



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

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PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM

HISTORIC DISTRICT

An historic district is defined as a significant concentration of buildings, structures, or sites that are united historically and aesthetically by plan or physical development. The following constitutes an application for preliminary consideration of eligibility for the nomination potential of a historic district for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This does **not** mean that the district is being nominated to the registers at this time. Rather, it is being evaluated to determine if it qualifies for such listings. Applicants will be notified of the staff's and the State Review Board's recommendations.

Contact the Virginia Department of Historic Resources Archivist to determine if previous survey material for this proposed district is on file, and if the district has been previously evaluated by DHR. Obtaining previously recorded information could save a significant amount of time in preparing this Preliminary Information Form (PIF). The archivist may be reached by phone at (804) 482-6102, or by email at Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov. The archivist will also give you the address of the regional office to which you should send your completed PIF materials.

/Please type this form and, if additional space is needed, use 8½" x 11" paper. If an electronic version of this PIF is available, it would be helpful if it could be submitted on a disc, or via email to the archivist. Note: All submitted materials become the property of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and will not be returned.

Photographs: Please provide at least four (4) **color or** black-and-white (B&W) photographs of general streetscapes and four (4) color or B&W photographs showing a sample of individual buildings within the proposed district. The inclusion of photographs is essential to the completion of this application. **Without photographs, the application cannot be evaluated.** Photographs should be labeled on the reverse side in soft pencil or china marker (not with adhesive labels), and are not to be mounted or affixed in any way.

Digital Images: In addition to the images printed on photographic paper, digital images, if available, should be submitted in TIF or JPEG format and can be included on the same disc as the PIF.

Maps: Please include two (2) maps showing the location of the proposed district:

- A copy of a USGS Quad map with name of county/city printed on the map and with the name of the proposed district indicating its location (sections of USGS Quadrangle maps can be printed free of charge from <http://store.usgs.gov> and hand-labeled to mark property boundaries or location), and
- A map showing a closer picture of the proposed boundaries with street names and/or routes and possible building footprints would also be helpful. Please include a "North" arrow, date, and "Not to Scale" on this map.

Before submitting this form, please make sure that you have included the following:

- Section of labeled USGS Quadrangle map
- Proposed district boundary map
- 4 labeled color or B&W general photos
- 4 labeled color or B&W individual building photos
- Completed Resource Information Sheet, including
 - o Applicant contact information and signature
 - o City or county official's contact information

Thank you for taking the time to submit this Preliminary Information Form. Your interest in Virginia's historic resources is helping to provide better stewardship of our cultural past.

Virginia Department of Historic Resources PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the proposed district for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the district could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information	For Staff Use Only
	DHR ID #:
District Name(s):	Gwynn's Island
District or Selected Building Date(s):	Prehistoric; 1635-1966 Circa Pre Post Open to the Public? Yes No
Main District Streets and/or Routes:	Route 223 (Cricket Hill Rd.), Route 633 (Old Ferry Road, N. Bay Haven Road), Route 740 (Hill Planation Road) City: Gwynn Zip: 23066
County or Ind. City:	Mathews County USGS Quad(s): Mathews, Deltaville

Physical Character of General Surroundings	
Acreage:	Approx. <u>1700</u> Setting (choose one): City Urban Town Suburban Rural Transportation Corridor
<p>Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features/Streetscapes: The proposed Gwynn's Island Historic District is generally bounded by Chesapeake Bay to the north and the east, Hills Bay and the Piankatank River to the west, and Milford Haven to the south. The district is distinguished by its organic pattern of growth. The district is accessed via the Gwynn's Island Bridge (0157-5003). Cricket Hill Road (Route 223) crosses the bridge before becoming Old Ferry Road and North Bay Haven Road (both Route 663) on the island itself, and eventually connecting to Hill Plantation Road (Route 740) on the bay side of the island. Secondary roads radiate from this spine. Development over the last two centuries featured a mixture of lot sizes, building types, and construction periods. Identified architectural resources capture the island's residential and industrial past. Some properties retain historic outbuildings as well.</p>	
Ownership Categories:	Private Public-Local Public-State Public-Federal

General District Information
What were the historical uses of the resources within the proposed district? Examples include: Dwelling, Store, Barn, etc...

Dwelling, seafood processing plant, tar furnace, dwelling, church, bridge, cemetery, warehouse	
What are the current uses? (if other than the historical use)	Dwelling, church, post office, warehouse
Architectural styles or elements of buildings within the proposed district:	Commercial, Folk Victorian, Vernacular, Federal/Adamesque, Cottage, Craftsman, Victorian, Bungalow
Architects, builders, or original owners of buildings within the proposed district:	Hugh Gwynn, original land patent 1635
Are there any known threats to this district?	Hurricanes, flooding, and sea level rise

General Description of District: (Please describe building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district and a general setting and/or streetscape description.)

