

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
**LANDMARKS)**

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Virginia</b>
COUNTY: <b>Rockbridge</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Walnut Grove**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**McCormick (Cyrus) Farm and Workshop (Walnut Grove)**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Route 606, app. .8 miles west of Steeles Tavern**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Steeles Tavern**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**Sixth (6)**

STATE: **Virginia** CODE: **51** COUNTY: **Rockbridge** CODE: **163**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Virginia Polytechnic Institute**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Blacksburg**

STATE:  
**Virginia** CODE: **51**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Rockbridge County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Lexington**

STATE:  
**Virginia** CODE: **51**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Historic American Buildings Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1957**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Library of Congress**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Prints and Photographs Division**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Washington**

STATE:  
**D.C.** CODE: **11**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia  
COUNTY: Rockbridge  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Walnut Grove today is an experimental farm run by the Shenandoah Valley Research Station. There are five buildings on the property dating to McCormick's occupancy: the main house, blacksmith shop, old mill, old office and slave cabin. The last three are part of a three-acre McCormick Memorial; the main house provides office space for the Shenandoah Station.

The main house is a brick, two-story structure with tin roof and large, simple interiors. The main house was built around 1822 and thus was Cyrus McCormick's home from the age of thirteen onwards. The small office behind the house may well pre-date it.

The blacksmith shop, where the McCormicks worked on their inventions, is a two-story log structure on a high stone foundation. Minor restoration was done in 1938, but the building is essentially intact.

The grist mill, immediately adjacent to the workshop, has working wooden parts, a stone and brick chimney, a shingle roof and stone foundation. A ramp leading to the second floor entrance was once formed by a split log, but has been replaced by more easily maintained wooden planks.

The slave cabin has been moved (from position "D" to position "E" on accompanying map A) and converted into a public rest room. In the process it has lost most of its integrity and all of its dignity. The cabin was originally a two-story structure with a large stone chimney. Both the chimney and the second story have been removed. (The springhouse, labelled "E" on accompanying map A, may have been a McCormick period building, but due to its complete dilapidation was removed.)

Adjacent to the mill and workshop is a well-kept picnic and parking area, part of the McCormick Memorial. Models of early reapers are on display in the workshop, and a recorded voice narrates Walnut Grove's history inside. The memorial area is purposely under-publicized, but is open to the public on an unlimited basis.

Boundaries:

The boundaries are those of Walnut Grove, which is bounded by the same lines today as it was when the McCormick family worked and experimented on it. The boundaries are shown by the orange line on the accompanying map B, labelled "Walnut Grove Farm" and dated June 11, 1954.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1809-1847

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal             | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric            | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation           |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McCormick Farm and Workshop, or Walnut Grove, is the birthplace of Cyrus McCormick, inventor, manufacturer, and philanthropist. It was here that he built the world's first working reaper, and here that its commercial manufacture was first begun.

Biography:

Cyrus McCormick (1809-1884) was born at Walnut Grove, the eldest son of Robert and Mary Ann (Hall) McCormick. He had little formal education, but in 1831 he patented a hillside plow of original design. When his father abandoned twenty years of periodic attempts to perfect a reaping machine, Cyrus continued the project. He avoided Robert McCormick's mistakes and constructed a crude machine built on entirely different principles. The 1831 experiments were encouraging and the following July, a new machine with added parts was given a successful public trial on late oats in the field of John Steele. This machine combined seven principles which remain essential to reaping machinery down to the present day: divider, reel, straight reciprocating knife, fingers or guards, platform, main wheel and gearing, and front-side draft traction. None of these principles were original with McCormick, but never before had they been combined together into one machine.

In 1837 a financial panic resulted in the failure of the Cotopaxi iron furnace. This left McCormick and his father deeply in debt, and serious work on the reaper was begun. Commercial manufacture was first undertaken at Walnut Grove, but in 1843 he sold rights to build the reaper elsewhere in Virginia. In 1844 manufacturing was begun in Brockport, N.Y., Cincinnati, Ohio, and other western points. The branch factories proved to be less efficient than had been hoped, and in 1847 McCormick decided to reconcentrate all manufacturing in one place. With great foresight he chose Chicago, then an insignificant lakeport.

McCormick's patent expired in 1848 and in two years there were at least thirty rival reaper manufacturers; by 1850 there were over a hundred. McCormick spent the rest of his life in constant legal defense of his patent rights. He outfought and outlasted two generations and lived to lead a third.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Burlingame, Roger, March of the Iron Men: A Social History of Union Through Invention N.Y., 1949  
 Hutchinson, William T., Cyrus Hall McCormick: A Seed-Time, 1809-1856, N.Y., 1930  
 Kaempffert, Waldemar, ed., A Popular History of American Invention (2 vol.), N.Y., 1924  
 Keller, Herbert Anthony, "Cyrus Hall McCormick," Dictionary of American Biography, XI, 607-609, N.Y., 1943  
 McCormick, Cyrus, The Century of the Reaper, Boston, 1931  
 Stewart, John F., The Reaper: A History of the Efforts of Those Who Justly  
~~May be said to Have Made Bread Cheap~~, N.Y., 1931.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
				LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
UTM			Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	18.656310.4201140		°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	18.658050.4199730							
SE	18.656860.4198380							
SW	18.655240.4199780							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 644

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Virginia	51	Rockbridge	163
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Virginia	51	Augusta	015
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Survey Project

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service  
 DATE: 2/1/75

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 1100 L Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington  
 STATE: D. C.  
 CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Landmark  
 OHP  
 Designated: July 1964  
 Date

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Boundary Commission  
 Cornelius Steine 9-5-75  
 Date

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Arthur Lowe 9/25/75  
 Arch. Survey  
 Boundary Commission

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries) Walnut Grove Statement of Significance Page #2

In 1851 McCormick introduced his reaper at the first great world's fair in London; he was awarded the Council Medal there, and continued to win major prizes at subsequent world fairs at Paris, London, Hamburg, Lille, Vienna, Philadelphia and Melbourne, 1855-1880. The French made him a chevalier, an officer of the Legion of Honor, and in 1879 elected him a member of the French Academy of Sciences as having done more for agriculture than any other living man.

The accolades were more than deserved. With the advent of the reaper, crops could be cut whenever they were ready, in less time, with less labor, less cost, and a greater yield. The reaper facilitated the rapid settlement of vacant lands by a large, westward-moving population. A greater proportion of people than ever before were freed to build up the nation's urban and industrial base. The reaper also enabled the north to more quickly end the Civil War, enabling it as it did to feed both the civilian population and the largest armies the world had ever seen, while simultaneously exporting large quantities of grain to Europe. The income from this trade did much to relieve the tremendous financial strain of a government waging a total war of conquest.

McCormick was not only a pioneer in the invention and evolution of reaping machinery, but also in the creation of modern business methods. He was among the first to use field trials, guarantees and testimonials in advertising, cash and deferred payments for merchandise, and labor-saving factory machinery designed to insure greater production. More than most men, he was able to convert his creative ideas into reality.