

VLR-2/16/82 NRHP-7/8/82

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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received

date entered

**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 Brick House

and/or common Woodlands (Preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number Route 659 N/A not for publication

city, town White Plains vicinity of congressional<sup>5th</sup> district (W.C. Daniel)

state Virginia code 51 county Brunswick code 025

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Susan B. Meredith (Mrs. A. Russell, Jr.)

street & number Box 32

city, town Lawrenceville N/A vicinity of state Virginia 23868

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Brunswick County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Lawrenceville state Virginia 23868

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
title (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1958  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state DC

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Woodlands is a stately 19th-century plantation house set in a spacious park of old trees and a broad lawn deep in the countryside of southern Brunswick County. The grounds are entered from the east via a circular drive, just off State Route 659 near Pole Creek. The house at once appears as the quintessential Southern planter's home, however, it has had an interesting architectural evolution that is apparent only after a detailed examination of the fabric and interpretation of the records. It has been thought for many years that the northwest corner of the structure began as a small, two-story brick cottage built in the 18th century by the Harrison family. However, it seems evident that the house actually began as a two-story "I" house in 1831 with the earliest section consisting of the main block, or east section, and that the northwest corner, or ell, was added while the main part of the house was under construction to accommodate the recently widowed Rebecca Wilkins Brodnax and her three small children. (Rebecca Wilkins Brodnax was the sister of John L. Wilkins, the builder of the main part of the house.) An examination of the brickwork shows the same type of Federal mortar joints used in both sections. Like most Federal "I" houses of central and southern Virginia, the original section was probably covered by a gable roof.

#### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The appearance of this substantial but not particularly elaborate farmhouse was drastically altered in 1860 by Alexander J. Brodnax (son of Rebecca Wilkins Brodnax), who based his scheme on a plan published in Samuel Sloan's The Model Architect (1860). Brodnax's copy of the book with his notations on the plan is still in the Woodlands library. In its present form the house is dominated by the massive 1860 hexastyle portico covering the entire east facade. The portico columns are tapered octagons supporting a broad pediment with an open tympanum containing an arched pediment window and bracketed eaves. Although the portico is Italianate in character, rather than the usual Greek Revival, it bears no relationship to any plate in Sloan. On the other hand, family tradition has it that the portico was inspired by that on Berry Hill, the Bruce family home in Halifax County. Indeed, the general character of the remodeled facade does recall Berry Hill. With the addition of the portico, the entire roof of the house was rebuilt so that the ridge now extends from east to west rather than north-south. Markings on the brick of the side walls indicate that the walls were raised approximately a foot when the roof was altered. The bracketed cornice, likewise, was extended all around the house at the time. The alterations also included the addition of the southwest parlor and room above in the angle formed by the rear ell. Apparently the brickwork on the south wall of this addition was poorly executed, as it deteriorated to the point that it recently had to be stuccoed over.

The remodeling entailed the alteration of a number of the windows, primarily those on the first floor. Most of the second-story windows remain in their original frames. On the facade the first-story windows were lengthened to the portico floor and set into new Italianate-type frames. The sashes were also changed in favor of 4/4 panes. All of the windows are topped by flat lintels with turned corner blocks. Disturbance of the brickwork above the east windows suggests that the arches may have originally been different. The present louvred blinds probably date to the 1860 remodeling. The main (east) entrance was also changed -- it presently consists of Italianate paneled doors with transom and sidelights containing contemporary panes of colored glass with foliated decorations. (Several of the panes have been replaced with clear glass.) Similar panes are found in the transom of the rear entrance.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1831; 1860      **Builder/Architect** Attributed (1860) Jacob Holt

