



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 081-0208

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

We have worked very hard to preserve the Greenlee's Ferry property for the people of Rockbridge County, Virginia. When Thomas Jefferson owned the Natural Bridge, he made several (?) trips to visit to his bridge. Coming from Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Greenlee's Ferry was a convenient place to stop for the night before traveling on to the Natural Bridge. Mary McDowell Greenlee, the mother of the builder of Greenlee's Ferry, was the first white woman settler in Rockbridge County and lived at Greenlee in her later years. She has been described as a witch, she was friendly with the Native Americans, and she had a phenomenal memory. She lived to be over 100 years old. We would like to honor the spirit and hard work of these early settlers, and to document the visit of former president Jefferson to Greenlee's Ferry.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes X No

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes X No

1. General Property Information

Property name: Greenlee's Ferry

Property address: 338 Arnolds Valley Road

City or Town: Natural Bridge Station

Zip code: 24579

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Rockbridge County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 5.01

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town Village Hamlet Rural X

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The property is located on the south side of the James River, overlooking a bottom on the east side of Arnolds Valley Road, with views of the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains. The acreage is open, planted in grass and with scattered trees. The core of the property corresponds to Rockbridge County parcels 113-7-1G and 113-7-1H.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Georgian, Greek Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): ca. 1800

#### **Narrative Description:**

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

Greenlee's Ferry is a two-story house of Flemish bond brick construction that occupies a knoll on the south bank of the James River in southern Rockbridge County, Virginia. The house is late Georgian in style, and that and the presence of wrought nails in construction contexts suggests a date of construction around 1800, possibly as late as ca. 1810 shortly after the death of property owner John Greenlee (d. 1808). The three-bay original house features an entry with transom; windows with jack arches, pegged surrounds and sills, and 12/12 sashes (some or all replacements); wood barred foundation vents; a metal-sheathed gable roof with molded wood cornices with pattern boards and, to the rear, modern gabled dormers; and interior brick end chimneys. From the south gable end extends a story-and-a-half wing of brick construction with irregular stretcher-header courses, a stone foundation, 6/6 windows, and an exterior brick end chimney.

The interior currently has a modified center passage plan, although originally it appears to have had a three-room plan with two rooms at the south end and a single room at the north end. The current center passage stair may replace a stair that rose through the two south rooms. The downstairs mantels are mid-nineteenth century replacements of simple Greek Revival form. The upstairs mantels are late Georgian with architrave fireplace surrounds. Two have floating shelves; the third has reeded "tic tac" moldings and end frieze tablets with gougework. This third mantel, larger than the other two, may once have stood in the downstairs. Its frieze tablets suggest early Federal influence.

The first floor of the side wing was formerly divided into a kitchen and a transverse stair hall, although in the 1980s a wall was removed and the two spaces combined. The first floor has a stair with a tapered octagonal bottom newel and a modern brick fireplace. The second floor has a Greek Revival mantel. Visible in the closet under the stair is the formerly exterior brick wall of the original house, with penciling on the mortar joints.

The basement is divided into north and south rooms with three arched chimney foundations (corroborating evidence for an original three-room arrangement above). The hearth box above the southeast chimney foundation is constructed with wrought nails. The beaded batten door between the two rooms is hung on strap hinges with unusual squared ends. The attic has Roman numeral builder marks on the rafters and collar beams.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

Historically, the Greenlee's Ferry property included a large number of domestic and farm outbuildings. Of these two survive—a store and smokehouse—and the trace of a rectangular foundation behind the house is visible in dry weather. An 1817 description indicates the existence of brick and stone buildings in close proximity to the house, of which there may be archaeological traces. The store, which may date to the 1880s or 1890s, is a one-story, gable-fronted, brick building on a stone foundation with front and rear stepped parapets. The front elevation and portions of other elevations have been rebuilt, although done so as to match the original appearance and reusing the original Greek Revival door and window trim and other elements. Other features include double-leaf front doors with a transom, vinyl replacement window sashes, and a remodeled one-room interior used as a workshop in recent years. The store is also thought to have served as a post office and in the twentieth century it was used as a dwelling. The smokehouse is a small building of circular-sawn frame construction with wire-nailed weatherboard siding and a front-gable roof. Also on the property are a modern gambrel-roofed garage, a well pump by the house, a farm lane along the river with a culvert with stone retaining walls, and a sycamore (now dying) documented as the third largest in the state.

