

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC John Tyler Home (Sherwood Forest)

AND/OR COMMON

Sherwood Forest

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER Virginia Route 5

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

 VICINITY OF

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

01

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Charles City

CODE

039

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

## PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Ruffin Tyler

STREET &amp; NUMBER

401 N. Allen Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23220

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE, Charles City Courthouse  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

STATE

Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1937

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex, Prints and Photographs Division

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED (Parts)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sherwood Forest, formerly Creek Plantation, was a 1190-acre property purchased by President John Tyler in 1842. The major structures remaining from the time of his occupancy are the Sherwood Forest Mansion and four nearby dependencies. Also standing are a hunting lodge and four outbuildings in the "Lions Den" section of the property, a grist mill in the "Creek Plantation" area, and remains of the Mapsico Road, the main thoroughfare in Tyler's time. During his occupancy the present rear door was the front door, facing south to the James River and the Mapsico Road which followed its course.

The Sherwood Forest Mansion is a two-and-a-half-story frame building, erected in 1780. In 1842 Tyler bought the house and built a covered colonnade, connecting the main house with the kitchen and laundry to the east. He also built a corresponding west wing which included ballroom and private office. Sherwood Forest is thus unusual architecturally, in that, while some 300 feet long, it is only one room wide.

In 1974, the mansion was beginning to deteriorate. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Ruffin Tyler purchased the house and fifty surrounding acres in March, 1975. They planned to spend some \$250,000 in restoring the Mansion and its dependencies to their original condition. This was to be financed in part by opening up part of the house to the public and taking a tax deduction.

Major projects included: replacing collapsed beams and floorboards in the ballroom-law office wing. Materials from other dismantled houses from the same period would be used; straightening walls in the same wing which had become lopsided; completely rebuilding the colonnade section, again with contemporary beams and floorboards; replastering every ceiling; replacing the collapsed laundry stairway; reproducing the original wallpaper; painting and repairing the mansion's exterior, and restoring the overgrown, 26-acre garden adjoining the house. Houses owned by the Tylers whose parts were available for reuse at Sherwood Forest included "Indian Field," Charles City; "Farmington," two miles east of Sherwood Forest, and "Mulberry Hill," South Carolina (with slave cabins). The many pieces of fine antique furniture from Mulberry Hill were to be used in furnishing Sherwood Forest.

The Tylers also planned several other projects which would not improve the historic integrity of the mansion. These included: cutting a door through the solid brick wall which divides the kitchen from the laundry; putting raised panelling and an 18th-century mantel in the overseer's office; installing a heating system with hidden pipes; and building a small elevator shaft inside an enclosed stairway (Mr. and Mrs. Tyler are both invalids).

In addition, Ruffin Tyler, age 14, had the restoration of the deteriorated dairy shed as his Eagle Scout project. The smokehouse was to be painted and the wine house was to be propped up to avoid collapse. The necessary was in ruins in 1974 (See map C for sketch map of Mansion area).

(Continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1842-1862

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sherwood Forest was the plantation home of John Tyler, tenth President of the United States, from 1842 until his death twenty years later. He named it Sherwood Forest since he considered himself, like the legendary Robin Hood, to be a political outlaw.

Tyler purchased the estate, then called Creek Plantation, following his succession to the Presidency in 1841. It contained some 1,190 acres and was located only a short distance from his birthplace, Greenway.

## BIOGRAPHY

John Tyler (1790-1862) was active in public affairs from 1811, when he entered the Virginia State Legislature, until his death in 1862. He early became a champion of states rights, favored a strict interpretation of the Constitution and strongly opposed the concept of a national bank. In 1840 he was nominated for Vice-President on the Whig ticket with William Henry Harrison. "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" won 234 of 294 electoral votes.

Harrison caught pneumonia on Inauguration Day and died a month later. Tyler successfully claimed all rights and privileges as the first Vice-President to succeed to the office of Chief Executive.

Tyler's opposition to a national bank led to his repudiation by the Whigs, and he was distrusted by the Democrats as well. Nevertheless, Tyler's administration accomplished a great deal. It reorganized the U.S. Navy, established the Weather Bureau, brought the Seminole War to an end, helped resolve Dorr's Rebellion in Rhode Island, negotiated a treaty with China, strengthened the Monroe Doctrine and annexed Texas by joint resolution of Congress. Despite these achievements James K. Polk was given the Democratic nomination in 1844.

Tyler worked hard for a compromise solution to the differences dividing North and South in the 1850's. He presided over the Washington Peace Convention of 1861, but when this failed he voted for secession at the Virginia Secession Convention. He was elected to the Confederate Congress, but died on January 18, 1862, before that body assembled.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Huntley, Elizabeth V., Peninsula Pilgrimage, 1941.  
 Chitwood, Oliver Perry, John Tyler, Champion of the Old South, 1939.  
 Tyler, Lyon G., The Letters and Times of the Tylers, 3 vols., 1884-96.  
 Work Projects Association, Virginia: A Guide to the Old Dominion, 1940.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 40 acres

UTM REFERENCES

D	1,8	32,05,6,0	4,13,48,2,0	A	1,8	32,26,1,0	4,3,24,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,8	31,94,7,0	4,13,32,1,0	B	1,8	32,10,8,0	4,13,02,5,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

April 23, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.,

TELEPHONE

(202) 523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark Designated: 11/24/78  
 date  
 Boundary Certified: August 2, 1977  
*George Perry*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION 11/24/78 DATE

ATTEST: [Signature] DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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In March 1975 the Tylers had not begun their restoration work. It was uncertain if any outside financial help would be forthcoming.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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The boundary of Sherwood Forest includes the mansion, dependencies, and the 26 acre garden.

Beginning on the south edge of Virginia Route 5 at a point about 9,100 feet east of the junction of Virginia Routes 619 and 5, proceed east along the south edge of Route 5 for about 2,350 feet; thence south for about 1,200 feet; thence west for about 1,100 feet to a small lake; follow the northern boundary of the lake for about 800 feet; thence north for about 1,800 feet to point of beginning on Route 5.

# SHERWOOD FOREST

November 13, 1974

(not to scale)

▣ NECESSARY (RUINS)

▣ DAIRY SHED (DETERIORATED)

GARDEN (26 ACRES)  
(OVERGROWN)

LAW OFFICE, BALLROOM  
(DETERIORATED)

KITCHEN, LAUNDRY, COLONNADE  
(DETERIORATED)

MAIN HOUSE (FAIR)

~300'

▣ WINE HOUSE (DETERIORATED)

▣ SMOKEHOUSE (FAIR)

