

**The McGuire Cottage
(also known as “Westwood Farm”)
3210 Brook Road**



Westwood, which is now generally known as the McGuire Cottage, stands as possibly one of the earliest houses built in the northside area around Sherwood Park and Union Theological Seminary (now known as the Union Presbyterian Seminary). It was the country residence of Dr. Hunter Holmes McGuire, Virginia medical pioneer and personal physician to General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and was part of the original Sherwood Park Development, a plan developed by Major Lewis Ginter, Joseph Bryan, McGuire and others under the Sherwood Land Company in 1892. The oldest remaining of the homes in this neighborhood – the McGuire Cottage - through architectural design and ownership, stands as a prime example of a country estate neighborhood in the late nineteenth century.

This building, which sits on a 34-acre tract of land at the intersection of Brook Road and Westwood Avenue, tells the story of two men, McGuire and Ginter. One was an influential entrepreneur and philanthropist with a sophisticated vision for Richmond and the other was a brilliant physician and medical pioneer dedicated to providing health care to the poor. Ginter was a visionary financier who acquired large tracts of land with



a goal of building beautiful suburbs around the city. McGuire was a local hero, partly due to his friendship with Jackson and partly due to his national professional prominence as a swift surgeon, who was courted by Richmond entrepreneurs to endorse their ventures, such as Valentine Meat Juice, and the developments of Bon Air and Ginter Park. This parcel at the southeast corner of this intersection and the historic house that sits at its center thus reflects the intersection of the lives of two prominent men who contributed much to Richmond's development in the latter half of the 19th century.

Born in 1835, McGuire was a nationally recognized physician, educator and a local hero. He graduated from Winchester Medical College and served during the Civil War in the Confederate Army as the personal physician to Stonewall Jackson. After Jackson's wounding at the Battle of Chancellorsville, McGuire attempted to save Jackson's life by amputating the wounded arm. Returning to Richmond after the war, McGuire became chair of surgery at the Medical College of Virginia. Also prominent on the national stage, McGuire served as President of the American Medical Association, Founder of St. Luke's Hospital and Training School for Nurses, and the Medical Society of Virginia and the College of Physicians and Surgeons (University of College of Medicine, now part of VCU Medical School).

McGuire had already begun buying real estate in the area in the late 1880s. Other prominent Richmonders also owned property in the area, including McGuire's close friends, patients and business colleagues Joseph Bryan and Ginter. Bryan owned "Laburnum House" on the tract of land just to the north of Westwood, across Westwood Avenue. Ginter spent his later years at "Westbrook" to the north of what is now Bellevue Avenue.

In March 1887, McGuire purchased Westwood, then a slightly larger tract with improvements in Henrico County, from William Pleasants for \$13,500. The land purchased by McGuire had previously been owned by Captain Charles Meriwether, a Union Army Captain and Mexican War Veteran, who sold the parcel to Pleasants on July 21, 1862.

Westwood appears to have begun as a one-and-a-half-story, wood frame, dwelling on a Flemish bond foundation in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. However, there has been some speculation that parts of the structure date as early as to the 1790s, which would make it one of the oldest extant dwellings in Richmond. The oldest primary elevation faces south and reflects a Greek Revival style. The home evolved over several building campaigns in which it took on the appearance of an Italianate Cottage-style house with additions that reoriented the front of the building to the east by the 1880s-1890s. For his renovations, McGuire selected one of the trendiest architectural styles of the time - the Italianate Cottage style was a Romantic-era style of Victorian housing



made popular in America in the 1880s-1890s by the pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing.

It is likely that McGuire updated the home to meet his own needs by adding or remodeling the eastern elevation, building an office on the second floor, and incorporating a tenant house or kitchen building to the northwest into the building. The reoriented main section of the house is cross-gable in plan and sits on a brick foundation. The front façade features a large tri-partite window in the upper story of the front cross-gable and a front porch ornamented with turned and carved wood details. Just inside the front door, a free standing staircase remains a defining feature in the entrance hall. The two-story section on the western elevation was possibly an outbuilding that was moved and attached to the house.