#### 4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

##### *Draft Statement of Significance*

Greenlee's Ferry, located on the James River in Rockbridge County, Virginia, is a two-story brick house of late Georgian style provisionally dated to ca. 1800. The house stands on land acquired by John Greenlee through royal and state patents beginning in 1769. Greenlee and his son, James Greenlee, operated a ferry at the location and lodgings were provided to travelers, including Thomas Jefferson. The house was later owned by Francis T. Anderson, who established Glenwood Furnace nearby in 1849. The Flemish-bond house, which features Georgian and Greek Revival detail, is adjoined by a partially rebuilt late nineteenth century brick store which may also have served as a post office. Greenlee's Ferry is potentially eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the Architecture area of significance for its late Georgian detail, traces of a three-room plan, its brick store (unusual for Rockbridge where most country stores were frame), and other architectural features. Additional research has the potential to shed more light on Francis T. Anderson's association with the property, including whether he supervised his ironworks from the house, in which case the property may be potentially eligible under Criterion A in the industry area of significance as the ironmaster's residence for the nearby National Register-listed Glenwood Furnace. Criterion B significance is potentially possible for association with Francis T. Anderson and with members of the Greenlee family. The proposed period of significance extends from ca. 1800, the provisional date of construction for the original section of the house, into the early twentieth century reflecting the construction of the store and smokehouse. The property is potentially eligible at the local level of significance.

##### *History*

John Greenlee (1738-1808) first acquired land at the confluence of Elk Creek and the James River through royal patent in 1769. Greenlee married Hannah McClanahan (d. ca. 1808) in 1768; Hannah is reported to have escaped an Indian massacre as a child. John Greenlee's mother was the famous Mary Elizabeth McDowell Greenlee (1711-1809), said by historian Oren Morton to have been the first woman settler of the county's Borden Tract in 1737. Mary Greenlee, who was a tavern keeper in her later years, moved to Greenlee's Ferry in 1780, presumably to live with her son. John Greenlee took out two policies with the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, in 1803 and 1805, although it is currently uncertain whether the policies refer to the Greenlee's Ferry property.

At the time of his death in 1808, John Greenlee owned in excess of 900 acres, most of which was acquired by his son James Greenlee (ca. 1768-1840), who married Mary (Polly) Paxton (ca. 1790-1859) in 1812. An 1826 tax record shows James as the owner of 855 acres with buildings valued at \$1,600 (this compares to the \$1,000 value of buildings on the nearby National Register-listed Marlbrook property, another Georgian-style Greenlee family house). Thomas Jefferson and his granddaughter Cornelia J. Randolph stayed at Greenlee's Ferry in August 1817 on a trip from Poplar Forest to Natural Bridge. Randolph wrote, "When we got to Greenlee's the house was an excellent brick house as well built as the houses of Lynchburg & there were three others building [*sic*] in the same yard two of brick & one of stone the one we went into was well finish'd in the inside but the filthiest place . . . I felt exactly as if the place was polluted. I could not bear to touch any thing, & at night they carried us into a very good little room but the sheets of our bed were dirty."

Jefferson told his granddaughter “he had a very nice comfortable bed but he slept in the room with two or three people.”

According to family historian Ralph Stebbins Greenlee, James and Mary’s son John Franklin Greenlee (b. 1816) “lived on the farm and took care of his mother until the farm was sold” after James’s death in 1840. According to WPA researcher James McClung, Francis Thomas Anderson (1808-87) acquired the property in 1857. Anderson was a judge of the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, a rector of Washington College, and, during the Civil War, a state legislator. In 1849 Anderson and an associate built Glenwood Furnace a short distance south of Greenlee’s Ferry. Anderson’s brother was Joseph Reid Anderson of Tredegar Ironworks fame; his wife was Mary Ann (or Anna) Alexander. The Greek Revival fabric in the house and the brick side wing probably date to the period of Anderson’s ownership.

Anderson’s obituary in the *Lynchburg News* noted, “In 1852 he thought it necessary that he should take charge of, and personally superintend property which he held in the county, to which he removed and retired from his professional practice.” The reference suggests he moved to the Greenlee’s Ferry vicinity at that time, although information from Alderman Library states that he moved to Rockbridge County in 1856 where he operated the furnace until ca. 1868. In 1870 he was described as living in Lexington. An 1857 sale advertisement in the *Lexington Gazette and General Advertiser* describes the property as including “a large brick dwelling, beautifully situated on the bank of the river, two brick kitchens, icehouse, a large barn, and all necessary outbuildings.” The ad claims that the original patent for the property included the bed of the river, which was “secured for a fishery.” Also included was an “old established ferry . . . which is increasing in value every year as an additional source of income.”

