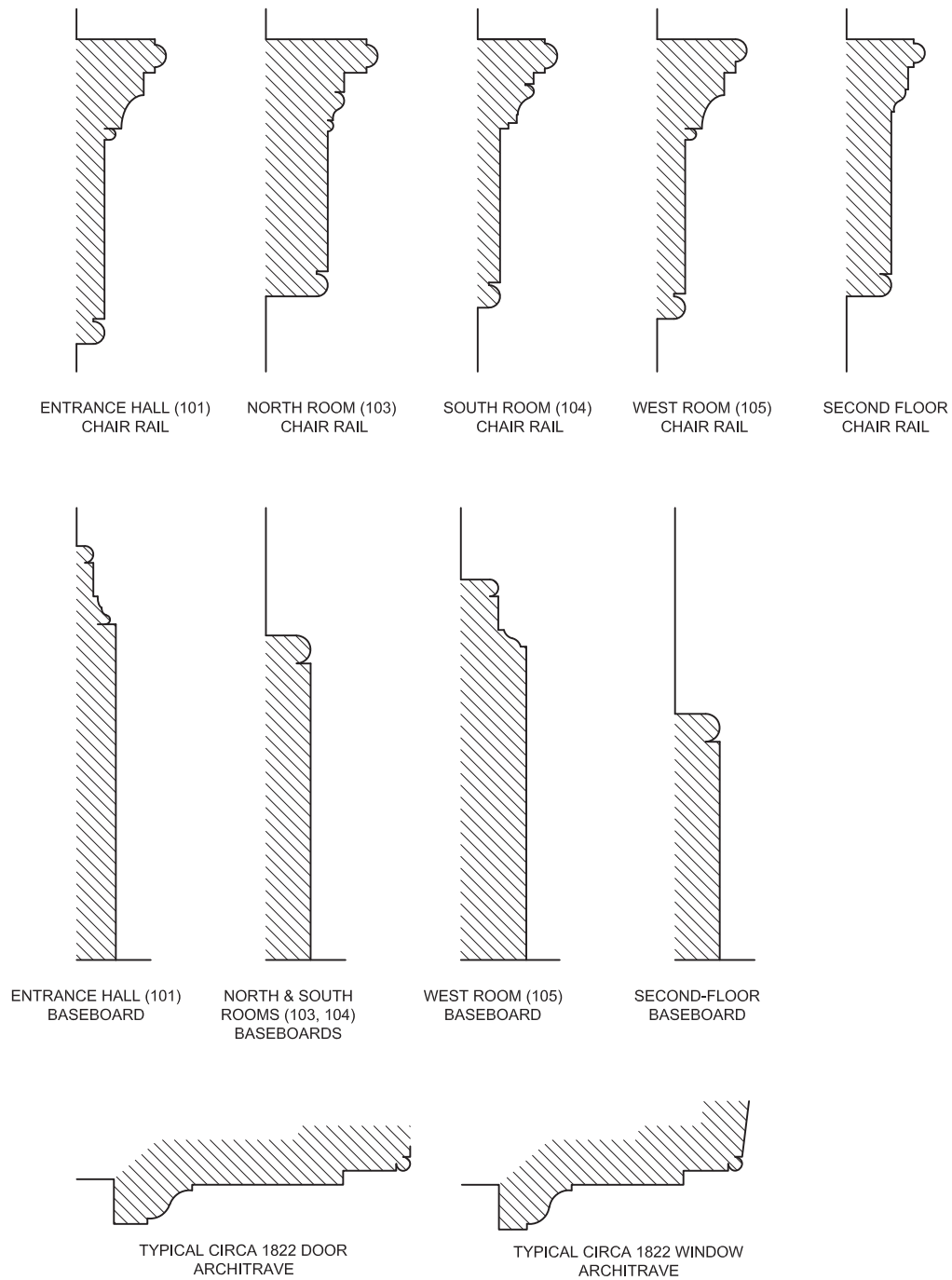


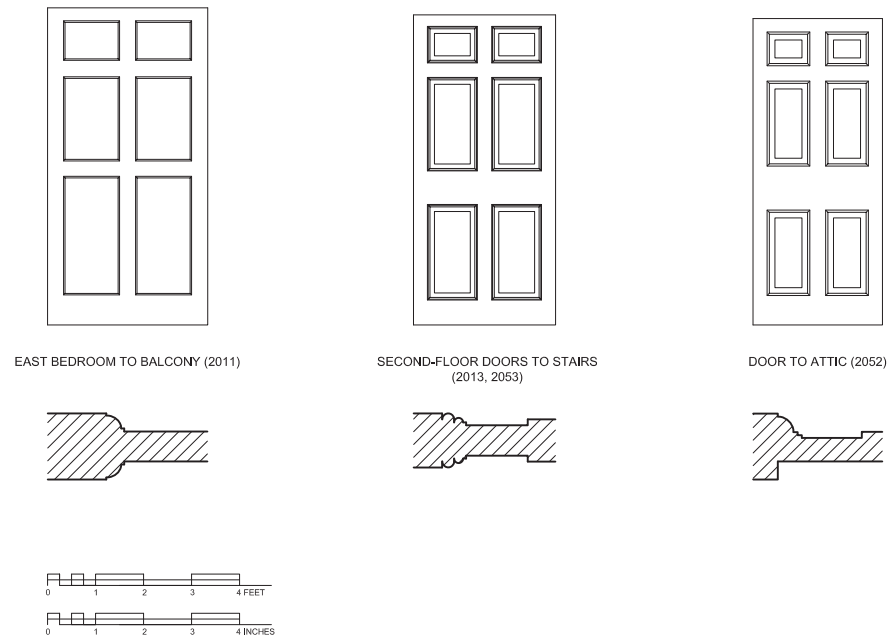
Figure 217. First floor doors. JGWA, 2024.



0 1 2 3 4 INCHES

Figure 218. Oak Lawn interior wood trims. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 219. Second floor doors. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN

No. 1011 (east entrance): The original opening is fitted with a pair of circa 1822 stile-and-rail doors, each 1' 10-1/4" wide x 6' 8" high x 1-3/8". Each leaf originally had three panels of the same configuration as the six-paneled doors in the room. The leaves have been modified and now each holds one vertical glazed panel above a recessed panel with a simple cyma panel molding. Hardware: The door hardware includes pairs of 4" high butt hinges; a 4" wide x 5-3/4" high antique box lock with the patent dates of October 19, 1869 and March 2[?] 187[?]; vertical slide bolts at top of leaves; and an oval keyhole escutcheon on the exterior face.

According to Mildred Irving Hill Fife, the eagle door knocker on the north leaf belonged to her sister, Mrs. W. Lawrence Smith:

The Brass Eagle Knocker on the front door of the Fifes' house ("Oak Lawn"), Charlottesville, Virginia belonged to Mrs. W. Lawrence Smith the former (Lilly Harrison Hill) of Richmond Va & Albemarle Co. who was my sister. She loaned it to me (Mrs. Shelton S. Fife) the former Mildred Irving Hill of Richmond Virginia who has lived in Albemarle Co., most of her life. This loan was in 1923 June.

Mrs. W. Lawrence ("Pat") Smith lived at "Morven," Albemarle Co., Va the early period of her married life. Her husband's mother owned "Morven" (Mrs. Edward B. Smith). Lilly bought this very old knocker to put on the "Morven" house. When Morven was sold she kept the knocker & loaned it to me thinking it suitable for "Oak Lawn."

Wood screen door at 1011: The 3' 7-3/8" x 6' 8-3/4" high wood screen door has two screened panels. Door hardware includes two 3-3/4" hinges; small grips; a hook and eye; and a *Wright Products* closer.

No. 1012 (southwest): The circa 1822 3' 2" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-1/2" thick stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes two 4" high butt hinges; and a 4-1/2" x 6" Carpenter's lock with brown mineral knobs.

No. 1021 (northwest to stair): The circa 1822 3' 1" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-1/2" thick stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges; and a 6" wide x 4-1/2" high rim lock with small bronze knobs.

Windows: The two original east window openings are framed by 6" wide two-fascia architraves; the sills extend out to the chair rail. Each opening is fitted with a 9/9 wood sash; the sash has 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins. Modern interior storm sash are fastened with a screw at the top and slide bolts on the lower sash.

Fireplace: The original 8' 3" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 1-1/2" from the north wall. The brick firebox is lined with metal. The brick surround is covered by a post-1847 cast-iron surround, painted black. Tall rectangular panels of vertical beads embellish the sides of

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 220. Entrance Hall (101), looking northwest (upper image) and southeast (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 221. The ceiling and cornice in the Entrance Hall (101). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 222. Two undated views of the entrance hall, looking north, when fully furnished.  
Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 223. Work on the entrance hall (101) ceiling in the 1997–1998 restoration.  
Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*



## OAK LAWN



Figure 224. Refurbishing the hardware in 1997–1998. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.

## OAK LAWN

the surround; at the top of the surround, bead moldings form rectangular motifs with concave corners, alternating with motifs of two concentric circles. Removal of the similar surround in 103 revealed that there were no manufacturing marks or dates cast into the metal, and that the firebox was originally much larger.

The post-1847 wood mantel features a plain wood fascia with a flush interior bead bordering the surround. Simple pilasters flanking the fascia extend from molded bases up to a two-fascia frieze, a denticulated crown molding, and a square-edged mantel shelf, 5' 6" above the floor.

The 3' 6" wide brick hearth projects 1' 8-1/2" from the surround.

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (four tubes, twenty sections) are positioned near the east window openings.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by an eight-arm chandelier with candelabra bulbs (before 1997–1998), hung from the plaster medallion at the center of the ceiling. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in all four walls and switches near the east and southwest doorways.

Finishes investigation: The paint stratigraphy of the entrance hall revealed between three and five layers of paint on each of the surfaces where samples were taken. The interior face of the exterior door (1011) had an additional layer of paint beyond that found on the sampled interior door (1041). This layer of dark green may correspond with an exterior repainting of the door. Both doors exhibit signs of dark and medium brown as the first and second layers, but these are reversed on the two doors. This indicates that the doors were likely grain-painted originally to imitate the natural finish of a fine wood. The dark green on the east entrance followed the grain painting. Thereafter, on both doors, layers of white paint were applied up to the present day.

The mantel in this room, as in the other three rooms on this floor that contain a similar mantelpiece, was originally finished with a dark tan followed by a near black. This pattern is repeated in each of the main rooms on this level, except for the slight variation in the north room (103) where a lighter tan was found along with the darker tan and black. This consistent, but slightly varied, paint stratigraphy may indicate that the four mantels were initially painted in imitation of black marble.

The earliest paint found on the chair rail and window trim was a blue-green.

More detailed paint sampling, careful layered finishes exposure, and advanced scientific analysis would need to be undertaken to accurately reproduce any of the faux finishes and paint colors that may have previously existed at Oak Lawn.

## NORTH STAIR (C101)

The enclosed north stair winds up to the second-floor east bedroom. Access to the stair is provided by doorways in the east walls of the stairwells at the first and second-floor levels. A window opening between the two stairs was inserted in 1997–1998.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 225. (Above) The north stair (C101). JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 226. (Left) The north stair after removal of the plaster and lath, 1997–1998. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*



## OAK LAWN

Walls: Wood-framed walls retain some plaster and wood lath; it is intact on the lower run of the stairs. Other areas were replaced with a gypsum board finish in 1997–1998. The finishes in this stair were replaced in the 1997–1998 campaign.

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling may be an original finish.

Doors: There is no trim at either of the two doorways.

Windows: The 1997–1998 opening between the stairs has no trim.

Stair: The original stair begins with five risers ascending west, then continues with seven winders to turn east, with five risers ascending east to the second floor. The risers average 9" high, and the bullnosed treads 11-1/2" deep, including the 3/8" nose. The stringer along the walls consists of a flush bead above a plain splash. 1997–1998 wood handrails are mounted to both walls with brass brackets.

Lighting/electrical: A fixture with a squashed globe shade is mounted to the ceiling at the first-floor level; a wall sconce at the second-floor level has a half-dome milk glass shade. Other electrical fittings include a pair of switches at the base of the stair, on the south wall.

Finishes investigation: The paint stratigraphy of the risers and baseboard within the east stairwell were inconsistent with one another, but it is likely that the sample drawn from the north baseboard stringer was incomplete. This may be a result of ongoing water damage along this wall, as only two layers of white paint were present. Where tested, the riser was initially coated with a brown paint, followed by a layer of significantly lighter tan, and then layers of white.

## NORTH ROOM (103)

The 19' 10-3/4" x 18' 0-3/8" north room includes single doorways in the south and west walls and three window openings (one in the west wall and two in the east wall). All of these openings are original to the structure. A chimney breast with fireplace projects from the south wall.

Recent members of the Fife family used this room as a library and family living room.<sup>304</sup>

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/2" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid north/south. The Fifes refinished the floorboards in the 1997–1998 work.

Walls: All four walls are original brick masonry, finished in plaster.

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling is 10' 0" above the floor.

Baseboard: The circa 1822 7-1/4" high baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splashboard.

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304. Interview with Millie Fife and Margie Fife Thomas by Ben Ford, June 13, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

Chair rail: The circa 1822 5-3/4" high wood chair rail is 2' 11-3/4" above the floor (from the top of the molding).

Picture rail: A 1-3/4" high wood molding (cyma, fillet, and bead) trims the top of the walls.

Doors: The two original doorways—one in the south wall (D1031), and one in the west wall (D1032)—have 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architraves. The south opening is positioned so closely to the east wall that there is no architrave on the east side.

D1031 (south): This stile-and-rail door (3' 2-1/2" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-3/8" thick) has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. While the door matches the circa 1822 doors, the larger cyma panel moldings (1/2" wide as opposed to the circa 1822 3/8" wide) and fewer paint layers indicate that it is a later door in the original doorway. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges, a 4-1/4" high x 6" wide antique rim lock with brown mineral knobs, and a large iron slide bolt. There is a ghost for an oval keyhole escutcheon on the south face, as well as a ghost for an earlier knob.

D1032 (west): The circa 1822 stile-and-rail door (3' 5 1/4" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-3/8" thick) has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" butt hinges and a 4" wide x 6" high antique box lock with the patent dates of October 19, 1869 and March 2[?] 187[?]. There are marks in the lock rail for a 6" mortise lockset and ghosts on the west face for a knob and keyhole.

Windows: The three window openings (two in the east wall and one in the west wall) are framed by 6" wide two-fascia architraves; the sills extend out to the chair rail. Each opening is fitted with a 9/9 wood sash; the sash have 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" angled muntins. Modern interior storm sash are fastened with a screw at the top and slide bolts on the lower sash.

Fireplace: The original 7' 4" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 9-1/4" from the south wall. The brick firebox is lined with metal. The brick surround is covered by a post-1847 cast-iron surround, painted black, which matches the surround in 101. Removal of the surround in this room revealed that there are no manufacturing marks or dates cast into the metal. The removal also revealed that the firebox was originally much larger.

The post-1847 wood mantel is similar to the one in 101: a plain wood fascia with a flush interior bead borders the surround, and simple pilasters flanking the fascia extend from molded bases up to a two-fascia frieze. However, while the 101 mantel features a denticulated molding below the mantel shelf, this mantel has a simple bed molding and fascia supporting the shelf (4' 8-1/2" above the floor).

The 1822 4' 8" wide brick hearth projects 1' 8" from the surround.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 227. The north room (103), looking southwest (upper image) and northwest (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 228. The fireplace in the north room (103) after removal of the cast-iron mantel.  
JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



Figure 229. Two views of the north room (103) in 2015. Courtesy of the Fife family.

## OAK LAWN

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (six tubes, twenty-four sections) are positioned near the west and southeast window openings.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a combination fan and light ceiling fixture. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in the east, west, and south walls; a receptacle in the floor; and tumbler switches near the doorways.

Communications: There is a communication outlet on the east wall.

Furnishings and fittings: Bookshelves with five tiers of shelves extend between the chimney breast and the southwest window, and between the northwest doorway and the northeast window. The Fife family recollects that these shelving units were installed by Shelton Strickler Fife in the 1920s. The painted wood shelves are trimmed with cavetto cap moldings and plain, boxed-in bases.

Finishes investigation: The trim in this room was originally a medium tan. The mantel, as elsewhere on this floor, appears to have been painted in imitation of black marble. Both a near black and a dark tan were found to be the earliest layers on the mantelpiece. The subsequent paint stratigraphy on the trim follows that of the overpainting of the marbleized finish mantel, where off whites are followed by two layers of white, as seen today.

## SOUTH ROOM (104)

This 20' 10-3/4" x 20' 1-5/8" room was originally a mirror image of the north room (103): single doorways in the north and west walls, two windows in the east wall, one window in the west wall, and a chimney breast projecting from the north wall. The room retains most of these original features, but in 1910, the west window was modified to create a doorway to the new bathroom.

By 1910, the room was used as a master bedroom, which fits traditional Virginia house plans, with a bedchamber on the first floor. After 1998, Francis H. Fife used it as an office.<sup>305</sup>

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/4" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid north/south. The floor near the fireplace displays evidence of a curved base of a stove, and the family remembers a Franklin stove in this firebox.<sup>306</sup>

Walls: All four walls are circa 1822 brick masonry, finished in plaster.

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling is 10' 1" above the floor.

Baseboard: The circa 1822 7-1/4" high baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splashboard.

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305. Interview with Millie Fife and Margie Fife Thomas by Ben Ford, June 13, 2024.

306. Ibid.



## OAK LAWN

Chair rail: The circa 1822 5-3/4" high wood chair rail is 2' 11-3/4" above the floor (from the top of the molding).

Picture rail: A 1-3/4" high wood molding (cyma, fillet, and bead) trims the top of the walls.

Doors: The original north (D1041) and southwest (D1042) doorways are framed by 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architraves. The north opening is positioned so close to the east wall that there is no architrave on the east side of the doorway.

The northwest doorway (D1043) was originally a window and converted to a doorway in 1910; the 6" two-fascia architrave matches those of the doors and windows. The 9-light sash reused as a transom, and a mark in the north jamb at the height of the chair rail (the location of the original sill), are both evidence of the earlier window.

D1041 (north): The circa 1822 stile-and-rail door (3' 3-1/4" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-3/8" thick) has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges and a 3" wide x 4" high antique rim lock with two porcelain knobs.

No. 1042 (southwest): The 1910 stile-and-rail door (3' 3-1/2" wide x 6' 5-3/4" high x 1-3/8" thick) has two vertical glazed panels over two raised/recessed panels. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3-1/2" high butt hinges and a 3" wide x 4" high antique rim lock with bronze knobs and an oval keyhole escutcheon.

No. 1043 (northwest): The circa 1910 2' 9" wide x 6' 0" high stile-and-rail door has four vertical panels—two glazed panels above two raised/recessed panels—somewhat similar to the door (1042) now in the original exterior opening. The textured glazed panels are painted over. Hardware: The only visible door hardware consists of a rose and a keyhole escutcheon. 1997–1998 photographs, taken during the demolition of the 1910 bathroom, show a metal towel rod on the west face of the door.

Windows: The two window openings in the east wall are framed by 6" wide two-fascia architraves (similar profile to the doorways); the sills extend out to the chair rail. Each opening is fitted with 9/9 wood sash with 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins. In the original northwest window opening (now a doorway), the upper sash was retained as a transom.

Fireplace: The original 8' 8-3/4" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 5" from the north wall. The brick firebox is lined with metal; based on the probes carried out in the north room, this firebox was originally much larger. The brick surround is covered by a post-1847 cast-iron surround, painted black, which matches the surround in 101.

The post-1847 wood mantel is similar to the one in 101: a plain wood fascia with a flush interior bead borders the surround, and simple pilasters flanking the fascia extend from molded



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 230. The south room (104), looking northwest (upper image) and southeast (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 231. Removal of the fireplace mantel in the south room (104) during the 1997–1998 work. The arrow marks the outline of the original firebox. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN

bases up to a two-fascia frieze, a denticulated molding, and a square-edged mantel shelf (4' 8-1/2" above the floor).

The circa 1822 4' 6-1/2" wide brick hearth projects 2' 0-1/2" from the chimney breast.

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (six tubes, twenty sections) are positioned near the east window openings.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a combination fan and light ceiling fixture. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in the east, west, and south walls and in the chimney breast, and tumbler switches near the north doorway.

Equipment: A communications receptacle is mounted to the east wall.

