



2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221; Telephone: (804) 367-2323; Fax: (804) 367-2391

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

The Preliminary Information Form (PIF) constitutes an application for preliminary consideration of a property for eligibility for the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The PIF is **not** the same as a nomination to the Registers, but is a means for evaluating the **eligibility** of a property for listing. The PIF is evaluated by Department of Historic Resources (DHR) staff and the State Review Board and their recommendations regarding the property's eligibility will be provided to the property owner in writing.

Before Preparing a PIF

Contact DHR's Archivist for assistance in obtaining any information DHR may have on file about your property, such as a previous architectural survey record or eligibility evaluation. You are welcome to use this information in preparing your PIF. Contact DHR's Archivist by phone at (804) 482-6102, or by email at Quatro.Hubbard@dhr.virginia.gov.

Staff at one of DHR's three Regional offices are available to answer questions you may have as you begin preparing your PIF. Locations and contact information for each office is at http://dhr.virginia.gov/regional_offices/regional_offices.htm. (You also are welcome to ask DHR's Archivist for the contact information.)

Preparing a PIF

A PIF consists of three equally important parts:

1. **Form:** Complete the attached form to the best of your ability, using your own research about the property to be evaluated as well as any information that DHR has provided. Remember that DHR's Regional staff also are available to assist you. The form may be completed using Microsoft Word software, typed, or hand-written. If using MS Word, the PIF can be submitted via CD, email, ftp, or other file sharing means.

Your PIF will not be evaluated if it is missing any of the following information:

- Property owner's signature
 - Contact information for the person submitting the form (if different from the property owner)
 - Contact information for the City Manager or County Administrator where the property is located
2. **Photos:** Provide color photographs of your property's exterior and major interior spaces, with emphasis on architectural features instead of furnishings. Photos typically include views of the main building from all sides, as well as important ornamental and/or functional details; any outbuildings or secondary resources; and the property's general setting. Submit photo prints on 4" x 6" glossy photo paper and digital images on CD or other file sharing means approved by DHR's Regional staff.
 3. **Maps:** A minimum of two maps must accompany your PIF:
 - **Location map:** This map shows the exact location of your property. The map can be created using Google Maps, Google Earth, Bing, or other mapping websites. A copy of a road map also may be used as long as the property's exact location and physical address are shown on the map. DHR's Archivist can assist in providing an acceptable location map with boundaries.
 - **Sketch map:** This map shows the locations of all resources on your property, such as the main building; any secondary resources (often referred to as outbuildings); major landscape features such as a stream, formal gardens, driveways, and parking areas, and the road on which the property fronts. The sketch map can be drawn by hand, or an annotated aerial view, tax parcel map or survey map may be used.

Submitting a PIF

Once you have completed the PIF, submit it to the appropriate Regional office. The Regional staff member will inform you when DHR staff will review your PIF and answer any questions you may have about the evaluation process.

Note: All submitted materials become the property of DHR and will be retained in our permanent Archive. In addition, the materials will be posted on DHR's public website for a period of time during the evaluation process.

*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.*



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DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) _____

Purpose of Evaluation

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

The City of Manassas recently acquired this property at the urging of the community due to a fear that the owners would eventually demolish the 1892-94 historic building. The City will be adding the house as a site within the Manassas Museum System and preserving the grounds as a City park. The City is seeking nomination in order to better protect the structure. As a local government, Manassas is self-insured through the Virginia Risk Sharing Association and currently the building can only be insured as a vacant structure for a total loss, with no insurance for vandalism or damage. A listing on the Virginia Landmarks Registry and National Register of Historic Places will enable the City to provide additional insurance. Emergency stabilization efforts are underway and a master plan will be developed in 2020.

