



Update, April 1980,
of N.R. Nomination

VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SURVEY FORM

File no. 272-1
Negative no(s). 4913

Historic name Rockledge County/Town/City Occoquan Street address or route number Mill Street, Occoquan, Va.	Common name "The Den"
USGS Quad Occoquan Original owner Original use Present owner Present owner address Present use Acreage	Date or period Architect/builder/craftsmen Source of name Source of date Stories Foundation and wall const'n Roof type
State condition of structure and environs State potential threats to structure Note any archaeological interest Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes ___ no ___	
<p>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.)</p> <p>Rockledge burned in January. It had been for years unoccupied, and in April a man who had been arrested on suspicion of deliberately setting fire to the building was convicted.</p> <p>The fire almost totally destroyed the roof and the main stairway, from the ground floor to the top. The modillion cornice on the north end of the building is almost completely gone, but that on the south front is intact. The stone walls were not affected by the fire except at the roofline and on the north gable end, where some uppermost stones have fallen. From the outside it is not evident that most of the interior window and door frames were destroyed because the exterior window and door frames where the fire occurred are intact. The front door has been removed. There is some smoke damage; the window panes are broken; and some of the shutters are missing. The copper gutter was probably torn down in the fire fight. The kitchen wing has only smoke damage.</p> <p>The roof of the building was completely destroyed on the north end, including the rafters. This is quite apparent from the rear of the building. The cornice is only partly destroyed, mainly at the center of the building. The window frames on the rear have been both burned and knocked out in extinguishing the fire. The one-story frame addition to the rear containing a bathroom is burned where it attaches to the main building, but its exterior is intact. The copper gutter on the rear has been pried off but could possibly be repaired and reattached. Stones at the cornice here are loose and falling away.</p> <p>On the interior, the hall, except for the slate floor at the entrance, and the whole stairway were destroyed. The stairway is impassable, the treads having been removed, but there is another stair which was unaffected by the fire, at the south end of the house. The interior frame of the front door and the frames for the windows in the two rooms flanking the hall were destroyed. The plaster was water damaged in these three rooms on the first floor.</p> <p>Interior inspected? Yes (continued)</p>	
<p>Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)</p> <p>The present owner acquired Rockledge in about 1975 from John Woodall, who had owned it since 1960. At the time the Sonners bought the house, it was in very deteriorated condition. The house had been vandalized and suffered from years of neglect. The last resident owners were Mr. and Mrs. Laurence Almon Barnes, who departed the house in January 1960 after deciding the house was not longer safe, owing to structural damage allegedly caused by blasting in the quarry across the river. It has been said that Rockledge has had only five owners: John Ballendine, founder of Occoquan and Rockledge's builder and first owner; the Janneys, who lived there from 1829 to 1929; Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Barnes, who owned it from c1929 to 1960; John E. Woodall, owner from 1960 to 1975; and, finally, Donald Sonner, the present owner.</p> <p>Between 1975 and the end of 1979, Mr. Sonner reportedly spent over \$250,000 restoring and repairing Rockledge. He completely gutted the house; reinforced the stone walls with the cement-like material called "Gunnite;" repaired the chimneys; installed new sheetrock; replaced the floors (using in part some old boards removed from the attic); installed new or reproduction doors, windows, trim, reproduction mantels, and plaster cornice; had the house completely rewired; installed new bathrooms and remodeled the kitchen completely. At the time of the fire in 1980, the house was in very good condition, though it remained unoccupied. The front porch had been rebuilt, the springhouse repaired, and some landscaping had been done on the terraces leading from the house to Mill Street.</p> <p>Immediately after the fire in January 1980, the owner Mr. Sonner, understandably dis- (continued)</p>	

Rockledge Update, April 1980, Architectural Description (Continued)

The plaster cornice was destroyed. The floor of the room to the right of the stair (room 1) seems to be in fair condition except for a burned-out section at the rear wall and some scorched areas at the entrance. The woodwork around the windows, front and rear, was destroyed, but the reproduction chair-rail and replacement mantel received only minor damage. The plaster on the ceiling is damaged, as is the cornice, but the walls are ok except for damage to the wallpaper.

In room 2, the room to the left of the hall, the floor evidently was damaged, as it has been completely ripped up. The joists show considerable damage. The closet to the right of the fireplace was completely destroyed. The chair-rail, woodwork around windows and both doorways were totally destroyed. The plaster shows a lot of water damage.

