

VIRGINIA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

File no. 76-163
Negative no(s). N/A

SURVEY FORM

Name Brent Town site and Brent Town Common name
County/Town/City Prince William & Fauquier Counties
Set address or route number
USGS Quad Somerville, Nokesville, Catlett Date or period
Original owner Richard Foote, Robert Quads Architect/builder/craftsmen
Original use Land grant & town site
Present owner Multiple owners Source of name
Present owner address N/A Source of date
Stories N/A
Present use Multiple uses, including U.S.M.C Foundation and wall const'n N/A
Base
Acreage Originally 30,000 acres Roof type N/A

State condition of structure and environs

State potential threats to structure
Note any archaeological interest

Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes ___ no ___

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration, taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

See below.

Interior inspected? N/A

Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

According to one source, the town of Brent Town, or Brenton, the name of which became the designation for the whole tract, was laid out on the lower side of Town (also known as Brent Town) Run, below the head of Dorrell's (or Dorrell's) Run. There, according to the plan, for the colonists' safety, the medieval system would be practiced wherein colonists would live together in town. With each town lot of one acre, would go a 100-acre farm on the town's outskirts. The location described above would place the site of Brent Town on the present U.S. Marine Corps Base, probably in Fauquier County, close to the intersection of the Prince William-Fauquier-Stafford County boundaries.

One local historian believes that the site of Brent Town is located on present U.S. Marine

Interior inspected? N/A

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One local historian believes that the site of Brent Town is located on present U.S. Marine Corps Base, in Area 11A or 11B. Another suggestion places Brent Town at Landsdowne, also on the Marine Corps Base. A third places it in Fauquier County east or southeast of Bristersburg.

Taking into account the differing opinions on the town's whereabouts, Brent Town or Brenton was located somewhere on the original 30,000-acre Brent Town Grant, made in 1686-87 as a sanctuary for people of all religious faiths by James II, the last Catholic King of England. The grant was made partly as a religious haven and partly as a commercial venture to settle a vast backwoods area formerly in Stafford County but now almost entirely within Prince William County, with a small portion in Fauquier County. The grantees were three Englishmen and Londoners and a politically prominent Catholic residing in Stafford County. The Londoners, Richard Foote, Robert Bristow, and Nicholas Hayward, were merchants and promoters of Virginia real estate.

(continued next page)

CONTINUATION SHEET
BRENT TOWN SITE AND BRENT TOWN GRANT

Historical Significance (continued)

George Brent of Woodstock was an English Catholic who had migrated to Stafford County. He was a nephew of Giles, Mary, and Margaret Brent, the earliest Catholic settlers in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia. George Brent, a representative to the House of Burgesses from Stafford in 1688, was the only permanent resident of the colony among the four partners in the Brent Town venture.

The definitely known boundaries of the Brent Town tract are Broad Run on the northeast and Cedar Run on the southeast. The tract lay largely in the fork of these two runs. The remaining boundaries are drawn from conjecture, beginning at a point about one-quarter mile east of the present town of Weaversville in Fauquier County, for the western apex. (Some sources say the "back line" ran from the mouth of the Walnut Branch of Cedar Run.) From there, the line traveled north-northeast to a point on Broad Run, supposedly near Linton's Ford. South of the Weaversville apex, the line traveled generally southeast along present S.R. 233 to Town Run. At some point along Town Run, the boundary extended due east for $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to the point where Dorrell's Run crosses the Prince William-Fauquier county line. The Brent Town Tract was not surveyed until 1737-38, and the lack of precise boundaries for Brent Town made settlement prior to 1738 difficult in the vicinity of the tract's uncertain boundaries.

A town was established in 1688 with the building of a blockhouse on the Foote quarter of the Brent Town tract. It is thought that no significant settlement of the town occurred until after 1738 when the tract was surveyed, and even then attempts to settle the area never really succeeded.* Brent Town was established on the western frontier of the 30,000-acre tract, so as to offer a defense against the Indians which still roamed up and down the Indian trails. The blockhouse built at Brent Town in 1688 overlooked the Iroquois Trail, also known as the Shenandoah Hunting Path and the Old Carolina Road. This road was the Indians' north-south route from the upper Potomac to the falls of the Rappahannock. Eventually, the Indians cut a new path further west to avoid contact with the settlers.

As a religious haven, the Brent Town project attracted some Catholics and also some Huguenots and Puritans; but as a commercial venture, the project was a failure, and in the early 1700s the heirs of the original grantees divided the land among themselves.