Finishes investigation: The side of the original door that faces inward, towards this space, does not show evidence of early grain painting, as does the room entrance-hall-facing side of the door. The base layer of paint on this door matches that of the window case and chair rail, which is a pale to medium green.

The chair rail that overlaps the face of the mantel contains the same dark tan and black paint as the mantelpiece itself. This marbled finish, which appears to have been used on all the mantelpieces on this floor may interrupt the number of paint layers present, such that they do not match the trim within the room. It appears that early redecoration of this space may have omitted recoating of the marbled finish, with only an off-white and white succeeding the original finish.

## WEST ROOM (105)

The 20' 0" x 18' 1-1/2" original west room includes single doorways in the west and south walls, two window openings in the north wall, a window opening in the south wall, and a fireplace that projects from the west wall. A doorway in the east wall leads to the entrance hall. The two stairways (C101, C105) are built against the east wall and the partitions enclosing them include doorways to the south stair (C105) and the storage under the stairways (106).

Variances in the flooring and trim in the southeast passage (south of the stair enclosure) indicate that this area was modified at some point.

According to the Fife family, this room was historically used as a dining room.<sup>307</sup>

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/4" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid east/west. In the passage south of the stair enclosure, there is a break in the boards. The boards nearest the doorway to 101 run north/south, and cant to the northeast, as do the boards in 101.

Walls: The north, west, and south walls are original brick masonry; the east wall and the stair enclosure partitions are framed wood. All of these walls are finished in plaster.

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307. Interview with Millie Fife and Margie Fife Thomas by Ben Ford, June 13, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling is 11' 7" above the floor.

Baseboard: The circa 1822 8-1/2" high baseboard includes a cap molding (flush bead, fascia, fillet, and quarter-round) above a plain splashboard.

Chair rail: The circa 1822 6-1/4" high wood chair rail is 3' 0" above the floor (from the top of the molding). At the east end of the south wall, the chair rail differs: the fillet at the top of the cap molding is much smaller than the molding in the rest of the room.

Picture rail: There is no picture rail or cornice in this room.

Doors: The original south doorway (1051) is framed by a 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architrave. The southeast doorway (1012) has similar, but narrower trim (5-1/2" wide); the opening is set so close to the south wall that only part of the architrave is used on that side.

The east opening to the stair (1052) has a 4" wide single-fascia architrave that, based on the paint analysis, was added after the original construction, although the door itself matches the original doors. The neighboring opening to the storage beneath the stair (D1053) is trimmed with a 5-1/2" wide two-fasciae architrave.

A 5" wide single-fascia architrave trims the circa 1900 west opening (1081) to the kitchen.

No. 1051 (south): The circa 1822 stile-and-rail door (3' 3" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-3/8" thick) has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges and a 5-1/2" high mortise lockset with small bronze knobs and a small bronze latch with a thumbturn. A ghost of a knob appears to be for a rim or box lock.

No. 1052 (east to stair C105): The circa 1822 stile-and-rail door (2' 11-1/2" wide x 6' 5-3/4" high x 1-3/8" thick) has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel molding. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4-1/4" high butt hinges and a 3" high x 4" wide antique rim lock with two bronze knobs and a decorative keyhole escutcheon.

No. 1053 (east to 106): The 2' 6" wide x 5' 9-1/2" high x 1-1/4" thick stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels over two pairs of vertical panels. The panels have simple cyma panel moldings on the west face, and no moldings on the east face. Based on the style of the trim and reveal, this door may date to the circa 1900 construction of the kitchen. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges and a 3" high x 4" wide antique rim lock with two bronze knobs and a decorative keyhole escutcheon; the 1997–1998 photographs show that this door had a staple pull instead of a rim lock before the restoration.

Windows: The two window openings in the north wall and the opening in the south wall are framed by 6" wide two-fascia architraves; the sills extend out to the chair rail. Each original opening is fitted with 9/9 wood sash with 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 232. The west room (105), looking east (upper image) and northwest (lower image).  
JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 233. An Easter party in the west room (105) in 1958. From left to right: David Barhydt Marshall, Jr.; Sarah Agnes Marshall; Richard Harrison Fife; William Fife Marshall; Ann Herndon Marshall. Courtesy of the Fife family.*

## OAK LAWN

Fireplace: The original 8' 8-1/2" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 4-1/2" from the west wall. The brick firebox is lined with metal. The brick surround is covered by a post-1847 cast-iron surround, painted black, which matches the surround in 101.

The post-1847 wood mantel is similar to the one in 103: a plain wood fascia with a flush interior bead borders the surround, simple pilasters flanking the fascia extend from molded bases up to a two-fascia frieze, and a simple bed molding supporting the square-edged mantel shelf (4' 7-1/2" above the floor).

The circa 1822 5' 2" wide brick hearth projects 2' 0-1/4" from the surround.

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (six tubes, twenty sections) are positioned near the south and northeast window openings. There is a thermostat on the south face of the stairs' enclosure.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a chain-hung, six-arm chandelier; another chandelier hangs from a chain in the northeast entrance to the room. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in all of the walls and a plate with three tumbler switches near the east doorway to the entrance hall.

Furnishings and fittings: A cupboard cabinet filling the space north of the chimney breast dates to post-1847, based on the detailing. Reeded moldings along the sides and the top terminate at bullseye corner blocks; a double-bead cap trims the top of the cabinet. Two tiers of paneled doors (raised/recessed panels on the east face and plain recessed on the west face) have pairs of 2-3/4" high butt hinges and small brown mineral knobs. The use of these knobs date the cabinet to no later than the early twentieth century; the reeded moldings and bullseye corner blocks suggest the later nineteenth century. Inside the cabinet, there are three shelves in the upper section, and one shelf in the lower section.

Finishes investigation: The trim throughout this room appears to have originally been a light tan, which was similar to that used in the north room (103), but somewhat lighter in color. The mantelpiece, as elsewhere, was painted in imitation of black marble.

The cupboard in the northwest corner of this room lacks this initial layer of light tan paint, but thereafter matches the paint stratigraphy found elsewhere within the room. The color that succeeded the original tan was a blue-green similar to that found in the entrance hall (101).

Both the initial tan and subsequent blue-green are absent from the trim surrounding the door to the south staircase (1052).

## SOUTH STAIR (C105)

The south stair is a mirror image of the north stair (C101). Access to the stair is provided by doorways in the west walls of the stairwell at the first and second-floor levels. In the 1997–1998

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 234. The south stair (C105), looking east (upper left) and in the space below the stair (above). JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 235. (Left) The wall between the south stair (C105) and the attic stair (C204) after the lath and plaster were removed, 1997–1998. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN

work, large sections of the plaster and wood lath were removed and a window opening was inserted between the two stairs.

Walls: Wood-framed walls are mostly finished with painted gypsum board. The finishes in this stair were replaced in the 1997–1998 work, after the plaster was removed to facilitate running conduit and HVAC piping to the attic.

Ceiling: Painted gypsum board, installed in 1997–1998.

Doors: There is no trim at either of the two doorways.

Windows: The 1997–1998 opening between the stairs has no trim.

Stair: The stair begins with five risers ascending east, then continues with seven winders to turn west, with five risers ascending west to the second floor. The risers average 9" high, and the bullnosed treads 11-1/2" deep, including the 3/8" nose. The stringer along the walls consists of a flush bead above a plain splash. 1997–1998 wood handrails are mounted to both walls with brass brackets.

Lighting/electrical: The stairwell is lit by a ceiling fixture with a squashed milk glass globe shade. Other electrical fittings include a pair of switches at the base of the stair, in the south wall.

### STORAGE UNDER STAIRWAYS (106)

The storage area beneath the two stairs is accessed through a doorway in the west wall. The curved partitions enclosing the stairs fill the north and south ends of the room, with a small area of wall to the south and room for a small window opening to the north.

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/4" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid east/west. There is a break in the floorboards near the center of the room that runs north/south. To the north of that break, the floorboards are still laid east/west. Near the east wall, there is another break and the floorboards extend north/south. These breaks align with the break in the floor of the small passage from the dining room to the entrance hall.

The painted floorcloths stored in this room do not appear to be for the closet; the wear on the floorboards indicates that the floor was historically not covered.

Walls: The north wall is original masonry, finished in plaster; the other walls are wood-framed partitions finished in plaster on wood lath.

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling, 6' 9-1/2" above the floor at its highest point, follows the rise of the stairs at the north and south ends of the room.

Baseboard: The circa 1822 4-1/2" high baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splash board.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 236. The storage under the stairways (106), looking east. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 237. The storage under the stairs (106), looking north. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN

Door: The doorway in the west wall (D1053) is framed by a plain wood fascia.

Window: The small 1822 window opening near the base of the north wall has plaster reveals and a brick sill. It is fitted with a four-light casement sash; the hardware includes two butt hinges and a surface latch.

Stairs: In 2024, small portions of the walls enclosing the stairs were removed to investigation the space beneath. These probes revealed that the stairs are original features with very few modifications over time.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a fluorescent ceiling fixture. Other electrical elements include a switch and duplex receptacle near the west doorway.

Furnishings and fittings: The built-in wood shelving on the east wall is a later addition to the room.

## KITCHEN (108)

The 16' 4" x 13' 2" one-story circa 1900 kitchen addition at the west end of the house includes circa 1900 window openings in the north and west walls; a circa 1900 doorway in the east wall; and a large 1997–1998 doorway to the south. The south opening replaced a circa 1900 doorway.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the finishes in the kitchen date to the 1997–1998 campaign.

Floor: 2-1/4" wide tongue-and-groove floorboards are laid north/south.

Walls: The east wall is the exposed original exterior brick, laid in Flemish bond, of the 1822 house. The other three walls are circa 1900 walls of reused brick, finished in 1997–1998 gypsum board.

Ceiling: The gypsum-board ceiling, 7' 7-3/4" above the floor, covers the circa 1900 beadboard ceiling. A 1997–1998 ceiling hatch provides access to the attic above the kitchen addition.

Baseboard: The 4-1/2" baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splash board.

Doors: The circa 1900 east doorway is trimmed with a circa 1900 beaded board reveal and a 4-7/8" wide single-fascia architrave with a quirked ogee outer molding. The large 1997–1998 south opening that replaced the circa 1900 south doorway has a 5" wide single-fascia architrave with a simple cyma outer molding.

No. 1081: This door has been removed. Hardware: Evidence remains for two 3-1/2" high butt hinges and a 2-1/4" high mortise lockset.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 238. The kitchen (108), looking north (upper image); and the attic above the kitchen, looking east (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

Windows: The north and west window openings are framed by 4-1/4" wide single-fascia architraves. Each opening has a 6/6 sash that slides on tracks; each sash has 10" x 12" panes and 5/8" muntins.

Heating: A thimble in the east wall served a wood-burning cooking stove; the Fife family remembers the stove in that location into the mid twentieth-century.<sup>308</sup> There is a modern floor register near the north window. Photographs of the kitchen before the 1997–1998 work show a cast-iron radiator in front of that window.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by 1997–1998 can ceiling fixtures. Other electrical elements include receptacles in the north, west, and south walls and in the central island; and a pair of tumbler switches in the west wall.

Plumbing: The central island includes 1997–1998 stainless-steel sinks and a *KitchenAid* dishwasher (KOFE104HP51). Photographs taken before the 1997–1998 work show a ceramic sink and countertop atop a wood cabinet in front of the north window.

Furnishings and fittings: The cabinets along the west and north walls have faux marble laminate counters and painted wood cabinets with no doors.

Equipment: There is a *Jennair Expressions* range and oven (W27400W) and *Whirlpool* refrigerator (WRT359SFY00) on the north wall.

## SOUTHWEST ADDITION (109)

The 1997–1998 remodeling replaced enclosed southwest porches with this spacious, light-filled room. Natural light is provided by window walls to the south and west and by three skylights. The 29' 4" x 20' 0-1/2" space includes three openings in the north wall: a wide 1997–1998 doorway that replaced the 1910 door to the kitchen; and the original window and doorway to the dining room. At the east end of the room is a closet and a doorway to the bathroom, both dating to the 1997–1998 work, as well as an original exterior entrance into 104.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the finishes in this space date to the 1997–1998 work.

Floor: 2-1/4" wide tongue-and-groove floorboards are laid east/west. Along the window walls, in the southeast corner of the room (where there is a wood-burning stove) and in the passage to the bath, the floor is covered in 1' 1-1/4" square quarry tiles.

Walls: The north wall is the exposed exterior walls of the original central block and the circa 1900 kitchen (108); the south end of the east wall is also an original exterior wall. The porches protected the original Flemish bond of the original walls with its penciled mortar joints, as well as the 1900

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308. Interview with Millie Fife and Margie Fife Thomas by Ben Ford, June 13, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

brick wall of the kitchen. Above the doorway to the kitchen, a painted gypsum board panel masks the lower roofline of the kitchen. The partitions enclosing the 1997–1998 bathroom are finished in gypsum board. The south and west window walls are made up of bays of three tiers of insulated awning sash set in a wood frame.

Pockets in the brick between the doorway and window of the west room (105) remain from the framing for the earliest southwest porch. Below the window is a ghost of a bulkhead covering for the entrance to the west basement (003).

Ceiling: The gypsum board ceiling, 10' 0" above the floor, is punctuated by three skylights.

Baseboard: The 4-1/2" high baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splash board and a quarter-round shoe molding.

Doors: The seven doorways in this room include two original openings: the northeast opening to the west room (1051) and the east opening to the south wing (1042). Both of these doorways are trimmed by 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architraves. A single course of rowlock bricks extends above the east opening.

An exterior doorway in the west wall (1091), the doorways to the northwest (1092) and southeast (1101) closets, and the doorway to the bathroom (T1101) all date to the 1997–1998 work.

The large 1997–1998 northeast opening into the kitchen has no doors; it replaced a circa 1900 doorway and door. Its trim matches the 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architraves of the original doorways.

No. 1091: The 2' 6" wide x 7' 9-1/2" high x 1-3/4" thick glazed door is set into the window wall below a single-light transom and next to a single-light sidelight. Hardware: The door hardware includes four 4" hinges, and a Corbin/Russwin mortise lockset with polished brass lever knobs.

No. 1092: The 2' 5-3/4" wide x 7' 8" high x 1-1/4" thick door to the northwest closet has six raised panels. Hardware: The door hardware includes three 3-1/2" high butt hinges and a 3-1/2" x 4-1/4" rim lock with bronze knobs.

No. 1101: The two bifold doors at the southeast closet each measure 1' 3-3/4" wide x 6' 7" high x 1-1/4" thick. Hardware: The door hardware includes sets of three butt hinges as well as wood knobs.

Windows: The circa 1822 north window opening has typical 2-3/4" wide exterior trim: two plain fasciae trimmed with an interior flush bead, and a wood sill. Pintles remain for shutters. The opening has a 9/9 wood sash.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 239. The southwest addition (109), looking west (upper image) and northwest (lower image). The pockets or cavities in the north wall are evidence of the first southwest porch.  
JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by four can ceiling lights and two fan/ceiling fixtures. Other electrical elements include receptacles in the east wall, the west closet partitions, and in the floor; and tumbler switches in the east wall and near the west doorway.

Heating: A free-standing stove sits in the southeast corner; its chimney extends up through the ceiling. There are floor registers along the window walls, and wall registers in the east wall. A thermostat is mounted to the east wall.

Plumbing: There is a stainless-steel sink on the west wall, set in a wood cabinet with a laminate counter and splash.

Equipment: A Frigidaire refrigerator (FRT18NNGWO) is set against the west wall, near the sink.

Northwest closet (109A): This 1997–1998 closet has wood-framed walls finished with gypsum board, built on top of the tile floor. The baseboard matches that of 101, without the quarter-round shoe molding. The closet is furnished with a clothes rod and a shelf supported by a wood rail.

Southeast closet (110A): The 1997–1998 closet in the southeast corner of the room is enclosed with wood-framed partitions finished in gypsum board, built against the original brick of the east wall. The gypsum board ceiling is 7' 0-3/4" above the floor (finished in 2-1/4" wide floorboards laid east/west). The baseboard matches the trim in 109. There is open storage above the closet.

## BATHROOM (T110)

A bathroom was first constructed onto the southwest porch as a shed-roofed addition in 1910.

In a letter to her son, Sarah (Sallie) Fife noted that carpenters had begun “cutting of the door from my room to the bathroom (where our west window was).”<sup>309</sup> The pipes and plumbing fixtures had not yet been installed; the “sewerage pipes” were to empty into an old well. In May, Sallie’s daughter wrote that the house now had “fine new bathrooms” and noted “Mamma’s [on the first floor] is the greatest convenience to her, she just gloats over it.”<sup>310</sup>

The wood-framed structure, finished in clapboards on the exterior and vertical beadboard paneling on the interior, included a doorway and a window opening in the west wall as well as the converted window opening in the original exterior wall.

This bathroom was demolished and a new bathroom constructed in the 1997–1998 campaign. All of the finishes, unless otherwise noted, date to that work.

Floor: The floor is covered in sheet vinyl, patterned in faux white ceramic tile with black corner accents.

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309. Sarah (Sallie) Fife to Shelton Strickler Fife, April 13, 1910, from Millie Fife to Ben Ford, 15 July, 2024.

310. Margaret “Madge” Whitler Fife to Shelton Strickler Fife, May 24, 1910, from Millie Fife to Ben Ford, 15 July, 2024.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 240. The 1910 first-floor bathroom (upper images), and after demolition (left). Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

*Figure 241. (Above) First-floor bathroom (T110), looking north. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

Walls: The original brick walls to the north and east, and the 1997–1998 partitions to the south and west, are finished in gypsum board. The bath/shower enclosure is finished in white subway tiles and black and white accent tiles with animal motifs.

Ceiling: The gypsum board ceiling is 10' 0-3/4" above the floor. The skylight is similar to the skylights in 109.

Baseboard: The 4-1/2" high baseboard includes a flush bead above a plain splash board and a quarter-round shoe molding.

Doors: The 1997–1998 south pocket doorway has a plain fascia trim. A 1910 doorway (1043) in the east wall (converted from an original window opening) is covered by gypsum board. The nine-light transom (the upper sash of the original window) is set in a reveal lined with gypsum board and a plain wood frame.

No. T1101: The 2' 6" wide x 6' 8-1/2" high x 1-1/4" thick stile-and-rail door has six raised panels. Hardware: The door hardware includes a polished brass flush pull/latch, as well as the tracks for the sliding door.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by strip fixtures around a mirror on the east wall. Other fittings include three switches in the south wall, duplex receptacles; and the outlets for the washer and dryer on the north wall.

Plumbing: The 1910 bathroom was equipped with a clawfoot bathtub, a toilet, and a pedestal lavatory on the west wall. The 1997–1998 fixtures include a flush-to-the-floor bathtub, set in an enclosure on the west wall; an *American Standard* toilet on the west wall; and a *Universal Rundle* lavatory in a laminate counter above a wood cabinet on the east wall.

On the north wall is a *Maytag* washer (MHW5630HWI) and a *Kitchen Aid* dryer (KEY5850GQO) with the affiliated plumbing connections.

Furnishings and fittings: There is open storage above the laundry area and the bathtub enclosure; these features date to 1997–1998.

## OAK LAWN

### SECOND FLOOR

#### EAST BEDROOM (201)

The 20' 2-1/2" x 18' 0-1/2" room at the east end of the second floor is accessed via the north stairway (C101). The room includes three doorways in the west wall, an east exterior doorway to a balcony, pairs of window openings in the north and east walls, and one window opening in the south wall. A chimney breast with fireplace projects from the north wall. When a bathroom was first installed on the second floor (now T206), it replaced a closet or dressing room to the southwest.<sup>311</sup>

At the other end of the west wall is a passage between the stair enclosure and the north wall. Evidence for powder-post beetles on the floor at the east end of the passage indicate that there was a wall in that location and that the east and west bedrooms did not connect.

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/2" to 6-3/4" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid north/south.

Walls: The north, south, and east walls are brick masonry, finished in plaster. The west wall is a framed partition, finished in plaster and lath.

Ceiling: The plaster-on-lath ceiling is 9' 10-3/4" above the floor.

Baseboard: The circa 1822 baseboard is 6" high, and includes a flush bead above a plain splashboard.

Chair rail: The 1822 5-3/4" high wood chair rail is 2' 5-1/2" above the floor (from the top of the molding).