The proposed Gwynn’s Island Historic District, located approximately four-and-a-half miles north-northeast of Mathews Courthouse, is bounded by Chesapeake Bay to the north and the east, Hills Bay and the Piankatank River to the west, and Milford Haven to the south (Map 1). The majority of the district is situated on Gwynn’s Island and is connected to the mainland by Cricket Hill Road (Route 223) and the Gwynn’s Island Bridge (057-5003). Once on the island, Cricket Hill Road gives way to Route 633, a designation shared by Old Ferry Road and North Bay Haven Road. This route serves as the central transportation artery for the island. Secondary roads branch off from it, running roughly northeast-southwest, with tertiary roads providing access to all parts of the community. These country roads, without stoplights, curbs, or streetlights, create a sense of space and community that ties together the diverse building stock on the island. The proposed district currently includes 66 documented architectural resources, as well as 20 known archaeological sites. Collectively, these resources capture the island’s history from the Paleo-Indian period to the mid-20th century, specifically its organic growth as a community during the last two centuries.

The proposed Gwynn’s Island Historic District is, and historically has been, bounded by its natural geography. Prehistoric activities are known to have taken place on the island’s perimeter, matching later European settlements. Approaching from the mainland, The Narrows on the west side of the island provided the most convenient crossing point for those willing to row to the island. Some of the extant roads still follow the natural geography of the island, skirting its shoreline or the various inlets. State Route 633 (Old Ferry Road and North Bay Haven Road) serves as the spine of the Gwynn’s Island road system. Secondary roads in a rough grid pattern branch off it, before giving way to smaller streets that provide access to individual homes or recent real estate developments.

Little is known about the earliest inhabitants of Gwynn’s Island. Twenty archaeological sites have been documented through surface collection along beaches across Gwynn’s Island, and date from the Archaic period to the time of contact with Europeans. Many of these were recorded as artifact scatters, though Site 44MT0016 may have been a camp and Sites 44MT0017 and 44MT0071 include shell middens. Recovered artifacts include a Paleoindian point (44MT0010), LeCroy points (44MT0011 and 44MT0012), a Brewerton point (44MT0058), an Early Archaic corner notched point (44MT0168), a grey slate gorget (44MT0018), and a variety of lithics and pottery sherds (44MT0012, 44MT0071, 44MT0168). Collectively, the number of indigenous sites on Gwynn’s Island indicate that it saw substantial activity over several centuries. Because indigenous transportation relied on waterways, many of the Gwynn’s Island sites are located on the perimeter of the island. While several of these sites have suffered from erosion or are now submerged since their first recording, there is significant potential for additional archaeological sites pending future survey work. Given that the Kecoughtan reportedly withdrew to Gwynn’s Island after Powhatan routed them from their village at

the mouth of the James River, it seems highly likely that the interior of the island may yield valuable information about the indigenous peoples who lived on the island. Additionally, the Chiskiack lived along the lower side of the Piankatank River by the mid-1630s. Further archaeological research may reveal how indigenous peoples adapted to new political and geographic circumstances and how they interacted with local English settlers.

The first significant non-indigenous name associated with the island was Hugh Gwynn. Gwynn patented 1,000 acres, which included much of the island as well as land on the south side of Milford Haven, in December 1635. When he re-patented the land in 1642, he expanded his holdings by 700 acres. No solid evidence remains of how Gwynn managed his holdings or how he used his land on the island, though it was likely developed for agriculture, and specifically tobacco. How the property moved through, and eventually out of, the Gwynn family remains unclear at present, but Hugh Gwynn, grandson of the patentee, lived at “Gwynnville” until his death in 1768. By the late 18th century the island was home to at least three different families. During Lord Dunmore’s occupation of the island in 1776, Governor Thomas Jefferson sketched a map of key Gwynn’s Island landmarks, including two houses noted as “Gwynn’s,” one marked “Keeble’s” and “Grymes’s Plantation.” Given the labor needed to support the household economy and raise tobacco, Gwynn’s Island likely served as home for several dozen people during this period.ⁱ

The island could however, sustain a population of several hundred, and did so during Dunmore’s occupation. On 1 June 1776, Lord Dunmore, Virginia’s royal governor, landed 800 men on the island, including 100 from his 14th Regiment, 100 royal marines, 150 loyalists from Norfolk, 50 seamen, and 300 African Americans, many of whom had joined the Ethiopian Regiment. He quickly set up camp and fortified his positions. Across the water on the south side of Milford Haven, General Andrew Lewis constructed an earthwork fortification known as Fort Cricket Hill, from which Lewis bombarded the British ships *Dunmore* and *Otter*. This successful attack, paired with the loss of several tenders and the realization that he would not receive assistance from British General Henry Clinton, spurred Dunmore to withdraw from the island and consequently ridded Virginia of its last royal governor.ⁱⁱ Fort Cricket Hill (057-0014 and 44MT0007) falls within the proposed historic district.