In the partition, the Bristows took the northern portion, including the area where the early 19th century town of Brentsville would be established; the Brents took land adjoining the Bristows and on Slatey Run; the Haywards took land on the south fork of the Dumfries Road; and the Footes took the southernmost portion, that land on both sides of Cedar Run above the mouth of Dorrell's Run, lying in Prince William and Fauquier Counties.

Some of the oldest houses in Prince William County are on the former Brent Town tract: Park Gate was built in about 1750 on the Brent portion; Pilgrim's Rest was constructed on the Hayward quarter in about 1750; and Hazelwood, begun c1750, and Effingham (c1760) were built on the Foote portion. The second Prince William County courthouse was built in 1769, close to the Foote quarter on Cedar Run. The fourth County courthouse was constructed in 1822 on the Bristow quarter of the Brent Town tract, at Brentsville. Broad Run Church was also erected on the Bristow portion. After the American Revolution, Robert Bristow, a descendant of the original Bristow grantee and a nonresident Englishman, lost his 7,500-acre portion when the Virginia courts escheated his Virginia estate to the Commonwealth. The tract was divided and the parts were sold at auction in 1834. The proceeds went to the newly-created state Literary Fund to be used for educational purposes. The Town of Brentsville was established on 50 acres of the original Bristow tract, 2 years after the courthouse was built.

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*As confirmation that the Town of Brenton, or Brent Town, was located within Richard Foote's portion of the original grant, in 1742, when the move of the Prince William County seat, then located on the Occoquan at present Woodbridge, was being planned, a place called Brent Town on land belonging to Richard Foote was proposed, unsuccessfully, as the site of the new courthouse.

Sources and bibliography

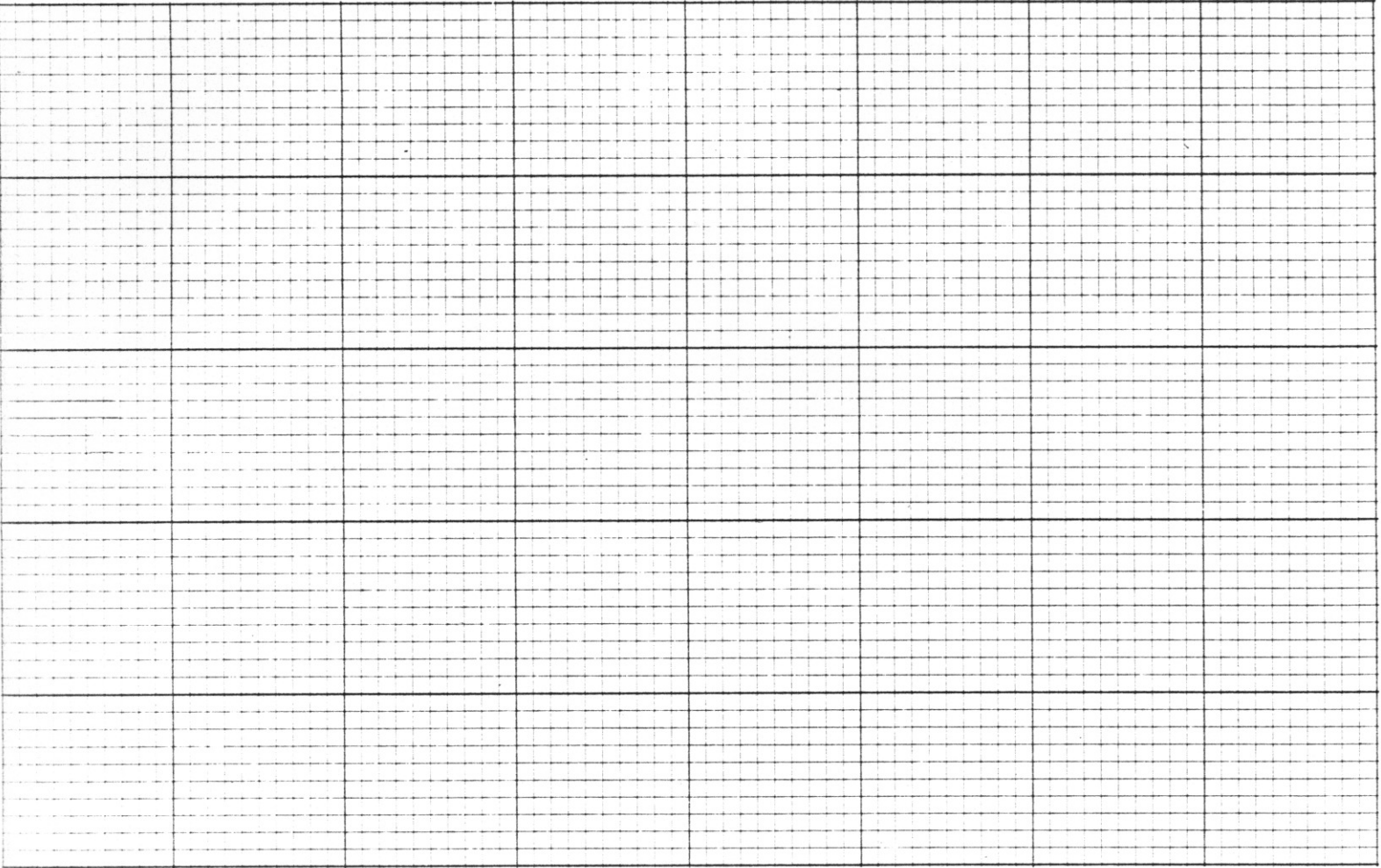
Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