In room 3, the second room from the hall, the window woodwork was completely burned. The rear portion of this room, however, received only smoke damage. The floor seems in good condition, except at the entrance to room 2. The plaster in this room shows water damage, and the cornice is down. This room was primarily smoke damaged. The center portion of the heavy mantel tree of this room's large stone fireplace was burned, but possibly prior to this fire.

The kitchen interior was only smoke-damaged.

In the rooms on the second floor, the hall and rooms on either side were badly damaged; the roof is open for the most part, and the plaster on the ceilings has been either pulled loose or has fallen down. The interior woodwork in these three rooms is destroyed. The room over room 3 though received only smoke damage. The attic was inaccessible.

Rockledge Update, April 1980, Historical Significance (Continued)

couraged by the fire which seriously damaged the house, announced his intention to clear the site and erect a fish plant there. Several months have passed, however, and the rumour is now that he will try to rebuild the house.

Rockledge Update, April 1980, Sources and Bibliography (Continued)

Virginia Catalog (1976), p. 186.

Sources and bibliography

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

Ratcliff, R.J., *This was Prince William* (c1978), pp. 29-32, 95.

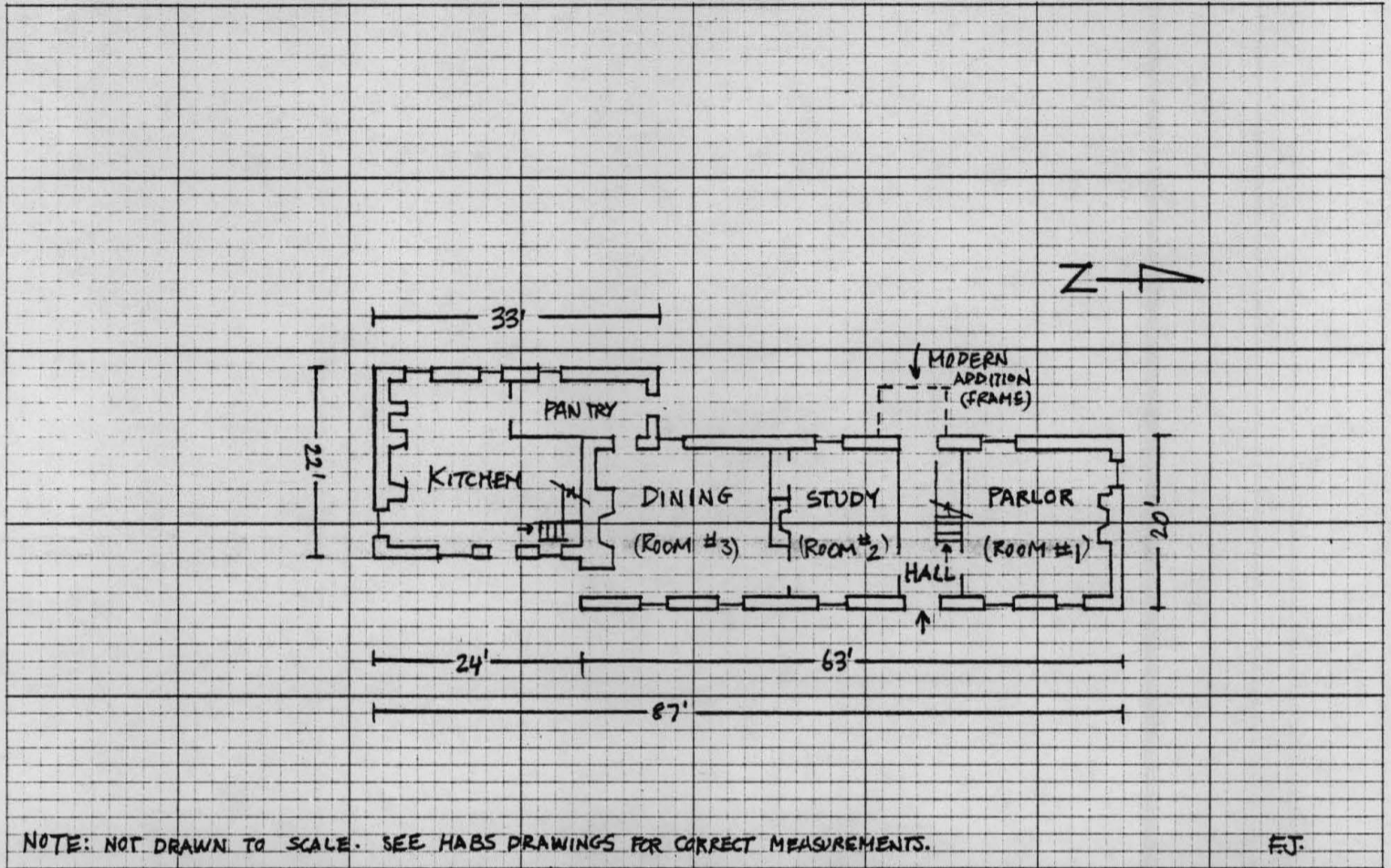
WPA, Writers Project, *Prince William, the Story of Its People and Its Places* (c1941), p. 80. (CONT.)

