

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: West Virginia	
COUNTY: Hardy	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 2	1973

1. NAME

COMMON: Mill Island

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: S of Moorefield

CITY OR TOWN: Moorefield (2nd. Congressional Dist.)

STATE: West Virginia

CODE: 54	COUNTY: Hardy	CODE: 031
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Mr. & Mrs. Donald Pryce-Jones

STREET AND NUMBER: 34 WEST MAIN ST. P.O. Box 306

CITY OR TOWN: Moorefield Romney, W.VA. 26757

STATE: West Virginia

CODE: 54

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Hardy County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Moorefield

STATE: West Virginia

CODE: 54

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

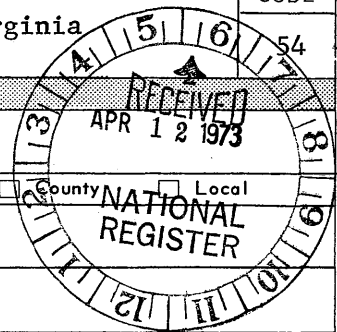
TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:



STATE: W. Va.

COUNTY: Hardy

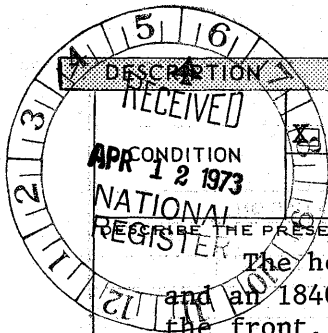
ENTRY NUMBER: JUL 2 1973

DATE:

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3-26-74



DESCRIPTION

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered Moved Original Site

RECORD THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house is the product of a union between a 1798 brick cottage and an 1840 Greek Revival mansion. As you approach the house from the front, an imposing 3½ story elevator is presented. The Greek Revival style is represented by the 1-story porch in the style of a small temple and a widows' walk on the roof peak.

The bricks, which were made on the premises for a period of 1½ years before the house was begun, are laid in an American Bond. The columns are hand-carved Corinthian style. Each of the front four is carved from a single tree trunk. These are the only Corinthian style columns in the South Branch Valley. The speculation is that the builder, Felix Seymour, imported a wood carver from the east coast to make them. A local craftsman would have been asked to produce these columns again and again for the affluent families who were just embarking on their second stage of house building in the valley. The first stage produced Fort Pleasant, Willow Wall, and Hickory Hill; this period lasted from 1790-1812. The second stage of historic building in Hardy County was to produce a series of elegant Greek Revival homes of which Mill Island was the most splendid.

The facade is a very simple arrangement of brick and wood. The basement windows are three feet high, which makes the basement light, airy, and very liveable. In years gone by, many of the house servants did, in fact, live in the basement. The main floor is lighted by windows that are 12 feet high with almost all of the original glass still in place. The second floor windows are 8 feet high. The ceilings in the second floor rooms are not as high as the first, but are still very grand. The third floor, at first glance, would seem impossible to use. The architectural trick of eyebrow windows helps conceal the height of the facade. The third floor contains three huge rooms with a ceiling height of 7 feet. The eyebrow windows are at knee level and do not make the rooms particularly bright or attractive, but the builder, Felix Seymour, probably did not care, since the space was to be used only as a house servant dormitory.

The restrained quietness of the exterior hardly prepares the visitor for the beauty of the interior. As the guest enters the front door, he steps into a front hall of remarkable proportions. The fifteen-foot-high ceilings on the first floor are needed for the heavy cornice work above each door and window. There is a 15' x 17' reception area in the front hall which leads to the staircase. The staircase is a partially flying oval stair that reaches all the way to the third floor. From the ceiling of the third floor a large lantern, now electrified, hangs to light the stairs as it did in Felix Seymour's day. Each stair has an end piece fashioned in an elongated Greek key design. Leading into the hall are four doorways, each with a heavy cornice carving in a restrained elegance. To the right of the hall is the huge room (18' x 40') known in earlier days as the "ballroom," which is now referred to as a "drawing room." This room is finished with the same kind of heavy cornice work above each door and window, but this time made more elaborate by the addition of a dentil mold

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

Continued from 7 Description--

just under the top crown molding. The floor of this room, as well as all other rooms in the house, is made of 1½" heart pine laid over 12-inch center beams (each beam is 4 inches wide).

The fireplaces in the ballroom are very simple, rusticated, ionic-capped posts in slight relief. There are two such mantels, each serving half of the room. There is no evidence to substantiate the supposition that at any time could the room have been divided.

