**1. NAME**

**COMMON:**
Sweet Briar House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**
Sweet Briar; Locust Ridge

**2. LOCATION:**

- **AND NUMBER:** 0.8 mi. NW of Rt. 29, .1 mi. SW of intersection with Rt. 624.

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Sweet Briar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>(Check One)</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>X Building</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Preserved</td>
<td>Yes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRESENT USE** (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Industrial
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**OWNER'S NAME:**
Sweet Briar College

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Sweet Briar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**
Amherst County Court House

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Amherst

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE OF SURVEY:**
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

**DATE OF SURVEY:** 1957

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**
Library of Congress

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Washington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the interior trim of the original section survives, although some of the mantels have been replaced by Victorian ones. The original woodwork is of the simplest type, with no outstanding details. Much of the trim in the entrance hall was replaced as a result of a fire in 1927. The simple trim in the tower rooms complements the fine Victorian furniture, much of which was purchased by the Fletcher family in Philadelphia and New York especially for the house. The first floor tower rooms are further enhanced by elaborate bronze chandeliers and marble mantels. Many Fletcher pieces remain in the rest of the house, making the place an important document of mid-nineteenth century interior decoration.

The house is set in a spacious informal park featuring ornamental trees and numerous large boxwood. Boxwood in front of the house that originally lined a circular drive have grown to great height and make a handsome frame for the facade. In the rear of the house is an early but largely rebuilt outbuilding that belonged to the original farm complex.
Sweet Briar House was probably built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century by the Crews (or Crouse) family as a six-room, T-shaped farmhouse. The land on which the house was built was part of a grant by the Crown to George Carrington in 1770. At a public auction in 1830, the property, known as Locust Ridge, was bought by Elijah Fletcher, a New England school teacher who had come to Virginia in 1810.

Elijah Fletcher was the owner and publisher of The Virginian, a Whig newspaper in Lynchburg; he also served as the mayor of that city. Mrs. Fletcher, the former Maria Antoinette Crawford of nearby Tusculum, changed the name of the property to Sweet Briar, for the abundance of wild roses that grew there. At first a weekend retreat, the Fletchers made Sweet Briar their permanent home in 1846. In the spring of 1851, Fletcher began the enlargement of the house by the addition of the tower wings and the connecting arcaded portico in the Italian Villa style. The project was completed in about eighteen months.

After Fletcher's death in 1858, his daughter Indiana inherited the house. In 1865 she married James Henry Williams, an Episcopal clergyman, and two years later their only child, Daisy, was born. Daisy died when only seventeen years old, and it was in her memory that her sorrowing parents made plans to found a school for girls and young women. The college was established in accordance with provisions of Mrs. Williams' will; its charter was granted by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1901; and the first students matriculated in 1906. The house now serves as the residence for the president of Sweet Briar College, one of the nation's most prestigious women's colleges.

As a result of the 1851 remodelling, Sweet Briar House stands today as a major example of the Italian Villa style in Virginia. In a sense Sweet Briar achieved its picturesque effect in much the same manner as its prototype, the vernacular Italian farmhouse - through alterations and additions. Unfortunately the architect of the remodelling is unknown, although an unsigned contemporary rendering of the facade showing its additions survives in the College Library. Not only is the quality of the picturesque evident in the architecture of the house, but the informal gardens originally laid out by Elijah Fletcher display a romantic inspiration as well. The many large boxwoods have long been a favorite attraction.
### 9. Major Bibliographical References


*Sweet Briar Institute*. 1904 (pamphlet).

Information provided by Martha von Briesen, Director, Public Relations Office, Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Virginia.

### 10. Geographical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:** 3 acres

**List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
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### 12. State Liaison Officer Certification

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [ ]
- State [X]
- Local [ ]

**Name:**

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
**Title:** Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

**Date:**

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**ATTEST:**

**Date:**

**Keeper of The National Register**

**Date:**