Throughout the 19th century, the Gwynn’s Island community grew and diversified. Captain Humphrey Heading Keeble erected a home (057-0032 and 057-5018) between 1790 and 1820, which still stands on Cherry Point. This stretched the family across the island from the area near today’s Edward Creek (based on the location of the “Keeble’s” house on Thomas Jefferson’s 1776 map of the island) to the northernmost point of the island. However, the island’s resident population did more than simply move and reorganize itself during this period. The island also began to attract northerners. New England native Mrs. Elizabeth Ellen Hill, writing as May Evergreen in *The Repository*, commented on her own love of her adopted home in the 1850s, as well as responses of other New Englanders who owned plantations on the island and summered at them. Mrs. Hill’s articles give a sense of Gwynn’s Island as a community still dominated by plantation agriculture and slavery. The three surviving antebellum dwellings (057-5453, 057-5455 and 057-5464) are relatively modest two-story frame structures, but the attendant buildings associated with slavery and farming are gone. Gwynn’s Island saw little action during the Civil War, with the exception of a Confederate naval officer and his men being captured there in 1863. Based on the surviving architectural resources, the island saw little development either during or in the decade after the Civil War.ⁱⁱⁱ

The population of Gwynn’s Island grew large enough that by 1883, the island community could support its own post office and sustained ferry service. The hand-powered cable ferry required much human effort to move across The Narrows, but it brought a new wave of development to the island. Thirty-three documented architectural resources date from this period until the end of “Reconstruction and Growth” in 1916. Of these, the majority are frame dwellings, one to three stories tall and between two and eight bays wide. Styles represented include Federal (057-5456), Folk Victorian (057-5237), and Victorian (057-5418). These resources capture most of the socio-economic strata of the Gwynn’s Island community during this period, ranging from the one-story, three-bay house at 2289 Old Ferry Road (057-5443) to the grand two-

and-a-half story, seven-bay Victorian house at 390 Callis Wharf Road (057-5418), and reveal both the simple necessities of shelter and the architectural ambitions of some island residents.^{iv}

Architectural resources from the “Reconstruction and Growth” period provide insight into other aspects of life on Gwynn’s Island. The Gwynn’s Island Cemetery was established in 1892 and continues in use to the present (057-5442). The Rising Sun Baptist Church met the religious needs of some in the community after it was built in 1896 (057-5240).^v The remains of two net tar furnaces (057-5238 and 057-5239) highlight the growing importance of commercial fishing to the island’s economy.

Resources from the “World War I to World War II” period capture a similarly varied experience. Unsurprising, most structures from this period were built during years of general prosperity. Thus, of the nineteen resources constructed during this period, nine were built shortly after World War I or during the 1920s and seven during the 1940s. Many of these resources are dwellings and reflect a variety of socio-economic circumstances for the island’s inhabitants. These buildings range in size from a one-story, three-bay cottage (057-5416) to a two-story, five bay dwelling (057-5463). Those with a discernible style tend toward Craftsman (057-5417, 057-5423, 057-5433, 057-5438, and 057-5447), though Cape Cods are also among the recorded resources (057-5425 and 057-5457).^{vi}

Two highly significant resources capture the continuity and the change on Gwynn’s Island during this period. The first is Oyster Seed Holdings (057-5234), historically known as Callis Wharf. Built by William James Callis, the wharf served a dual purpose: steamboats docked there and seafood was processed there. Today, a complex of buildings serving the latter purpose still stands. As such, the historic buildings of Callis Wharf connect Gwynn’s Island to the wider community created along the eastern seaboard via steamboat travel and to the commercial fishing industry which fed that same regional community.

The second significant resource arguably changed the composition of Gwynn’s Island more than anything else in its history. In 1931, the Virginia State Highway Commission took over operations of the Gwynn’s Island Ferry. Within four years, it decided to build a bridge connecting the island to the mainland. The Gwynn’s Island Bridge (057-5003) opened in 1939, and facilitated the expansion of passenger vehicle traffic on the island. By 1965, the Gwynn Post Office was built to accommodate the island’s growing population (057-5441).

With increased access, Gwynn’s Island transformed into a “second home” location throughout the latter half of the 20th century. This resulted in significant modern in-fill across the island, though such modern developments are often clustered along the shoreline on small lots, and are readily distinguishable from the historic resources. Though these may have displaced historic resources, they nevertheless contribute to the feel of a “leisure destination,” which Gwynn’s Island has been since at least the early 20th century and to a smaller degree in the prior century.

Collectively, the archaeological and architectural resources within the proposed Gwynn’s Island Historic District encapsulate all significant periods of Virginia’s history, from its deepest pre-historic past to its 20th-century development as an island escape.

ⁱ Previously, an architectural resource (057-0016) and corresponding archaeological resource (44MT0120) were connected to Hugh Gwynn’s occupancy of the island. These records have since been revised to reflect 19th-century occupation by the Respass family. However, archaeological evidence of 17th-century English settlement may still survive on the island. Martha W. McCartney, *Mathews County, Virginia: Lost Landscapes, Untold Stories* (Mathews County Historical Society, 2015), 31 and 166; Thomas Felix Hickerson, *Happy Valley: History and Genealogy* (Published by author, 1940), 29; Thomas Jefferson, [Untitled Map of Gwynn’s Island], [1776] in Barbar Oberger and J. Jefferson Looney, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 1778-January 4, 1780* (Charlottesville, 2009), III:345.