Picture rail and Cornice: None.

Doors: The original east exterior doorway (2011) is framed by a 6-1/2" wide two-fascia architrave. The west doorways (2012, 2013) to the bathroom and the stair have 5-1/4" wide two-fascia architraves. In the northwest connecting doorway (2051) between the two bedrooms, the two-fascia architrave is 6-1/2" at the top, but cut off by the walls at the sides.

No. 2011 (east entrance): The original opening is fitted with an 1822 stile-and-rail door (3' 6" wide x 6' 7-1/2" high x 1-3/8" thick) with six recessed panels: two horizontal panels above two pairs of vertical panels. The panel moldings differ from the typical simple cyma, as they are slightly more complex with a quarter-round and fillet. Hardware: The door hardware

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311. Margaret "Madge" Whitler Fife to Shelton Strickler Fife, May 24, 1910, from Millie Fife to Ben Ford, 15 July, 2024.

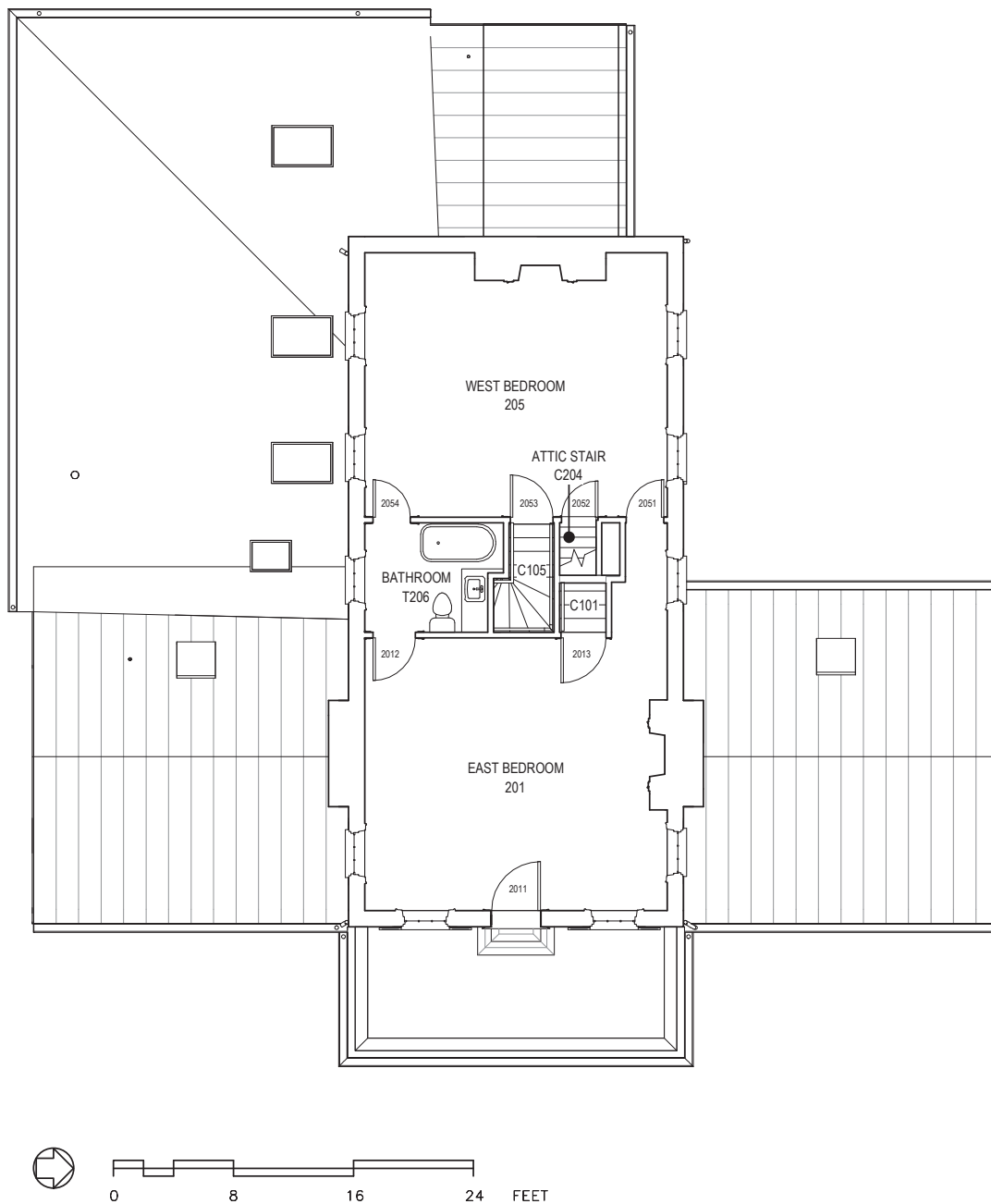


Figure 242. Plan of second floor.



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 243. East bedroom (201), looking southeast (upper image) and northwest (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 244. The fireplace mantle in the east bedroom (201). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN

includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges; a 5-1/2" mortise lockset with white porcelain knobs; a thumbturn latch; and a chain latch.

No. 2012 (southwest to T206): The 3' 11-1/2" wide x 6' 6" high x 1-1/2" thick stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges; a 3-1/2" wide x 5-3/4" high antique box lock with patent dates (similar to the lock at door no. 1032); and a hook and eye.

No. 2013 (to north stair): The 2' 11-1/2" wide x 6' 5-1/2" high x 1-1/8" thick stile-and-rail door has six panels (raised/recessed on the east face and recessed on the west face). The panel moldings, obscured by paints, appear to include two beads and a fillet, matching the door (2053) to the south stair. The paint analysis on the south stair door confirms that this is a later door. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3" high butt hinges; a 5" wide x 4-1/4" high Carpenter's lock with brown mineral knobs, installed upside down; and a cast-iron slide bolt. There are nails for a missing key escutcheon on the west face of the door.

Windows: The five original window openings (two in the east wall, two in the north wall, and one in the south wall) are framed by 6" wide two-fasciae architraves. Each opening is fitted with a 9/6 double-hung sash with 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins.

Fireplace: The original 8' 5" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 2-3/4" from the north wall. A ledge of bricks has been added to the base of the firebox, presumably for a stove insert. Painted stucco covers the brick surround.

The circa 1822 wood mantel begins with a two-fasciae architrave around the surround, trimmed with an inner flush bead and an outer cyma and fillet molding. Above the architrave is a plain frieze, and then a crown (or bed) molding of a cavetto, fillet, ovolo, and fillet supporting the square-edge mantel shelf (3' 10 3/4" above the floor).

The circa 1822 4' 8-1/2" wide brick hearth projects 1' 8" from the surround.

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (six tubes, twenty-four sections) are positioned near the east and northwest window openings. There are also two ceiling registers.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a combination fan and light ceiling fixture. A ceiling fixture, similar to the ones in the stairwells, is mounted to the ceiling of the northwest passage to 202. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in the south and east walls and tumbler switches near the east and southwest doorways.

Equipment: There are communication outlets in the north and south walls.

Furnishings and fittings: A shelf supported by metal brackets is mounted above the doorway (2051) at the west end of the northeast passage.

## OAK LAWN

Finishes investigation: The southwest doorway (2012) was sampled on both sides, with the side facing in towards Room T206 containing one additional early paint scheme that was not present on the opposite face of the same door. This initial layer of paint was of a gray-green color.

Both the sample taken from the east side of that door and the sample from the mantel began with a yellow/tan color that was followed by red/brown.

The trim surrounding the northeast window included none of these colors but exhibited multiple layers of off-white and white paints.

### ATTIC STAIR (C204)

The original circa 1822 stair to the attic ascends eight risers east, then one winder to a landing, where the floorboards are laid east/west. The stair continues with six risers west to the attic floor. At the top run of the stair, there is a plain wood post that supports a rail at the top of the stairwell wall. A plain stringer baseboard stringer rises along the stairs. The stairwell walls are finished in plaster. Above the doorway in the west wall, the initials "J.F." are carved into the plaster, presumably by a member of the Fife family.

### WEST BEDROOM (205)

The 20' 3-1/2" x 17' 8" room at the west end of the second floor is accessed via the south stairway (C105). It includes four doorways in the east wall and pairs of window openings in the north and south walls. A chimney breast with fireplace projects from the west wall.

As part of the 1997–1998 work, the lath and plaster were removed from the east wall and from the ceiling. Steel angles mounted to the ceiling joists were installed to allow for a level finish.

Floor: The circa 1822 random-width (4-1/2" to 6" wide) tongue-and-groove boards are laid east/west.

Walls: The north, south, and west walls are brick masonry, finished in plaster. The east wall is a framed partition that was fully refinished in 1997–1998.

Ceiling: The ceiling, refinished in the 1997–1998 work, is 9' 11-1/2" above the floor.

Baseboard: The 1822 baseboard is 5-1/2" high. It includes a flush bead above a plain splashboard.

Chair rail: The 1822 5-3/4" high wood chair rail is 2' 6-1/2" above the floor (from the top of the molding). This trim matches the chair rail in 201.

Picture rail and Cornice: None.

Doors: The four doorways in the east wall are all trimmed with two-fascia architraves, ranging from 5-1/4" wide at the northeast opening to 6" wide at the stair opening.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 245. The second-floor west bedroom (205), looking northwest (upper image) and northeast (lower image). JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 246. The west bedroom (205) during the 1997–1998 work. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN

No. 2051 (to 201): The stile-and-rail door (2' 5-3/4" wide x 6' 5-3/4" high x 1-3/8" thick) with six recessed panels: two horizontal panels above two pairs of vertical panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges; a 3-1/4" wide x 4-1/2" high box lock with white porcelain knobs. There is a ghost of an earlier rim lock, and ghosts for knobs on the edge of the stile.

No. 2052 (to attic): The circa 1822 2' 4-3/4" wide x 5' 8" high x 1-3/8" thick stile-and-rail door has six panels: two horizontal panels above two pairs of vertical panels. The raised/recessed panels on the west face have cyma/quarter-round panel moldings; the east recessed panels have no moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 4" high butt hinges; and a 6" wide x 3-3/4" high rim lock with small bronze ovoid knobs and an oval keyhole escutcheon.

No. 2053 (south stair): The 2' 11-3/4" wide x 6' 5-1/2" high x 1-1/8" thick stile-and-rail door has six recessed panels: two horizontal panels above two pairs of vertical panels. Like the second-floor door to the north stair, the panels moldings are more intricate than the typical cyma moldings; while obscured by paint, they appear to be made up of two bead and a fillet. This molding and the paint analysis both indicate that this door is later than the original doors; there may have been no second-floor doorway to the stair originally. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3" high butt hinges; a 5" wide x 4-1/4" high Carpenter's lock with brown mineral knobs, installed upside down; and a surface latch with a knob stamped with a clover leaf.

No. 2034 (T206): The twentieth-century 2' 7-3/4" wide x 6' 7" high x 1-1/4" thick stile-and-rail door has four vertical raised/recessed panels with simple cyma panel moldings. Hardware: The door hardware includes a pair of 3" high butt hinges; an antique 4-1/4" wide x 3" high rim lock with brown mineral knobs; and hook and eye.

Windows: The four original window openings (two in the north wall and two in the south wall) are framed by 5-3/4" to 6" wide two-fascia architraves. Each opening is fitted with a 9/6 double-hung sash with 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins. In all but the northeast opening, a board is nailed down to the sill.

Fireplace: The circa 1822 8' 10" wide plastered brick chimney breast projects 1' 11" from the west wall. Painted stucco covers the brick surround.

The wood mantel begins with a two-fascia architrave around the surround, trimmed with an inner flush bead and an outer cyma and fillet molding. Above the architrave is a plain frieze, and then a crown (or bed) molding of a flush bead, cavetto, and fillet supporting the square-edge mantel shelf (3' 9-1/2" above the floor).

The 1822 4' 11-1/2" wide brick hearth projects 1' 5-3/4" from the chimney breast.

Heating: Mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiators (six tubes, twenty-four sections) are positioned near the southwest and northeast window openings. There are

## OAK LAWN

also two ceiling registers and a register at the north end of the east wall, near the ceiling. A “Honeywell” thermostat is mounted to the east wall.

Lighting/electrical: The room is lit by a combination fan and light ceiling fixture. Other electrical elements include duplex receptacles in the north, west, and east walls and tumbler switches on the east wall.

Equipment: There are communication outlets in the north and south walls.

Finishes investigation: Paint analysis within this room focused on the east wall, which contains four distinct door types.

Door No. 2052, which leads to the attic staircase, appeared to have the greatest number of layers with at least two coats of tan and warm gray followed by a brown/red.

The paint stratigraphy on Door No. 2053 (south stair) begins with the warm gray that appears to be the second paint scheme present on Door 2052 (attic stairs).

Samples taken from Door No. 2051, which opens from the east bedroom, did not possess the earliest tan and warm gray layers, but began with the brown/red which appeared to be the third scheme present on Door 2052 (attic stair).

The southernmost of the four doors, which leads into the bathroom (T206), is of modern construction and contains only two coats of white paint, which are the most recent layers of paint on the remaining four doors that were tested for paint stratigraphy within this space.

## BATHROOM (T206)

The 9' 2" x 7' 4" second-floor bathroom is positioned against the south wall and connects via doorways to both bedrooms. The room includes single doorways in the east and west walls and a window opening in the south wall.

In 1910, a bathroom was installed in this location at the same time as the first-floor bathroom. According to Margaret “Madge” Whitler Fife, who lived in the house at that time, the bathroom was installed in an existing closet that served the east bedroom (201).<sup>312</sup>

Floor: The floor is covered in sheet vinyl imprinted with a pattern of beige ceramic tiles.

Walls: The south wall is brick masonry, finished in plaster. The other walls are wood-framed partitions, finished in gypsum board.

Ceiling: The gypsum board ceiling is 9' 5-1/2" above the floor.

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312. Margaret “Madge” Whitler Fife to Shelton Strickler Fife, May 24, 1910, from Millie Fife to Ben Ford, 15 July, 2024.

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 247. The second-floor bathroom (T206), looking northwest. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 248. The second-floor bathroom (T206) during the 1997–1998 work, after the lath and plaster were removed. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*

## OAK LAWN

Baseboard: The 1822 baseboard on the south wall is 6" high and includes a flush bead above a plain splashboard. A similar baseboard was made for the interior partitions in 1997–1998 to match the original.

Chair rail: The 1822 5-3/4" high wood chair rail on the south wall is 2' 6" above the floor (from the top of the molding). The profile matches the chair rail in 201. On the other three walls, the chair rail was made to match the south trim. The modern rail wraps around the lavatory cabinetry.

Picture rail and Cornice: None.

Doors: The single doorways (2012, 2054) in the east and west walls are framed by 5-3/4" wide architraves. At the east trim, the historic chair rail and baseboard are cut to butt against the molding; the newer west trim is cut to fit around the chair rail and baseboard.

Windows: The original window opening in the south wall is framed by a 5-3/4" wide two-fasciae architrave. The 9/6 double-hung sash has 10" x 12" panes and 3/4" muntins.

Heating: A mid-twentieth-century *American Standard Arco* cast-iron radiator (four tubes, fourteen sections) is positioned the south window. There is also a 1997–1998 ceiling register.

Plumbing: The 1910 enameled, cast-iron, claw-foot tub near the west wall was refurbished to use in the bathroom. A 1997–1998 *Universal Rundle* lavatory is set in a laminate counter above an open wood cabinet on the north wall. A 1997–1998 *American Standard* toilet is set against the east wall.

Lighting/electrical: The bathroom is lit by a ceiling fixture with a milk glass saucer shade, and by strip lighting at the mirror on the north wall. Other electrical elements include a duplex receptacle and a pair of switches in the east wall.

Furnishings and fittings: An open cubicle high in the north wall was installed in 1997–1998. There are towel bars on the north and east walls.



## OAK LAWN

### ATTIC

#### CENTRAL ATTIC (301)

The central attic extends the full length and width of the second-floor rooms. The plan includes a chimney on the west wall, flanked by window openings, and a fanlight window in the east wall.

Floor: 5-1/2" to 14" wide boards are laid east/west.

Walls: The walls are exposed stud framing to the north, south, and east; the east wall is brick. Two tiers of horizontal boards cover the base of the knee walls to the north and south and the gable walls to the east and west. The upper portions of the chimney on the west wall have been replaced with concrete masonry units.

Ceiling: The exposed rafters for the gable roof are 3" wide and spaced 2' 0" to 2' 1-1/2" apart (on center) and meet at mortise and tenon joints at the peak of the roof. The sheathing for the roof averages 10" wide. A wood tie has been installed near the top of each pair of rafters.

Door: There is no trim at the stair doorway.

Windows: The two window openings in the west wall have plain wood frames set in masonry openings and fitted with four-light casement sash. Hardware includes two butts and a wood latch at each sash.

The east six-light fanlight is set in a plain wood frame. No evidence for hardware was found during this investigation.

Heating: Air conditioning was installed as part of the 1997–1998 work, and the corresponding equipment includes a *Trane US* air handler at the west end of the attic; insulated ductwork; and particle board enclosures for the ducts along the south wall.

Lighting/electrical: The attic is lit by incandescent porcelain utility fixtures. Other electrical elements include a switch at the bottom of the attic stair and remnants of a knob-and-tube system.

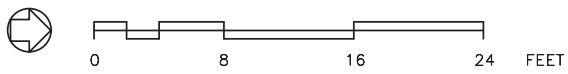
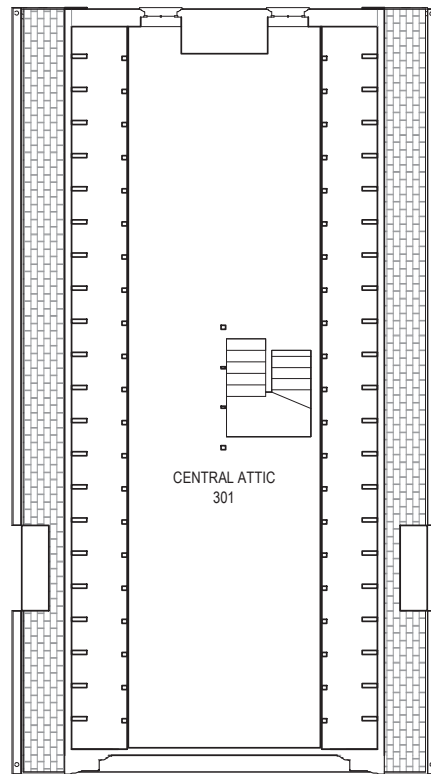


Figure 249. Central attic plan. JGWA, 2024.

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*Figure 250. The central attic (301), looking east (upper image) and west (lower image).  
JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 251. (Left) The rafters meet at mortise-and-tenon joints at the peak of the gable. JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 252. (Below) The central attic (301) in 1997. Courtesy of Nancy O'Brien.*





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*Figure 253. The Cook's House from the southeast. JGWA, 2024.*

## COOK'S HOUSE

The small, gable-roofed building to the west of the main house, traditionally known as the “Cook’s House,” is a one-bay-wide, one-bay deep structure built of bricks laid in a stretcher bond. A doorway is centered in the east elevation, and a window opening centered in the north elevation. A brick chimney rises along the south side of the building. The roof is covered in asphalt.

A historic photograph of the building, taken from the northeast, shows a shed-roofed addition on the east side of the building (Figure 30). That wood-framed structure had a window in the north elevation. In images taken in 1967 (Figure 58) and 1971 (Figure 62), the building is painted white.