Ginter had a grand vision for the development of north Richmond. By 1890, Ginter had begun plans for a new development to be known as Sherwood Park. Westwood, by now the McGuires' summer home, was incorporated into the plan for Sherwood Park. Yet Sherwood Park was only one piece of Ginter's development plan for Richmond's North Side under the auspices of the Sherwood Land Co. and Ginter Land and Improvement Co., whose officers and directors included a roster of Richmond's prominent citizens, including Bryan and McGuire. The Sherwood Park neighborhood was to be bounded by Sherwood Avenue on the south, Westwood Avenue on the north, Hermitage Road on the west and Brook Turnpike on the east. The development took its name from an estate owned by Wellington Goddin earlier that century.

Ginter was clear on his vision for the Sherwood Park development and would seek the best designers in the business. He began consulting with the Brookline, Massachusetts firm of Frederick Law Olmsted & Associates, the prominent American planner and landscape architect who may be best known as the designer of New York City's Central Park and Chicago's Riverside Park. Ginter envisioned an enclosing fence for the neighborhood and directed that "Hermitage and Brook roads be 100 feet wide, reserving 15 feet of the 100, from the fence line for trees, grass and shrubs, and (that) the same will be done with avenues, north and south of the park. These avenues will be called Westwood (between Sherwood and Bryans') and Sherwood (between Sherwood Park and Williams')." In a letter dated May, 1892, Ginter noted that no home would be of less than \$20,000 in value and that no dwelling could be used as a "tannery, a barroom, a soap factory or any other factory or as a business or occupation that might be a nuisance in the neighborhood." Set on 187 acres, Sherwood Park was to be a residential development where Richmonders could enjoy the fresh country air.

The development of Sherwood Park was delayed, but Ginter's activities and entrepreneurial nature left an indelible mark elsewhere on Richmond. He founded the American Tobacco Co., magnifying not only his fortune but also his philanthropy. He published the Richmond *Daily Times* (a predecessor of the Richmond *Times Dispatch*).



He developed other North Side suburbs, including Bellevue Park and Ginter Park, and built the Jefferson Hotel and the Lakeside Wheel Club. He purchased a controlling interest in the Brook Turnpike (now Brook Road). His investment transformed the toll road, which had witnessed many illustrious events in history - from Lafayette's victorious march from Yorktown to the Civil War earthworks along its route - from a mud road to a smooth surface more conducive to commerce and commuting. The Brook Turnpike would prove a model channel for traffic to and from Ginter's new suburbs. He would transport granite from his nearby granite quarry via a narrow gauge railroad. His Richmond Railway and Electric Company operated one of Richmond's first electric streetcar lines, running north on Brook. Lined with fragrant honeysuckle hedges, privet and more than 10,000 trees, Ginter's network of roads were considered the finest in Richmond.

As one of his many acts of philanthropy, Ginter donated 12 acres to the northeast of Westwood Avenue and Brook Road to the Union Theological Seminary. The new chairman of the Seminary's board of trustees, George Watts of Durham, also was an officer of Ginter's American Tobacco Co. Not coincidentally, he made a large gift to the Seminary's building fund on the condition that the Seminary be relocated to the land donated by Ginter.

Ginter passed away in 1897, before his plans for Sherwood Park could be executed, and the original plan for Sherwood Park was modified. His original land company was re-organized into the Sherwood Land Company with Bryan and McGuire as directors and C. T. Watkins as a minor stockholder. The first section of the Sherwood Park development was not completed until 1929.

According to McGuire's great-grandson, McGuire referred to his country estate at Westwood as his "farm." A great proponent of the health benefits of country air, he said antisepsis was tedious and unnecessary because Virginia's pure country air was in itself antiseptic. He saved his family from the miasmas of urban Richmond by sending them away in summers, first to his cottage in Bon Air. At Ginter's request he moved their summer quarters to Westwood. A visitor to Westwood once asked McGuire, "If this is your farm, where are your crops?" McGuire reportedly called for his eight children and replied, "These are my crops." His having raised eight adult children in that era with no infant mortality was evidence of the health of Westwood's air and lifestyle.