ⁱⁱ McCartney, *Mathews County, Virginia*, 163-165.

ⁱⁱⁱ May Evergreen, “Chimes from the Chesapeake” *The Ladies Repository*, (Boston: A. Tompkins, 1844-1873), vol. 28-29, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah6k8n>; McCartney, *Mathews County, Virginia*, 305, 329, 364.

^{iv} Only two architectural resources date to the 1870s: a two-story T-Plan folk Victorian dwelling built in 1871 (057-5235) and a two-story frame cottage built in 1875 (057-5449). Catherine C. Brooks, *Walk With Me* (Infinity Publishing, 2005), 73; McCartney, *Mathews County, Virginia*, 444. For resources dating from 1883 to 1916, see: 057-5440 (1896), 057-5456 (1890), 057-5465 (1890), 057-5424 (1893), 057-5448 (1894), 057-5432 (1895), 057-5428 (1898), 057-5437 (1898), 057-5445 (1898), 057-5055 (pre-1900), 057-0017 (1900), 057-5421 (1900), 057-5237 (1900), 057-5444 (1900) 057-5435 (1904), 057-5418 (1905), 057-5454 (1905), 057-5426 (1910), 057-5429 (1910), 057-5431 (1910), 057-5439 (1910), 057-5446 (1910), 057-5458 (1910), 057-5450 (1912), 057-5451 (1912), 057-5443 (1915), 057-5459 (1915), 057-5460 (1915), and 057-5452 (1916). Not included in the above list is the Respass House site (057-0017), as it no longer stands, though its former location is known.

^v Though the Rising Sun Baptist Church is an intact example of a Vernacular meetinghouse/church, it may have been moved from its original location.

^{vi} See: 057-5436 (1917), 057-5416 (1920), 057-5419 (1920), 057-5420 (1920), 057-5466 (1920), 057-5423 (1922), 057-5434 (1923), 057-5438 (1928), 057-5457 (1930), 057-5433 (1930), 057-5433 (1934), 057-5462 (1934), 057-5462 (1935), 057-5430 (1940), 057-5447 (1940), 057-5463 (1940), 057-5422 (1942), 057-5417 (1945), and 057-5425 (1945).

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the proposed district. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Please list all sources of information. Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

The proposed Gwynn's Island Historic District has been the setting for significant events throughout Virginia's history and provided a temporary or permanent residence for significant individuals. Its architectural and archaeological resources reflect the evolution of Virginia as a colony and as a state, as well as the changing aspirations of its residents. Gwynn's Island hosted both early indigenous settlements and the earliest European settlement on the Middle Peninsula. One of the earliest documented legally-enslaved Africans lived there, and the indentured African servants with whom he labored established the beginnings of the island's African-American community in the 1640s. In the 18th century, Gwynn's Island provided the last stronghold for royal governor Lord Dunmore, before departed from Virginia during the American Revolution. Throughout the 19th century, Gwynn's Island played a significant role in the development of maritime industries, including commercial fishing. So important were the resources on and around the island that it was frequently drawn into Governor Cameron's "oyster war." The 20th century saw the focus of Gwynn's Island shift away from industry and toward an economy based on post-war prosperity and the increase of leisure travel among Americans. In addition to the well-documented events and people, the architectural and archaeological resources of Gwynn's Island yield information about how the community shaped the landscape to meet their own needs and ambitions. The information captured in these resources ranges from evidence of indigenous trade networks to the creation of the mid-20th century leisure economy. Given the number and degree of significant events, people, and resources associated with the proposed Gwynn's Island Historic District, it fulfills the requirements for Criteria A, B, C, and D.

Archaeological evidence indicates indigenous activities took place on the island from the Paleo-indian period through European Contact in the early 17th century. There are twenty documented archaeological sites on Gwynn's Island, which have yielded artifacts including a Paleo-indian projectile point, LeCroy points, a Brewerton point, and a variety of lithics and ceramic sherds. A grey slate gorget found at site 44MT0018 places the indigenous inhabitants within trade networks that stretched into the Ohio Valley. Given the longstanding occupation of Gwynn's Island, it seems likely that indigenous peoples continued to use the island following contact. Sites such as 44MT0017 include European artifacts, but whether those reflect indigenous or European cultural affiliations remains unknown.^{vii}

Significant events and individuals become more documented following European settlement in the 17th century. John Smith may have visited Gwynn's Island during his exploratory voyages in 1607-1608, but the man who gave the island its name did so in December 1635. Hugh Gwynn, member of the General Assembly, received a patent for 1,000 acres of land at the mouth of the Piankatank River, including much of Gwynn's Island and land on the south side of Milford Haven. Gwynn's motives for claiming this land while he resided in Charles River County remain unknown, but he secured for himself the first known land grant on the Middle Peninsula. Gwynn apparently did little with his newly-acquired land, and re-patented the same 1,000 acres in 1642, as well as an additional 700 in 1643. Whether Gwynn lived on the island or merely settled his servants and headrights there remains unknown. Gwynn continued to expand his holdings throughout the remainder of his life. In the 1650s, he claimed 300 acres of land on the southwestern end of Gwynn's Island, which bordered Edwards Creek and added 165 acres on the lower side of Milford Haven. Either Gwynn or his son (also Hugh Gwynn) consolidated these claims into a patent for 2,000 acres in 1657. During breaks from claiming new lands, Gwynn served in public office. He represented Charles River County in the House of Burgesses in 1639, served as a justice in York County in 1641, represented York County as a burgess in 1646, and served as a Burgess for Gloucester County in 1652. The latter position indicates he was resident on or near his island by 1652.^{viii}