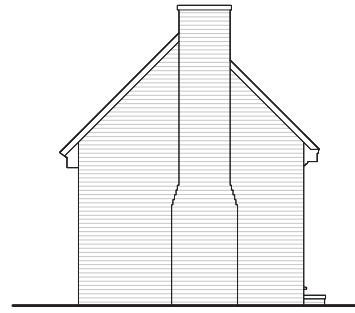
### EXTERIOR

The walls of the Cook’s House are brick, laid in a common bond. Below the roofline, the bricks are laid with one header course every three stretcher courses. The header courses are spaced further

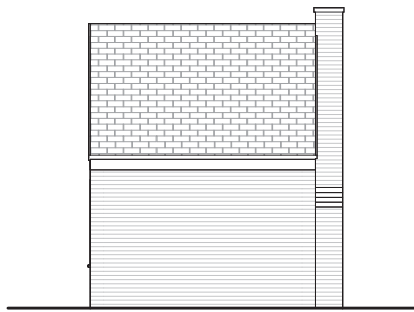




EAST ELEVATION



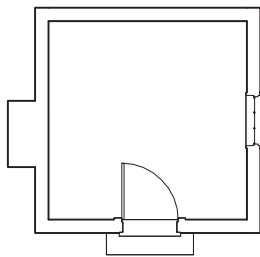
SOUTH ELEVATION



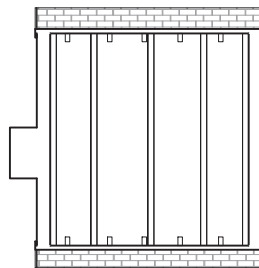
WEST ELEVATION



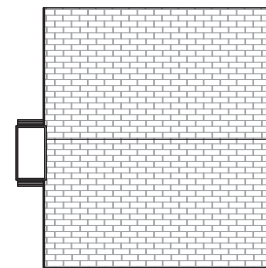
NORTH ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN



ATTIC PLAN



ROOF PLAN

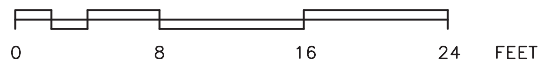


Figure 254. *The Cook's House*. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

apart in the north gable. Individual rowlock bricks are used to fill the spaces between the stretcher courses and the stretchers at the corners of the building.

The south gable has been rebuilt, and those bricks are laid in a stretcher bond against concrete masonry units (visible from the interior).

At the top of the brick on the east elevation is a wood cavetto and ovolo molding below a projecting soffit. On the west face, there is no bed molding; just a shallower soffit and a board angled out to meet the edge of the roof. Plain raking barge boards trim the north and south elevations.

The doorway in the east wall is framed by a fascia trimmed with an interior bead, and is set above a wood threshold. The north window has a plain narrow wood frame and sill.

## INTERIOR

Floor: The concrete floor includes a drain in the northwest corner.

Walls: The walls are rendered brick, except in the south gable, where the interior wall has been rebuilt with concrete masonry units.

Ceiling: The ceiling has been removed, exposing the framing for the roof. Marks and nails on the framing indicate that there was a plaster-on-lath ceiling, approximately 7' 7-1/2" above the floor. Above the rafters, plywood sheathing supports the asphalt roof.

Door: The doorway in the east wall is framed by a 4" wide plain unfinished board.

East door: The 3' 1-1/4" wide x 5' 11" high board-and-batten door is made of 7/8" thick, 3" wide vertical tongue-and-groove boards fastened to two horizontal battens. Hardware: The door is hung on a pair of 9-1/2" L-shaped strap hinges. There is a hasp for a padlock. Keyhole and knob openings remain below the hasp.

Window: The window in the north wall is set in a plain wood frame; a plain board replaced the sill. The lower six-light sash has 10" wide x 9-3/4" high panes and 5/8" wide molded muntins on the interior face; on the exterior face, they are plain, thin muntins, just 5/16" wide. The bottom rail of the sash has been replaced.

The upper sash has 10" wide x 12" high panes. The sash is installed backwards: the 5/8" molded side of the muntins is on the exterior face, and the thin 5/16" muntins are on the interior face.

Lighting/electrical: The interior of the Cook's House is lit by a porcelain utility fixture on the ceiling framing. A switch and duplex are surface-mounted to the east wall, near the doorway.

Furnishings and fittings: A wood rail with modern hooks on the west wall is fastened to dimensional lumber boards hanging from the ceiling framing.

# OAK LAWN

## HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

### PROBLEMS OF REPAIR

During its first two centuries, Oak Lawn served several generations of two families as a primary residence. This continuity of use and ownership led to few outward changes, but also to periods of uneven maintenance. Hard regular use necessitates routine maintenance and invariably leads to deterioration and renewal. Extensive work in the late 1990s has upgraded the building's overall condition, and sound maintenance since that time has left Oak Lawn in good overall condition.

Although changes have occurred over time, the house retains much of its original character and many of the architectural features that lend the building its distinction. Several existing features, such as the rooftop railing above the front entry porch, have seen wholesale replacement over the years. This railing has been replaced at least three times. Other features, such as the decorative plaster in the entrance hall and the flat plaster in other areas have seen extensive refurbishment and large areas of full replacement.

Deterioration of some building elements occurred because of inconstant attention to maintenance over time, as a result the house experienced at least two periods of significant renewal and updating. The first of these was during the early years of Fife ownership, while the second came in the 1990s. Ongoing maintenance over the last few decades has stabilized the building conditions, but some of these interventions have obscured the building's evolution over the course of its history. Other repairs and alterations have exacerbated some problem conditions, while recent repairs mask underlying conditions. Because Oak Lawn is listed on the National Register, any future modifications should be undertaken only by qualified contractors.

The following itemized problems of repair are organized first by typical problems that affect all areas of the building, followed by conditions that have had an impact on specific locations. These are organized by each exterior elevation and by each of the numbered rooms within the house.

#### EXTERIOR

1. The slate roof over the central part of the house is in sound but deteriorated condition, with widespread areas of loose and displaced slates.
2. There is surface rust on the sheet-metal ridge cap above the slates on the main roof of the house.
3. There is bridging of the fully adhered membrane on the roof above the southwest addition (109) where the nearly flat membrane roof connects to the sloped standing-seam roofs to the east and west ends of the roof. Bridging is caused by a lack of adhesion to the substrate, and often leads to shortened service life of the roofing.

## OAK LAWN

4. Evidence of settlement cracking can be seen at the outermost bays of the north and south wings as well as the west end of the central block of the house. Other shifting within the brickwork can be seen where the profiled brick water table passes over the basement windows. In these locations, the brickwork lacks adequate horizontal and lateral support. This condition exists above both original and replaced window frames.
5. The roof leaders from the upper roof deposit bulk water onto lower roofs and gutters. Many of these lower areas have less capacity than the leaders from the upper roofs. The treatment of the roof water runoff differs where the leaders meet the ground. In some areas there are splash blocks, while others deposit water into a below-grade drainage system.

The underground system only exists on the east side of the house and daylight to the east lawn, from the south side of the house, and at the gutter along the northwest side of the driveway, from the north side of the house. The leaders at the north wing were clogged at grade level during the initial inspection.

6. There is uneven paint buildup around the exterior of the building; some areas of raised wood grain indicate large-scale paint removal by abrasive blasting at some point in the past.
7. Most of the gutters around the building are clogged with leaf litter and do not drain properly.
8. The standing-seam sheet-metal roofs on the north and south wings are similar in appearance, but not in age. The south roof appears to date to the work done c. 1900, while the north roof was installed nearly one hundred years later.
9. The wood windowsills around the building are generally checked with some areas of cracking that extend through the paint and present an avenue for water to access the underlying wood.
10. There is extensive overpainting at doors and windows around the building.
11. The original lime-rich mortar is largely intact, but the soft mortar exhibits widespread holes and areas of deterioration. Though not uncommon, these problem conditions are mostly small and isolated. Larger voids exist at head joints, where full depth mortar is often missing from the original construction.
12. Most of the window sash exhibit at least early stages of breakdown of the glazing compound within the windows. Areas that are more exposed to extreme swings in temperature and light tend to be in a more advanced state of deterioration.
13. The majority of the original wood window frames at the basement level have been replaced with modern lumber relatively recently. The exception to this is on the south elevation of the house, where the frames have been protected by adjoining construction for much of their history. Some of the rebuilt frames are of reduced size, because of raised grade levels.
14. The mortar within the chimney stacks is generally in worse condition than elsewhere on the building as a result of two factors: exposure and the thinness of the construction. Because of the size of the flues, large areas of the chimneys are only one wythe of brick in thickness.

## OAK LAWN

15. The east porch roof is flat-lock sheet metal and has been coated many times. The roof of the south wing has been similarly coated but is standing-seem sheet metal.

### EAST ELEVATION

1. Three roof leaders combine into one at both sides of the central section of the house's east elevation.
2. The brick below the wood deck of the entrance porch is generally deteriorated with open joints and efflorescence on the surface of some bricks due to moisture related issues. The grade has been raised over time on both the north and south sides.
3. The upper surfaces of wood steps leading to the roof of the entrance porch are somewhat deteriorated.
4. The moldings and applied trim at the base of the second-floor door to the east bedroom (201) are missing, shifted out of position, and cracked. The sill below is cracked and worn, with part of the outer nosing missing.
5. The wood balustrade at the entrance porch roof is supported on loose wood blocking below each of the plinths.
6. The plantings in front of the house are generally overgrown and conceal much of the building's primary elevation, but these are for the most part positioned at a fair distance from the building itself.
7. At the time of the initial inspection, the soldered seams of the roof leader just above the grade-level boot on the north side of the entrance porch were broken with the leader clogged and semidetached. This condition appears to have existed for some time, as moisture-related biological growth and deterioration of mortar joins can be seen in the immediate vicinity of the break.
8. Biological growth and moisture-based surface staining can be seen on the balustrade of the entrance porch where no effective drip edge was provided.
9. Short sections of the wood trim have been replaced with new material at all levels of the cornice of the entrance porch. A similar area exists where the north wing abuts the central block of the house and at the extreme north end of that cornice on this elevation.
10. One of the window muntins is broken on the north wing, leaving two original glass panes without adequate support.



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### SOUTH ELEVATION

1. The pointing on the south chimney is mismatched in several areas and is badly deteriorated near the roof line.
2. The cast-iron plumbing vent that projects through the membrane roof above the southwest addition (109) is overly complex for the purpose it serves. A rubber cap covers the end of one arm of the vent. This has deteriorated and is open as result. The diameter of the current vent is smaller than the two pipes that lead into it.
3. The mixed aluminum and galvanized sheet-steel flashings between the first and second floor levels are loose at their bottom edge in several locations.
4. A faint outline of the shutters can be seen on the surface of the brickwork at the second-floor windows at this elevation. It appears that the exterior of the house may have been lightly sandblasted at some point in the past. There is evidence of this on the wood and brick elements.
5. The entry to the south basement (001) is protected by a small brick enclosure that extends from the south face of the building. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles that are reaching the end of their service life. The southern end of the roof is covered in biological growth. The decking on the west slope has been replaced by particle board. The brick over the doorway to the basement level is displaced and cracked along the joints due to a lack of adequate support.
6. About a half a dozen of the thirty insulated glass sash on the south elevation of the southwest addition (109) are fogged up as a result of breakdown of the gaskets around the perimeter of the glass.
7. There is plant growth in some of the mortar joints to the west of the projecting entrance to the south basement (001).
8. The section of belt course on the west end of the south wing is badly discolored as a result of regular inundation of water from the adjoining roofs above. The sheet-metal diverter on the roof above does not appear to be equal to the task of protecting the wall below. The aluminum faced flashing at the junction of the southwest addition and the original brick belt course, between the basement and first floor levels, is not tight and allows water to enter.
9. The boxwood bush at the southeast corner of the building comes in contact with that corner of the house and partially blocks access to the south-facing basement-level door.

### WEST ELEVATION

1. With the construction of the southwest addition (109) on the south side of this elevation and the mechanical equipment on the north, this, the rear elevation of the house, is more altered than other areas.

## OAK LAWN

2. Evidence of reuse of bricks in the rebuilt kitchen wing can be seen where painted bricks are randomly interspersed with unpainted units.
3. Areas of spot repointing exist in several locations of this elevation, particularly on the north end of the north wing and around the hose bib on the kitchen wing (108).
4. An area of stepped settlement cracking exists to the south of the exterior door on the north wing (103). This has resulted in cracks through several bricks just above handrail height. Evidence of the crack can be traced for the full height of the wall.
5. The stacking of firewood against the wooden stoop leading to the north wing (103) can promote moisture-based rot and insect infestation.

## NORTH ELEVATION

1. The molded bricks that form the water-table around the house are badly shifted out of position where they pass over the basement level windows at the west basement (003).
2. Several pieces of electrical and mechanical equipment and associated conduit and tubing are positioned along this elevation of the building to the west of the north wing.
3. The grade adjacent to the north end of the north wing is higher than elsewhere on the building.
4. Overhanging trees have grown up against the roof and walls on the north end of the north wing.
5. A large area of water staining and associated biological growth can be seen where the west elevation of the north wing abuts the central block of the house. There is some deterioration to the small four-light window openings in this area.
6. An area of stepped cracking extends along several routes and can be seen between the top of the first-floor and the bottom of the second-floor windows within the westernmost bay of the central block of the house.
7. There is a large weed tree growing near the foundation of the kitchen wing (108). The tree is currently taller than the wing, but not yet as tall as the central block of the house.
8. Deteriorated, open, and unevenly repointed mortar joints can be seen adjacent to the roof leader on the west end of the central block of the house.
9. A stepped crack extends from below the north-facing window into Room 108. This has been repointed with light-colored mortar.

## OAK LAWN

10. Areas of displaced brickwork exist on the north chimney, just above the eave of the main roof.

### INTERIOR

1. The wood floors are generally in sound condition, but wear and minor imperfections commensurate with the age of the material can be seen in most locations.
2. Heavy paint buildup is present on most of the interior wood trim. This has obscured some architectural details, such as the dentils and molding profiles on some of the chimney pieces.

### SOUTH BASEMENT (001)

1. A full concrete-slab floor exists in this space. This condition may be causing rising damp to move further up the wall than would otherwise be the case. The “tideline” on the west wall of this room is higher than in the north basement even though the surrounding grade is lower and outward signs of moisture-related problems are fewer.
2. Much of the cementitious render has fallen from the north wall of the space, particularly in the area around the chimney.
3. Water appears to gain entry to this room through the base of the south exterior doors. The exterior areaway drain in this area appears to be at least partially clogged.
4. The spaces between the floor joists that form the ceiling are filled with unfaced fiberglass batt insulation, which does not allow for full inspection of the underlying conditions of the flooring and joists above.

### NORTH BASEMENT (002)

1. Rising damp is a consistent problem at the north end of the room, where the grade on the exterior is high, and where a three-foot-wide concrete slab has been poured against the base of the wall. A thin coat of Portland cement-rich cementitious mortar has been applied to much of the brick interior wall surface in this area.
2. One six-inch-square post and two-by-fours rest on the concrete slab on the north end of the room. These are positioned to support the northernmost joist. The support post on the east wall has dropped out of position.
3. There are signs of repeated cyclical wetting and drying of the dirt floor within the space, which is uneven. Water appears to accumulate at low points in the floor after storms.
4. Both east-facing window openings have been rebuilt with substantially higher sills than originally constructed. The infilled areas of brick can be clearly seen below the modern single-

## OAK LAWN

pane window sashes. Only the single window on the west elevation remains in its original configuration, though the wood window frame had been rebuilt.

5. The access hatch on the west wall is, like the east windows, substantially smaller than it was when originally constructed. This is likely the result of raised grade coupled with roof water runoff from above. The change allowed for the elimination of what would have been a sub-grade areaway.
6. The arched hearth support on the south wall of the room shows substantial signs of long-term rising damp. A horizontal band of unpainted brick exists across the center of the wall with intact whitewash coating above and below. This condition is most distinct at the west end of the wall, adjacent to where signs of overflow from the roof above can be seen on the exterior.
7. The spaces between the floor joists that form the ceiling are filled with unfaced fiberglass batt insulation.

### WEST BASEMENT (003)

1. There is significant deterioration of the floor joist at the ceiling level in the northwest corner of this room. Evidence of this can be seen in the settlement of the flooring below the built-in cupboard in Room 105. Evidence exists of long-term moisture-related issues at the roof leader in this corner of the building.
2. The window frames on the south side of the space are original, while those on the north have all been changed.

### EAST CRAWL SPACE (004)

1. The dirt floor in this space is about four feet higher than in the adjacent space to the west (003). The level of the floor makes this room dryer than those on each side.
2. A trench exists along the wall between this room and the west basement (003).

### WEST CRAWL SPACE (005)

1. There is evidence of animals, likely foxes, burrowing within the dirt floor of this space. Access appears to have been gained through the adjacent space to the south (002).

### ENTRANCE HALL (101)

1. Paint buildup has filled some areas of the shadow-lines of the plaster cornice in the entrance hall.

## OAK LAWN

2. The corners of several of the plaster bands on the ceiling are not mitered where they have been repaired.
3. Much of the plaster within the cornice and at the ceiling level is uneven because of repairs and breakage caused by shifting plaster over time.
4. The plaster along the west wall of the room is mostly replaced by run-in-place material. The “chatter marks” from running the plaster can be seen along most of its length on that wall.
5. Sections of the plaster cornice are cracked because of movement and insufficient support.
6. The raised threshold to the north room (103) is worn and missing material along both edges. The flooring in this doorway does not align with the flooring throughout the remainder of the room.
7. The raised threshold to the south room (104) is worn and missing material along its north edge. The butt joint, where the junction of the flooring in the two rooms comes together, is exposed in this location.
8. Exposed radiator pipes rise to the second floor along the east wall of this room. The pipes are not positioned in discrete locations, and are visually disruptive.

## NORTH STAIR (C101)

1. Much of the original plaster of the walls and ceiling within this space has been replaced with gypsum wallboard. The plaster along the north run of these stairs has not been replaced, and is in poor condition with cracking, paint failure, blistering, and loss of surface material near the baseboard and at the height of the handrail. This condition is a result of water infiltration at the gutter level where the north wing adjoins this part of the house.
2. The treads are unevenly worn and there is bare wood exposed near the center of each tread.
3. There is cracking along the top of the baseboard on the north wall.
4. There is a network of cracking that runs diagonally across the wall above the door to the entrance hall (101) on the east side of this space.
5. A significant crack runs east to west along the plaster ceiling above the north run of these stairs. The edges of the plaster are sagging where they meet the crack. This crack correlates to the cracking on the exterior that is associated with water runoff where the north wing meets the central block.
6. A gap between the northern edge of the treads and the stringer has been covered with a new fillet molding at most of the treads on the northern run of these stairs.



## OAK LAWN

### NORTH ROOM (103)

1. Rising damp from an elevated grade has caused blistering of paint and damage to plaster at the northeast corner of the room. There is also separation cracking at the top of the baseboard and where the baseboard adjoins the bookshelves at this same location.
2. The ceiling in this room is very uneven and areas appear to have settled somewhat as a result of loss of key between the plaster and lath.

### SOUTH ROOM (104)

1. The two pattern-glass panels in the blocked doorway that formerly led to the 1910 bathroom have been painted over.
2. The floor is uneven and has dropped slightly at the southeast corner of the room. Along the south wall, a quarter-round molding had been added to fill the gap, while at the east wall a section of the baseboard has been replaced. These conditions are likely the result of a faulty leader at this corner of the south wing at some point in the past.
3. On the west wall, to the south of Door 1042, there is a gap between the flooring and baseboard. This gap has not been covered by a quarter-round molding, as has a similar gap at the south wall. This is likely because the underlying problem appears to be more recent and ongoing. Brick dust has accumulated on the floor in this location, as the result of water entry at the junction of the southwest addition and the projecting brick belt course of the original south wing.
3. The upper face of the bricks that make up the hearth are worn and uneven.
4. An arched area of discoloration can be seen on the wood flooring at the south edge of the hearth, where the brick and wood flooring come together. This ghost line demarks the edge of a Franklin stove that was previously located in this fireplace. There are deep burn marks where embers smoldered below the apron lip of the Franklin stove.

### WEST ROOM (105)

1. Damp from a faulty roof leader has caused blistering of paint and damage to plaster within and above the built-in cupboard at the northwest corner of the room. There is also separation cracking at the top of the baseboard.
2. There is blistering of the paint at the level of the chair rail on the south wall of the room.
3. Areas of the floor in this room are more worn than most other spaces; this is particularly prominent adjacent to the door leading to Room 109, which was formerly an exterior door.
4. There are two exposed radiator pipes rising to the second floor along the north and south wall of this room. The pipes are positioned on either side of windows and are visually disruptive.

## OAK LAWN

5. The wood floor is discolored where a stove plate was once positioned in front of the fireplace.
6. A section of flooring had been removed and a single board replaced within the southeast corner of this room. The new board does not match the adjacent material.
7. The wood threshold between this room and the kitchen (108) is extremely worn. Loss of material has opened a gap along the westernmost edge of the threshold.
8. There is cracking and opening of the joints between the chair rail and the window casing along the north side of this room.