On the opposite side of the hall are two large parlors. They contain the same heavy cornice work and plain mantels as the hall, which blend well with the door and window moldings but do not compete with them.

The dining room is in the 1798 portion of the house. The ceilings are not as high nor is the woodwork as elegant. The kitchen used to be in the basement, directly below the dining room. Around 1870 a dumbwaiter was installed to serve the foods promptly from below. The dumbwaiter booth and the bell for service still exist in the corner of the room.

The upstairs has five major bedrooms, a sleeping alcove, a large hallway sitting room, a huge library, and two baths. In all, there are some 18 rooms with fireplaces and three rooms without.

At present the house is the property of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Pryce-Jones. They have furnished it with French and Italian antiques from the 15th., 16th., 17th., and 18th. Centuries. Such a combination of rare and ancient furniture and a country Greek Revival home might cause a resounding clash of style, but it says so much for the house, "Mill Island," and its owners' taste, that everything looks at home and just as if each had always been waiting for the other.

Continued from 8 Significance--

the Civil War. It was removed in the early 1900's because of water seepage into the cracked bricks there.

As a living statement of the hospitable ways of a planter's aristocracy, the house has great social and historic significance, As a present example of a repository of antique Italian and French furniture and art, the house now has unparalleled artistic significance for West Virginians.

The house has been open to the public yearly on the Annual Heritage Weekend Tour of Hardy County. It is the firm conviction of most of those on the tour that "Mill Island" is of outstanding meaning when viewed as a representative of a way of life long gone.



SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1798-1848**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input checked="" 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

"Mill Island," more than any other home in the South Branch Valley, is a social statement of a way of life that is remembered in many a sticky romance of the "gone are the days" type. The home was built as evidence of the social qualifications of Felix Seymour. He had made a successful marriage to Sidney McNeil of Willow Wall. Her home was, and still is, the grandest architectural achievement in the South Branch Valley. Sidney McNeil's family was the most wealthy and influential family of the valley at the time of her marriage. The Seymours were only second generation "Johnny-come-latelys" of good breeding, good political connections, and well-to-do, but still not one of the "Old" families. At the time of his marriage, all that Felix Seymour had to offer Sidney was seven hundred acres of prime valley land, a great deal of money, a family myth of connection with Jane Seymour's family of Henry VIII fame, and a brick cottage of five rooms.

"Mill Island" was built as a suitable background for the social success that Felix and Sidney Seymour were to achieve. The great ballroom, reception hall, parlors and huge dining room were constantly full of dances, entertainments and magnificent dinners. The hospitality of "Mill Island" became a living legend. Friends and relatives came to spend an hour or a year; it didn't really matter, for there was plenty of room, plenty of food and the service never faltered.

A local unpublished diary of a young 15 year old girl, dated 1854, describes a romp held for Felix and Sidney's oldest daughter:

The young ladies entered by the front door, the young men by the side door. As each came in, they were given a string to follow as it wound 'round and 'round through the house. Somewhere in the house each girl met the young man who was following his end of the same string. He became her dinner partner and escort for the evening.

During the Civil War the house was but slightly damaged, possibly because it was far out of the way. It was often used as a hospital for members of the Confederate raiders known as McNeil's Rangers. One of the Miss Seymours married during the war in a wedding of great elegance for war time. The dancing and dining went on till dawn. The house was always open to folks from Moorefield who were suffering from "war nerves." During the Civil War the town was often full of Union soldiers and the ladies of Moorefield were firm Confederates. One cannon ball in the upper right wall of the house was the only sign that the house bore of

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Porte Crayon- The Old South Illustrated --Plate I

413 17
 4322925
 676.523

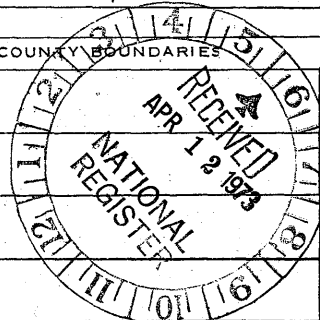
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		39 ° 02 ' 22.8"	78 ° 57 ' 37.2"	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 Acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mrs. Nancy Snider, Field Research Agent

ORGANIZATION: West Virginia Antiquities Commission DATE: August 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
Old Mountainlair- West Virginia University

CITY OR TOWN: Morgantown STATE: West Virginia 26506 CODE: 54

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: Maurice Brooks
Maurice Brooks
Title: State Liaison Officer

Date: March 26, 1973

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

Robert M. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/2/73

ATTEST:
[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 6-21-73