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Woodlands, a Brunswick County farmhouse, is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of a ca. 1831-33 "I" house remodeled into a highly stylized temple-front residence. The transformation was influenced to a large degree by Philadelphia taste and fashion; the house plan was adapted by Alexander J. Brodnax from Samuel Sloan's The Model Architect soon after Brodnax married Ellen A. Mallory of Philadelphia in 1854. The architectural features of the 1860 remodeling show a stylistic similarity to the documented works of Jacob Holt, a Southside builder who built Shadow Lawn and Eureka in neighboring Mecklenburg County. The Brodnax family acquired the house site at the beginning of the 19th century, and the property remains in the hands of Brodnax descendants.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

William Edward Brodnax, a descendant of an early Brunswick County family, inherited substantial legacies from his parents in 1771 and 1789. His name first appears in the local record books in 1783 when he purchased land on the north side of the Meherrin River from James Mason of Greenville. In 1795 he began to assemble his second tract about fifteen miles southwest of the courthouse, acquiring 800 acres on Pole Creek from Col. Frederick Jones of Mecklenburg. In 1799-1800 he purchased 1,834 acres from Benjamin Harrison, and in 1801 and 1803 he acquired land adjoining this parcel from James H. Harrison, John Love, and Nathaniel Harrison. There is no indication that any of the Harrisons ever maintained a residence on these tracts or, indeed, if there were any houses on them. In 1807 he purchased an additional 454 acres from James Robinson and completed this tract in 1812 with a purchase from Joshua Winfield. These parcels of land are all listed separately in the land tax books until 1814, when they are consolidated into one tract of 4,145½ acres "on Poplar Creek and its waters [i.e. "Pole Creek"] 15 miles SW of courthouse." The dwelling Woodlands now stands on part of this tract.

William E. Brodnax wrote his will over a period of several years, beginning sometime before 1827, and added several codicils before the will was recorded in county court on March 28, 1831. Ann Brodnax Wilkins inherited from her father "all that I purchased of Benjamin Harrison and Nathaniel Harrison adjoining, and one hundred acres to be taken of that tract called Theo<sup>s</sup> Harrison on the most convenient manner for timber with the least injury to the balance of the said Theo<sup>s</sup> Harrison tract." Ann had married John L. Wilkins in 1828. Her brother, Alexander Brodnax, married Rebecca Ann Wilkins, sister to John, in 1824. Alexander lived at the Hermitage, a residence formerly owned by his father, William E. Brodnax.

Ann's inheritance was put in the name of her husband who appears as a landowner for the first time in 1832. In 1833, the land tax book recorded the sale of two parcels of land

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brunswick County Will Books, Deed Books, Land Tax Books.  
Richmond, Va. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives. Brunswick County file #12-38,  
Woodlands.  
Sloan, Samuel. The Model Architect. Philadelphia, 1860.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 33 acres

Quadrangle name White Plains, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	8	2	3	3	1	6	0	4	0	6	0	0	1	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B 

1	8	2	3	3	1	7	0	4	0	5	9	8	9	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

C 

1	8	2	3	2	8	4	0	4	0	5	9	6	7	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

D 

1	8	2	3	2	6	4	0	4	0	5	9	7	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

E 

1	8	2	3	2	8	1	0	4	0	6	0	1	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

F 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

G 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

H 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point on W side of VA 659 about 3,250' NW of the N intersection of VA 659 and VA 611; thence extending about 1,350' SW; thence about 650' WNW; thence about 375' S along said side to point of origin.  
(See Continuation Sheet #4)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code  county N/A code

state N/A code  county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date January 1982

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date FEB 16 1982

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

WOODLANDS, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6,7

Page 1

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1968, 1981 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. Description

Architectural Analysis

The arrangement of the first-floor openings of the ell has been significantly changed, probably during the 1860 alteration. It appears from scars in the brickwork that there were originally only two bays on the first floor (as above) and that the locations of the openings were shifted to accommodate an extra window. The windows have also been lengthened and given triple-hung sashes. Since part of the frame of the additional window dates to the Federal period, it is speculated that this window was salvaged from the south wall of the ell when the house was enlarged. The present one-story porch on the ell as well as that on the west side date from the 1860 changes. The present kitchen wing seems to have been added later in the 19th century.