## SOUTH STAIR (C105)

1. Most of the original plaster walls and ceilings within the enclosed stairways have been replaced with gypsum wallboard.
2. The treads are unevenly worn and there is bare wood exposed near the center of each tread.

## STORAGE UNDER STAIRWAYS (106)

1. There are two holes cut into the plaster to gain access to the enclosed spaces below the stairs in both the north and south ends of this room. These removals were performed as probes to help inform the building history.
2. The finish on the wood floor in this space is worn, and bare wood is exposed across much of the surface, but painted floor cloths cover much of the area within this space.
3. There is moisture-based deterioration of the plaster at the small window on the north side of this space. The deterioration is focused on the east side of the window. The baseboard below the window is detached from the wall, and a sizable gap exists where the two come together.

## KITCHEN (108)

1. The modern hatchway to the attic does not rest snugly against the stops, and gaps exist around the perimeter.
2. The edges of some of the plastic laminate countertops are loose and displaced.
3. A pane of glass on the north-facing window is broken.
4. The central horizontal muntin in the upper sash of the north window is badly gouged where it had been struck repeatedly by a sash lock.
5. The framing in the attic above this space has been extensively repaired. All the sheathing on the south slope has been replaced.

## OAK LAWN

### SOUTHWEST ADDITION (109)

1. There is cracking and minor displacement of the exposed brickwork above the doorways to the south room (104) and the west room (105).
2. Fogging of the insulated glass obscures outward views to both the south and west.
3. There are open joints, surface deterioration of the mortar, and loose and missing bricks on the north wall of this space.

### BATHROOM (T110)

1. The outer edge of the plastic laminate countertops is loose and displaced adjacent to the doorway leading to Room 109.
2. The piping below the sink is exposed and made of low-grade plastic.
3. There is a frame and runners for a glass shower door, but the operable panels are missing, and a shower curtain has been installed.
4. There is minor mildew present at the caulked joints within the shower enclosure.

### EAST BEDROOM (201)

1. The upper face of the bricks that make up the hearth are worn and uneven, as are adjoining areas of the wood flooring.
2. The mortar joints of the hearth and the firebox are deteriorated, and in both locations several individual bricks are cracked, broken, or missing.
3. There are gaps around the perimeter of the hearth, particularly along the east side of the hearth where the brick is broken and the edge of the wood flooring is worn.
4. There is insect damage and wood frass evident where a wall was removed at the northwest corner of this room.
5. A section of wood floor has been removed and reset in the southeast corner of the room.
6. There is a slight gap below the exterior door on the east side of the room, this has been covered by an applied piece of weather stripping.

### WEST BEDROOM (203)

1. The surface finish on the wood floors in this room is more worn, with more bare wood exposed, than elsewhere in the house.
2. The painted finish of the render surrounding the firebox is chipped and worn.

## OAK LAWN

3. The floor adjacent to the southeast corner of the chimney breast is displaced and has dropped out of position. The edge of one of the boards has been damaged where the tongue-and-groove flooring comes together.
4. There is a gap between the flooring and the baseboard along the bottom of the west wall, to the south of the fireplace. This is likely the result of water entry where the kitchen roof and south porch used to meet. There is no evidence that this is an ongoing concern.
5. The entire east wall of this room was sheathed in gypsum wallboard during extensive work in 1997–1998.

## ATTIC STAIR (C204)

1. The finished surfaces within the space are more worn, stained, and aged than elsewhere in the house, but this is also the most original and undisturbed area of the house.
2. There is exposed insulation at the top of the wall at the floor level of the attic space.
3. The door to this space was rehung during the extensive work on the east wall of Room 203 during the 1990s.

## BATHROOM (T206)

1. The wood nosing on the front of the sink base is worn, and bare wood is exposed.
2. The vinyl flooring has been cut along the south side of the room near the radiator piping.
3. All of the walls and the ceiling within this space were replaced with gypsum wallboard when the bathroom was remodeled in the 1990s.

## CENTRAL ATTIC (301)

1. There is a splice repair on the interior surface at the top of the east-facing lunette window. The underlying crack appears to extend through the frame of the sash.
2. Plastic sheeting throughout the attic space limits visibility during on-site inspections.
3. There is significant insect damage on the wood floor below the east-facing lunette, this appears to have been a consequence of past moisture entry at this location.
4. Modern collar ties have been added where none existed originally. These may not be entirely necessary, as there are original vertical struts at the midpoint of each rafter, but the single anchor point limits the effectiveness of the later ties.
5. There is evidence of insect damage on a short section of the south rafter, near the middle of its span. Due to limited access the full scope of damage could not be fully ascertained.

## OAK LAWN

### COOK'S HOUSE

1. The base of the entry door is deteriorated, because the end grain for the vertical boards is exposed at the base.
2. There is a significant step crack at the lower east corner on the south wall. This is an area that was not rebuilt.
3. There is uneven paint across much of the south and west walls of the building, which appears to be the result of significant rebuilding in the past.
4. There is biological growth and loss of glazing at the lower of the two sashes of the single window on the north side
5. The asphalt roof is in fair condition, but the surface of the roofing is uneven at the edges of the roof rake and at the eaves. The full roof deck was replaced with plywood during the most recent reroofing.
6. There is evidence of rising damp at the northeast corner of the building.



## OAK LAWN

### PROBLEMS OF REPAIR IMAGES



*Figure 255. Slate shingles cover the central section of the roof, which shows signs of its age through missing, broken, and displaced slate. Regular maintenance has countered some of the age-related deterioration. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 256. Roof accessories, such as snowguards, flashings, and hung quarter-round gutter are generally in sound condition. Copper hooks used to secure replacement slates can be seen in numerous locations. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 257. (Above) The standing-seam sheet-metal roofs of the north and south wings are of different ages and conditions. The roof on the south wing has several coats of aluminized roof coating. Some of this has chipped, and some areas of rust staining exist. JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 258. (Left) Where the nearly flat membrane roof over the 1990s additions meets the gable roof of the south wing, the preexisting roofing was lifted to provide an overlap. The older metal roofing was then refastened by nailing through the face of the sheet metal. The membrane roofing is no longer fully adhered at this junction. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 259. Clogged or nearly clogged gutters exist at all sides of the building. The sheet-metal gutter to the left of this image is intended to prevent water from running down the brick wall below; however there is water damage on the brick below. The asphalt roof on the entrance to the south basement is nearing the end of its service life. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 260. Many of the gutter downspouts on the house follow a circuitous route to the ground. In this location, north of the east porch, three gutters drain into one downspout. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 261. (Above) The rooftop balustrade on the east entrance porch was constructed in 1997–1998. Because it lacks a drip edge, there is surface staining and some biological growth on the painted surfaces below the cap rail. The plinths rest on exposed pressure-treated blocking. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 262. (Left) Much of the pointing at Oak Lawn is in good sound condition, but there are areas of deteriorated mortar, such as at the chimneys, near grade level, and near gutter downspouts. Because of the size of the flues, the brick construction at the chimneys is only one wythe thick. As a result of this thinness, mortar failure in these areas is common. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 263. (Left) Head joints, the vertical joints at the small ends of individual bricks, are often not filled as well as the bed joints below each brick during construction. When the surface joint in these locations fails, a void often exists behind the surface. JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 264. (Below) In many instances, there is displacement of the bricks where the molded brick water table passes over the basement windows. This condition is most advanced at the westernmost window on the north side of the main block of the house. JGWA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN



*Figure 265. (Above) While much of the original mortar remains intact, the softness of the lime mortar makes it both resilient and susceptible to isolated areas of failure. Many of these have been repointed with a mix of different mortars, but each area of new mortar stands out to some extent because of color, texture, or poor workmanship. JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 266. (Left) Isolated voids in mortar joints can provide a space for plants to take root, particularly where high moisture content is present. This location is subject to both roof water run-off from the junction of the southwest addition and the south wing, and from rising damp as a result of raised grade against the building, and weeds are growing out of open joints. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 267. (Above) Failing glazing compound surrounding individual panes of glass and checked wood and cracked paint at the sills are common problems at the original windows. These problem conditions are most advanced where regular and rapid cycles of heating and cooling take place. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 268. (Left) Overpainting, where paint projects onto the face of the brickwork, is a common problem at the window and door openings at Oak Lawn. The wood trim elements at the east door on the second-floor level are damaged, missing, and raised out of position. JGWA, 2024.*



## OAK LAWN



*Figure 269. (Above) The loss of the outer flange of the muntin at this window on the north side of the central block of the house leaves the glass poorly supported and the joint unsealed. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 270. (Left) The north end of the north wing is extremely overgrown, with tree branches coming in direct contact with the building in several locations. This is likely similar to the conditions that led to the replacement of this roof, while the corresponding roof on the south side of the building was still in sound condition. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 271. The north side of the central block of the house is a repository for numerous pieces of mechanical, electrical, and telecommunications equipment. It is also the exit point for the direct vent of Oak Lawn's boiler. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 272. Evidence of rising damp can be seen across the midsection of the hearth support in Room 002 where the limewash has fallen away from the deteriorated face of the brick. There are also deteriorated mortar joints in this section of the wall. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 273. (Left) The cementitious render that was applied to much of the brick wall surface in the south basement (001) has fallen away in sheets where it has trapped rising moisture. In these locations, the brick is more damaged than in areas where only limewash was applied to the brick surfaces. JGWA, 2024.*

*Figure 274. (Below) The plaster ceiling in the entrance hall (101) has been renewed and repaired on numerous occasions. Buildup of paint coatings has obscured some of the details and shadow lines. In some areas cracking of the plaster has resulted from movement and uneven support. JGWA, 2024.*





## OAK LAWN



*Figure 275. The north wall of the north stair (C101) is in extremely deteriorated condition. This is the result of moisture ingress from the exterior where the north wing and main blocks of the building meet and roof water runs down the face of the exterior wall. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 276. The floorboards under the built-in cupboard in the northwest corner of the west room (105) have dropped out of position, as has the baseboard above. This condition is a result of moisture-based deterioration adjacent to a failed roof leader. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 277. The plaster failure on the east side of the small window in the storage room under the stairs (106) is the result of moisture ingress. In this location, overflow from the roof has caused an area of staining on the exterior face of the wall and related damage on the interior. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 278. Settlement cracks can be seen in the well-preserved exposed brickwork above two of the doorways in the southwest addition (109). In the image, one of the cracks is over the doorway to the west room (105). JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 279. The brick thresholds of each fireplace are worn and the mortar joints eroded, but in the east bedroom (201) this condition is particularly severe. The wood flooring adjacent to the hearths is often similarly worn. JGWA, 2024.*



*Figure 280. The west end of the floor boards to the south of the fireplace in the west bedroom (205) have dropped out of position. This condition is likely the result of moisture-based deterioration where the roofs above the kitchen and the southwest addition merge. JGWA, 2024.*

## OAK LAWN



*Figure 281. Rotted roof sheathing was left in place in some locations when the roof of the north wing was replaced. In other areas extensive repairs to framing and decking were undertaken. JGWA, 2024.*

# OAK LAWN

## HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Oak Lawn is an important cultural and historic resource for a diverse constituency within the City of Charlottesville: members of the UVA community, residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, and descendants of the families, free and enslaved, that lived and worked on the site. It is important to protect, preserve and maintain the historic and natural features and resources of the site that contribute to the significance of the property, while identifying zones on the site that are more or less sensitive to changes that may be required as UVA/UVA Health explores opportunities for future use of the site and the main house by the University and the community. This Historic Structure Report should be used to ensure the integrity of Oak Lawn, including the Cook's House and surrounding landscape, is maintained and enhanced while accommodating changes required for modern needs.

Built and occupied for two centuries as a one-family house, any new public use contemplated for the main house at Oak Lawn should preserve the historic form, materials and details of the building's exterior and maintain the original spatial configuration, features, and finishes of the historic interiors. At the outset, a conservative approach to the protection of these character-defining features should guide any preliminary design concepts that explore potential uses of the site and house by the University.

Should modifications be required to incorporate improved access to or within the house, or for the distribution of upgraded building systems and restroom facilities, or for unique programmatic requirements that cannot be accommodated within the historic spaces of the house, the southwest addition presents a viable opportunity for re-configuration or reconstruction. Changes to this portion of the house can be made more easily and in a manner that is more compatible with the historic character of the house, and will not compromise important character-defining features of the exterior or interior of the house. Similarly, the design and integration of new electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems throughout the house should be undertaken with care to ensure that the least invasive methods of installation are pursued.

This HSR summarizes the findings of a comprehensive archival and physical investigation of Oak Lawn, in order to support the strategic guidance and design direction for the building's adaptive use. Primary and secondary archival resources have been consulted, the site's significance and integrity have been evaluated, and a visual survey of existing building conditions has been completed. A summary of problems of repair has been prepared, and general recommendations are provided. Future design and construction work should be undertaken by architects, engineers and contractors with experience in the preservation and renovation of historic structures to ensure that work at Oak Lawn is carried out efficiently and effectively, and in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.



## OAK LAWN

### SIGNIFICANCE

As the previous sections of this report indicate, in addition to its association with the Bramham and Fife families of Charlottesville, Oak Lawn is significant for its association with nineteenth century plantation development, later ongoing productive use as a farm property, and even later subdivision to form the basis for an extensive residential neighborhood by 1957. In addition to the Main House, other structures and landscape features that contribute to the significance of Oak Lawn include the Cook's House, two family cemeteries (Bramham/Bibb and Fife), the entrance driveway, the east and south lawns, the terraced gardens southeast of the main house, and the concrete watering trough.

### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Oak Lawn is an important historic property because of its architectural and historic significance, which has survived with much of its historic building fabric intact. As an architecturally sophisticated example of the tripartite house, a traditional Virginian building typology, it appears that the design of the main house at Oak Lawn evolved from the first Monticello (1771 drawings by Jefferson) and the William Finnie House in Williamsburg (circa 1782). Both of these structures are two early Virginia tripartite houses associated with Thomas Jefferson. It should be noted that the Finnie House was previously referred to as the James Semple House by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and may have been built as early as 1769 by William Pasteur, an associate of Jefferson who was living in Williamsburg at that time.

### CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

A character-defining feature is “a prominent or distinctive aspect, quality, or characteristic of a historic property that contributes significantly to its physical character,”<sup>1</sup> that is “important in defining the building’s historic character.”<sup>2</sup> Character-defining features can be specific architectural elements, such as finishes, windows, or doors. Less obvious features, such as the symmetry or asymmetry of the window and door openings, or the siting of the historic structure, also define the building’s historic character.

One purpose of a Historic Structure Report is to identify and minimize the loss of character-defining features and materials. Small losses, even as inconsequential as the replacement of an original window sash, can accumulate and whittle away at the historic character of a building.

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1. Director’s Order (NPS)- 28, Cultural Resources Management Guidelines, <http://obpa-nc.org/DOIAdminRecord/0049518-0049814.pdf>.

2. Kay E. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Historic Preservation Services, 1995), 63.

## OAK LAWN

Remarkably, even after nearly two hundred years of occupation, the main house at Oak Lawn retains most of its character-defining features.

The following outline of those features follows guidelines provided by the National Park Service.<sup>3</sup>

### SHAPE

- Tripartite form: a two-story central block (one room wide by two rooms deep) flanked by one-story single room wings.
- Projection of the central pavilion, beyond the face of the two symmetrical wings.
- Gabled roofs on central block and wings.

### PROJECTIONS

- East pediment, finished in tongue-and-groove wood boards, and its six-light wood fanlight.
- One-story porch extending across the east elevation of the central block, with its four Tuscan-style brick columns with a stucco finish and carved stone bases and capitals. The southwest addition is not a character-defining feature.
- Brick chimneys: integral west chimney, and north and south chimneys rising along the face of the central block elevations.

### OPENINGS

- Locations of historic doorways and window openings, including the asymmetry on the east elevation of the central block.
- One original exterior opening in each first-story room.
- Wood stile-and-rail paneled doors: six recessed panels in circa 1822 openings; four recessed panels in circa 1910 modifications.
- Painted wood window sash: Six-light casement sash in cellar windows; 9/9 sash in first-story windows of central block and wings; 9/6 sash in second-story window openings.

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3. Lee H. Nelson, *Preservation Brief 17: Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character* (National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, 1988).

# OAK LAWN

## MATERIALS

### CENTRAL BLOCK AND WINGS

- Use of common red brick, laid in a Flemish bond, above a molded water table. Below the water table, use of stretcher bond. Evidence for penciling on mortar joints.
- Painted wood trims: simple two-fasciae trim at windows; two-fasciae trim with outer cyma molding at doorways; simple cornice and entablature treatments.
- Use of slate at the roof of the two-story central block.
- Evidence for slate roofs (nail holes) on the north and south wings.
- Use of flat-seam metal roofing at the east porch roof and slate (originally) or standing-seam metal (after the slate was removed) on the wings.
- Use of wood flooring and ceiling at the east porch.
- *Missing: The wood steps to the east porch no longer extend across the full width of the porch.*

### KITCHEN

- Bricks laid in a common bond. Evidence, such as traces of whitewash, of earlier use of the bricks.

### INTERIORS

- Spatial relationships: central hall opens to the north, south, and west rooms. Exterior doorways in each room that provide cross-ventilation and connect all of the rooms.
- Evidence for winter kitchen in west basement room.
- The nearly square dimensions of the circa 1822 rooms.
- The two winding stairs leading to the second-floor east and west bedrooms.
- Attic framing with pegged connections between north and south rafters.

### FINISHES

- Wood tongue-and-groove floorboards.
- Painted plaster wall and ceiling finishes.
- Historic painted wood trims: baseboards, chair rails, picture rails, door and window architraves.
- Plaster ceiling ornamentation in first-floor entry hall .

## OAK LAWN

- Fireplace mantels: mid-nineteenth century painted wood mantels and cast-iron surrounds on first floor; circa 1822 painted wood mantels and brick surrounds with a stucco finish on second floor. Brick hearths.
- Stairs: Wood treads and risers at winding stairs and attic stair.

## NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

Elements and features that do not contribute to the historic character of the building include the kitchen addition, the narrowed steps to the east porch, the southwest addition and entrance stairs, the west porch stairs at the north wing, the east second-floor porch railing, the bathroom and kitchen fixtures and finishes, the north room shelving, the 1997–1998 storage cubicles, the interior storm windows, and the building systems and accessories.

## COOK'S HOUSE

While small in comparison to the main house, the Cook's House is the one remaining outbuilding on the property that provides a tangible connection to the agricultural use and occupancy of the site by enslaved and free African Americans. This structure, along with the Main House, the entrance driveway, and the east and south lawns, survives today to recall the historic dwelling precinct of the larger site, and contributes to the historic setting of Oak Lawn.

The character-defining features of the Cook's House include:

- Small rectangular form.
- Brick laid in common bond.
- Gable roof, with steep roof pitch and exposed rafter and interior loft framing structure.
- Window opening in north wall.
- Doorway in east wall.
- Engaged chimney on south wall.