W.P.A., Writer's Program, Prince William, The Story of Its People and Its Places (c1941), pp.19-22, 26 +; R.J. Ratcliffe, This Was Prince William (c1976), p.5,12,14,15,76,77. Fairfax Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William (c1924, repr. 1964), pp. 177-187.

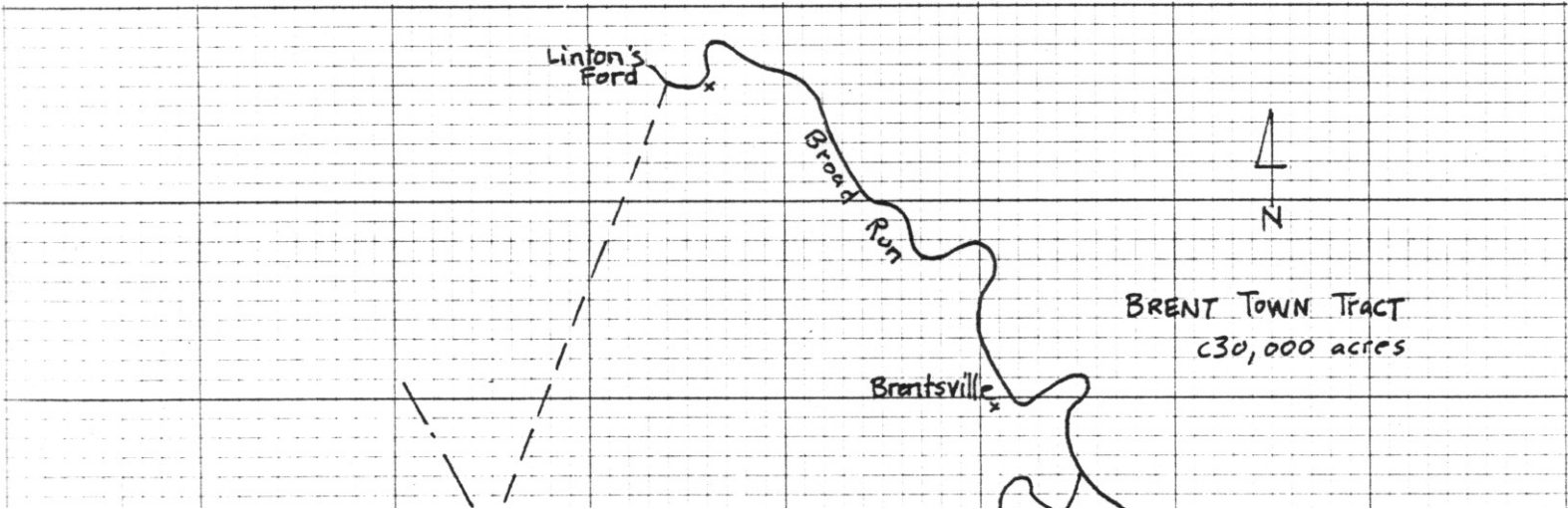
Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

Names and addresses of persons interviewed E.R. Conner, III, Manassas Museum, R. J. Ratcliffe, Manassas, Va.

