



VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

File no. 76-302
Negative no(s). 5179

SURVEY FORM

Historic name Cockpit Point Confederate	Common name
County/Town/City Prince William Co.	Battery Site
Street address or route number Cockpit Point and Possum Nose, off Cockpit Point Rd., vic. Cherry Hill.	
USGS Quad Quantico Quad	Date or period
Original owner unknown	Architect/builder/craftsmen
Original use unknown	
Present owner VEPCO(?) part-owner(?)	Source of name
Present owner address VEPCO Woodbridge Dist.	Source of date
Office 1901 Reddy Drive, Woodbridge, Va.	Stories N/A
Present use Not in use.	Foundation and wall const'n N/A
Acreage 16 acres.	

Roof type N/A

State condition of structure and environs Area is overgrown, but gun emplacements and earthworks are supposed to be intact.

State potential threats to structure Development, vandalism, souvenir hunters.

Note any archaeological interest This is 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.)

See below.

Interior inspected? N/A

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

The name Cockpit Point is at least as old as 1737, when it was so-identified on the Robert Brooke map of 1737. This map shows the Potomac River from Great Falls to the Chopawamsic

In 1861 and 62, Cockpit Point and Possum Nose were the location of one of the batteries the Confederates secretly built to blockade the Potomac. Other batteries were located in Prince William along the river from Evansport on the Quantico Creek to Freestone Point on the Neabsco Creek. Between October 1861 and March 1862, the Confederate army and navy, under the command of Brig. Gen. W.H.C. Whiting, closed the Potomac River to all ships carrying supplies to Washington D.C., the center of the North's war preparations. Altogether, the Confederates installed about thirty-seven heavy guns and an unknown number of small guns at these batteries. The smallest of the batteries was at Freestone Point. The largest number of heavy guns was at Shipping Point and Evansport, at the mouth of the Quantico Creek. The Shipping Point and Evansport sites, now within the Quantico Marine Base, were destroyed by development. The largest and best preserved site of a heavy artillery battery, Cockpit Point Battery is on a wooded 16-acre hill north of Shipping Point. When the battery was constructed, Cockpit Point and Possum Nose were considered as one point and were called Cockpit Point.

The earthworks for the battery and powder magazine on Possum Nose are said to be in excellent condition. There are three separate places for guns. The largest gun placement, at the tip of the peninsula, was able to hold two or three guns. Flanking the largest fortification are two smaller placements, one for a single gun and the other possibly for two guns. Rifle pits

(continued next page)

Sources and bibliography

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

Mary Alice Wells, "Possum Nose--Confederate River Battery on the Potomac. Can It Be Saved?" in Echoes of History, Mar 1973, pp. 25-27; R.J. Ratcliffe, This Was Prince William (c1971), p.114.

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

(continued next page)

"Sketch of Virginia and the Rebel Camps and Batteries," 1861, in National Archives; "Battery on Possum Nose [Cockpit Point]," Official and Illustrated War Record; (continued " ").

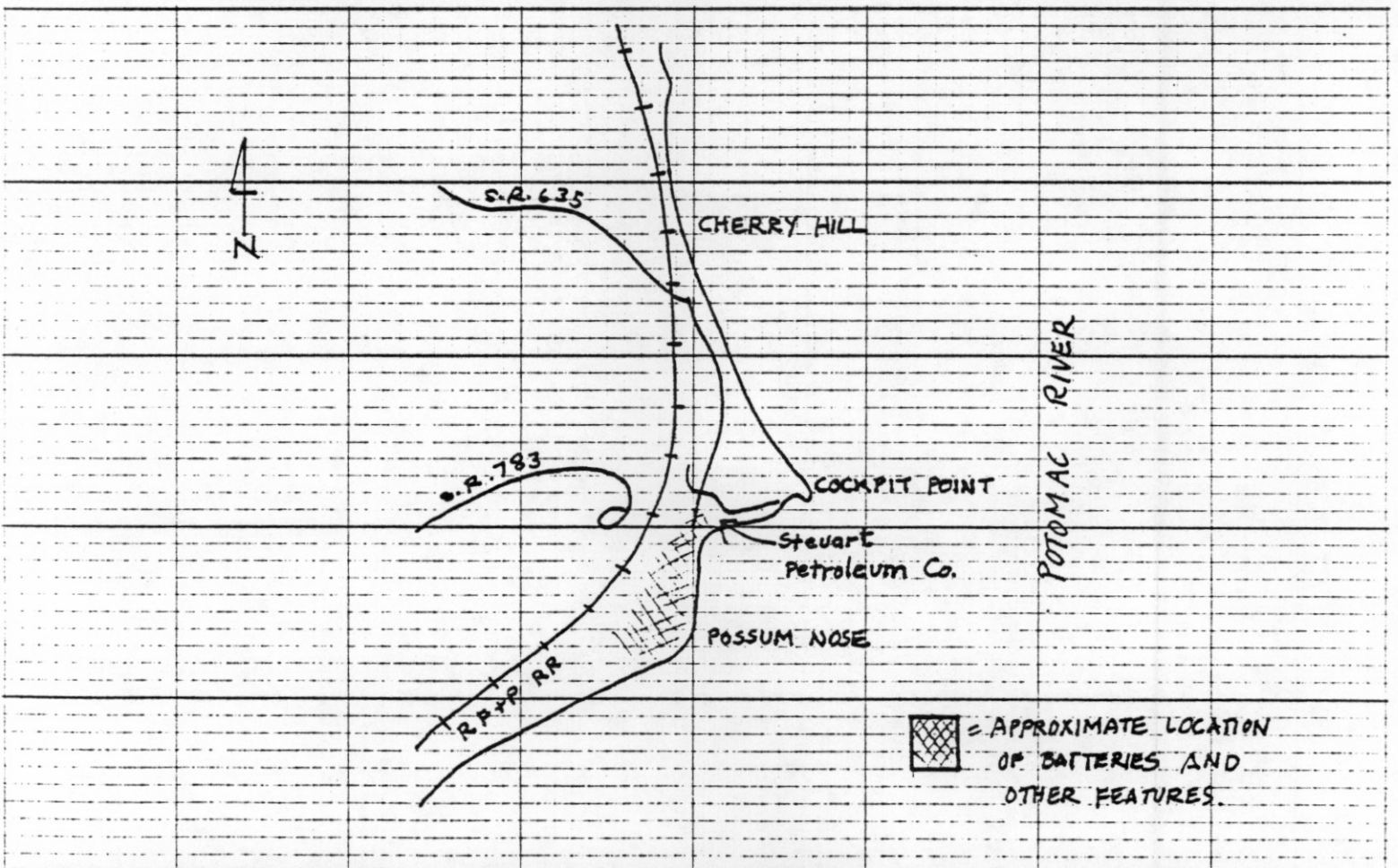
Names and addresses of persons interviewed

Don Curtis, Prince William County Historical Commission.

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, NYDC

Date

APR

1991

CONTINUATION SHEET
COCKPIT POINT CONFEDERATE BATTERY SITE

Published Sources (continued)

Mary Alice Wills, Confederate Batteries Along the Potomac, booklet, Jun 1978;
W.P.A., Writer's Program, Prince William, The Story of Its People and Its Places
(c1941, 1961), p. 49.

Primary or Unpublished Sources (continued)

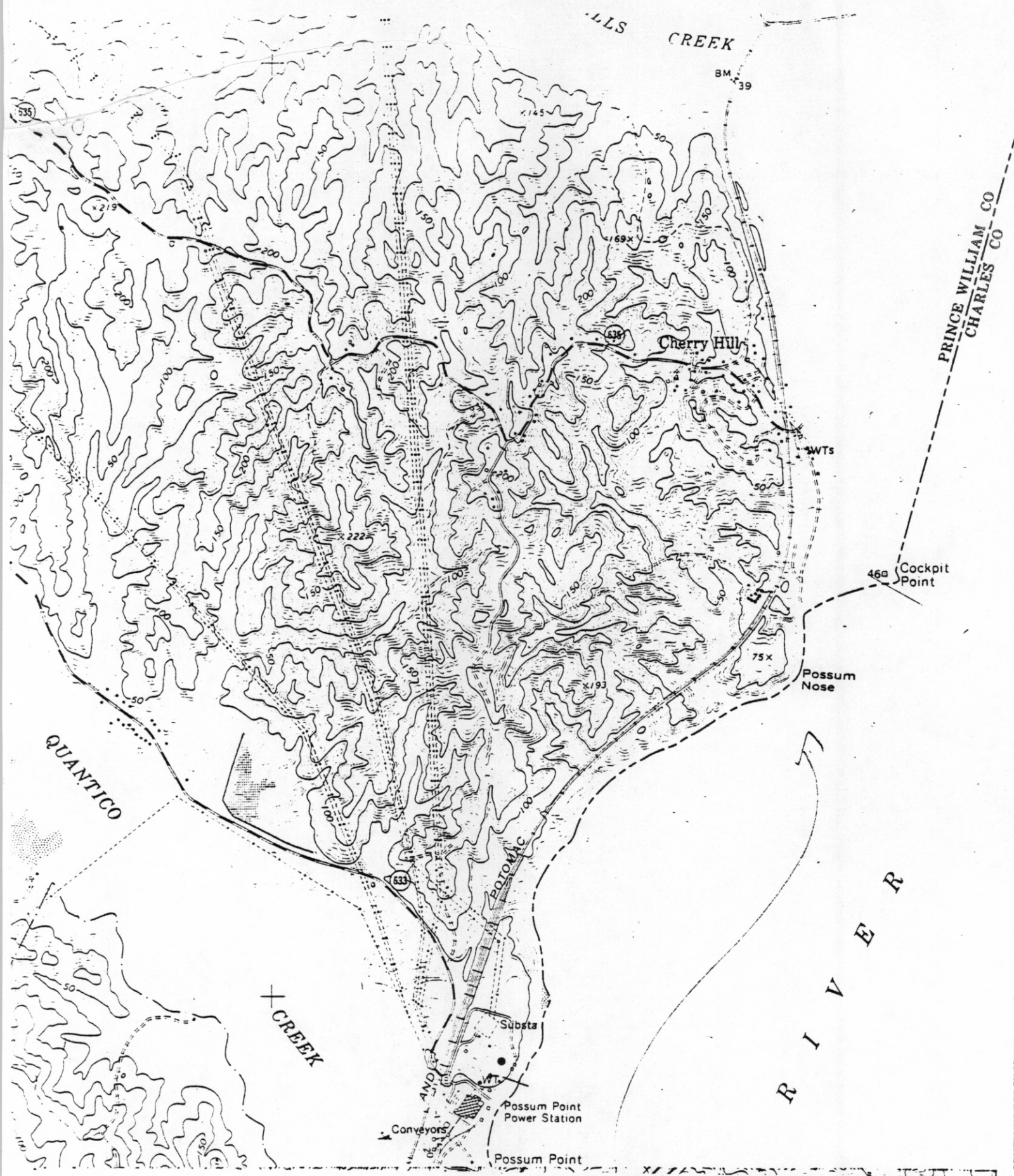
"Map of Northeastern Virginia in Vicinity of Washington." Compiled in the Typographic Engineers Office, Arlington, Va., 1 Jan 1862, Source: National Archives.

Historical Significance (continued)

were constructed behind the guns to guard the fortification against an attack by land. These pits are said to be intact. Other indentations on the back of the 75-foot high-Possum Nose Hill are thought to be sites of cabins or huts. Some had brick fireplaces, the remains of which can be seen in the debris. The powder magazine was located towards the rear of the hill, close to the railroad tracks.

The Cockpit Point battery at Possum Nose is historically significant because it is the best preserved and largest of the batteries constructed by the Confederates to blockade the Potomac. The little-known blockade, which lasted almost five months during the winter and spring of 1861-62, successfully cut Washington off from its supplies of military goods arriving by ship and also deprived the city's residents of other desired good and commodities.

The batteries were abandoned in the Confederates' general withdrawal from Northern Virginia in the spring of 1862. Before withdrawing, the Confederates destroyed some of the guns. The Union army and navy took some of remaining usable guns and destroyed those they could not carry away.



COCKPIT POINT CONFEDERATE
BATTERY SITE 76-302