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

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

1. General Property Information

Property name: Annaburg

Property address: 9201 Maple Street

City or Town: Manassas

Zip code: 20110

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

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

Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 3.65 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban X Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____

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

Annaburg is situated within a suburban environment in the historic City of Manassas, located thirty miles west of Washington, D. C. It is set within a large block and sits on the cusp of the Annaburg subdivision, surrounded by a residential neighborhood on its east, west, and south sides, and commercial development to the north. On the north half of the block sits the Caton Merchant House, an assisted living facility built in 1986, while the Annaburg mansion is within the southern half of the block. Except for the mansion, a drive, and a parking lot, the rest of the property is open with a scattering of trees and the remnants of some concrete paths. The trees are thought to be original plantings from around 1890-

95 while the paths date to the 1960's. It has been said that Robert Portner, the original owner, imported trees from the Black Forest of Germany for his estate, as well as trees from all forty-four states in the Union at the time, provided they could grow in Virginia's climate. Some of these trees frame the location of the estate's original driveway. There is also a raised mound that dates to the 1960's and served as a putting green for the nursing home residents.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Classical Revival with Prussian Influence

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

If the builder is known, please list here: John Cannon

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1892-1894

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.

Annaburg was built as the summer residence of millionaire beer baron Robert Portner and designed by Washington, D. C. - based architect Gustav Friebus, who combined elements of some of Portner's favorite European mansions. The three-story, Classical Revival house was built between 1892 and 1894 using brownstone obtained from Portner's own quarry in Manassas and locally made beige brick.

The house is unique for its use of Palladian, stained glass, and large picture windows, as well as wide and narrow 1/1 windows. The first floor originally featured a large dining room, butler's pantry, a receiving or music room, a central ballroom flanked by east and west parlors, and a water closet. The first floor remains virtually unchanged from the time the Portner family was in residence, apart from a wall that was built during the nursing home era that obscures the stairwell. This may have been installed as a required smoke control for the rooms and floors above. It is believed that the doorway and transom window above were repurposed from another space in the house. On the second and third floors, away from the public view, similar walls and standard metal fire doors were used to close off the stairwell.

The second and third floors have undergone the most dramatic changes from the Portner era. After the estate was abandoned in the 1920s, people would enter the house and remove anything of value or interest that remained including brass fittings and copper pipes in the walls. The majority of the resulting damage occurred during World War II-era scrap metal drives. When the nursing home took possession of the property in 1960, the house was in considerably bad shape. The second and third floors of the house were converted into private apartments for residents in contrast to the shared rooms residents were given in the nursing home wings. Since original floor plans for the house are not known to exist, it is difficult to determine just how much was altered and how many changes were made to these floors without further investigation, though it is assumed to be significant. The one room that appears to be relatively unchanged on the upper floors is the central room that exits out onto a semi-circular porch

above the main porch. In all probability, this was a sitting or day room while bedrooms on either side would have been 'His' and 'Hers' bedrooms for Robert and Anna Portner. Contemporary accounts also state that the house originally contained three bathrooms of varying sizes – a water closet on the first floor and two full bathrooms on the upper floors, as well as electrical lighting throughout.

The fundamental structure of the basement remains the same, though much of the architectural evidence of its use in the Portner-era was removed when it was refitted for use as a beauty salon, kitchen and snack bar, pharmacy, and storage during the nursing home era. It is a logical assumption that the kitchen was in the northwest corner of the basement, directly below the dining room as there is suggestive evidence of a dumb waiter having previously connected the two rooms. It can also be surmised that the basement contained a laundry room, pantry or food storage room, and an icebox and mechanical room for Portner's air conditioning system.

On the outside of the structure, the house had a large porch that the ballroom opened up to on the south façade along with wrap-around porches on the south, east, and west sides, a square porte-cochere on the west, and a complimentary semi-circular porch on the east. The east façade also included a brownstone carving of Mrs. Portner's family crest, while a complimentary crest of Robert Portner's family appeared on a brownstone tower near the house. The crest's placement on this wall was a deliberate decision. While on a two-year trip to Germany from 1888-1890, Robert Portner had a portrait of his family painted, which measured twelve feet wide by nine feet tall. When he had Annaburg designed, he intended for the portrait to be hung in the east parlor, which would take up the entire wall, and used the crest as an exterior decoration for this same wall. While the Portner crest was lost with the demolition of the tower, the Valaer family crest was saved when the house was converted to a nursing home by framing it and making it a feature in a hallway between the house and the east wing of the nursing home.