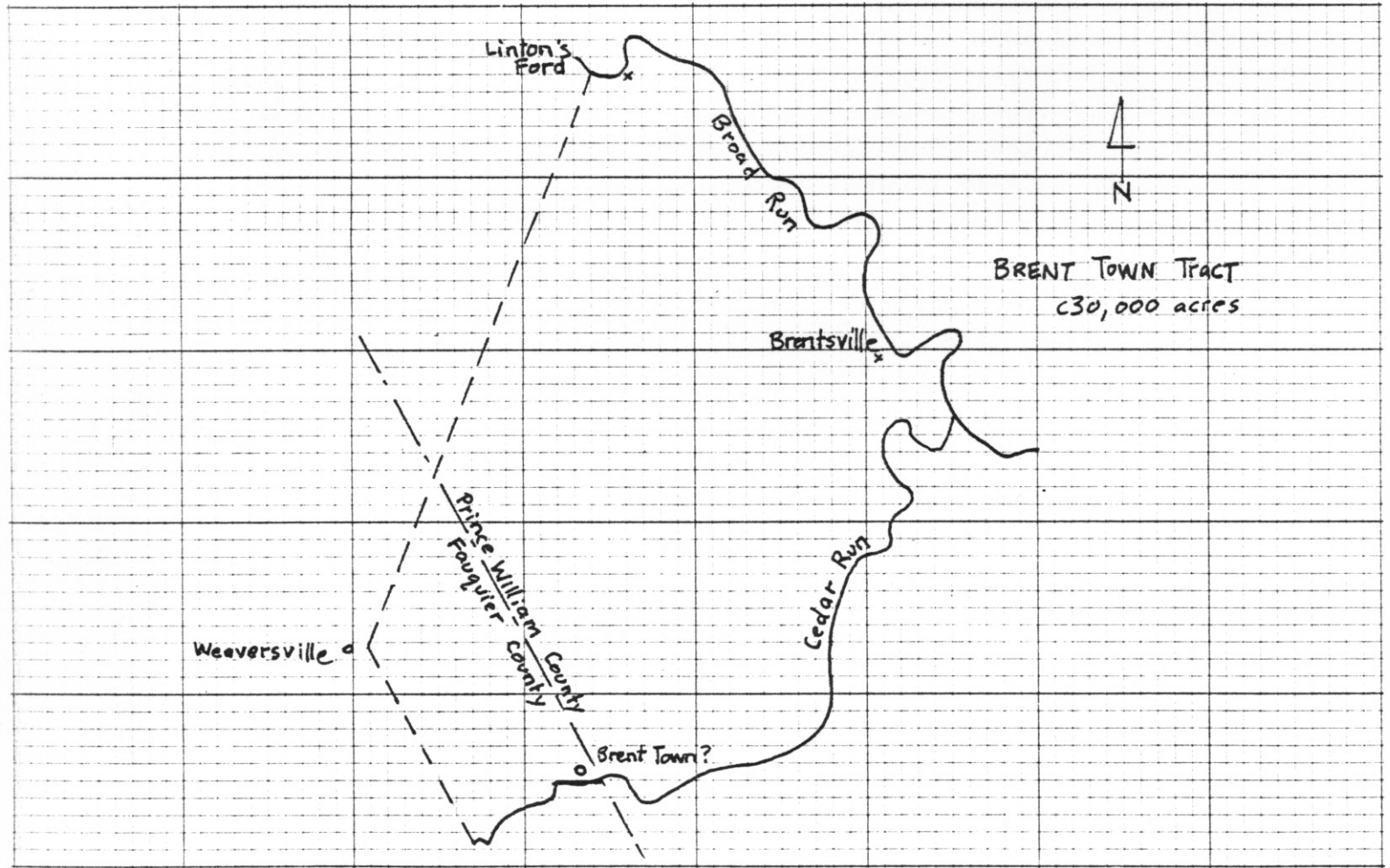
Plan (Indicate locations of rooms, doorways, windows, alterations, etc.)



Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)

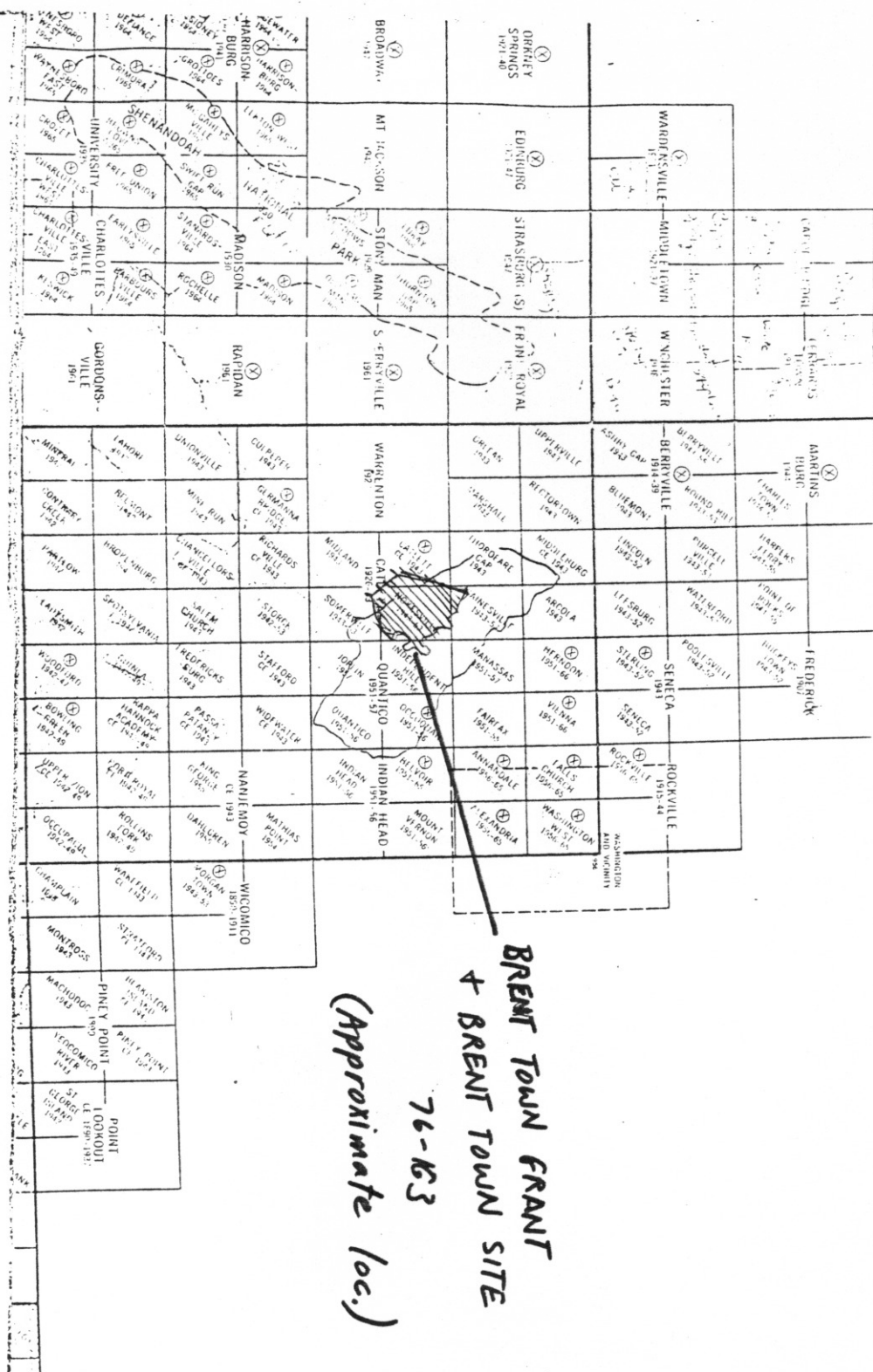


Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)



Name, address and title of recorder
Frances Jones, Architectural
Historian - Surveyor, NYFDC