## SIMILARITIES SHARED BY OAK LAWN AND BUILDINGS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Oak Lawn's character, design, scale, and detailing suggest it was very likely designed and constructed by people, both free and enslaved, who were associated with the building of the University of Virginia. Traditionally, James Dinsmore's name has long been associated with Oak Lawn; he and John Neilson had similar views on architectural design and were very used to working together and with Thomas Jefferson, who was personally and professionally acquainted with Nimrod Bramham. Although written documentation related to Dinsmore's professional activities at the

## OAK LAWN

time of Oak Lawn's construction or Bramham's business records from the period have not yet been found to establish a definitive connection between Dinsmore and Bramham or Oak Lawn, there is considerable physical evidence of similarities in the design and construction of Oak Lawn and the University of Virginia buildings. Similarities in exterior character, design, style, and material to the Pavilions and Hotels at the University of Virginia (Figure 282 and Figure 283) are as follows:

- Use of red bricks laid in Flemish bond for wall construction, with painted wood trim
- Use of the Tuscan order for entrance porch columns/UVA colonnades. The columns at Oak Lawn, UVA, and Montebello (the home of John Perry, another of the contractors for the original construction at UVA) are remarkably similar in size and detailing (Figure 284). At all three locations, the abacuses of the column capitals are 1' 4-1/2" square. Note that this detailing, along with a molded brick course at Montebello that matches the molded brick forming the Oak Lawn water table, suggests that Perry was also involved at Oak Lawn.
- Use of brick columns with a stucco finish and stone for the column capitals and bases
- Use of fan lights in pediments
- Use of louvered shutters
- Comparable window and door sizes, detailing, and proportions
- Elevated first floor level
- Similar roof pitches

The historic interior spaces of the main house at Oak Lawn are similar in character, appearance, and use of materials as those used in the Pavilions and Hotels. The similarities are:

- The sizes and proportions of rooms
- Wood tongue-and-groove floorboards
- Use of painted wood trims, including baseboards, chair rails, door and window entablatures. Note that the circa 1822 door and window profiles are simplified versions of profiles found in the Pavilions and Hotels).
- Painted plaster walls and ceilings
- The second-floor fireplace mantels

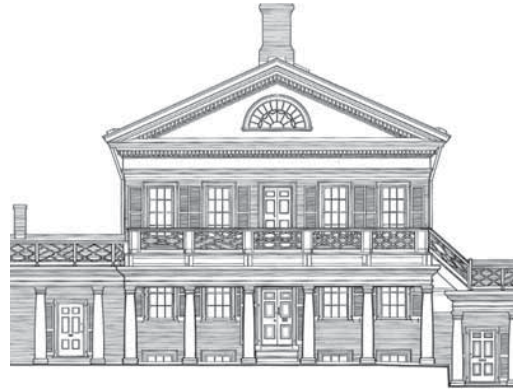
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OAK LAWN

Given the significance and integrity of the main house at Oak Lawn, a preservation approach should be taken to all historic building fabric, including the exterior masonry and slate roofing materials as well as the windows, doors, hardware, and interior flooring, plaster, and decorative features and finishes. Original materials should not be replaced solely for cosmetic reasons, but should be maintained and conserved whenever possible to retain the patina of age associated with historic

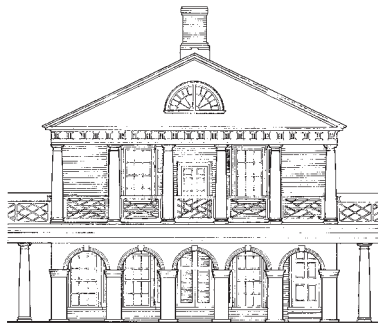




OAK LAWN



PAVILION VI



PAVILION VII



PAVILION VIII



PAVILION IX

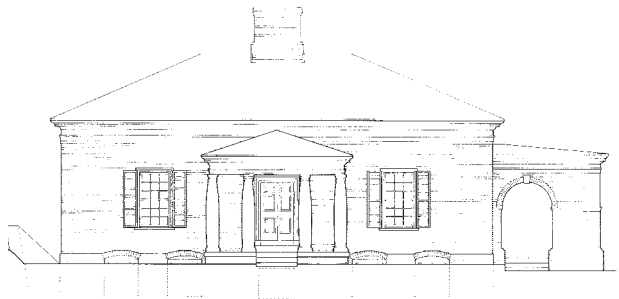


PAVILION X

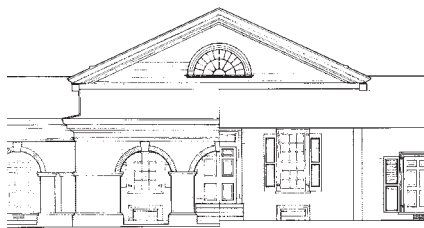
Figure 282. The front elevation of Oak Lawn and selected pavilions from the University of Virginia. Drawings taken from historic structure reports and the Historic American Building Survey.



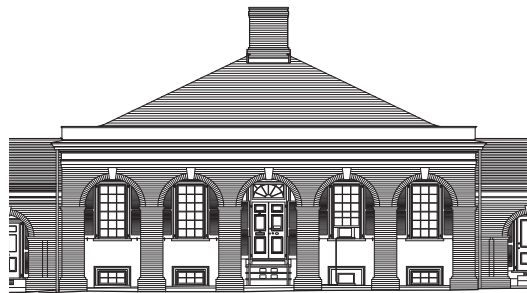
**OAK LAWN**



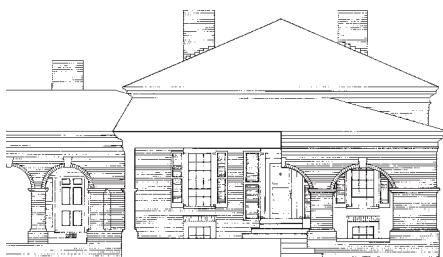
**HOTEL A**



**HOTEL C**



**HOTEL D**



**HOTEL E**

*Figure 283. The front elevation of Oak Lawn and selected hotels from the University of Virginia. Drawings taken from historic structure reports for these buildings.*

## OAK LAWN

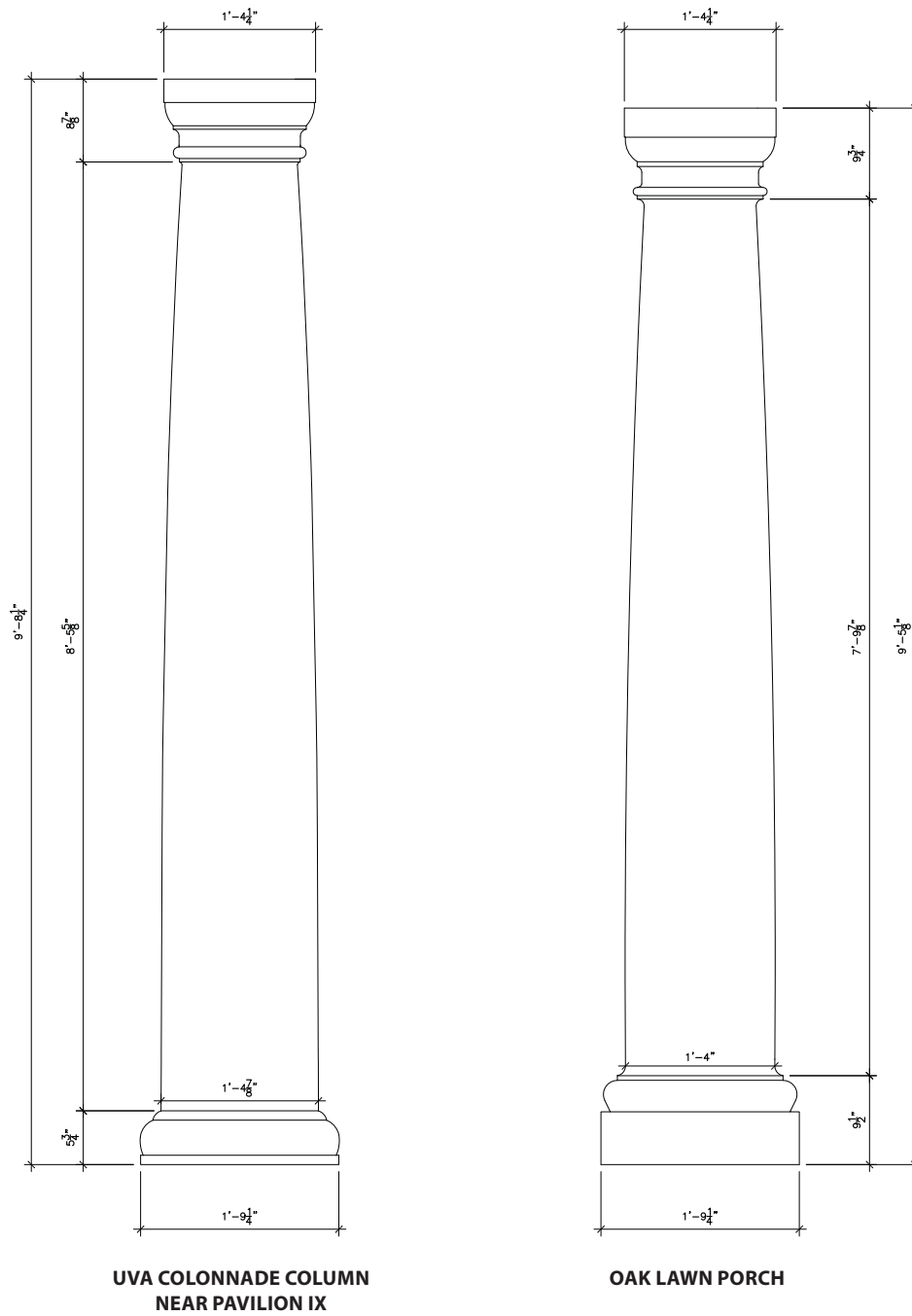


Figure 284. Comparison of the colonnade columns at the Lawn and the Oak Lawn porch columns. The columns at John Perry's house, Montebello (now owned by UVA) has similar columns. JGWA, 2024.

## OAK LAWN

buildings. Where character-defining features require replacement due to deterioration, care should be taken to replicate original materials, craftsmanship, dimensions, details, and finishes whenever possible. Where significant historic features are missing, such as the full-width steps or the original wood balustrade with Chinese Chippendale railings (or later wood-and-cast-iron balustrade) at the front entrance porch, further research and consideration should be given to historic restoration of these and other elements where appropriate.

If possible, further archival research during the design phase, as well as physical investigation and analysis during construction, should be undertaken. This is especially important during construction, as original construction detailing and 19<sup>th</sup> century building technologies and systems are often uncovered during the work and should be documented before evidence of these historic materials or features is inadvertently destroyed. Further archeological investigation should be considered at the basement (floor of the winter kitchen), around the perimeter of the building (original builder's trench) and across the southern portion of the site (agricultural use and occupancy).

## EXTERIOR

### ROOF

1. Use slate and sheet metal to match existing in color, texture, width, exposure, and thickness where repairs are necessary. Replace any deteriorated roof sheathing as required.
2. Replace existing EPDM roofing at southwest addition, and incorporate new skylights as required at the southwest addition.
3. Replace the roof and sheathing at the south entrance to the south basement.
4. Replace sheet metal gutters and leaders for improved and increased rainwater discharge and storm water management, but in a style compatible with the historic character of the building. Ensure that the underground storm water drainage system is functioning properly, and that adjacent grade is sloping away from the base of the building.
5. Repair or replace the flat-seam roof at the east porch to avoid ponding at the second floor exterior steps and around the wood balustrade construction.
6. Consider replacement of the south and west standing seam roofing to match the existing north roof, which has been recently installed and is in good condition. Alternatively, conduct further research on the original roof material to replicate the historic material and configuration at all lower pitched roof locations.

## OAK LAWN

### MASONRY

1. Gently clean the brick masonry, removing dirt, biological growth, and paint.
2. Repoint missing or deteriorated mortar joints with a mortar matching the color, profile, and composition of the original mortar. Repoint chimneys 100% due to their condition.
3. Replace or reset wood lintels at the basement windows within the masonry water table, and reconstruct surrounding masonry with salvaged brick or new brick to match original in size, shape, color, texture, strength, and porosity.
4. Repoint step cracking at the northwest corner of the central block. If cracking reappears, then consider soil testing to determine the cause of the settlement.
5. Remove abandoned surface-mounted cables, conduits, and other attachments.
6. Test stucco on the columns of the east porch to determine the composition of the existing material. Repair as necessary and coat with mineral silicate coating (after removing the existing latex paint).

### WOODWORK

1. Clean and repair wood trim at the roof eaves and at the east pediment.
2. Prepare and paint all exterior wood trim, including roof eaves, east pediment, and east porch floor, ceiling, steps, and balustrade.

### WINDOWS AND DOORS

1. Restore historic windows. Remove sash from openings, remove glazing putty, replace any cracked or broken glass, and install new glazing points and putty. Prepare and paint the sash and trim. Service the windows, re-installing to ensure proper operation; install sprung-bronze weatherstripping where damaged or missing to reduce air infiltration.
2. Retain interior storm windows.
3. Provide traditional Dutchman repairs or replace windowsills where deterioration is too extensive; prepare and paint.
4. Prepare and paint window shutters. Consider replication/installation of new shutters where missing.
5. Prepare and paint windows at the southwest addition, if structure is to be retained; consider replacement insulated glazing where vacuum seals have lost integrity.
6. Restore historic doors. Prepare and paint, re-installing to ensure proper operation. Install sprung bronze weatherstripping where damaged or missing to reduce air infiltration. Provide compatible supplemental operational hardware as required by functionality. Do not remove original hardware, but consider modifications to render un-operable if necessary.



## OAK LAWN

### INTERIOR

Generally, the interior configuration of the historic rooms on the first and second floor should be preserved in their historic form; demising smaller spaces within these rooms using new partition construction should be avoided. Materials, features, and finishes should be restored wherever possible, and historic paint colors could be replicated as determined through paint analysis to more-fully recapture the building's original interior character when in use as a residence. All surfaces should be cleaned, primed, and painted, with the exception of the wood tongue and groove flooring, which should receive a natural finish matching the original. Non-original cabinetry and shelving visually detracts from the historic character of the interiors in the north wing and in the second floor west bedroom, and should be removed.

Use of the historic first and second-floor fireplaces is not recommended.

As the two sets of winder stairs that serve the second floor appear to be original to the building's construction, consideration should be given to the potential uses and occupancies that are proposed for the second floor, to avoid their unnecessary removal and replacement.

New kitchen/server and restroom facilities should be provided in existing rooms already modified for this purpose with plumbing and other building systems. New concealed electrical conduit and wiring for power and IT should be provided in rigid conduit, and located to avoid impact to any remaining historic plaster lath and finishes or interior wood trim. The existing mechanical system is in serviceable condition, but should be evaluated and upgraded as required by the proposed new use and occupancy of the building.

Basement and attic spaces are not ideally suited for use except for unconditioned storage of non-combustible materials and mechanical system distribution. Structural deficiencies were not observed.

## COOK'S HOUSE

The Cook's House should be retained as an unused landscape feature, and treated with care as an artifact for potential future interpretation within the wider landscape. To stabilize and protect the Cook's House, the exterior masonry including the chimney requires repointing, and the roof should be replaced with historically accurate materials and detailing, including painted wood trim provided at the eaves. Further research should be completed to accurately replicate the door and window fenestration, including hardware, and consideration should be given to the reconstruction of the missing lean-to shed seen at the west side of the building in historic photographs. The area around the structure should be cleared of vegetation as well as the random tools and building materials currently in the vicinity to allow for proper drainage. Any bricks found should be saved.

All existing materials and remaining historic evidence at the interior of the building should be preserved; if any work is contemplated, further investigation of this structure is strongly recommended to carefully deconstruct any elements using the highest level of care and historic preservation standards for documentation prior to intervention.

OAK LAWN  
APPENDIX A  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

OAK LAWN

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

FIELD REPORT

OAK LAWN (VDHR 104-0031) – FIRST FLOOR STAIRWELL SPACES  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCREENING OF COLLECTED SEDIMENT

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*January 27, 2025*



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## Field Report

### Oak Lawn (VDHR 104-0031) – First Floor Stairwell Spaces Archaeological Screening of Collected Sediment

Benjamin Ford  
Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC  
January 27, 2025

#### Introduction

The University of Virginia engaged *John G. Waite Architects* to produce a combined Historic Structure Report and Cultural Landscape Report for the Oak Lawn property, a ca. 1822 residence and associated broader historic landscape. To facilitate preliminary architectural analysis of the Oak Lawn residence, two probes were cut into the first-floor sealed spaces in the northern (C101) and southern (C105) stairwells (Figure 1). Visual inspection of the exposed spaces by University of Virginia staff identified significant sediment and debris on the floor including ceramic, glass, corn cobs, nuts, as well as animal bone. The location of the finds, as well as the quantity and type of material culture present, indicated that both spaces were likely used as rat warrens. However given the presence of the material culture that could enhance the ongoing Historic Structure Report, the University of Virginia requested that Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC collect the sediment and debris in each of the first floor stairwells, screen the sediment, and analyze the material culture. This field report represents the findings of the material culture analysis from the first floor stairwell spaces at Oak Lawn.

#### Methods

On June 18, 2024, Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC staff collected the materials within the first floor northern and southern stairwell spaces. Debris and material culture was collected manually with short shovels, and dustpan and trowel. Materials were placed in plastic buckets and boxes and brought back to Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC offices for screening and processing. Screening of all collected sediment took place outdoors. Sediment was screened through 1/4-inch wire mesh to ensure consistent recovery. Material culture collected was bagged by provenience (e.g. northern stairwell vs. southern stairwell) (Figures 2 through 6).

Based on the knowledge that the stairwell spaces were likely used as rat nests, it was understood that everything recovered from screening of sediment would not be saved. To that end, artifacts collected during screening were sorted into materials to be saved (e.g. ceramics, glass, bone, and other diagnostic material culture, etc.) and less diagnostic material culture to be documented through photography and then disposed of (e.g. lathing, plaster, cloth, rope, corn cob, fruit pits, nuts, seeds, etc.). Material culture



that was saved was washed, dried, and bagged in labelled plastic bags and catalogued. A spreadsheet database or catalog was then generated identifying, characterizing, and if possible, dating the material culture.

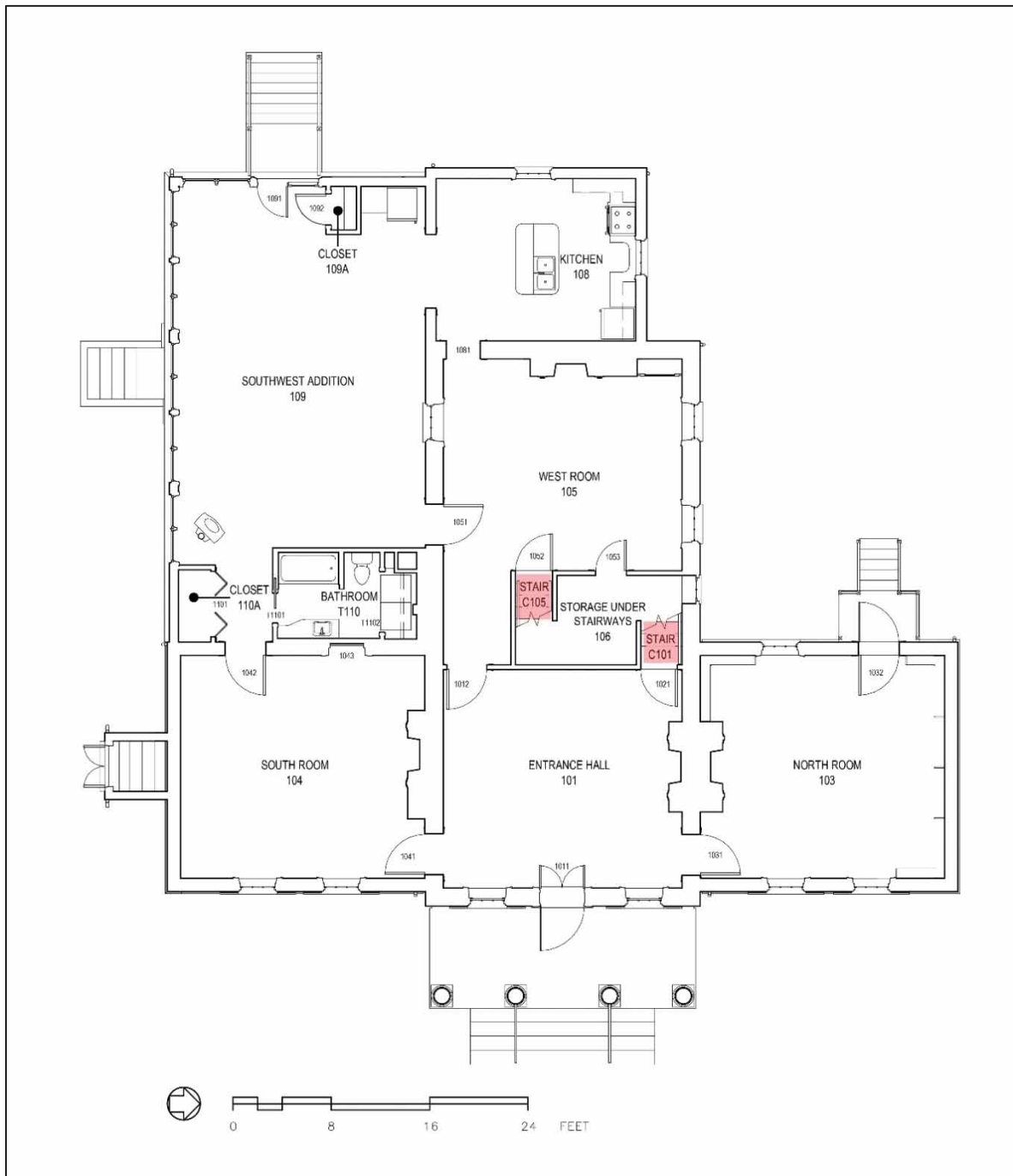


Figure 1: First floor plan, Oak Lawn, showing the location of the red-shaded northern stairwell space (right) and southern stairwell space (left). Image courtesy of *John G. Waite Architects*.