The existing plan of Woodlands, conforming somewhat to the plate in Sloan's pattern book, consists of a relatively narrow center passage extending the depth of the house. Double parlors are to the south of the passage while a library and dining room are to the north. Separating the library and the dining room is a narrow stair hall which can be reached from a side entrance.

The present main stair, with its wide oval handrail, turned newel, and turned balusters, is Italianate in style and is part of the 1860 alteration. The exact location and appearance of the original stair is unknown. The east parlor is decorated with a paneled Italianate mantel of white marble. This mantel obviously replaces an earlier mantel which may be the rather fancy Federal mantel now located in the southwest bedroom. (The earlier mantel predates its room since the room was not added until 1860.) The original windows on the west wall of the east parlor were removed when the west parlor was added. The two rooms are connected by a wide opening containing sliding doors framed by heavy Italianate pilasters. The mantel in the west parlor matches that in the east parlor. As part of the remodeling, both rooms received ornamental plaster ceiling rosettes and elegant bronze gasoliers. The gasoliers are decorated with 12"-high figurines of knights in armor. Both rooms have elaborate gilt cornices above the windows.

The library in the northeast corner preserves most of its Federal trim which consists of reeded symmetrical architrave with corner blocks carved with starbursts. Of the original mantel, only its frieze remains in place as the fireplace was rebuilt. The carved border on the mantel frieze matches that on the mantel in the southwest bedroom. In the library one can see where the original window frames were pieced and lengthened to the floor.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

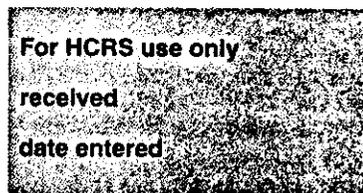
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

WOODLANDS, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 7,8

Page 2, 1



7. Description

Architectural Analysis

The dining room contains a typical Southside Virginia Federal mantel having paneled pilasters, a tall frieze with center and end blocks, and a tightly molded mantel shelf. Markings on the flooring indicate that the partition between the dining room and the narrow back stair has been shifted to enlarge the dining room. The stair itself is typically Federal, having a round handrail, square balusters, and slender turned newels.

On the second floor, the east bedrooms preserve their original Federal mantels and other Federal trim. Both mantels are decorated with paired colonnettes. The mantel in the southwest bedroom, already mentioned, is decorated with fluted columns, dentil cornice, and a boldly carved tureen in the center panel. Two additional bedrooms, one at the end of the hall and one over the dining room, have no particular interest.

Lending the house a particular attraction is the rich accumulation of family furnishings spread throughout the interior. Included among the many items are portraits, prints, books, case pieces, upholstered pieces, and china of the Randolph and Brodnax families. The objects range in date from the 18th century through the late 19th century.

In addition to the main house, the grounds contain a 19th-century outbuilding connected to the main house by a covered walkway. The one-story, single-cell structure is covered by a gable roof. To the northwest of the main house is a one-story frame outbuilding with a stone-and-brick exterior end chimney. The foundations of at least one other outbuilding, probably the original kitchen, are nearby. To the south of the house was formerly a fairly elaborate Victorian garden which has been swept away in favor of lawn. Both the house and grounds are maintained in good condition.

CL

8. Significance

Historical Background

by Wilkins and in 1834 the book recorded the completion of improvements by him: "John L. Wilkins Jr. 2414 [a.] on Little Creek Floyd's Road 15 [mi.] SW [of courthouse] \$2500." The book also contained the annotation "2500 dollars added for improvements," indicating the construction of a substantial house. Unfortunately, in 1832 Alexander Brodnax died, leaving his wife and three small children. The following year his sister, Ann Brodnax Wilkins, died, never having seen the house completed. John Wilkins and his widowed sister and her family moved into the new house shortly thereafter.