Date
APR 1981



Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

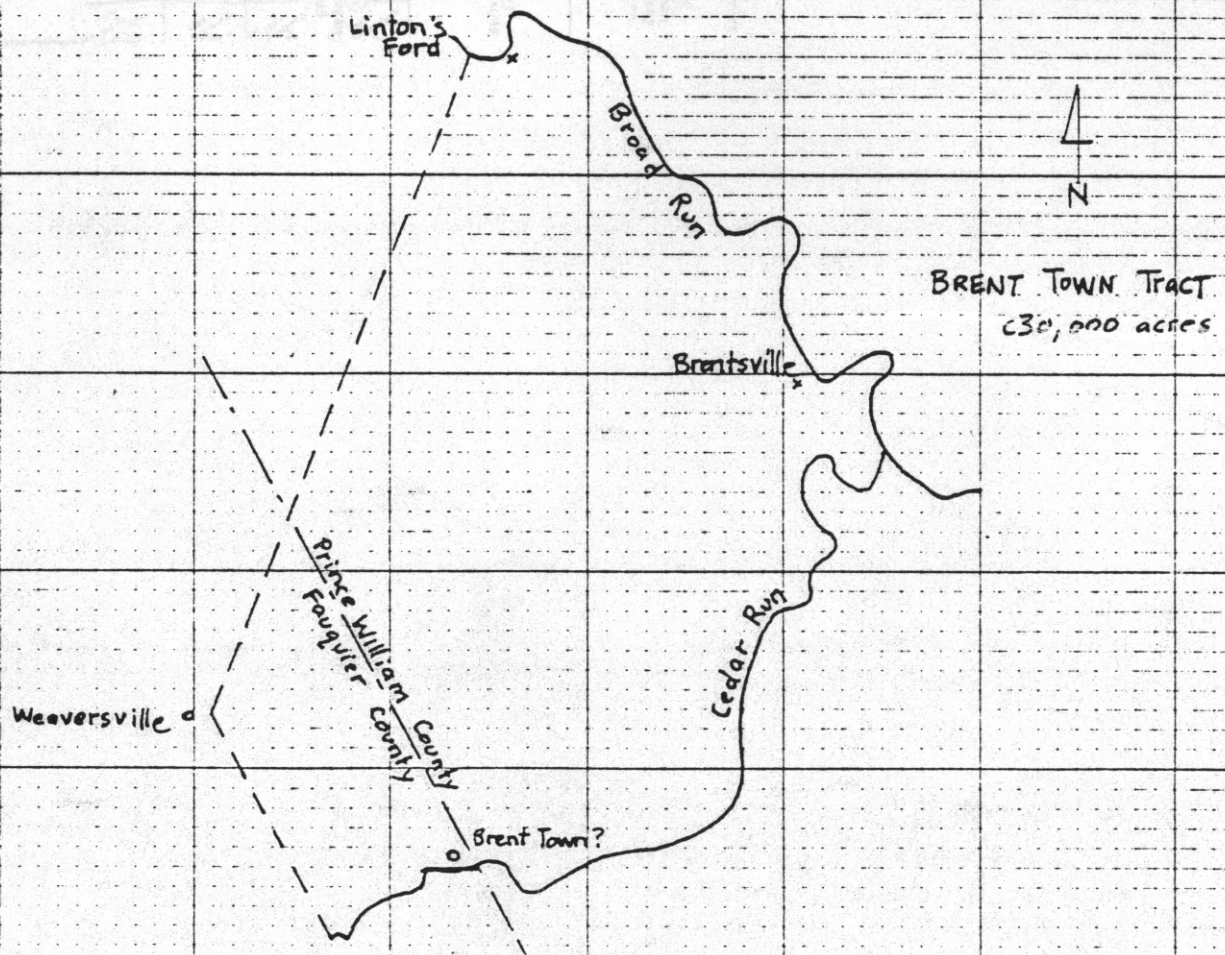
Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

Plan (Indicate locations of rooms, doorways, windows, alterations, etc.)

[illegible]

A hand-drawn map on grid paper showing a path labeled "Broad Run" connecting "Linton's Ford" (marked with an 'x') to "Brentsville" (marked with an 'x'). A dashed line runs parallel to the path. A north arrow points upwards. Text on the right reads "BRENT TOWN TRACT" and "c30,000 acres".

Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)