Gwynn also had the ignominious honor of being master to three indentured servants who fled to Maryland in 1640. Though Gwynn asked the Quarter Court's permission to sell them or put them to hire in Maryland, the

justices determined all three be returned to Virginia. Two of the men, a Dutchman and a Scotsman, were whipped. The third, a black man named John Punch, was sentenced to serve Gwynn for the remainder of his life. Thus, Punch may be one of the first people to be condemned to a life of involuntary and perpetual servitude before the legal codification of racialized slavery. Gwynn brought at least five other people of African descent to Gwynn's Island, as well. "Tony, a Negro" was included as one of Gwynn's headrights in his 1642 land patent, and "Antiono, Domino, Calentia, and Mamia, 4 Negros" were listed as headrights in his 1650s patent.^{ix}

For the next century, Gwynn's Island was a fairly quiet place. During the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the governor ordered two lookouts posted to the island to watch for French privateers venturing into Virginia's waters. The *Fortune*, on its way to Virginia and Maryland with a cargo of indentured servants, ran aground on the island during a storm in September 1769. Sometime before 1776 additional families came to Gwynn's Island. The Keeble family built a house on the southeastern side of the island, while John Randolph Grymes purchased a plantation on its northern edge. To support the agricultural endeavors of the Gwynn, Grymes, and Keeble families, a community of enslaved persons resided on the island as well.^x

The most significant event in Gwynn's Island's history came in late May 1776 when Lord Dunmore, the last royal governor of Virginia, encamped his forces on the island. Earlier that month, Dunmore had been anchored near Norfolk. Learning that American forces were preparing to attack his smallpox-weakened troops, Dunmore decided to relocate to Gwynn's Island. The governor was acquainted with loyalist John Randolph Grymes, who owned a plantation on the island and could provide assistance if needed. Captain Andrew Snape Hamond, the senior British naval officer in the Chesapeake, viewed the island as an easily defendable refuge, with an excellent harbor. On 26 May 1776, Dunmore landed a combined force of about 800 men, including his own 14th Regiment, the Royal Marines, loyalists from Norfolk, sailors, and the Ethiopian Regiment. Dunmore hoped that relocating his forces to Gwynn's Island would help his surgeons inoculate African American recruits and isolate the sick. Once on the island, Dunmore's forces built two batteries and a stockade fort on the southeastern tip of the island, while British ships secured the approach to the island.^{xi}

American General Andrew Lewis answered Dunmore's threat from the mainland. He and four companies of men from the Gloucester County battalion erected the earthworks known as Fort Cricket Hill, the remnants of which survive archaeologically to the present day (057-0014 and 44MT0007). By early July, General Lewis acquired cannon for the American earthworks, and on 9 July American forces opened fire on the British ships. The *Otter* and the *Dunmore* both sustained serious damage. In addition, four tenders ran aground, one was captured, and five burned, along with the *Logan*. Dunmore, realizing he would receive no aid from the British forces and that the Americans lacked the ability to land on the island, ordered his forces to depart. Gwynn's Island was therefore the last home to Virginia's final royal governor. Throughout the remainder of the American Revolution, the island saw little action beyond an occasional livestock raid by British sailors who ventured up the Piankatank.^{xii}

Dunmore's occupation of Gwynn's Island enabled some of the African American residents of Kingston Parish to gain their freedom. Polly Cary, who belonged to Humphrey Gwynn, joined the British forces in 1776 and obtained a certificate of freedom, as did Henry Gwyn, who belonged to a master of the same name. Not all fared so well, however. John Randolph Grymes claimed that when the British left the island all of his property was considered free booty. Twenty-five of his slaves were captured and sold as plunder, twelve died while in the army, and thirty more were taken by the army.^{xiii}

Gwynn's Island transitioned into independence, and eventually the 19th century, peacefully. The Gwynns and the Keebles continued to be the predominate names associated with the island, even as the needs and ambitions of the community began to change. From 1798 to the 1830s, James Gwyn and his family operated a store on the island, where Humphrey Keeble was a licensed merchant and shipbuilder. These sorts of commercial interactions began to move the island away from a heavy reliance on agriculture, and toward a

more diversified economy that drew merchants, fishermen, and men in the ship-building trades to the island. During the War of 1812, with the British forces threatening communities surrounding the Chesapeake Bay, Gwynn's Island endured a brief landing, but nothing more.^{xiv}