As completed by 1834, the Woodlands house was a two-story, single-pile, "I" house, a common early 19th-century house type throughout central Virginia. Unlike most houses constructed in the southern counties during this period, however, Woodlands was built in

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

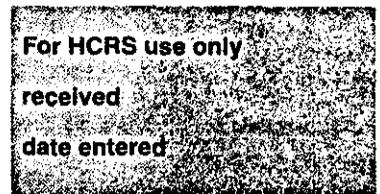
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

WOODLANDS, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #3

Item number 8

Page 2



8. Significance

Historical Background

brick rather than wood, undoubtedly reflecting its builder's affluence. The present rear dining room and lateral stair hall were presumably added soon after the completion of the main section in order to accommodate Wilkins's sister and her family. While the interior woodwork is stylistically of the same period as the main section, the door surrounds are treated in a less elaborate manner and lack the carved starbursts found on the main block. The woodwork found in the library and dining room shows a type of Federal-style trim that is indigeneous to Southside Virginia.

Rebecca Brodnax died in August 1842, followed soon by her brother, John L. Wilkins, Jr., who died in March 1843. According to his will written in April 1842, John L. Wilkins, Jr., left "all my estate of every description to Rebecca A. Brodnax, my sister, during her life or widowhood...then equally divided between her sons, William Edward Brodnax and Alexander John Brodnax." The inventory was substantial and included many luxuries and a library. The two Brodnax sons are reputed to have lived with their uncles, Robert Brodnax and Edward Brodnax in North Carolina until they came of age in 1849. In that year, the Brunswick County land tax book first recorded their individual holdings, noting in the case of the residence "Alex. J. Brodnax 1523 [a] Brick House, Floyd's Road 15 [mi.] SW [of courthouse] \$2300." The annotation states "fr. J.L. Wilkins est." The land tax book shows a decrease in the building value at "Brick House" (Woodlands) in 1851, recording it at \$1,800. In 1857 the house was valued at \$2,000, a figure that presumably represented the replacement of outbuildings. The largest increase in building value was recorded in the 1861 land tax book which noted "Alex. J. Brodnax 1523 [a] Floyd Road 15 [mi.] SW [of courthouse] \$3000." The annotation noted "\$1000 added for buildings." Brodnax, a doctor, had married Ellen A. Mallory of Philadelphia in 1854. The subsequent changes made to the "Brick House," therefore, reflect her presence and taste, as well as that of her husband.

Surviving in the library at Woodlands is a copy of The Model Architect by Samuel Sloan, a prominent Philadelphia architect, containing handsome illustrations that influenced the 1860 remodeling of the Brunswick County residence. At least one scheme, Design LVII, Plate XC, in the Woodlands copy of Sloan has penciled notations that correspond with changes made to the original "I"-house plan. These changes included the transformation of the house from single pile to double pile through the addition of the rear (south-west) parlor and upper bedchamber. At the same time, the present stair was added and the interior decorated with Victorian appointments.

The remodeling included the addition of the two-story Italianate portico, with bracketed pediment, and the extension of the windows on the first story to the porch level. The additions and remodeling are attributed to Jacob Holt, a Southside Virginia and North Carolina builder. The work at Woodlands is similar to that exhibited by other Holt buildings, including Shadow Lawn and Eureka, both in neighboring Mecklenburg County.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

WOODLANDS, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #4

Item number 8, 10

Page 3, 1

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8. Significance

Historical Background

Alexander Brodnax died in 1885, leaving his widow and two children. Mrs. Brodnax died in 1913. Brodnax descendants continue to own and occupy the Brodnax's "Brick House," now commonly referred to as Woodlands.