Name, address and title of recorder

Frances Jones, Recorder

Date

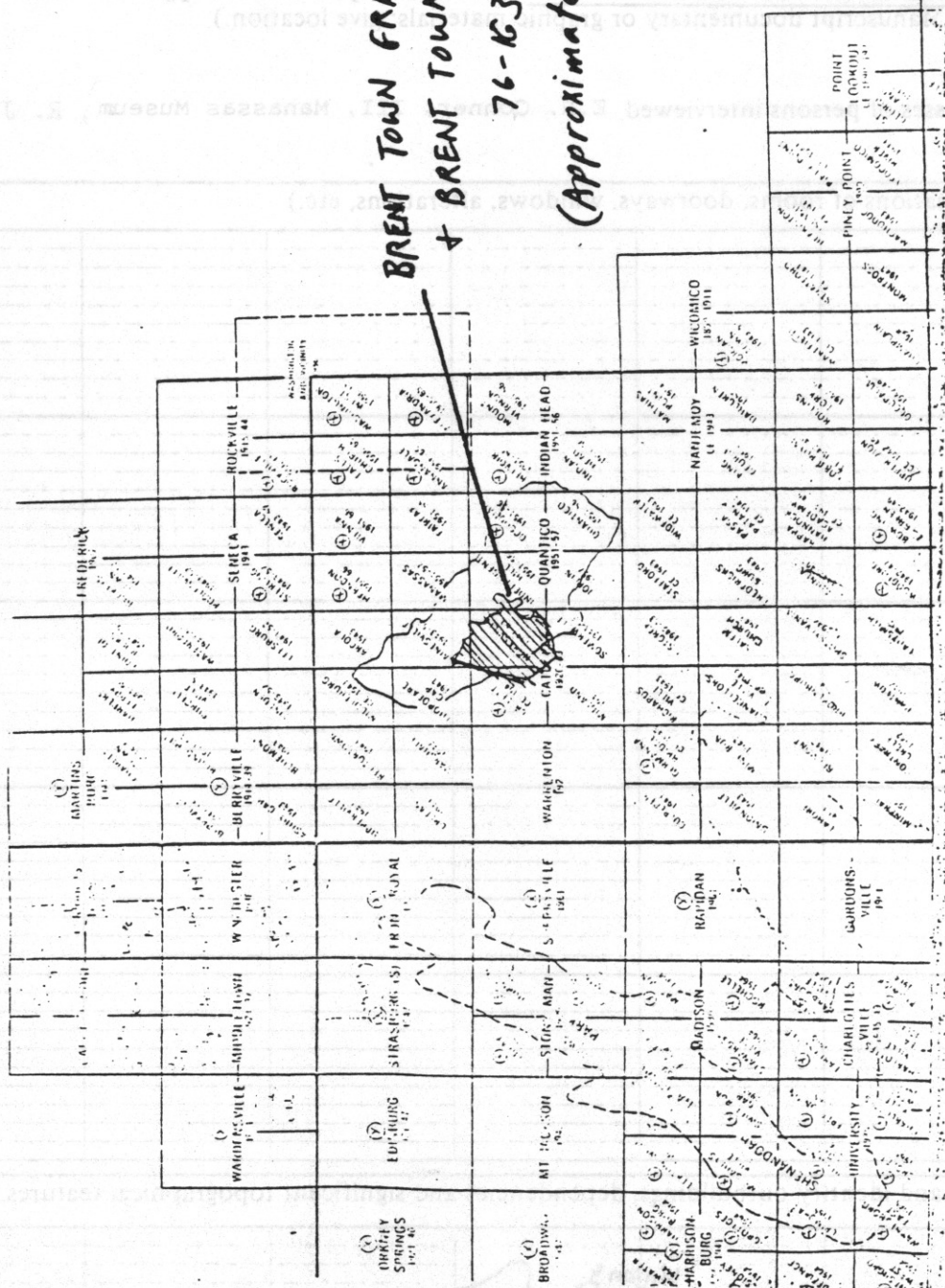
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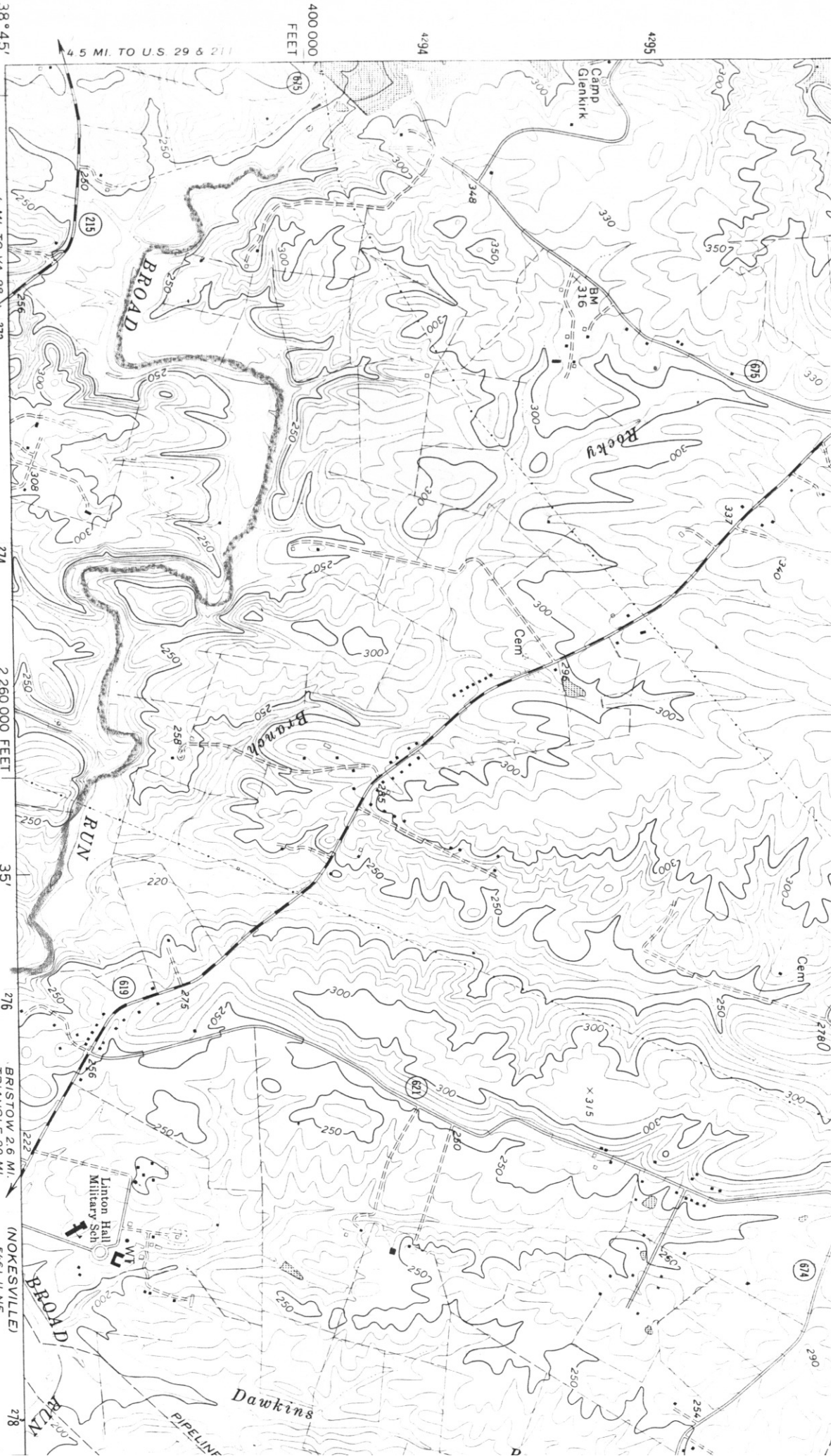
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BRENT TOWN GRANT
+ BRENT TOWN SITE