Figure 2: First floor, Oak Lawn, showing northern stairwell and probe cut into formerly sealed space.

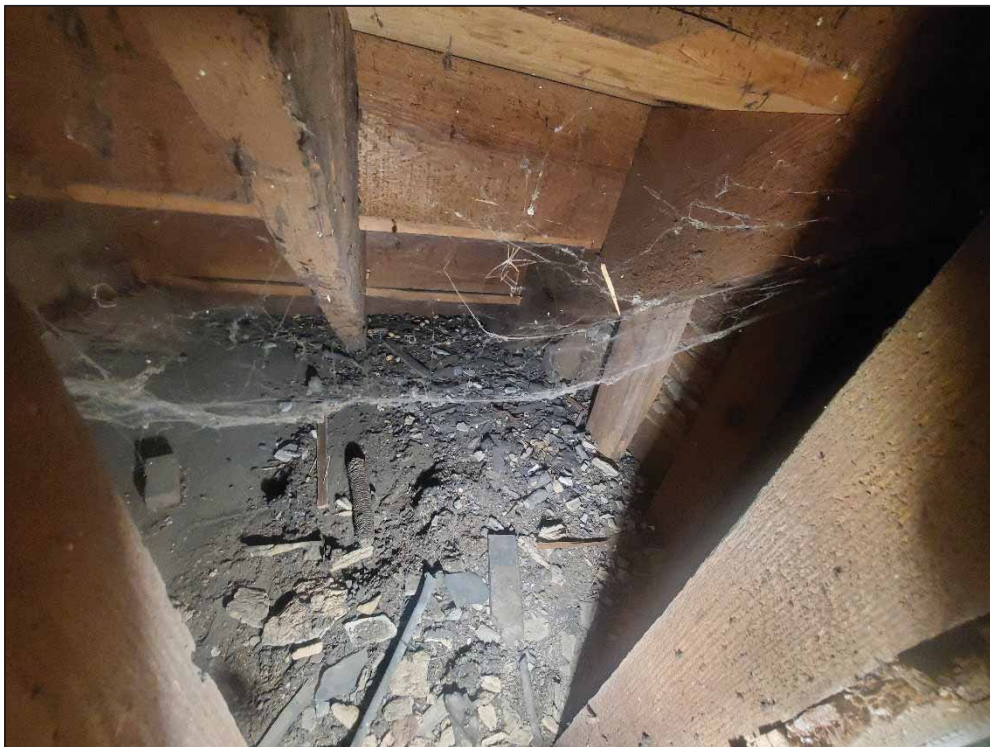


Figure 3: Interior of northern stairwell showing sediment and debris on floor.

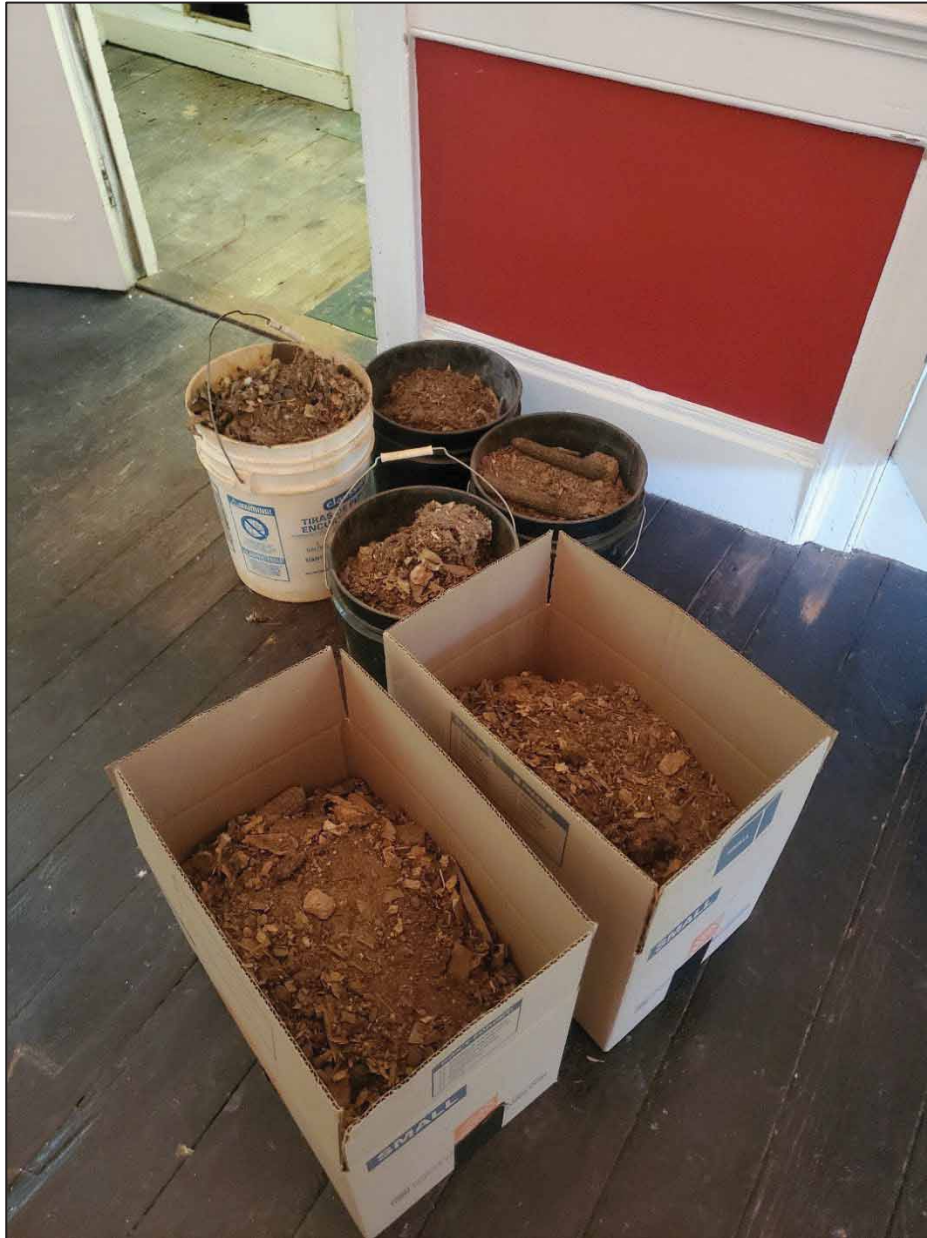


Figure 4: First floor, Oak Lawn, showing southern stairwell and probe cut into formerly sealed space.



Figure 5: Interior of southern stairwell showing sediment and debris on floor.





**Figure 6: Buckets and boxes showing total amount of sediment and debris collected from northern and southern stairwell spaces.**

### Stairwell Space Context

The north and south stairwell spaces are two small, approximately 3.0 by 4.0-foot, sealed spaces located directly underneath the lowest portion of the stairs leading from the first to the second floors. Human access to these spaces is only via a closeted room accessible from a doorway in the eastern wall of the first-floor West Room (105). Examination of the probes cut into both of these spaces documented that the enclosing walls were composed of horizontal lathing nailed on to vertical studs with a possibly original rough or scratch coat. On top of the scratch coat was a thin, possibly mid-twentieth-century, plaster finish coat with fiberglass or metal backing.

It is not clear if the framing and plaster sealing of both of these small spaces was original to the construction of the residence, or whether it happened during some subsequent renovation. Clearly these spaces would not have been considered usable due to the small volume they contained and the fact that they were not easy to access. Regardless, given the materials and method of construction for these spaces, their formal sealing likely occurred prior to the mid-twentieth century when dry wall became widely accessible and broadly utilized in construction.

A visual examination of the quantity and kind of materials present in both stairwell spaces, and the fact that they were sealed for some length of time, suggests that they served as rats nests, possibly for extended periods of time. Two rats were common in Virginia in the nineteenth century: 1) the brown rat (*rattus norvegicus*), and 2) the black rat (*ratus ratus*). The brown rat is known to both burrow in the ground and inhabit the lower levels of human residences and structures. The black rat also can live outdoors in burrows and trees, but generally inhabits human residences and structures. Although black rats can be found in all areas of human structures, they tend to prefer the upper levels of spaces such as attics and roofs, and any cavity in a wall. Given the location of the rat nests, it is likely that the north and south stairwell spaces served as nests for black rats.

Black rats are known to live in social groups, and by any definition, are uniquely adaptable and prolific. They reach sexual maturity in 2 – 3 months, have between 3 to 6 litters a year composed of 6 – 10 pups, and live between 1 and 3 years. They are predominantly nocturnal and omnivorous consuming most anything including meat, grains, vegetables, nuts, fruits, etc. Black rats generally forage for food, nesting material, and other objects within a short range of their nests, often between 100 – 500 feet. They generally carry food to a secure space, often their nest, to eat or hoard it. Nests are often occupied by multiple generations over a long period of time. Of note, adult black rats can squeeze into very small spaces, approximately 1/2-inch in diameter, by compressing their flexible skulls and ribcages. They enter human habitations through small gaps, crevices, often gnawing these initial entry points to make them larger.<sup>1</sup>

Given their close association with humans and their habit of bringing food and other items back to their nests, black rat habitations are frequently found to contain the material culture detritus, discarded and stolen, of the people with whom they live. Several types of materials are generally found in black rat nests including food items, nesting materials, items used for gnawing, and items which appear to have no functional use whatsoever other than the fact that they were collected by rats.<sup>2</sup> The material culture recovered from both first-floor sealed stairwell spaces at Oak Lawn fits broadly into all of these categories. A general analysis of these artifacts follows.

### Material Culture

A significant amount of material culture (n = 566) was recovered from both the northern and southern stairwell spaces. (Tables 1 and 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Travis McDonald, "Rat Housing in Middle Virginia: The Diffusion of Everyday Live," 171, 179-180. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 10 (2005): 169-184.

<sup>2</sup> McDonald, "Rat Housing," 175.



**Table #1: Artifacts catalogued and disposed by type and quantity.**

<i>Material Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date Recovered</i>
Rope	2	June 18, 2024
String	7	June 18, 2024
Cloth fragment	4	June 18, 2024
Wood lathing fragment	8	June 18, 2024
Newspaper fragment	4	June 18, 2024
Paper	3	June 18, 2024
Cork	1	June 18, 2024
Acorns	7	June 18, 2024
Walnut shell	1	June 18, 2024
Pistachio shells (whole and half shell)	166	June 18, 2024
Corn cobs	22	June 18, 2024
Peach pits	187	June 18, 2024
Nut shells (unidentified)	3	June 18, 2024
Mouse trap (wood / iron)	1	June 18, 2024
Spool (wood)	1	June 18, 2024
Sand paper	1	June 18, 2024
Dairy milk caps (cardboard)	3	June 18, 2024
<b>Totals</b>	<b>421</b>	

**Table #2: Artifacts catalogued and kept by type and quantity.**

<i>Material Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Date Recovered</i>
<i>Architectural Composite</i>	37	June 18, 2024
Mortar and plaster	32	June 18, 2024
Bitumen (roofing shingle)	5	June 18, 2024
<i>Architectural Glass</i>	12	June 18, 2024
Pane glass	12	June 18, 2024
<i>Domestic Ceramic</i>	6	June 18, 2024
Ironstone	5	June 18, 2024
European Hardpaste	1	June 18, 2024
<i>Glassware</i>	22	June 18, 2024
Bottle / Jar	11	June 18, 2024
Tumbler / Drinking glass	3	June 18, 2024
Indeterminate	8	June 18, 2024
<i>Metal</i>	19	June 18, 2024
Bottle cap	3	June 18, 2024
Jar / Canning Jar cap	13	June 18, 2024
Nail, cut	1	June 18, 2024
Hook	1	June 18, 2024
Can	1	June 18, 2024
<i>Synthetic</i>	1	June 18, 2024
Rubber	1	June 18, 2024
<i>Textile</i>	1	June 18, 2024
Woven bag	1	June 18, 2024
<i>Faunal</i>	47	June 18, 2024
Animal bone	47	June 18, 2024
<b>Totals</b>	<b>145</b>	

The most prolific category of item recovered from both stairwell spaces were organic materials such as fruit pits, nuts, nut shells, corn cobs, and animal bone. These items would all likely have been food items that were found both in the Oak Lawn residence and its adjacent grounds and brought back to the nest for consumption. The array of food items is remarkable and to a great degree reflects what would have been available to rats. The acorns, walnuts, and other mast items would clearly have been foraged from the adjacent land surrounding Oak Lawn. The sheer quantity of peach pits, certainly fruit gathered from the Oak Lawn vicinity, speaks to the presence of a modest-sized orchard likely in some proximity to the primary residence. Corn cobs too, document the presence of agricultural fields just beyond the domestic core, and possibly the presence of a nearby purposefully built granary or a structure which had a secondary purpose of storing grain. Several of the corn cobs showed evidence of rodent gnawing. Pistachio shells, however, likely speak to foraging from within the Oak Lawn residence. Not grown regionally, historically pistachios would likely have been imported into the United States,<sup>3</sup> purchased locally, and stored within the Oak Lawn residence (Figures 7 through 10).

In the case of animal bone, the samples recovered from the stairwell spaces were nearly exclusively medium to large mammals. For those animal bones that could be identified as to species, limited quantities of pig and sheep/goat bone were recovered. A single small rodent skeleton, mostly articulated, was also recovered from the south stairwell space. Most of the medium to large mammal bone recovered from the rat nests likely represent salvaging from an exterior refuse pile. Several of the animal bone exhibited sawn ends documenting that it had been butchered and likely disposed of following consumption. While much of the bone could have contained residual meat, a large majority of the bone also exhibited rodent gnawing, possible the result of rats needing to wear down their teeth (Figures 11 and 12).



**Figure 7: Corn cobs recovered from the south stairwell.**

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<sup>3</sup> Pistachios were not grown in the United States until after the mid-twentieth century.



Figure 8: Corn cobs, acorn, and pistachio nuts recovered from the north stairwell.



Figure 9: A sample of peach pits recovered from the stairwell spaces.





Figure 10: A sample of nuts recovered from the stairwell spaces.



Figure 11: Butchered animal bone showing a medium mammal humerus (top), a sheep/goat humerus (middle), and a sheep/goat mandible (bottom) recovered from the south stairwell space at Oak Lawn.



**Figure 12: Animal bone recovered from the Oak Lawn stairwell spaces. Note the significant rodent gnawing scars on each bone.**

Soft items likely used for nesting such as cloth, newspaper, string, and other paper-based items were also recovered. Rope and string of all different diameters and lengths were found in the stairwell spaces. Cloth too, mostly crumpled into wads, was recovered both stairwell spaces. A remnant red woven cloth bag, with a black printed label noting its contents, ‘Landreth’s Xtra Early Peas,’ a product that was introduced by the company in 1822. The bag and its peas were likely produced in the ca. post-1886 period as a copyright date of 1886 appears on the bag.<sup>4</sup> Less preserved were fragile, small pieces of newspaper and other paper products. One piece of newspaper noted that J. A. Broadus was selected to give the introductory sermon in a gathering in Savannah. J. A. Broadus was John Albert Broadus (b. 1827 – d. 1895), a Baptist minister and President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Broadus attended the University of Virginia and became pastor of the Baptist Church in Charlottesville. The newspaper would have to have been published sometime in the second half of the nineteenth century and before Broadus’ 1895 death. The recovery of three cardboard dairy milk bottle plugs or caps, items that were not produced until 1889 at the earliest and became relatively widespread by the turn of the century, document that rats were present in these spaces in the early twentieth century (Figures 13 through 18).

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<sup>4</sup> The Landreth Seed Company was established in Montreal in 1780 and, following a move to Philadelphia in 1784, became the premier seed supply company to growers in the United States.





Figure 13: Rope and string recovered from the south stairwell space.

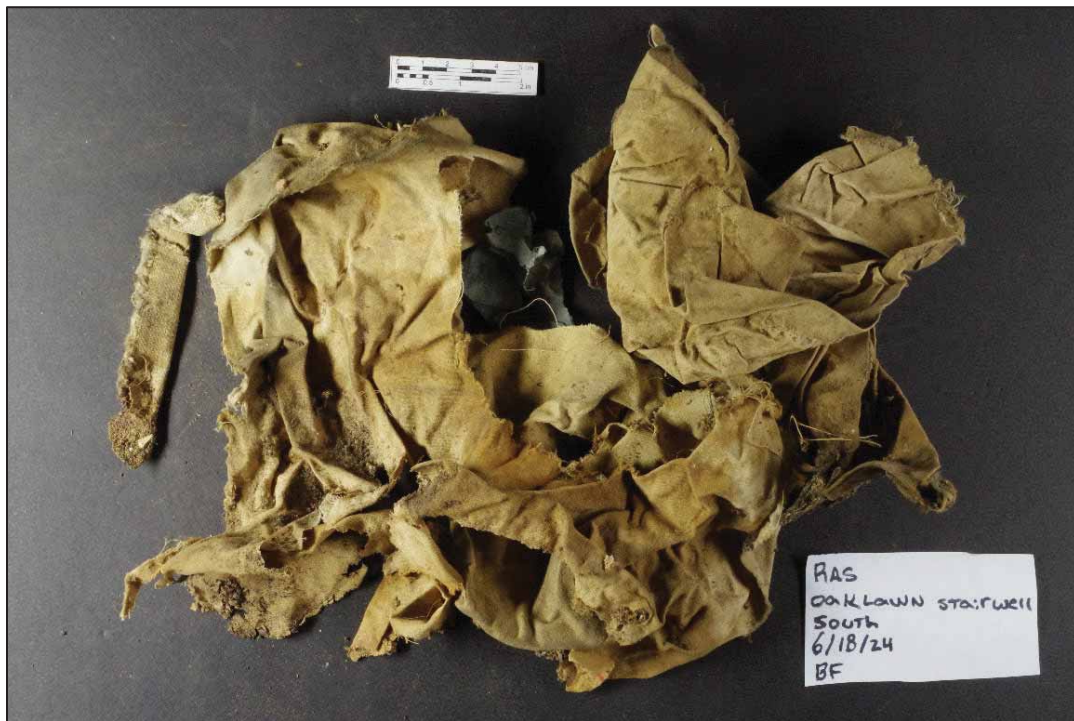


Figure 14: Cloth recovered from the south stairwell.



