



Unknown site + 30,000-acre land grant

VIRGINIA

HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

File no. 76-163

Negative no(s).

SURVEY FORM

Brent Town Grant

Historic name Brent Town site and a Common name
County/Town/City Prince William + Fauquier Counties
Street address or route number

USGS Quad Somerville, Nokesville, Catlett Quads Date or period
Original owner Richard Foote, Robert Bristow Architect/builder/craftsmen

Original use Nicholas Hayward, George Brent
Present owner Land grant + town site Source of name

Present owner address Multiple owners Source of date
N/A Stories N/A

Present use Multiple uses, including U.S.M.C. Base. Foundation and wall const'n N/A
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.)

Interior inspected? N/A

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

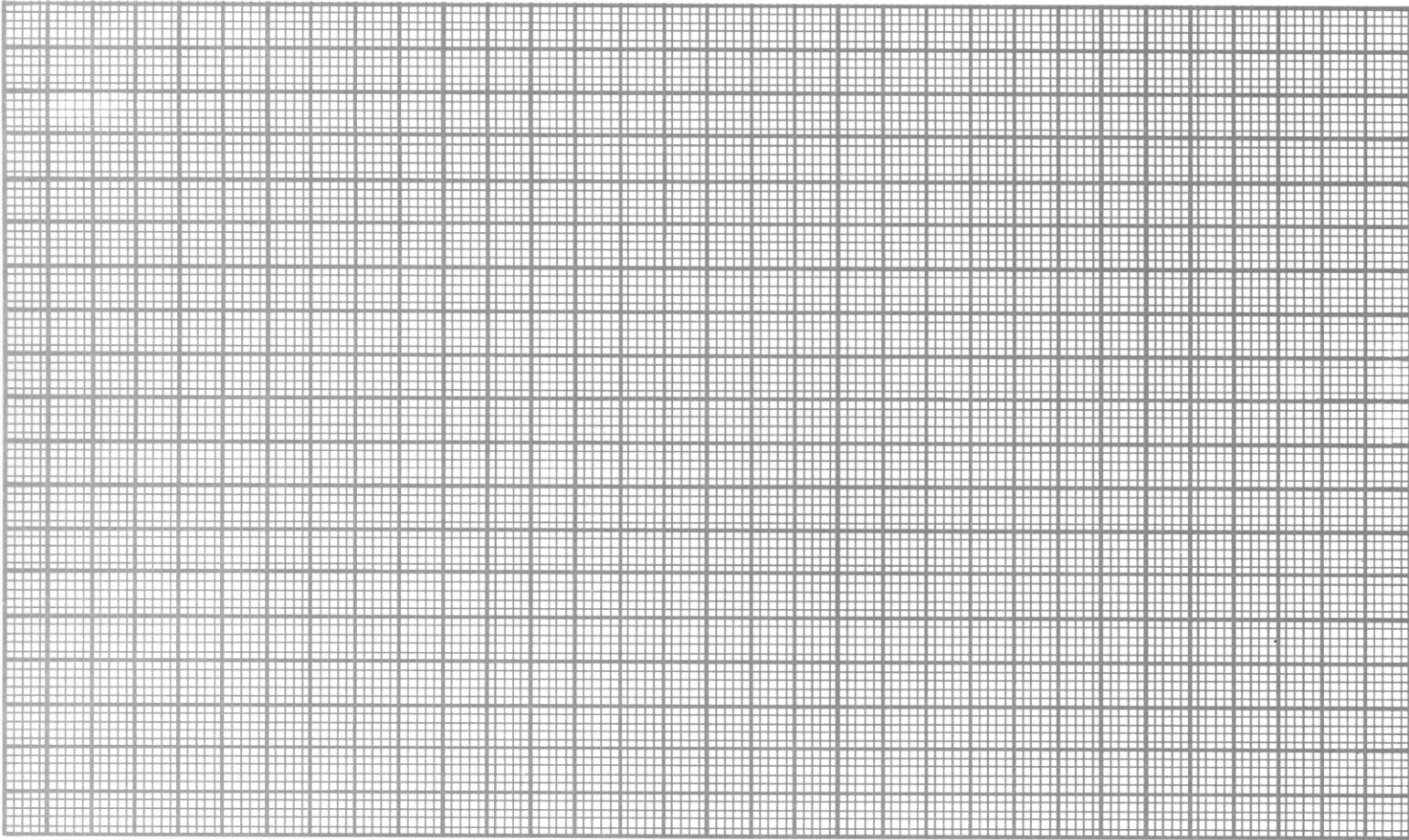
Interior inspected? *N/A*

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

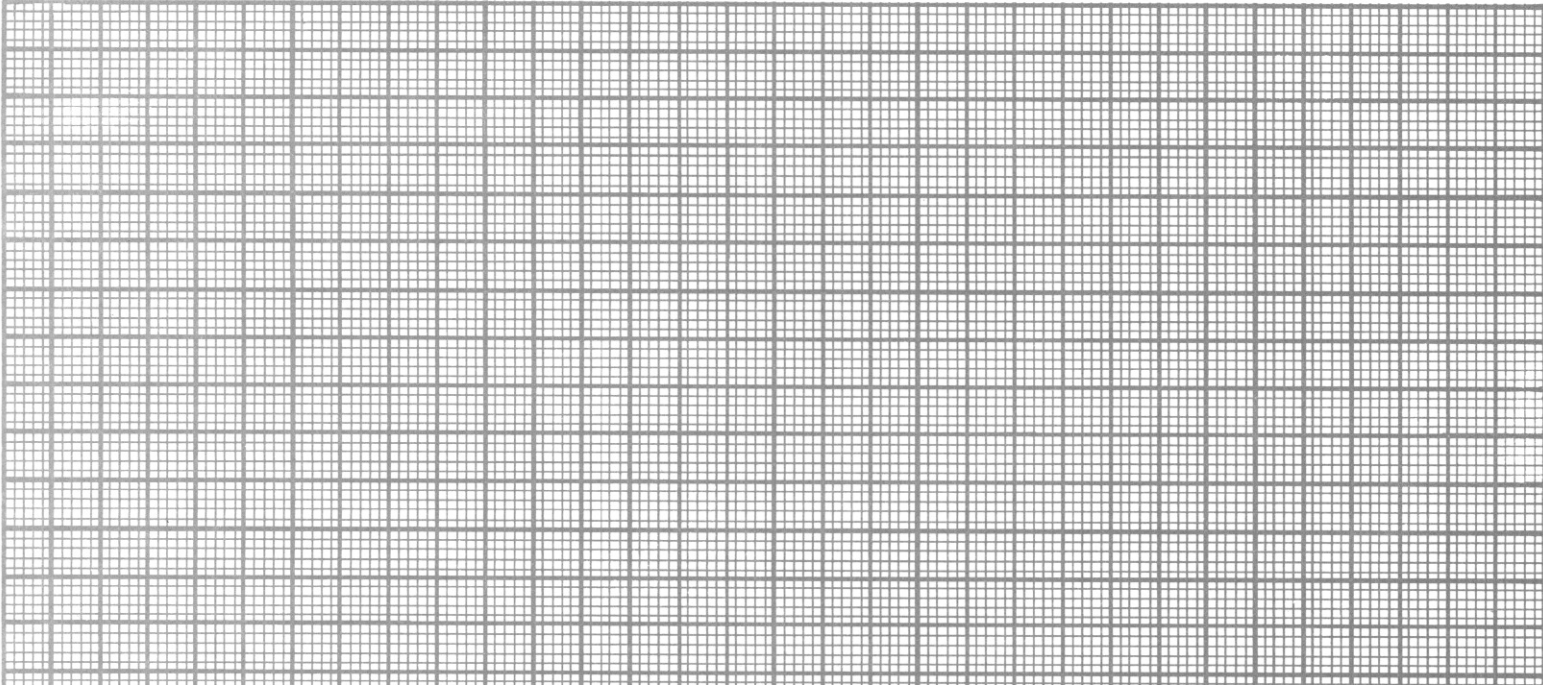
Sources and bibliography
Published sources (Books, articles, etc., with bibliographic data.)
W.P.A., Writer's Program, Prince William, the Story of Its People and Its Places (c1941), pp. 19-22, 26 + 3;
Fairfax Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William (c1924, repr. 1964), pp. 177-187. cont.
Primary sources (Manuscript documentary or graphic materials; give location.)