The house suffered much damage in the forty years it stood abandoned. The east and west exterior facades suffered additional damage when the building was converted into a nursing home. The building's wrap around porches, porte-cochere, and eastern semi-circular porch were removed while any protruding brownstone was broken off, multiple holes were cut into the walls, and metal decoration was removed or severely damaged, all when three-story brick wings were added to the sides of the house. The most significant and longest-lasting damage came from the decision to paint the façade white in an attempt to offset the tan brick and brownstone of the house with the red clay brick of the wings. As an extremely porous material, brownstone needs to be able to breathe, and by being continuously painted for nearly sixty years moisture has been trapped inside the brownstone causing it to erode, break apart, and dissolve. When the wings were removed, the hospital decided that instead of trying to remove the existing white paint they would paint the exposed east and west facades white to match the north and south sides.

The interior of the house has suffered additional damage since the time the facility closed in 2005, though it does not appear to be anything catastrophic or that cannot be repaired. Most of the issues stem from deferred maintenance and climate issues. Leaks occurred in the roof, which created moisture issues within the house. Mold began to grow in the basement, along with standing water, and moisture levels have caused the interior drywall to delaminate and crumble. Window air conditioning units have only mildly helped to control humidity levels, but not to an extent that they were significantly beneficial. Now

that the City of Manassas owns the property, steps are being taken to mitigate the mold, repair the roof with historically accurate and sensitive materials, and stabilize the structure.

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.

As the estate was developed, most of its secondary structures were demolished. The gatehouse to the estate remains at its original location on the northeast corner of Portner Avenue and Main Street, and the columns supporting the front gate have since been removed to the Manassas Cemetery. Directly behind the mansion were two outbuildings measuring twenty-five feet by twenty-five feet. It is presumed that these served as an icehouse for the house's air conditioning system and a powerhouse for electricity. Both structures were demolished in 1986 to make way for the Caton-Merchant House, an assisted living facility. The three-story Portner Tower was demolished in 1979 due to its severely dilapidated condition and risk of injury to the public. There is still evidence of the tower's location, however, in the form of two rings of dead sod directly over top of the foundations of the tower. This site would be an ideal location for a small archaeological dig. This could help determine its specific use, if any, and to possibly discover if there was a tunnel that connected the house to the tower, as has been speculated upon in the past.

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.)

In 1882, Alexandria, Virginia, beer brewer Robert Portner began looking for a place to establish a summer residence. Around the time of his marriage in 1872, he had visited the estate of Christian Mathis, a Swiss immigrant living in Manassas, Virginia, and by 1883 Mathis' widow was ready to sell the property. Portner purchased the property, four lots containing 191 acres, from Mrs. Mathis for \$6,000. The Mathis estate featured a three-story Italianate-style wood-frame house, nestled amongst several groves of orchards. Some of the distinctive features of the house included wrap around porches on the first and second floors, and a Steamboat Gothic-style cupola atop the third floor.

Over the next eight years, Portner continued to purchase land, expanding his estate from his original 191-acre purchase to 1,200 acres. As his estate continued to grow, so did his family. By 1890 the existing wood-frame house at Annaburg had grown too small for his family, which now included Portner, his wife Anna, and eleven children. In 1891 he began planning to build a new house at Annaburg, which he had named his estate in honor of both his wife and the military academy he attended in his youth. Though the evidence is not concrete, the architect of Annaburg is believed to have been Gustav Friebus, a fellow Prussian and Mason who lived in Washington, D. C. Friebus had a very notable career, serving as the chief draughtsman of the Washington Monument, architect of several notable residences in and around Washington, and later as an architect with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The only factual evidence known to exist tying Friebus to Annaburg is an excerpt from a Washington periodical from 1894, which states in part, "Probably the best built and most expensive house in Virginia has just been put up on the Weir farm, now the property of Robert Portner, whose winter residence is

Washington. Taking infinite delight in developing the resources of this historic farm, Mr. Portner has already created a fine vineyard of many acres from which Mr. Xander gets all the grapes for his excellent native wines. [...] A short distance from Mr. Portner's fine new house, the architect of which is Mr. Gustav Friebus, stands a counterpart of the castle of Annaburg on the Rhine, from which floats the Stars and Stripes every day in the week." There is ample secondary evidence to support Friebus as the architect, which can be expounded upon later.