Alexander D. Campbell owned the property after Anderson. An 1880 business directory identified Campbell as the owner of 250 acres in what was then called the Glenwood vicinity (Francis Anderson owned over 20,000 acres in the area at the time). The 1883 Carmichael map labels the house A. Campbell and shows the Arnolds Valley road passing between the house and an associated store. The store in 1883 may have been the predecessor of the current store building, which stands on the same side of the road as the house. If so, the current store was probably built no later than ca. 1890, as suggested by its Greek Revival interior. The 1883 maps shows the Shenandoah Valley Railroad crossing the James just upstream from the house. The ferry remained in use into the early twentieth century when it was superseded by a three-span metal truss bridge at the location of the current concrete bridge.

The oldest photo of the house yet identified, which appears to date to ca. 1900, shows an addition off the rear northwest corner which created a second, north-facing river front. The new front had a semi-octagonal porch flanked by bay windows. At a later date the porch was replaced by one of simpler, shed-roofed Victorian design. A porch also extended across the front of the side wing but no porch then existed at the main original front entrance. A 1937 WPA photo shows the bay windows and replacement north porch but no porch on the side wing. The 1937 photo also shows a door on the front of the side wing which was converted to a window in the late 1980s, and a hipped north end of the roof. The Pate family acquired the house in 1975, at which time it was in bad repair (the rear wing was mostly collapsed). The Pates began a restoration which was completed by current owner Susan van Ravenswaay after the purchase of the property in 1987. The restoration has included reconfiguration of the north end of the roof to return it to its original side-gable form and repointing and partial reconstruction of the brickwork.

## Sources

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- Carmichael, John. "The County of Rockbridge, Virginia." Map, 1883.
- Chataigne, J. H., comp. *Chataigne's Virginia Business Directory and Gazetteer, 1880-81*. Richmond, Va.: Baughman Brothers, 1880.
- Crowl, Heather, and Steven H. Moffson. "Glenwood Furnace." Draft National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1996.
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- Greenlee, Ralph Stebbins. *Genealogy of the Greenlee Families in America, Scotland, Ireland and England*. Chicago: 1908.
- "Greenlee Landing: A Short History." Report (n.d.) in the possession of the Van Ravenswaay family.
- "A Guide to the Papers of the Anderson Family, 1771-1952." Finding aid, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, 2005.
- Hugo, Nancy R. *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*. Earlysville, Va.: Albemarle Books, 2008.
- Lexington Gazette and General Advertiser* (Lexington, Va.).
- Lynchburg News*, ca. November 30, 1887. Clipping online at the Findagrave website (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/10603319>), accessed December 1, 2017.
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- McClung, James W. "Home of Alexander D. Campbell." Virginia Historical Inventory Report, March 11, 1937.
- Morton, Oren F. *A History of Rockbridge County, Virginia*. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1980 (reprint).
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- Randolph, Cornelia J., to Virginia J. Randolph, August 30, 1817. Letter at Founders Online website (<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-11-02-0519-0005>),

accessed December 1, 2017.

“Rockbridge Co., Va. Section no. 1.” Map (1863), Library of Congress.

Rockbridge County deed and land book records. Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Va.

Trout, William E., III. *The Upper James Atlas*. Richmond, Va.: 2001.

Van Ravenswaay, Lisa. Personal communication with the author, November 2017.

Van Ravenswaay, Susan. Personal communication with the author, November 2017.

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: X Public\Local \_\_\_\_\_ Public\State \_\_\_\_\_ Public\Federal \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: See attached

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: \_\_\_\_\_

city or town: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Signature: See attached Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: J. Daniel Pezzoni

organization: Landmark Preservation Associates

street & number: 6 Houston St.

city or town: Lexington state: Virginia zip code: 24450

e-mail: gilespezzoni@rockbridge.net telephone: (540) 464-5315

**6. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

name/title: Spencer H. Suter, County Administrator

locality: Rockbridge County

street & number: 150 S. Main St.

city or town: Lexington state: Virginia zip code: 24450

telephone: (540) 463-4361