This quiet existence might have drawn new settlers to the island, though agricultural and maritime opportunities might have been just as appealing. Just as the incentives varied, so too did the people. Writing as May Evergreen in the Boston publication *The Ladies' Repository*, New England transplant Elizabeth Ellen Hill wrote of the charm of her new home in a series titled, "Chimes from the Chesapeake." In recounting her experiences, Hill captured the antebellum movement of people between the North and the South, even in the era of rising sectionalism prior to the Civil War. In her third installment, Hill wrote of "a gentleman residing in New Hampshire who is not yet prepared to remove his family to the South." Nevertheless, the family had made "a visit of several weeks" which gave them "a lasting impression of their 'island home,'" and may well have been the first documented vacationers to the island.^{xv}

While Elizabeth Hill offered her pleasant opinions on island life in the 1850s, others expressed vastly different sentiments during the Civil War. Reverend Humphrey Keeble of Mathews County, for example, burned seven volumes of Rev. Charles Spurgeon's sermons, after Spurgeon revealed himself to be an abolitionist. Despite such extravagant actions and its strategic position on the Chesapeake Bay, Gwynn's Island saw little action during the war itself. In 1861, Colonel John Bohannon stationed a picket on the island to support an armed guard monitoring the Piankatank River by boat. When Lieutenant Colonel George M. Guion occupied Mathews County in 1863, he detoured to Gwynn's Island on hearing of a party of Confederate guerrillas encamped on the island. The Union force ultimately captured a Confederate naval officer and eleven of his men, before destroying a dozen boats, a sloop, and the barge the men had used in privateering.^{xvi}

During Reconstruction, the economy of Gwynn's Island flourished, due in no small part to the island's growing connection to larger cities like Baltimore via steamship. Between 1874 and 1897, the firm of R. H. Respass and Son operated a store on the island, which sold goods that came from Baltimore. The Baltimore Underselling Store on the island offered "almost anything and everything that is needed for man, woman, or child." While finished goods from Baltimore came into the island, it sent in return growing amounts of commercially harvested oysters and fish. So valuable was the seafood trade, that the 1880s saw a substantial rise in illegal dredging, leading Governor Cameron to embark upon an "oyster war" that lasted throughout the decade. In an effort to prevent damage to oyster beds, the General Assembly outlawed dredging of rock-bed oysters. Dredgers frequently ignored the law, prompting the gunboat *Chesapeake* to be assigned to police Virginia's waters. Throughout the decades, reports surfaced of action taking place around Gwynn's Island, as the *Chesapeake* and Mathews County authorities attempted to uphold the law. The frequency at which dredgers were captured or sited around Gwynn's Island, illustrates not only the island's importance to the seafood industry, but also makes it a key site of an early state-enforced marine conservation program.^{xvii}

Steamboat travel and the commercial seafood industry shaped much of the existence of Gwynn's Island's population well into the 20th century. The best surviving example of this on the island is Callis Wharf, which today operates as Oyster Seed Holdings. William James Callis built the wharf in the late 19th century, and his son W. Eugene Callis improved it in the early 20th century. Soon after, the Maryland Steamboat Company, which operated out of Baltimore, and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Steamboat Company began using it for passenger travel. By 1912, the wharf also supported a seafood packing house. The lucrative nature of Gwynn's Island's wharves attracted commercial traffic, passenger traffic, and the occasional theater. The James-Adams Floating Theater, which inspired Edna Ferber's *Showboat*, was playing Gwynn's Island during August 1933. Fortunately, it was moved to Cricket Hill Wharf just before a major hurricane made landfall on the island and was saved from the widespread damage that afflicted much of Gwynn's Island.^{xviii}

During the decades between the Civil War and World War I, the growing community on Gwynn's Island used the resources gained from fishing and farming to seat itself firmly in the modern era. In 1883, the people of Gwynn's Island built their first post office, overseen by Postmistress Lucie J. Powell. At this time, any

delivery of persons or packages to the island required a skiff or canoe to cross The Narrows, with horses swimming behind. Whether the citizens or the postal carrier tired of this is unclear, but during the summer of 1883, the community raised funds to launch a ferry service between the island and the mainland. At long last, local carriage, and eventually automobile, traffic could easily reach the island. The community similarly banded together following the destruction of a schoolhouse in 1909. That year, island residents founded the Citizens Improvement League, with the goal to build a modern school that would accommodate 200 or more white children. Rather than erect an entirely new building, however, they purchased a building from the Odd Fellows and converted it into a school. Actual construction on a purpose-built school would not begin until 1920.^{xix}

