

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The early-to-mid-19th century house was built by a member of the Lewis family of The Farm and Locust Grove, on 54 acres cut from the Locust Grove tract. It was set prominently and safely on a hill overlooking the Rivanna River and the Free Bridge. Then for half a century it was occupied by members of the Minor family of Brookhill.

By 1912, Charlottesville was growing rapidly, but Free Bridge Road was still a rural area, and Riverdale was still a small, working farm. The old house must have seemed small and outdated to its new owners, and so a whole new house more suited to a suburban location was built onto one end of it. Whereas the earlier house faced southwest, the new house faced the river and the Free Bridge.

The 1912 house is a delightfully quirky vernacular interpretation of the Colonial Revival style which was just coming into vogue. Rock-faced moulded concrete block was a new construction material; and it is used here, as cut stone would be, in the foundation, arches (with two headers instead of one stretcher forming the keystones), and corner quoins. There is also a sort of unique concrete block frieze. The two-story tetrastyle portico is too large for this 3-bay, single-pile house, and its massive, heavy columns are not quite Tuscan and not quite Doric, but the effect is very imposing. Still more provincial is the solid balustrade around the second story balcony under the portico.

That monumental 2-story portico that is so visible from across the river recognizes the house's spectacular site overlooking the only entrance to the town from the east. A century later, that has not changed. Riverview's place in the memory of travelers who have crossed the Free Bridge into Charlottesville in the past ninety-one years exceeds the building's architectural and historical merit. When it was new, it would have been the only building in sight, the manor house of a small farm just outside the city limits. As the town has grown over the last century, it has been surrounded by development, both residential and commercial. It now stands on a 2/3-acre city lot ringed by huge boxwoods. But through it all, it has remained the single most interesting landmark at the sole eastern entrance to the City. (Four roads enter Charlottesville from the south, three from the west, two from the north, but only this one from the east.) Standing on a hill above the intersection and overlooking the river, the house is as commanding a presence today as it ever was. It is the only building in sight with any architectural interest whatsoever. If for no other reason, it would merit protection for this alone.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

2003 -- When the stucco was removed, the walls of the original house were found to be half-timbered with noggin, supporting an early construction date. The 1988 wing follows somewhat the footprint of the early-mid-19th century house, but the massing and the

roofline are quite different. The original 1 ½-story structure was dominated by a steep, gabled, metal roof that swept down into lower pitched roofs over front and back porches. That sweep of the roof is missing in the 1988 wing. It consists of a full 2-story central section with one-story sections along each side that are intended to represent the porches of the original. All of these sections have separate, low-pitched roofs covered with composition shingles. The metal roof of the 1912 house has also been replaced with composition shingles. The walls of the 1988 wing are covered with siding that imitates beaded weatherboarding.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

2003 -- In 1985, the year after her husband's death, Mrs. Funk sold the house to The JEM Land Trust (DB471-110, 505-346). Two lots were cut off the west side at that time. Extensive structural damage from termites was discovered in the old section during a 1988 renovation. With BAR approval, most of that section was demolished in June 1988 and replaced by new construction that followed the form of the original building to some limited extent and incorporated as much original material as possible.