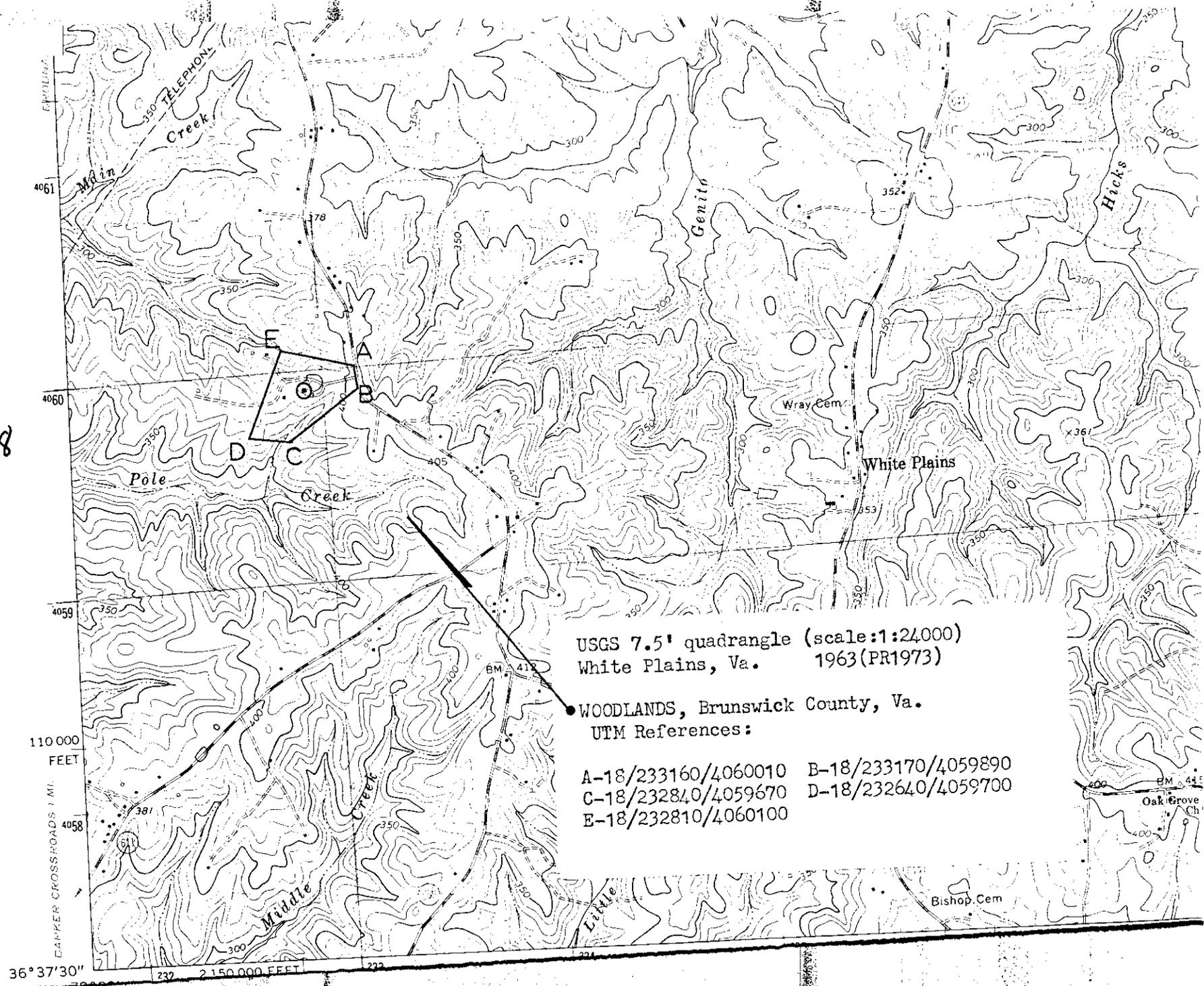
VDS/RCC

10. Geographical Data

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for Woodlands have been drawn to provide a sufficient amount of open land and screen of woodlands so that the house and its outbuildings will have a scenic, pastoral setting.

012-0038



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
White Plains, Va. 1963(PR1973)

WOODLANDS, Brunswick County, Va.  
UTM References:

- A-18/233160/4060010
- C-18/232840/4059670
- E-18/232810/4060100
- B-18/233170/4059890
- D-18/232640/4059700

36° 37' 30" 232 2 150,000 FEET