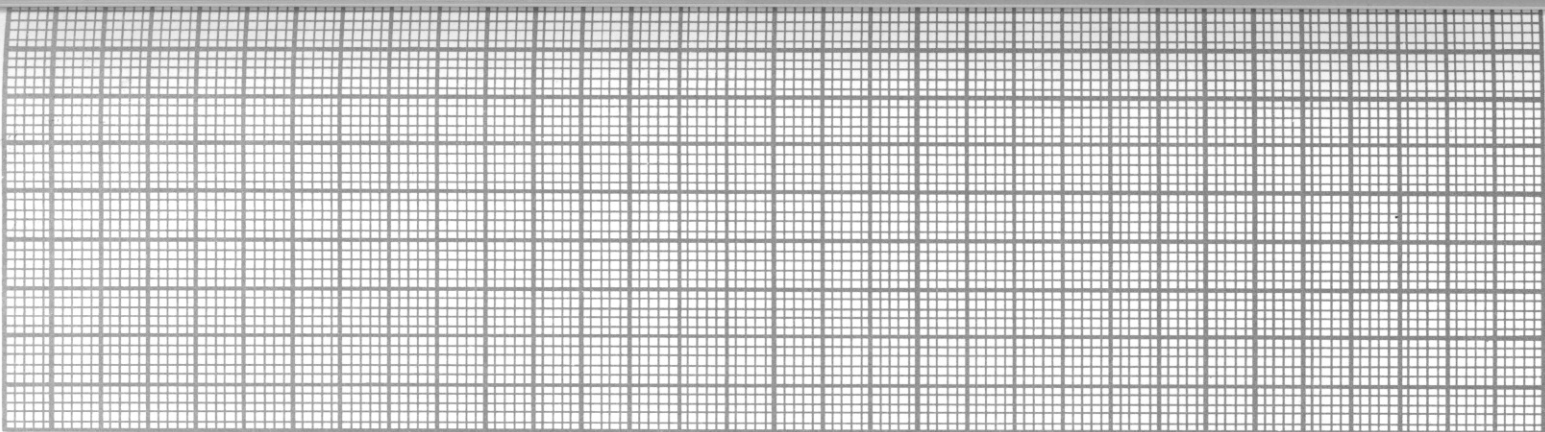
Names and addresses of persons interviewed E.R. Conner, III, Manassas Museum.

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

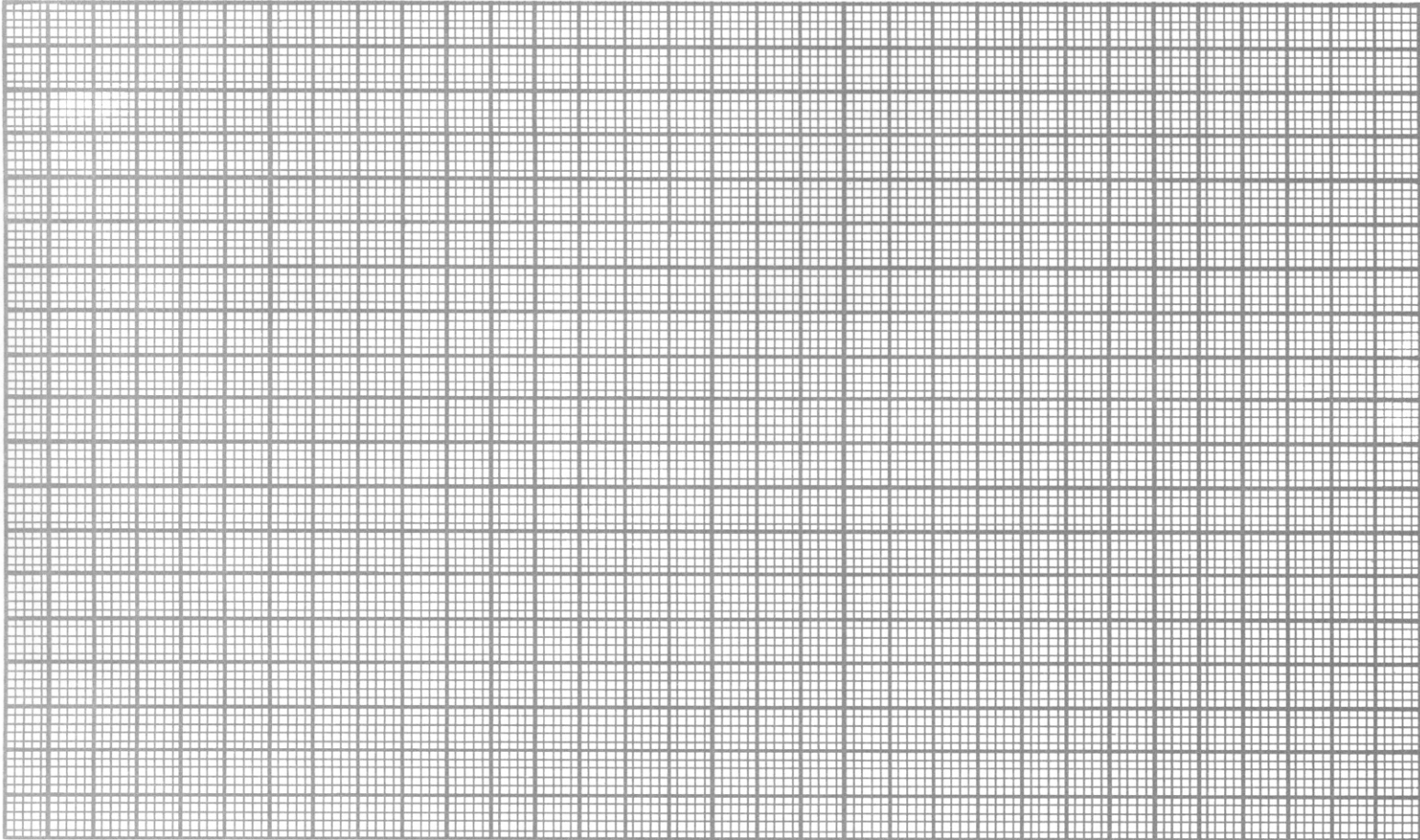


Site plan (Locate and identify outbuildings, dependencies and significant topographical features.)





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Name, address and title of recorder

. Date

HISTORY.

of Brent Town, or Brenton,
the name of which became the
designation for the whole tract,

4 According to one source, the town 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. ~~Each~~ ^{With} each town lot of one acre would go a 100-acre farm on the town's outskirts. The location

~~A local historian suspects that~~
described above would place ^{the site of} Brent Town site 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 Corps Base, in Area 11A or 11B. Another suggestion places Brent Town at Landsdowne, also on the Marine Corps Base.

not

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Cont.

Taking into account the differing opinions on the ^{town's} whereabouts, of Brent Town, or Brenton was

located somewhere on the original 30,000-acre ^{as a sanctuary for people of all religious faiths}

Brent Town Grant, made ~~in~~ in 1686-87 by

James II, the last Catholic king of England.

The grant was made ^{partly as a religious haven and partly as} as a ~~part~~ commercial ~~and political haven~~

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 and

~~politician~~ residing in Stafford County. The Londoners,

~~Englishmen~~ were Richard Forte, and Robert Bristow,

"Merchants," and Nicholas Hayward, were merchants

and promoters of Virginia real estate. ~~These~~ George Brent

of Woodstock ^{was} an English Catholic who had migrated

to Stafford County. ^{He was} ~~that~~ a nephew of Giles,

Mary, and Margaret Brent, ~~some~~ of the earliest

Catholic settlers in the colonies of Maryland and

Virginia. George Brent, a representative to the ^{of Burgesses}

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to Stafford County. ~~that~~ ^{He was} a nephew of Peter,

Mary, and Margaret Brent, ~~some~~ of 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 ~~the~~ 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, ^(Some sources say the "back line" ran from the mouth of the Walnut Branch of Cedar Run.) for the western apex. [^] From there, the line traveled north-northeast to a point on Broad Run, ^{supposedly} near Linton's Ford. ~~At~~ South of the Weaversville apex, the line traveled generally southeast along present S.R. 233 to Town Run. ~~Approximately following Town Run~~ ~~the~~ 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.

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South of the Weaversville apex, the line traveled generally southeast along present S.R. 233 to Town Run. ~~Approximately following 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.

* See Footnote. Place note at the bottom of the page that this sentence falls on.

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

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~~white~~ 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

(5)

the heirs of the original grantees divided the land among themselves.

¶ In the partition, the Bristows took ~~received~~ the northern portion, including the area where ^{early 19th century} the town of Brentsville would be established; the Brents

took land adjoining the Bristows and on Slatey Run; the Haywards took ~~their~~ land on the south fork of the

Dumfries Road; and the Fortes took the southernmost portion, that land on

both sides of Cedar Run above the mouth of Porrell'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

Forte portion. The second Prince William Courthouse

was built in (1769) close to the Forte quarter

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 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, the Bristow portion, which belonged to Robert Bristow, a descendant of the proprietor and ~~was~~ a non-resident Englishman, lost his property 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 Brantville was established on 50 acres of the ^{original} Bristow tract, 2 years after the courthouse was built.

44 As confirmation that the town of Brenton, or Brent Town, was located within Richard Forte's portion of the original grant, in 1742, when the move ~~than~~ 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 Forte was proposed, unsuccessfully, as the site of the new Courthouse.

Scale

1" = 1 mile



BRENT TOWN TRACT

TAKEN FROM WPA BOOK &
R.J. Ratcliffe's Map.

published sources, cont.

R. J. Ratcliffe, This Was Prince William (c1976), p. 5, ^{12, 14, 15,} 76, 77,
1