Unfortunately, modernity seems to have brought with it unintended consequences. On Christmas Eve 1915, an argument between an African-American man and several young white men devolved into a fight at the Hudgins and Mitchem Store. The former fled to the Grimstead and Adam's Store nearby, where Grimstead sent him upstairs and informed the white pursuers that the sheriff would take care of the remainder of the proceedings. The African-American man was arrested, jailed, and stood trial in January 1916 on two counts of assault and battery. Found guilty, he was fined \$35 and spent 30 days in jail. Whether this was the first outbreak of violence in a community or the last, it correlates with an exodus of the African-American population from Gwynn's Island. African-Americans had been steadily departing the island since the Civil War, when the population was approximately 650 people, of whom about half were African-American. By 1870, the census recorded only 192 freed people on the island. By 1910, that number dropped to 135 out of a total population of 811. A 31 August 1916 article in *The Mathews Journal* noted that "most of the colored people have moved away to Hampton. The few that are here are making preparations to leave." By 1920, only 19 people of African American descent remained on the island, and *The Mathews Journal* reported on 1 July, "all of the colored people have moved from the Island except one family and they will leave soon."^{xx}

It seems unlikely that the Christmas Eve incident alone sparked such a migration. At play may also have been increasing economic opportunities in Hampton Roads, including at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, and changes in commercial seafood operations. Also informing their decisions to move may have been a sense of rising racial tension. During this period, the Ku Klux Klan was beginning a resurgence across the country, and the relative geographic isolation of Gwynn's Island paired with their declining proportion within the population, may have convinced the African Americans on Gwynn's Island to relocate. While African Americans no longer lived on Gwynn's Island, they continued to participate in its economy. They still fished, tonged oysters, processed and packed seafood, ran auto shops and performed general maintenance on island homes, though they no longer lived there.^{xxi}

The 1920s saw two significant changes in Gwynn's Island's presentation of itself to the world. The first was the solidification of its status as a "white" community. The second was that it began promoting itself as a travel destination. One 1924 article by Earle Lutz in the *Richmond-Times Dispatch* captures both. "White Man's Paradise Nestles in Virginia Bay" described a pastoral island without "lawyers, doctors, negroes, traffic cops, and movie theaters." Though the former was a symptom of Gwynn's Island's past, the latter seemed to offer promise for the islands' future. Since at least the 1850s, people had summered on the island, and Americans' increased spending abilities gave more people the ability to travel for leisure during this period. Adults were not the only ones to travel, however, as "a large number of Scout boys [Boy Scouts of America] arrived to spend the summer at their summer resort" Camp Powhatan beginning in July 1920.^{xxii}

The same year Lutz revealed Gwynn's Island to be an unknown paradise, the people living and working there saw their own economic prospects improve. In 1924, *The Mathews Journal* reported that the Gwynn's Island Fish and Oyster company produced 108,000 cans of herring and 2,000 barrels of tightly-packed herring. Within a decade, Gwynn's Island was the center of heavy investment in seafood processing. In addition to the Gwynn's Island Fish and Oyster Company, it also was home to the Mathews Sea Food Products Company, J. Newton Foster and Son, the Gwynn's Island Operating Company, and the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.^{xxiii}

The onset of the Great Depression brought some economic changes to the island. Most residents continued to maintain some agricultural land, and so could maintain at least a minimal level of sustenance. Those who relied entirely on income from the fishing industry, however, were not so lucky. By June 1933, A&P shuttered its packing plant. Two months later, in August 1933, a massive hurricane made land-fall on the island, causing widespread destruction, flooding nearly the entire island. Fortunately, the Civil Conservation Corps were brought in to assist in clean-up operations and government-backed loans offered to small farmers and commercial fishermen to allow them to continue in business.^{xxiv}

The demand for seafood during World War II brought another wave of prosperity to Gwynn's Island. However, subsequent over-fishing in the Chesapeake and an outbreak of MSX in the oyster population during the 1960s caused substantial damage to the commercial seafood industry on the island. The construction of W. D. Jenkin's marina complex, beginning in 1964, helped reinforce the increasingly recreational nature of the island's economy. In addition to the twenty-one slips already built by July 1964, Jenkins planned to construct additional slips, a boat lift for large pleasure craft, bath houses, a restaurant and a motel, which became the iconic Islander Motel on its completion in 1967.^{xxv}

Today, the community on Gwynn's Island incorporates both history and modernity. Architectural and archaeological resources populate the island, even as modern residences populate the shorelines. Even these new homes, though, are part of a century-long tradition of the island as a leisure destination. Similarly, Oyster Seed Holdings and Island Seafood continue the island's aquaculture heritage. Perhaps most importantly, through the efforts of the Gwynn's Island Museum, the community is starting to come to terms with its racially-divided past and address how it has affected and may continue to affect Gwynn's Island.^{xxvi}

The proposed Gwynn's Island Historic District encapsulates a remarkable confluence of significant moments in Virginia's history, from its Archaic past, recorded only in artifacts, to its role in the American Revolution, and from the island's participation in an inter-coastal economy to its development into a leisure destination. Few other places can capture either the depth or the breadth of the history present on Gwynn's Island.

^{vii} See VDHR Archaeological Site Records: 44MT00010, 44MT00011, 44MT00012, 44MT00058, 44MT00168, 44MT00018, 44MT00012, 44MT0071, 44MT0168. Martha W. McCartney, *Mathews County, Virginia: Lost Landscapes, Untold Stories* (Mathews County Historical Society, 2015), 6.