The dated cornerstone of the new house at Annaburg was laid in April 1892 and work was completed in December 1894, at a cost of \$150,000. Portner had all of the brick made in Manassas and quarried the brownstone from a nearby quarry he had recently purchased. The more refined touches of the house he had shipped from Europe, which included Italian marble mantles for the fireplaces and statuary from Greece. The construction of the house did not stop him from purchasing more land, and over the next twelve years he expanded the estate by an additional 907 acres. At its height, Annaburg encompassed a total of 2,157 acres, stretching from Main Street in Manassas to the shores of Bull Run, and included the majority of both the Weir family's Liberia farm and the McLean family's Yorkshire farm. Both estates played extremely important and historic roles in the Civil War, and Annaburg came to include a relic of the war in the form of the earthwork fortification known as Fort Beauregard.

One of the biggest driving forces behind Portner's continual purchase of land and expansion of Annaburg was the legacy he wanted to leave behind for his children. Perhaps he took inspiration from Robert "King" Carter, who had previously owned the land upon which Portner's Annaburg was situated and divided his farm into several smaller farms for his children. An article from the *Alexandria Gazette*, dated February 24, 1896, supports this idea by saying, "The summer home of Mr. Portner, the rich brewer of Alexandria, is here, and the owner recalls the Dutchman of the Shenandoah Valley in his propensity for buying 'the land that joins him.' It is said that Mr. Portner's estate now extends for miles in the direction of Washington. He is credited with saying that he means 'to have a farm for each of his twelve children.'"

Robert Portner was a resourceful and forward-thinking man and did everything that he could to maximize the use of his land. Mathis had been an amateur botanist and had planted multiple orchards on his property; Portner expanded these orchards, planted new ones, and even tried his hand at viniculture. Washington, D. C.-based winemaker and whiskey distiller Christian Xander, converted grapes from Portner's vines into wine. Portner and Xander's product was so good that it won medals at the Paris Exposition of 1900. In addition to this, Portner converted Liberia into a dairy farm, and raised cattle, deer, and horses, which he continually entered into regional horse shows. The estate even included a 300-acre, fenced in deer park where he would often host deer and quail hunting parties.

Portner did not limit the estate to just farming pursuits as there are several documented instances of lavish parties thrown for both public and private audiences. Probably the most notable of these was when Anna Portner, by then a widow, hosted a luncheon for President Howard Taft in 1911 when he came to Manassas for the Peace Jubilee in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Bull Run.

By 1903, Robert Portner had retired from active business life and moved to Annaburg on a permanent basis. He died here in 1906 and is buried in the family plot in the Manassas cemetery. His widow Anna continued to use the estate, splitting her time between there and Washington, D. C., until her own death

at Annaburg in 1912. After her death, one of the Portner children would live at Annaburg on a semi-permanent basis over the next few years, first Herman until his death in 1916 and then Paul until his death in 1919. Oscar Portner and his family had resided at Windemere, a third house on the property, on a permanent basis until they moved to Washington in 1918 when a Spanish flu epidemic broke out in Manassas. After Paul's death, the remaining siblings only used Annaburg for about one week each summer, as they were kept busy with their own lives in Washington, D. C. and New York City.

By the early 1920's the family decided to remove and sell most of the furnishings at Annaburg and lock the doors for good. The house slowly declined in beauty and before long was a shell of its former self. The family's real estate holdings, which included Annaburg, the Portner Apartments in Washington, D. C., and various other properties, had long-since been transferred to the Portner Realty Company and the Capitol Construction Company, but by 1947 society had changed tremendously and landed estates were not something very many families held onto anymore, especially ones that were long-since abandoned. By this time only three Portner children remained - Etta Portner Meredith, daughter-in-law of Rep. Elisha E. Meredith; Anna Portner Flood, widow of Rep. Henry Delaware Flood; and Elsa Portner Humes, wife of Augustine Leftwich Humes. They, along with the remaining heirs, decided to sell the remaining property. The Annaburg estate was sold to local developer I. J. Breeden for \$215,000.

