



# VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

|                      |
|----------------------|
| File no. 76-259      |
| Negative no(s). 5177 |

## SURVEY FORM

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Historic name William Grayson's Tomb & /                                  | Common name Belle Air Site  |
| County/Town/City Prince William County                                    |   |
| Street address or route number 2338 Longview Drive, Woodbridge, Va. 22191 |   |
| USGS Quad Occoquan Quad.  | Date or period House is c1890; tomb dates to c1790.   |
| Original owner Benjamin Grayson   | Architect/builder/craftsmen   |
| Original use Plantation   |   |
| Present owner Omer B. & Margaret L. Fisher                                | Source of name unknown  |
| Present owner address 2338 Longview Drive<br>Woodbridge, Va. 22191        | Source of date Architectural evidence.<br>Stories 2 stories   |
| Present use Residence (tomb is on grounds).<br>Acreage c5 acres.          | Foundation and wall const'n Stone foundation, frame walls.<br><br>Roof type Metal-covered gable roof. |

State condition of structure and environs House is in good condition. Tomb has been vandalized.

State potential threats to structure Tomb needs some repairs if it is to last much longer.  
Note any archaeological interest

Should be investigated for possible register potential?    yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

Grayson's Tomb is a concrete-covered, barrel-arched vault partly projecting out of a hill that is located on a privately-owned parcel in the Marumsc Hills Subdivision. The vault, which is said to have been covered with cement and stone during the late 19th or early 20th century by Sherwood Stonnell, purchaser of the Belle Air plantation, contains the remains of William Grayson and Rev. Spence Grayson. Stonnell built the present house above the tomb on the site of the demolished Belle Air house. It is rumored that the early house was used as a field hospital during the Civil War, and that the tomb was blown up and the house burned by soldiers.

The house beside Grayson's Tomb, known as the Stonnell House, is a late 19th century, 2-story, frame-constructed, weatherboard-clad, T-shaped farmhouse which was supposedly constructed on the foundation of the Grayson homestead, Belle Air. The house, three bays long with a central hall plan, has a one-story open porch across the front. Decorative features include the shingled and patterned gables. There is a one-story projecting bay window on the east side. A remodeling which dates to the mid-1960s included the closing in of a one-story porch on the east side and the construction of an addition to the rear.

Prince William County Historical Commission has selected Grayson's Tomb to receive a bronze commemorative plaque.

Interior inspected?

Historical significance (Chain of title: individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

William Grayson, one of Virginia's first elected senators, was also one of Prince William County's most illustrious citizens. He was born at Belle Air estate in 1736, the son of Benjamin Grayson, one of the first Scots merchants on the Quantico Creek. William's mother was Susannah Monroe. Her brother Spence Monroe became the father of James Monroe. From 1758 to 1760, William Grayson attended the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania). He later graduated from Oxford University and studied law at The Temple in London. Grayson returned to America in about 1765 and began to practice law in Dumfries, where he also resided. Grayson's Hill, where William Grayson had a house and small farm, is behind the Stagecoach Inn.

At the start of the American Revolution, William Grayson became captain of a Continental Regiment he formed in Prince William County. As aide-de-camp to George Washington, Colonel Grayson participated in the battles of Long Island, White Plains, Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. After the Revolution, Grayson returned to Dumfries. He was a member of the Virginia legislature and of the Continental Congress. William Grayson and Richard Henry Lee were Virginia's first elected senators.

Grayson was married to Eleanor Smallwood of Maryland, the daughter of a merchant and planter. The Graysons were parents of four sons, Frederick, George, Robert, and Alfred, and

(Continued)

## Continuation Sheet

Historical Significance, cont.

a daughter Hebe.

Grayson was appointed a trustee for the two towns established at the mouth of the Quantico Creek in the 1780s, Newport and Carrborough, to attract the river trade after the heavy silting of the creek threatened to cut off Dumfries.

Grayson died in 1790 and was buried at Belle Air, the family plantation which had passed to Grayson's eldest brother, Rev. John Spence Grayson. William Grayson's cousin James Monroe was elected by the State Legislature in 1790 to fill Grayson's seat in the U. S. Senate. Grayson County, Virginia, was named for William Grayson.

Belle Air. A frame house dating to the late 19th century sits on the site of Belle Air, the birthplace of William Grayson and the home of Benjamin Grayson, one of the area's first Scottish merchants. Benjamin Grayson came to Prince William from Westmoreland County. He took out his first patent in Prince William in 1743 and thereafter increased his land holdings.

Belle Air descended to Rev. John Spence Grayson, the Graysons' eldest son. During the American Revolution, Spence Grayson was chaplain of his brother William's Additional Continental Regiment. Reverend Grayson was rector of Dettingen Parish from 1784 to 1789. Belle Air was subsequently owned by Dr. John Spence (1766-1829), a pioneer in vaccination and in medical journalism.

In 1976, the Prince William County Historical Commission erected a gazebo in Merchant Park beside the Weems-Botts Museum to memorialize William Grayson. There is a metal highway marker on U. S. 1 in Woodbridge which tells of William Grayson and Belle Air.

Published sources, cont.

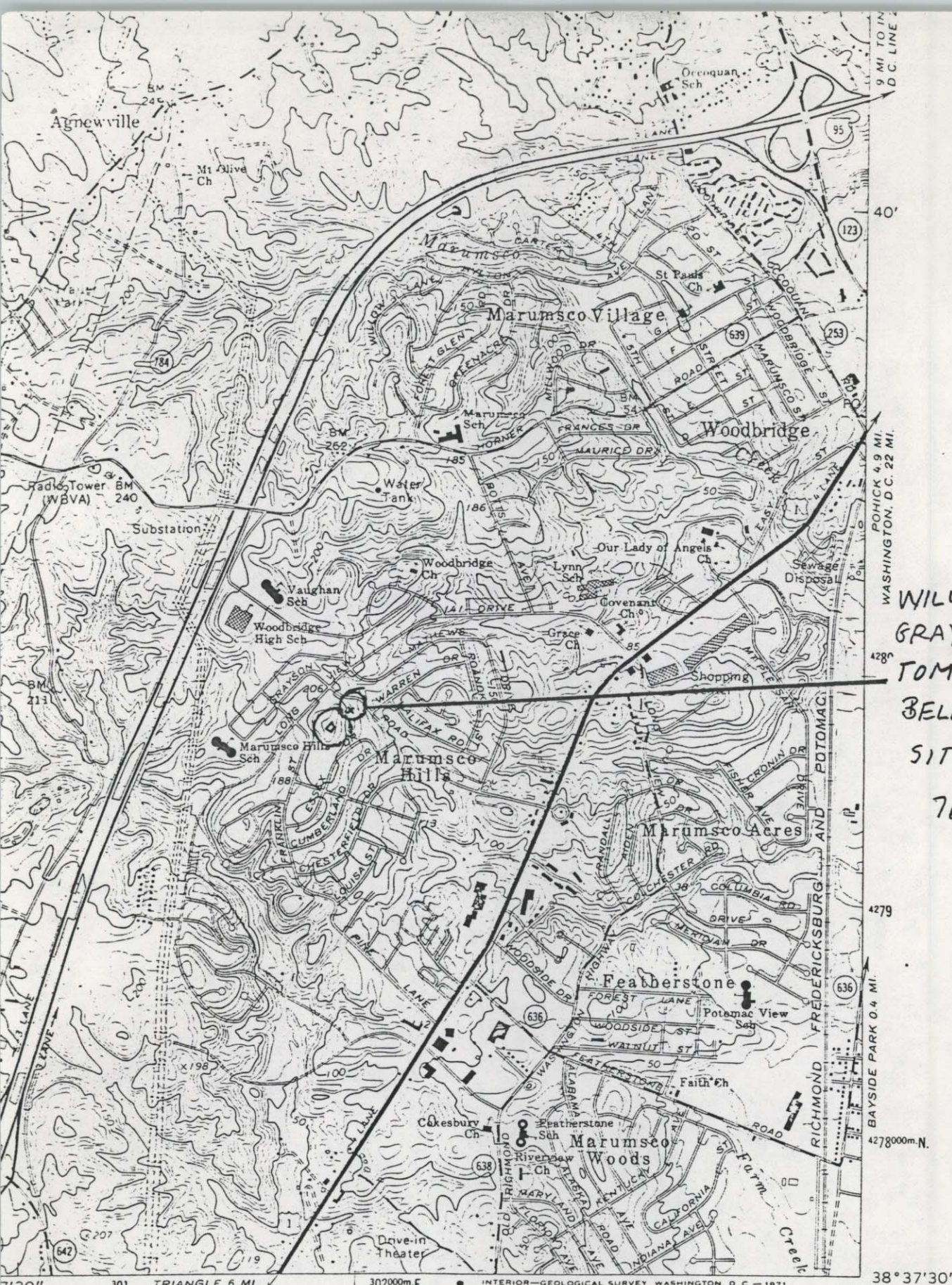
presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries, 3 Mar 1977, 24 pp.