^{viii} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 31, 45; "Historical and Genealogical Notes" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 18, no. 1 (July 1909), 60. Gwynn's Island was initially part of Charles River County, then became part of York County, and then became part of Gloucester when that county formed in 1651. Finally, it became part of Mathews County in 1790.

^{ix} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 31-32; John W. Dixon, *The Black Americans of Gwynn's Island: 1600s through 1900s* (Gwynn's Island: Gwynn's Island Museum, 2005), 6.

^x McCartney, *Mathews County*, 107, 135.

^{xi} Dean C. Allard, "The Potomac Navy of 1776," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84, no. 4 (October 1976), 419; McCartney, *Mathews County*, 161, 163-165, 170.

^{xii} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 161, 163-165, 170.

^{xiii} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 175-179.

^{xiv} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 219, 239.

^{xv} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 305; May Evergreen, "Chimes from the Chesapeake" *The Ladies Repository*, (Boston: A. Tompkins, 1844-1873), vol. 28-29, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah6k8n>

^{xvi} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 320, 329, 364.

^{xvii} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 395, 430; *The Mathews Journal*, 3, no. 6, 18 January 1906; "Reshaping Virginia" *Virginia Memory*, http://www.virginiamemory.com/reading_room/chronology_by_period/13; "Virginia News," *Richmond Dispatch* 64, no. 146, 19 December 1883; "Virginia News," *Alexandria Gazette*, 86, no. 18, 21 January 1885; "Local News," *Peninsula Enterprise* 4, no. 31, 7 February 1885; "Charges Against the Commander of the Commonwealth's Oyster Steamer Chesapeake," *Peninsula Enterprise*, 6, no. 46, 21 May 1887; "Virginia News," *Alexandria Gazette* 89, 25 July 1888; "Oyster Interests," *Alexandria Gazette*, 91, no. 9, 10 January 1890.

^{xviii} Bob Tanner and Jean Tanner, eds., *Gwynn's Island and the Great Storm of 1933* (Gwynn's Island: Gwynn's Island Museum, 2002) 4, 14; McCartney, *Mathews County*, 442, 488.

^{xix} Catherine C. Brooks, *Walk With Me* (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2005), 73; McCartney, *Mathews County*, 488; Elsa Cooke Verbyla, ed., *Gwynn's Island Times: News Items 1905-1950* (Gloucester, VA: Tidewater Newspapers, Inc., 1998), 24.

^{xx} Dixon, *The Black Americans of Gwynn's Island*, 18, 20; Verbyla, ed., *Gwynn's Island Times*, 15, 23.

^{xxi} Dixon, *The Black Americans of Gwynn's Island*, 16, 24. In Mathews County, these tensions became blatantly apparent in 1925, when the Ku Klux Klan reportedly burned a cross at the courthouse (McCartney, *Mathews County*, 471).

^{xxii} Earle Lutz, "White Man's Paradise Nestles in Virginia Bay," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, 5 October 1924. A Boy Scout troop was organized in Mathews County in 1919; Verbyla, ed., *Gwynn's Island Times*, 23; McCartney, *Mathews County*, 468.

^{xxiii} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 483.

^{xxiv} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 483, 488-489; Tanner and Tanner, eds., *Gwynn's Island and the Great Storm of 1933*.

^{xxv} McCartney, *Mathews County*, 508-509; *Southside Sentinel* 30 July 1964.

^{xxvi} Personal communication with Lori Jackson Black

Sponsor (Individual and/or organization, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please use a separate sheet.)

Mr. Ms. Mindy Connor Mathews County
(Name) (Firm)

P. O. Box 839
(Address)

Mathews VA 23109
(City) (State) (Zip Code)

mconnor@co.mathews.va.us 804-725-7172
(Email Address) (Daytime telephone including area code)

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.
Contact person: Mindy Connor, County Administrator

Daytime Telephone: (804) 725-7172

Applicant Information (Individual completing form)

Mr. Mrs. Dr. Elizabeth Cook, Dr. David A. Brown, and DATA Investigations LLC
Ms. Miss Thane H. Harpole
(Name) (Firm)

1759 Tyndall Point Lane Gloucester Point VA 23062
(Address) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

fairfield@fairfieldfoundation.org 804-815-4467
(Email Address) (Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature:



Date: 1/6/2017

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.

Mr. Mrs. Dr. Mindy Connor County Administrator
Miss Ms. Hon. (Name) (Position)

Mathews P. O. Box 839

Mathews VA 23109 804-725-7172
(Locality) (Address)

(City) (State) (Zip Code) (Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this district. Hurricane Sandy (October 2012), the second costliest hurricane in U.S. history, caused widespread destruction across the eastern mid-Atlantic. Federal funding to support the study of this impact and potential future impacts were designated for Virginia and several of its localities, including Mathews. Prior architectural survey identified Gwynn's Island as a future potential historic district and we are seeking an evaluation of this district because we feel that this assemblage of buildings and its surrounding landscape warrants a designation of eligibility for the state and federal registers, highlighting its significance and integrity and potentially qualifying property owners for future assistance in the preparation for and recovery from similar cataclysmic natural events.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes No
Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes No