



VIRGINIA
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

File no. 76-289
Negative no(s). N/A

SURVEY FORM

Historic name Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine Site Common name
 County/Town/City Prince William County
 Street address or route number Mine Road, north of Dumfries, vic. Quantico Creek and South Fork
 USGS Quad Quantico Quad Date or period c1890-1919
 Original owner Mr. Detrich, Mr. Beetis? Architect/builder/craftsmen
 Original use Pyrite mine
 Present owner U. S. Government Source of name
 Present owner address c/o Robert L. Harney, Supt. Source of date
 Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va. Stories N/A
 Present use Included in park. 22172 Foundation and wall const'n N/A
 Acreage c10-acre site included in Forest Park.
 Roof type N/A

State condition of structure and environs There are no structures remaining and site is being allowed to return to natural state.

State potential threats to structure

Note any archaeological interest This would be an archeological site.

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.)

The bed of the narrow-gauge railroad can be seen intermittently on the west side of Mine Road between Dumfries and the mine site. Remnants of the "company town's" 70 or more buildings are said to be visible southeast of the barren mine site.

The site can be reached on foot, either from the north, along a Forest Park trail, or from the south, along the abandoned Mine Road.

Interior inspected? N/A

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

In the late 1880s, pyrite was discovered in Prince William County, about 3 miles up the Quantico Creek from the Potomac. From 1889 [or 1899] to 1919, the ore was mined by the Cabin Branch Mining Company; and from 1917 to 1929, the American Agricultural Chemical Company operated the mine. During its peak years, the mine had three shafts for extracting the ore, two vertical and one inclined. Number three shaft, the deepest, was 2,400 feet deep. The mine employed from 200 to 300 workers, including children. In 1919, the year the mine closed, there were approximately 70 structures at the mine, in addition to the shafts. These included workers' housing, an assortment of buildings for processing the ore, machine shops, sheds, storage buildings, a company store, and several dwellings. A narrow-gauge railroad moved the pyrite ore around the site from the shaft to storage bins, to the sorting mill. The railroad would then carry the graded ore down the Quantico Creek, past Dumfries, to Possum Point. There at the docks at Barrows Siding, the ore would be loaded onto ships for transporting to a refinery.

Pyrite was mined for the sulphuric acid contained in the mineral. Sulphuric acid is used in the manufacture of a wide variety of products, including glass, soap, bleach, textiles, paper, dye, medicine, sugar, rubber, and starch. Sulphuric acid extracted from pyrite was also used for fertilizer, leather-making, sheet metal cleaning, and refining of precious metal.

The Cabin Branch Mine was for about 31 years the basis for the economy of nearby Dumfries. The Town of Dumfries had been a thriving port town from its founding in the 1740s to the end

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CONTINUATION SHEET
CABIN BRANCH PYRITE MINE

Primary Sources (continued)

a paper read before History Dumfries Association, October 1978. See also Prince William Forest Park brochure identifying the site on park map.

Historical Significance (continued)

of the 18th century, when silting closed the creek to navigation, and the town began its long decline.

In 1919, the Cabin Branch Mine closed down. Among the reasons for its closing was the discovery of a better grade of pyrite in Spain, where the mineral could be mined more cheaply. The immediate cause of the mine's closing is said to have been a workers' strike for higher wages.

The federal government acquired the site of the old pyrite mine in the 1930s for inclusion in the Prince William Forest Park. The Civilian Conservation Corps dismantled the remaining structures on the mine site in the 1930s and used the building materials to build the cabins in the park.

Sources and bibliography

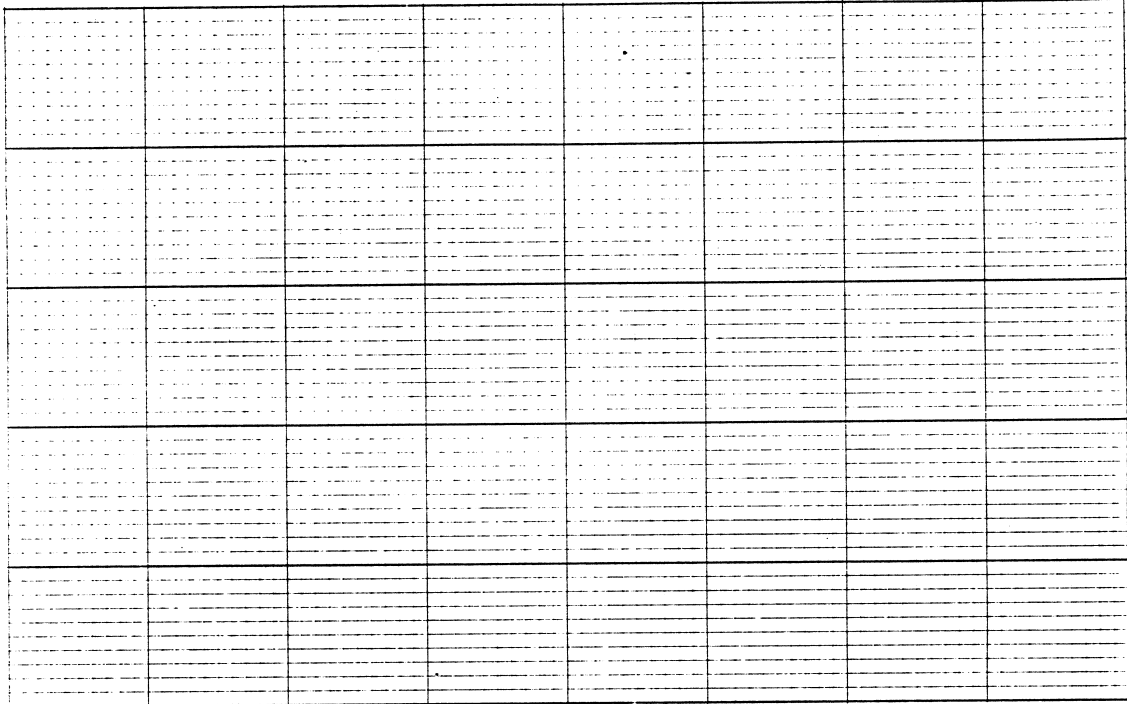
Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)

Article on pyrite mine in Manassas Journal Messenger by Bonnie Atwood (date unknown).

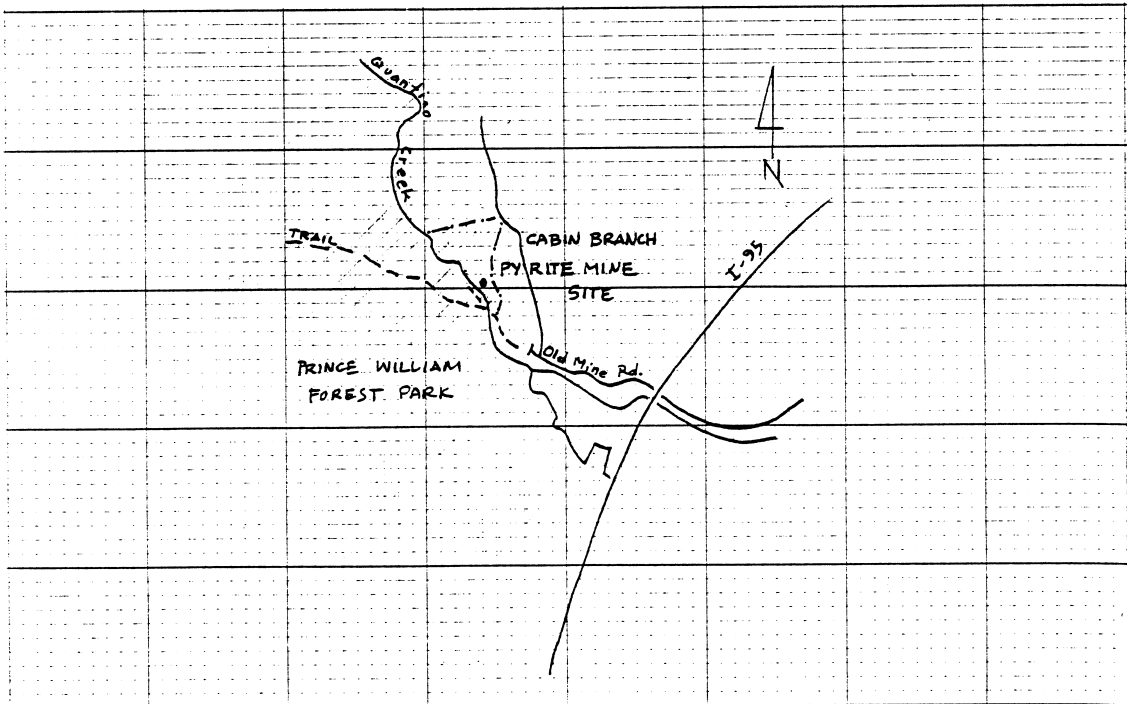
Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials: give location.) P. W. Forest Park has an 8-page manuscript history of the mine, including a contemporary map of the site identifying 78 structures (1916, 1919); "The Cabin Branch Mine," by A.L. Mountjoy, (continued next page).

Names and addresses of persons interviewed. Mr. Cecil Garrison, resident of Dumfries, worked in mine.

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



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



Name, address and title of recorder: **Frances Jones, Architectural Historian - Surveyor, [unclear]**

Date: **APR 10 1991**

ICE WILLIAM FOREST PARK