Breeden, who with his wife Hilda had moved into the Liberia house, began developing the estate by creating the first subdivision surrounding the main house and naming it Annaburg. They planned additional neighborhoods and subdivisions and before long he began selling off larger parcels of land to other developers while continuing to develop other parts of the estate themselves. Some of the more notable developments include Deer Park, the Mathis Avenue shopping center, the Yorkshire subdivision, and the City of Manassas Park.

In 1961, the Breeden family sold the 7.4-acre block located within the Annaburg subdivision which contained the mansion to J. Kennedy Sills. Sills had three-story brick wings constructed on either side of the house, and four years later opened the Manassas Manor Nursing Home. In 1979, he sold the facility to Prince William Hospital, who renamed the facility Annaburg Manor. The site remained a nursing home until 2005, when two new facilities were built to replace the aging facility. During its lifetime as a nursing home, Annaburg Manor was home to two notable residents: Robert Portner, III, grandson of the beer brewer, and Kentucky news anchor Hugh Finn, a resident in a vegetative state who was at the center of a national right-to-die debate.

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

One of Robert Portner's hobbies was to tinker with machinery. As a brewer and a member of the US Brewer's Association, he was kept abreast of all the latest developments in the brewing industry, and would often purchase prototypes of these inventions, study their mechanics, take them apart, and find ways in which they could be improved upon. One of the most attempted inventions in the brewing industry was for a machine that would keep products cold. In 1878, Portner invented the first successful machine to do this, using a method known as direct ammonia expansion, by which ammonia flowed through a pipe and around a secondary pipe inside, in which water flowed through. Several contemporary accounts note that the pipes were often caked in a thick layer of frost or snow. The invention was so successful that when Annaburg was built, Portner modified it and had it installed in his new home, making Annaburg what is believed to be the first house in the country to have air conditioning. By running ice-cold water through copper pipes in the walls, the Portner family was able to be comfortable in the oppressive summer heat of Virginia. This machine was so effective, in fact, that his grandson Robert Portner, III, later recounted how the house, in the dead of summer, was like an icebox. Nothing is known to remain of this system.

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

Private: _____ Public\Local X 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: W. Patrick Pate, City Manager
organization: City of Manassas
street & number: 9027 Center Street
city or town: Manassas state: VA zip code: 20110
e-mail: ppate@manassasva.gov telephone: (703) 257-8224

Legal Owner's Signature:  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: Elizabeth S. Via-Gossman, AICP, Director, Community Development
Daytime Telephone: (703) 257-8224

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

name/title: Elizabeth S. Via-Gossman, AICP, Director, Community Development and
Michael Gaines, Historian and W. Douglas Gilpin, Architect
organization: City of Manassas
street & number: 9027 Center Street
city or town: Manassas state: VA zip code: 20110
e-mail: evia-gossman@manassasva.gov telephone: (703) 257-8224

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, City Manager, and/or Town Manager

name/title: W. Patrick Pate
locality: City of Manassas
street & number: 9027 Center Street
city or town: Manassas state: VA zip code: 20110
telephone: (703) 257-8212

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Annaburg Manor 9201 Maple St

Legend

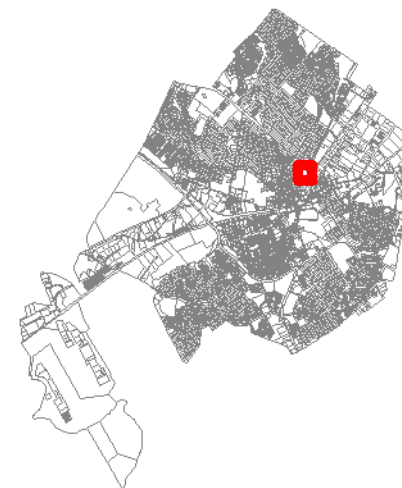
-  Site Outline of Parcel
-  Parcels

0 50 100
Feet



Map Created by:
Department of Community Development
Map Updated on: 01/24/2020

This map is intended for reference purposes only. Any determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines, or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination.



Annaburg Manor, 9201 Maple Street, Manassas VA – Sketch Map