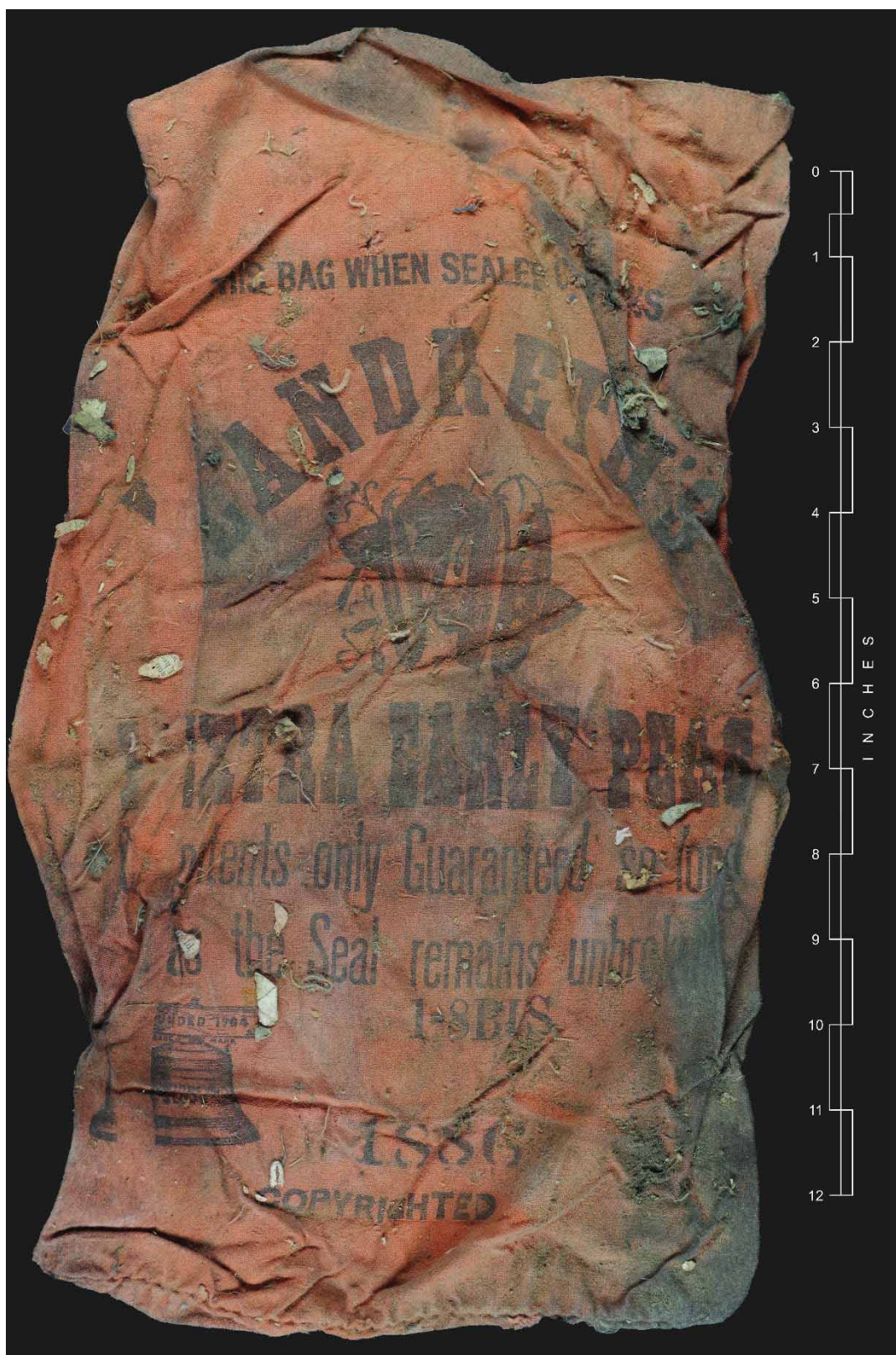


Figure 15: 'Landreth's Xtra Early Peas' bag. Landreth Seed Company, ca. 1886.

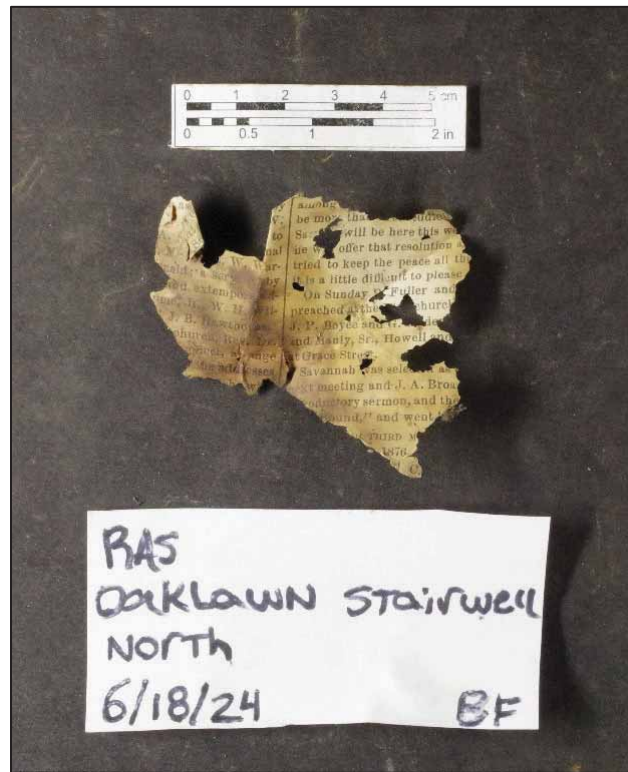


Figure 16: Newspaper sample, mentioning Baptist minister John Albert Broadus recovered from the north stairwell.



Figures 17 and 18: Cardboard dairy milk bottle caps recovered from the south stairwell.

Softer organic items that were not food included wood and architectural composites such as render and plaster. Much of the wood recovered from both stairwell spaces was lathing. Combined with the remnant render tabs, the lathing pieces may not represent items collected by rats but could have come from a construction episode, or perhaps during a remodeling. However, even though not collected, lathing may have been utilized by rats for gnawing. Other items, such as a wooden spool and soft wood mouse trap, were likely collected by a rat (Figures 19 and 20).





Figure 19: Wood lathing, a mouse trap, and a wooden spool recovered from the south stairwell.



Figure 20: Lathing render tabs showing detail of hair amendments.

Objects that possessed no obvious use to rats, such as ceramic, glass and metal were also recovered from both stairwell spaces. Ceramics recovered from the stairwell spaces were limited in number but included both ironstone (n = 5), a refined earthenware produced from 1840 onwards, and European hardpaste porcelain (n = 1), also commonly available on the American market from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Glassware was more numerous and included fragments of bottles, jars, tableware, and lighting. Of note, a complete small pharmaceutical bottle manufactured for the Charlottesville-based pharmacy of 'F. M. Wills' (1850 – 1912), portions of a clear press-molded, ribbed, hurricane lamp shade, and a paneled tumbler and larger paneled drinking glass were recovered. Because they have no overtly functional value to rats (e.g. food, gnawing, nesting), it is not yet clear why these hard objects appear in the rat nests. However similar ceramic, glass and metal objects have also been found in other rat nests in historic homes (Figures 21 through 25).<sup>5</sup>



Figure 21: Ironstone ceramic plate (left) and European hardpaste porcelain ceramic (right) recovered from the south stairwell space.

<sup>5</sup> McDonald, "Rat Housing," 176-179.





Figure 22: Ironstone ceramic cup recovered from the south stairwell space.



Figure 23: Tableware glass recovered from the south stairwell space.

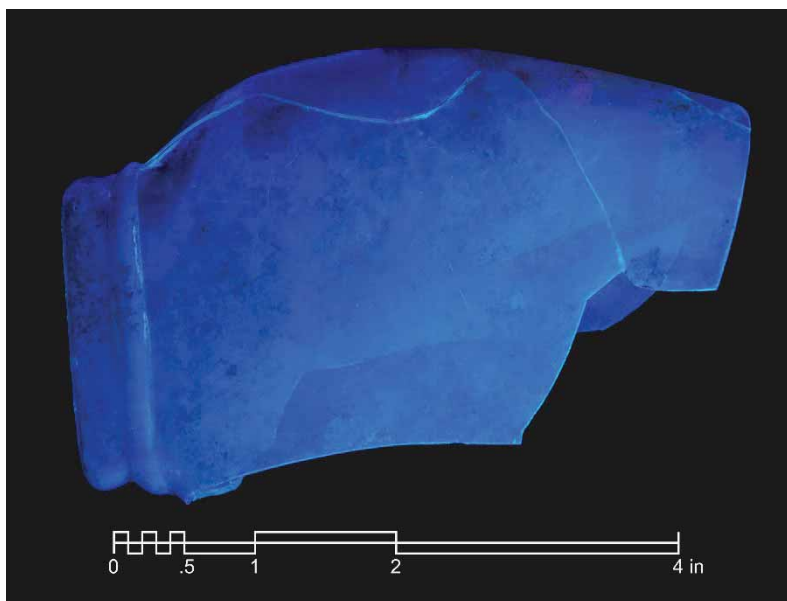


Figure 24: Leaded glass bottle, recovered from the south stairwell space, viewed under UV light.



Figure 25: Embossed pharmaceutical bottle produced for F. M. Wills, a local pharmacy, recovered from the south stairwell space.

A limited number of metal objects, predominantly light in weight, were also recovered from the stairwell spaces. These metal objects included screw caps, crown bottle caps (1892+), and zinc canning jar lids (1858+) and their porcelain lid liners (1870s+), and most of a second quarter of the twentieth century Maxwell House 'vita fresh' coffee can (Figures 26 through 29).



Figure 26: Zinc, stamped Ball screw top lid to canning jar recovered from south stairwell space.



Figure 27: Stamped metal cap to jar, ca. 1919-1921, recovered from the south stairwell space.



Figure 28: Stamped metal cap to jar, ca. late nineteenth century, recovered from south stairwell space.

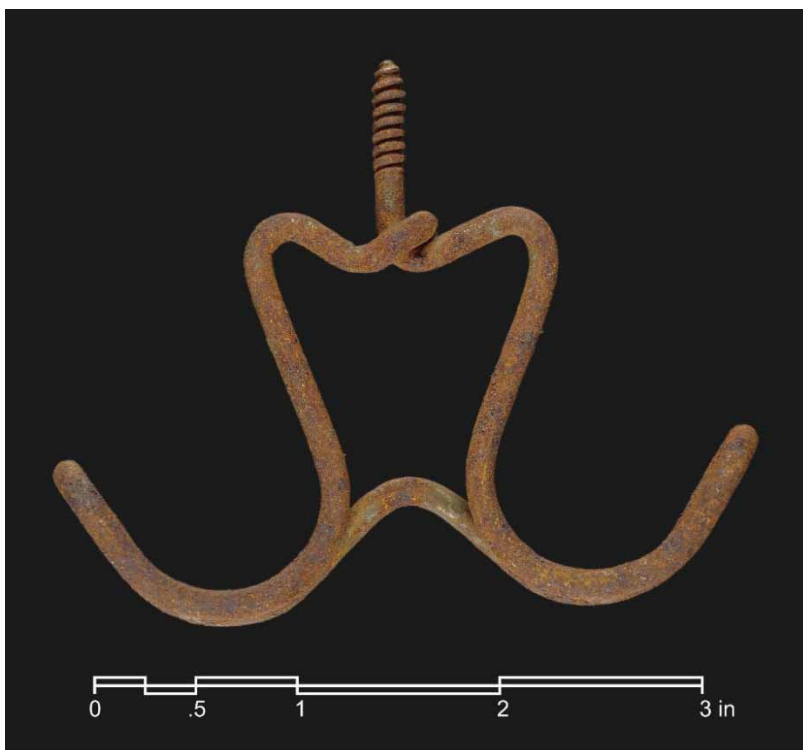


Figure 29: Iron double hook with screw tip recovered from the north stairwell space.



## Discussion and Significance

In general, most of the diagnostic artifacts recovered from the first-floor stairwell spaces appear to date to a broad 100-year period between the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. It is during this period when Oak Lawn was occupied by the immediate and extended Fife family (ca. 1847 onwards). The lack of definitive second quarter of the nineteenth-century material culture dating to the Bramham family period of occupation (ca. 1822 – 1845) is curious, but could possibly be explained by the relatively short two decade period of occupation, and possibly that these stairwell spaces were not yet accessible to rodents.

Several of the artifacts recovered from the stairwell spaces speak directly to agricultural production at Oak Lawn, most likely the post-Emancipation farm run by Robert Herndon Fife. In particular, the corn cobs, peach pits, pea seed bag, and animal bone document a diversified form of agricultural production oriented towards both domestic subsistence as well as the sale of cash crops. Peas and peaches would have provided seasonal food that could have been immediately consumed or canned. Corn, although possibly also used domestically, was more likely produced for the regional market and sold to local or regional merchant firms. Given that rats generally do not forage too far from their nests, it is likely that the orchards that produced the peaches, as well as the corn fields, were located immediately adjacent to the domestic core of Oak Lawn. Likewise, the animal bone attests to cuts of meat consumed by Oak Lawn residents, meat that was either purchased from local butchers or produced at Oak Lawn. The presence of both pig and sheep/goat bones, animals that may have been commonly kept on local farms, suggests that livestock kept at Oak Lawn was possibly quite diverse.

The significant quantity of the ceramic, glass, and metal objects in both the southern and northern stairwell rat nests is puzzling, but appears to be in keeping with the general type of material culture found in rat nests from other historic homes. At Colonial Williamsburg, similar objects such as pane glass, ceramic sherds, a straight pins, and metal utensils were recovered from a rats nest in the Bray School. Likewise, at the University of Virginia's Pavilion X residence rodent nests were identified in many basement level rooms along with food and nesting materials.<sup>6</sup> Archaeologists and architectural historians consider rats to be archivists and curators, preserving bits and pieces of the material culture generated by the humans through which they are closely associated. At Oak Lawn, the rat nests in the northern and southern stairwell spaces each contained large objects. As McDonald notes, however, the size of object brought into a rats nest is only limited by the maturity of the rat and the size of hole providing access to the space.<sup>7</sup>

A close visual examination of the interior of the enclosed north and south stairwell spaces was not possible given the small size of the probe openings. It is assumed, however, that rats gained access to these spaces from either the west or east basement level spaces, or possibly from the stairwells themselves via the attic and roof.

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<sup>6</sup> Amy Crawford, "In Colonial Williamsburg, Thieving Rats Save History." *Atlas Obscura*, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/colonial-williamsburg-bray-school-rat-nest-archaeology>, accessed January 17, 2025; Steve Thompson, "Archaeological Investigations in the Basement of Pavilion X, University of Virginia," 22-23, 29, 38, 43. VDHR File No. 2011-3551. (Charlottesville: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, 20).

<sup>7</sup> McDonald, "Rat Housing," 179.



Oak Lawn - First Floor Stairwell Spaces  
Artifact Catalog

Context	Material Class	Material_1	Material_2	Manu_Tech	Form_1	Form_2	Form_3	Decoration	Completeness	Count	Note_1	TPQ
south staircase	arch. glass	clear	n/a	ind	flat		n/a	No	fragment	12	2 mend	ind
south staircase	glass	clear	leaded	blown, mold	container	bottle	see notes	No	body/rim	1	12 mend, oval body tapered at shoulder and base like a honey jar, rectangular ground rim finish 62x39mm	late 19th
south staircase	glass	clear	leaded	ind	ind	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1		ind
south staircase	glass	clear	leaded	press molded	tableware	tumbler	n/a	paneled	base/body	1		1830s
south staircase	glass	clear	leaded	press molded	tableware	tumbler	n/a	paneled	body/rim	1		1830s
south staircase	glass	clear	n/a	press molded	tableware	drinking glass	n/a	paneled	body/rim	1	taller than a tumbler but similar weight	late 1820s
south staircase	glass	clear	n/a	blown, free	container	bottle	ind	No	base/body	1	4 mend	ind
south staircase	glass	clear	n/a	blown, ind	container	bottle	ind	No	body	1		ind
south staircase	glass	clear	n/a	blown, mold	container	bottle	pharmaceutical	No	complete	1	square, tooled prescription finish, "F M WILLS / CHARLOTTEVILLE" with mortar and pestle, Frederick Miles Wills of Wills Drug Co.	c. 1850-1912
south staircase	arch. composite	mortar	lime based	hand made	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1	with hair	ind
south staircase	arch. composite	plaster	lime based	hand made	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	9	with hair and lathe impressions, 2 mend	ind
south staircase	arch. composite	plaster	lime based	hand made	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1		ind
south staircase	arch. composite	plaster	lime based	hand made	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1	finished white surface, hair	ind
south staircase	arch. composite	plaster	lime based	hand made	n/a	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1	2 mend, finished light green surface, hair, hint of bright yellow underneath the green	ind
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	bottle	crown cap	No	complete	1		1892
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	machine made	container	bottle	screw cap	No	complete	1	plastic liner	20th c.
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	ind	container	bottle	cap	No	fragment	1	paper label "FA..."	ind
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	sheet/rolled	container	ind	n/a	No	fragment	1	ring from cap or container body	late 19th
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	jar	cap	No	complete	1	"EASY TO OPEN / USE / HOOK BOTTLE / OPENER"	late 19th
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	jar	cap	No	complete	1		late 19th
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	jar	cap	No	complete	2		late 19th
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	jar	cap	No	complete	1	illustration of group of Am. Indians "COUNCIL / MEATS / IN VACUUM" ...FORK DEEP INTO RUBB..."	1919-1921
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	jar	cap	No	fragment	1		late 19th
south staircase	metal	iron	n/a	stamped	container	can	n/a	No	fragment	1	entire top of can has been cut off, blue background, "Canned Just Right" "VITA FRESH", likely Maxwell House coffee	1892
south staircase	metal	zinc	n/a	stamped	container	canning jar	cap	No	complete	1	Ball lid with milk glass lid liner, on liner "BOYD'S GENUINE PORCELAIN LINED CAP 14V 5"	1935-1962
south staircase	metal	zinc	n/a	stamped	container	canning jar	cap	No	complete	1	milk glass lid liner "BOYD'S GENUINE PORCELAIN LINED CAP" with "3" in the center	1869
south staircase	metal	zinc	n/a	stamped	container	canning jar	cap	No	complete	1	milk glass lid liner without markings	1869
south staircase	metal	zinc	n/a	stamped	container	canning jar	cap	No	complete	3	Ball lid with milk glass lid liner, on liner "GENUINE ZINC CAP FOR BALL MASON JARS"	1935-1962
south staircase	ceramic	refined earthenware	ironstone	press molded	tableware	plate	n/a	No	body/rim	1		1840
south staircase	ceramic	refined earthenware	ironstone	press molded	tableware	saucer	n/a	No	base/body/rim	1	black transfer print mark, UK royal coat of arms "STONE CHINA / J. W. PANKHURST & CO"	1852-1883
south staircase	ceramic	refined earthenware	ironstone	press molded	tableware	ind	n/a	transfer print under, blue	fragment	1	scrollwork	1840
south staircase	ceramic	refined earthenware	ironstone	press molded	tableware	cup	n/a	No	rim/handle/body	1		1840
south staircase	ceramic	refined earthenware	ironstone	press molded	tableware	cup	n/a	No	base/body/rim	1	6 mend	1840
south staircase	ceramic	porcelain	eurpean hardpaste	press molded	tableware	saucer	n/a	glided	base/body/rim	1	thick glided band along rim	1850s

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south staircase	synthetic	rubber	n/a	ind	ind	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1	black triangular rounded	ind
south staircase	textile	see notes	n/a	woven	see notes	n/a	n/a	No	complete	1	red cotton bag with black printing "THIS BAG WHEN SEALED CONTAINS / LANDRETHS / XTRA EARLY PEAS / contents only guaranteed so long / as the seal remains unbroken / 1-8BUS / 1886 / COPYRIGHTED	1886
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	pig	metapodial	No	shaft	3	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	pig	metapodial	No	complete	2	mostly complete, ends broken, rodent gnawing, proximal unfused	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	vertebra	No	fragment	2		ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	large/medium	vertebra	No	fragment	1		ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	large/medium	vertebra	No	fragment	1	sawn both sides, rodent gnawing, deep cut mark	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	rib	No	fragment	4	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	rib	No	fragment	2		ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	rib	No	fragment	1	rodent gnawing, sawn one side	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	large/medium	rib	No	fragment	1	rodent gnawing, sawn one side	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	pelvis	No	fragment	1	rodent gnawing, hacked one side	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	sheep/goat	mandible	No	fragment	1	right, missing condyle, PM3-M3, dentine exposed on all, heavy wear M1 and moderate on rest	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	fibula	No	shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	radius	No	shaft	1		ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	sheep/goat	radius	No	proximal end/shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	large	limb	No	shaft	1	sawn both sides, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	limb	No	shaft	1	sawn one end, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	humerus	No	proximal end/shaft	1	sawn proximal end, fused, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	humerus	No	complete	1	likely s/g, proximal end sawn and fusing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	humerus	No	distal end/shaft	1	sawn proximal end, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	humerus	No	distal end/shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	sheep/goat	ulna	No	proximal end/shaft	1	fused, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	sheep/goat	ulna	No	shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	ind	No	fragment	1	rodent gnawing, cut marks	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	ind	No	fragment	1	sawn both sides, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	medium	ind	No	fragment	1	sawn one end, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	scapula	No	complete	1	proximal end broken, rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	limb	No	shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	ulna	No	shaft	1		ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	tibia/tarsus	No	shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	humerus	No	distal end/shaft	1	carnivore gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	bird	medium	humerus	No	proximal end/shaft	1	rodent gnawing	ind
south staircase	faunal	bone	n/a	n/a	mammal	rodent	see notes	No	see notes	1	mostly articulated small rodent skeleton, missing forelegs and one hind leg and head	ind
south north staircase	glass	clear	leaded	ind	ind	n/a	n/a	No	fragment	1		ind

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[illegible]