In 1900, McGuire suffered a stroke and retired to Westwood, where he died a few months later. "A Sketch of the Life & Career of Hunter Holmes McGuire" was written after his death and states, "the regard in which he was so widely held has been given in evidence in the numerous tributes to his memory from societies and institutions of learning, and which have been published. The shadow of the grief which his death cast upon this community in which he had so endeared himself by his virtues, yet remains. Dr. McGuire's reputation was not local, nor was it even national, for he was known and



honored and beloved in Europe as well as in this hemisphere.” Indeed, the noted Union spy Elizabeth Van Lew wrote of “kind old doctor McGuire” who was the only one in Richmond who would speak to her.

McGuire’s widow, Mary S. McGuire, sold Westwood to the Westwood Land Company on February 9, 1901. The Union Theological Seminary, which had been given the land across Westwood Avenue and Brook Road by Ginter, purchased Westwood in 1907. The Seminary employed the McGuire Cottage for married student housing and constructed several additional structures on the 34-acre tract, including several dormitory apartments and additional structures. Yet, by some accounts, the connection to McGuire remained. In 1942, one resident of the McGuire Cottage recounted a story of the frequent appearances of a figure in a Confederate Army uniform with a band of crape around the left sleeve. Several months later the resident ran across a picture of the ghost in a museum catalogue - it was McGuire, who wore black crape on his sleeve for some time after the war. The McGuire Cottage has been vacant since 1994 and has been used by the Seminary for storage.

The history of the McGuire Cottage reflects the vision of McGuire for the model of healthy country lifestyle and the centerpiece of Ginter’s vision for the best of suburban development. Although not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Historic Richmond believes the McGuire Cottage is potentially eligible as a result of its association with McGuire and its evolution from early 19th century farmhouse to 20th century Union Presbyterian Seminary facility. As a significant historic resource, the McGuire Cottage contributes to the culture of the Richmond region and Historic Richmond believes that the preservation of the McGuire Cottage is particularly important.