Fairfax Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William (c1924, 1964), pp. 156, 664.

R. J. Ratcliffe, This Was Prince William (c1976), pp. 41, 43, map, p. 109.

W. P. A., Writers Project, Prince William, the Story of Its People and Its Places (c1941, 1961), pp. 82-83, 91-92.

Eileen Mead, "Unimpeached Integrity," Potomac News, 8 Dec 1975.

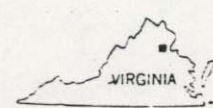


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WASHINGTON, D.C. 22 MI.  
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4278000m.N.  
4277000m.N.  
38°37'30"  
77°15'

WILLIAM  
GRAYSON'S  
TOMB &  
BELLE AIR  
SITE  
76-259

7°30" 301 TRIANGLE 6 MI STAFFORD 16 MI. 302000m.E. INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON, D.C.—1971 77°15'

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
 Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt - - - - -  
 ○ Interstate Route    ◻ U.S. Route    ○ State Route



OCCOQUAN, VA.

(INDIAN HEAD)  
556°11'5W

QUAD

Sources and bibliography

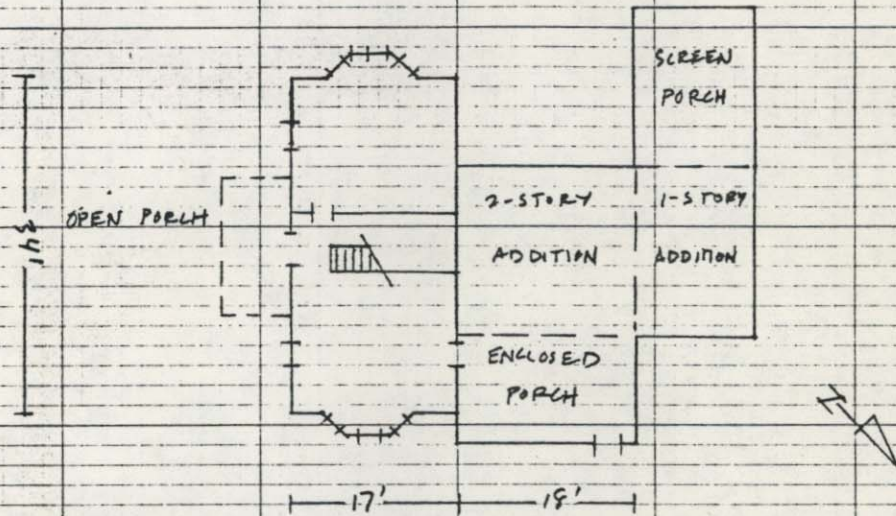
Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

James DuPriest, William Grayson; a Political Biography (c1977); Marilyn Nehring, "William Grayson; an Overview of the Life of One of Virginia's First U. S. Senators," an address (Cont.)

Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

Names and addresses of persons interviewed Mr. & Mrs. Fisher (owners).

Plan (Indicate locations of rooms, doorways, windows, alterations, etc.)



Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)

