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CELEBRATING OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Historic Preservation of Sugar Hill Farm

The home of Diane and David Bostic in upper Richmond County demonstrates just how wide-ranging and creative historic preservation of early homes can be. Salvaging two endangered, vintage Virginia houses, the couple constructed one “new, old house” that combines architectural history and period charm with modern conveniences.

The two historic buildings reconstructed are the colonial Hamlett House, originally located thirty miles from Lynchburg in piedmont Campbell County and Forest Grove, an early nineteenth century house found just across the Rappahannock in Essex County. Sugar Hill House sits atop a knoll in the Newland community, on an eighteen-acre tract that was discovered by the Bostics online when they began to search for terrain with woods and fields suitable for an early house. The acreage they purchased in 2006 from grandsons of the Bartlett

family had been in that family for more than 175 years; the family cemetery is still on the property. The Bartletts once operated a country store across the road from their home, a small two story, circa 1900 house on a knoll that was too dilapidated to be salvaged by the Bostics.

Some Strange Coincidences

Diane and David met in Newburyport, Massachusetts where the U.S. Coast Guard was founded. Here Diane was born and David, originally from West Virginia, was stationed in the Coast Guard. Diane lived in Newburyport until moving to Virginia in 2011. David had settled in earlier, first building the large red barn adjacent to the house.

Bartlett is a familiar name in New England, according to Diane Bostic. Josiah Bartlett was a signer of the Declaration of Independence from New Hampshire. After buying the Bartlett property on Newland Road they discovered in a storage shed, three glass tumblers decorated with the city seal of Newburyport!



Sugar Hill House, farm and garden dependencies in 2017

Forest Grove, Essex County

While driving the back roads of Essex County in 2007, Diane and David discovered an abandoned timber frame, oak structure, circa 1820, located near Center Cross. The house had been the subject of a Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission survey in 1973. At that time it was owned by Nathan Bayton.

As the survey noted, this was a full two-story house without basement, with an extension on the rear, also of two stories. It rested on brick foundations, with exterior chimneys on either end. The window sash had 8 lights over 8 on both floors. On either side of the very large chimneys, in the attic, were tiny 4-light windows. The clapboards were plain, with no beading. An interesting Victorian mantel, present location unknown, graced the west room.



Forest Grove in 2007

Robert Peel Dillard bought this house and farm around 1884. His son John Harvey Dillard inherited the place and sold it, circa 1924. John H. Dillard was uncle to Alexander Fleet Dillard, Sr., an attorney of Ware's Wharf, Essex County. The Wilkerson family lived here and owned property in the early 20th century.

In 1973, the house had not been lived in for several years, and the grounds were being used for raising hogs. By 2007, when the Bostics began to dismantle the house, though still salvageable, it had deteriorated significantly and the property was overgrown.

The front façade of the reconstructed house, (below) with its pair of end chimneys and window pattern recalls Forest Grove, while the narrower first story windows and gambrel roof lend a more colonial look.

In



Forest Grove in 1973

1836, James Williams of Middlesex County came to Essex and married Frances Brooke, daughter of Peter Broocke of Traveler's Rest, and his wife Patsy Cauthorn Broocke. They settled at Forest Grove, and may have built the house which was named for the thick stand of old oaks there. In 1870, James Joshua Williams married Virginia Ellen "Jennie" Dobyns of Cottage Park, near Dunnsville and they made Forest Grove their home.



Jennie Dobyns
1847-1930



Front of Sugar Hill, 2017

colonial look.

Hamlett House, Campbell County

Sugar Hill is a small community located about five miles outside the town of Brookneal, Virginia. Nearby is historic Red Hill, once the home of Patrick Henry. The Bostics also owned a historic house in Campbell County when, quite by accident, they discovered the Hamlett House, part of a compound of three houses and a mill located on Turnip Creek. The house was constructed in 1772 of heart pine on a limestone basement. Housewright Julius Wood carved his name and the date on the timbers.

The Hamlett name originated in England and referred to a “small village” or “home in a village.” Richard Hamlett patented 497 acres in James City County, Virginia in 1655. The name is still well known in Campbell County. Though the outside of the house is cozy and unassuming, the interior reflects the prosperous lifestyle of the Hamlett family as owners of a large tobacco plantation. Details include 10 foot high ceilings, grain-painted wainscoting, and a marbled mantle with matchstick moldings and hand-carved fluted columns. The Hamlett family continued to live in the house until after the Civil War. A window pane is signed by Nathan Hamlett and dated 1863. Brothers Thomas and Meca were both killed in the Civil War.

The story and a half rear wing of the Hamlett House has become the rear wing of the Newland house. It features a porch that stretches the full length of the entrance side, dormer windows and a central chimney. Inside an enclosed staircase bears the deep wear of generations of Hamlett feet.



Hamlett House just before dismantling (above) and as the reconstructed rear wing of the Bostic home in Richmond County.

Reconstructing Sugar Hill

When taking down the houses for reconstruction, each room was photographed, numbered, color-coded, and these markings were applied to the materials as they were removed from the house. The cleaned and sorted materials, including bricks from chimneys, were stored in a tractor-trailer shipping container on the Newland property.

The reconstructed house is on a specially engineered precast concrete basement that houses Diane’s barber shop and David’s office.

Details of the interior create a feeling of going back in time. Flooring and mantels are all original. Old windows are in pristine condition and most maintain their original glass after conservation by the Bostics, who took a course in window restoration. The old windows were placed in a steam box to soften the putty for easy removal. Some are equipped with a wooden “bird’s mouth” to keep them in place when open and no ropes and weights make them easy to remove for cleaning.

Many antiques complete the picture at Sugar Hill. In a front parlor is a fire screen Diane recreated from an original in the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. The front stair hall contains a plantation desk and a large jug with “tobacco spit” glaze, both of local, Hinson family origins. In the dining area are a Shenandoah Valley maple step-back cupboard and a painted comb-back Windsor chair acquired in Massachusetts.



Sources: Information was provided by interviews with Diane and David Bostic. Thanks to Brookneal Library and Museum, Wesley Pippenger and Ancestry. Com., Survey of Forest Grove from Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Photos courtesy of the Bostics, Ancestry. com VDHR, and Richmond County Museum.

David Jett



The Mission of the Richmond County Museum is to Preserve, Protect, and Interpret the Artifacts and Heritage of the County through its Exhibits, Programs, and Research. Consider sustaining the museum's mission through a gift in your Will or Trust. Call 804-333-3607 for more information.

Richmond County Museum

Richmond County Museum
and Visitor Center
5874 Richmond Road
P.O. Box 884
Warsaw, VA 22572

PO Box 884
Warsaw, VA 22572

Phone: 804-333-3607

Fax: 804 -333-3408

Email:

museum@co.richmond.va.us

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*Please join us for our seventh annual
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Sugar Hill Farm

Saturday September 16th , 2 - 5 p. m.



Tours of House, Food, Exhibits, Crafts

Tickets: \$30.00 advance, \$35.00 at gate

All to benefit museum, more information: call 333-3607

Sugar Hill Farm

Sugar Hill resembles numerous other Essex houses of similar design, with center hall, end chimneys and gambrel roof, such as Poplar Springs, once located near Bray's Fork. This house, also dismantled by David Bostic, awaits a new site for reconstruction.