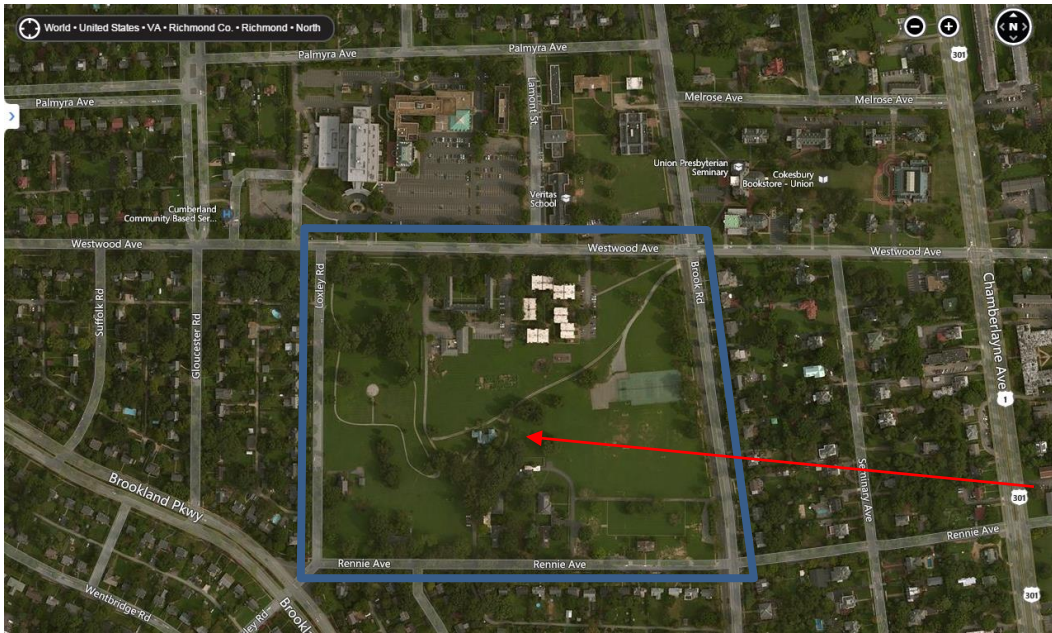


Figure 1. Westwood tract (blue) is bound by Rennie Ave, Loxley Rd, Westwood Ave, and Brook Rd. Westwood is illustrated by red arrow. Source: Bing Maps 2015.

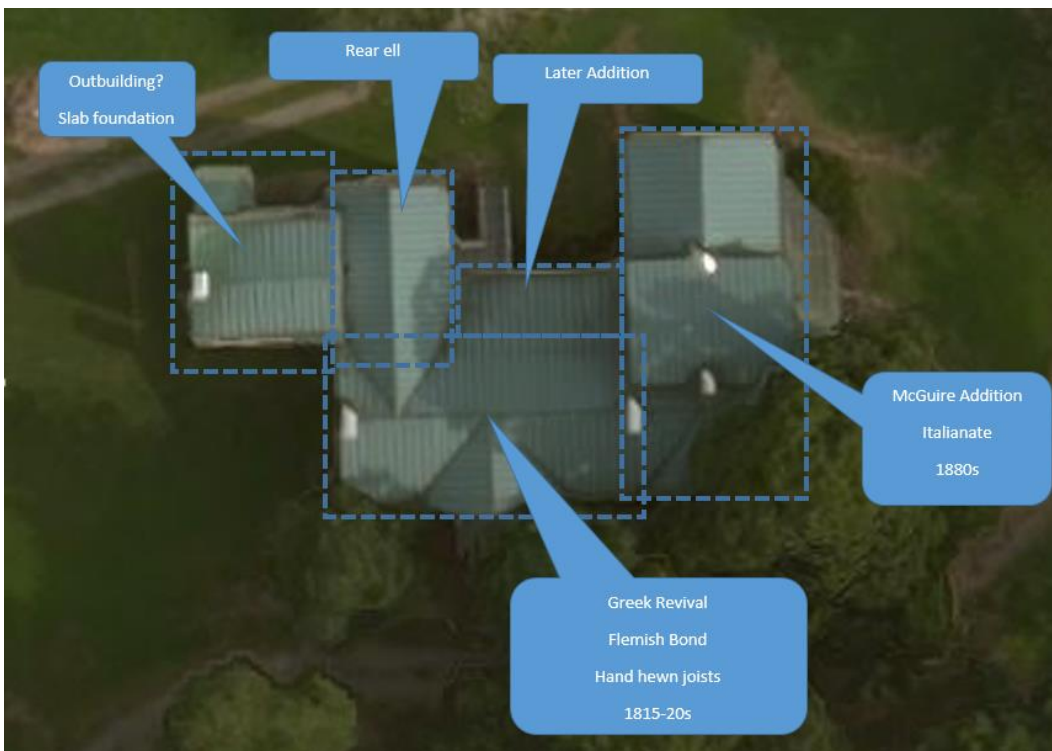


Figure 2. Building evolution of Westwood. Source: Historic Richmond, 2015.



Figure 3. Westwood, earliest section, south facade. Source: Historic Richmond, 2015.



Figure 4. Westwood, Italianate Cottage addition, east facade. Source: Historic Richmond, 2015.



Figure 5. Undated additions, north elevation. Possible outbuilding on right. Source: Historic Richmond, 2015.



Figure 6. Staircase in entrance hall of 1880s addition. Source: Historic Richmond, 2015.



Figure 7. Dr. McGuire's children in the foreground of Westwood. Undated photo. Source: Lewis Ginter's Richmond; David D. Ryan with Wayland W. Rennie, Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond, Virginia, 1991.

Sources

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