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

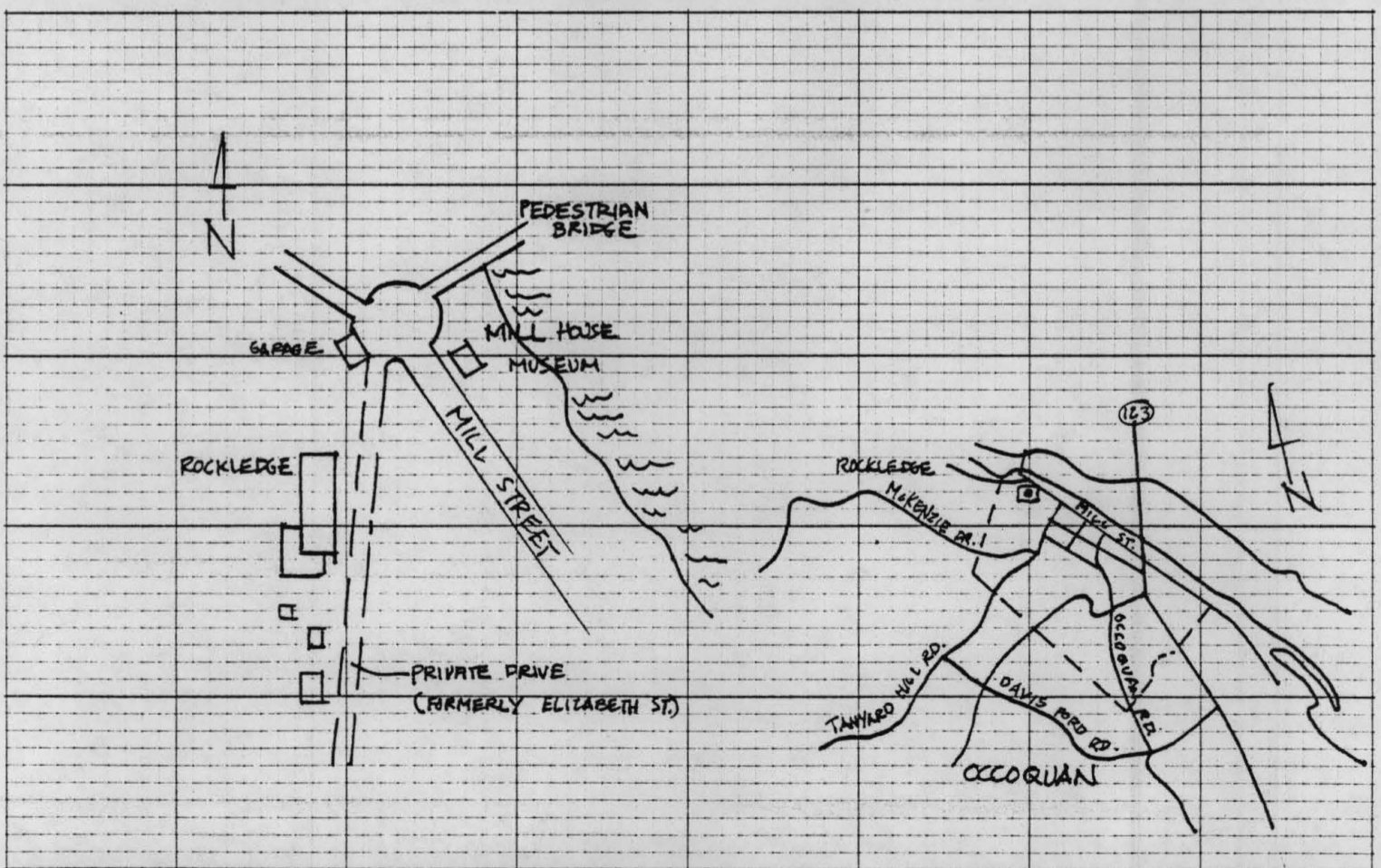
Historic American Buildings Survey--Measured Drawings. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Names and addresses of persons interviewed Donald Sonner, owner.

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



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

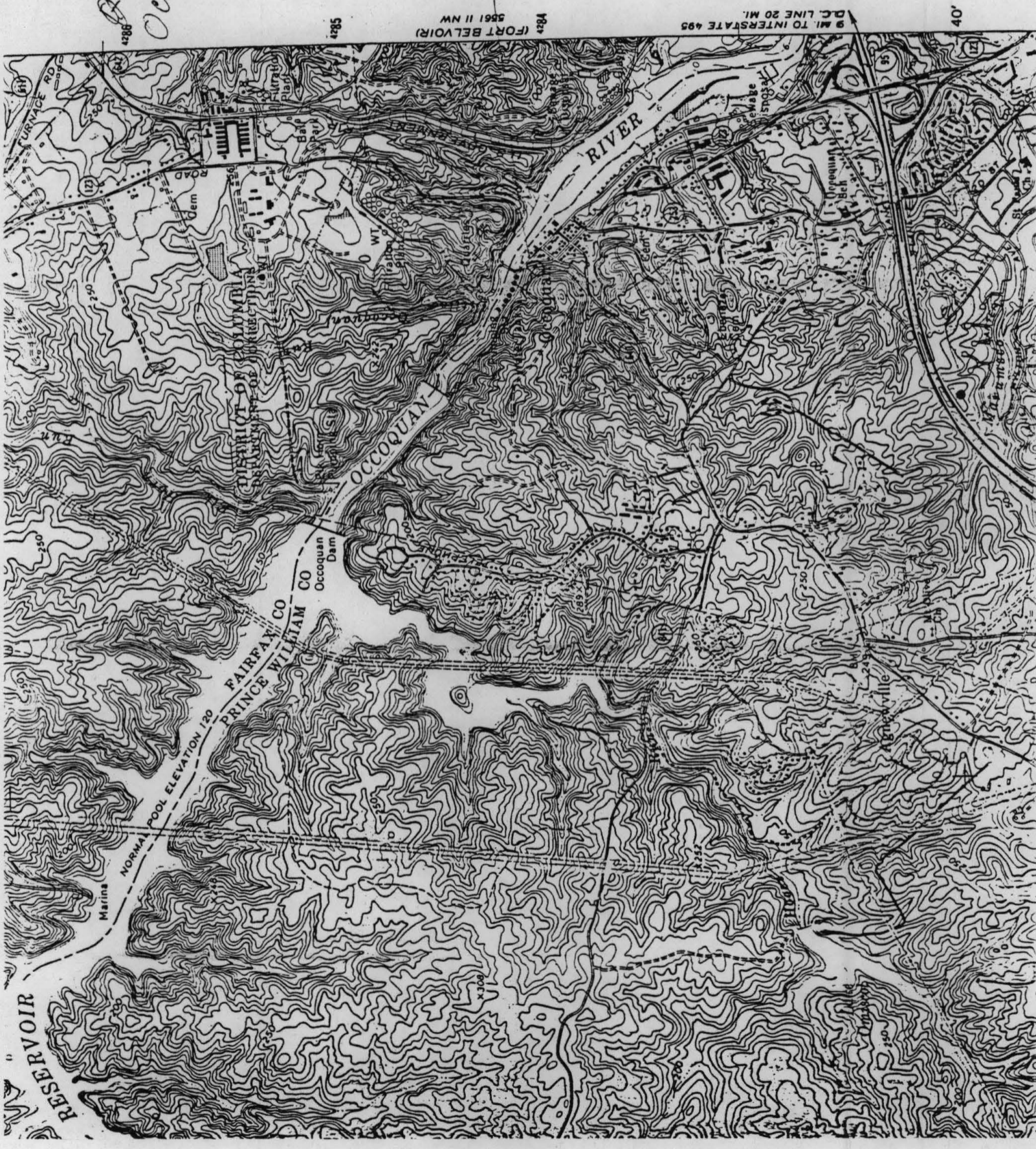


Name, address and title of recorder Frances Jones, Architectural Historian - Surveyor, NVPDC

Date April, 1980

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