76-163

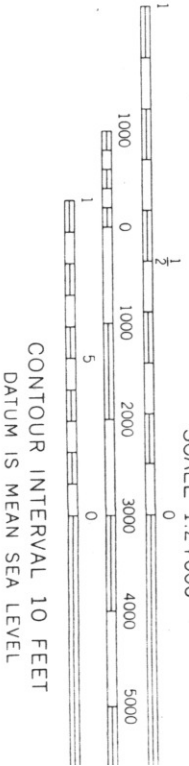
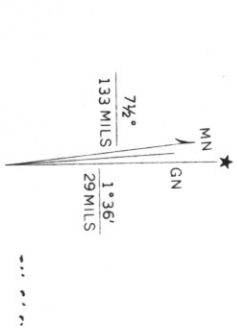
(Approximate loc.)





CATLETT
5461 11 NW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USCG&GS, and USCE
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1964. Field checked 1968
Supersedes Army Map Service map dated 1953
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Virginia coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STA
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON
AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTE
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAIL

2 MAGNETIC NORTH
CENTER OF SHEET

1.36'
29 MILLS

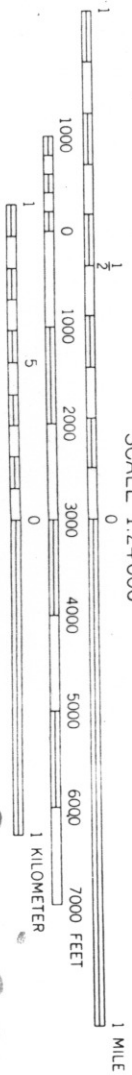
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Revisions shown in
Commonwealth of
Virginia 1972

QUAD#

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

gainesville



SCALE 1:24000
(NOKESVILLE)
5461 11 NE
BRISTOW 2.6 MI.
TRIANGLE 20 MI.

