

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Van Meter

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number River Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Romney

☒ vicinity

state West Virginia

code

WV

county Hampshire

code

027

zip code

26757

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐
does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional
comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Fort Van Meter
Name of Property

Hampshire County, West Virginia
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		1
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		structures
			objects
		1	1
			Total
Name of related multiple property listing		Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register	
N/A		N/A	

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions	Current Functions
DEFENSE: fortification	VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification	Materials
OTHER: side-gable	foundation Stone
	walls Stone
	roof Wood: shake
	other Wood

Narrative Description
See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B.** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance

Military
Architecture

Period of Significance

c.1754-c.1764

Significant Dates

c.1754

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

See Continuation sheets

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Fort Van Meter
Name of Property

Hampshire County, West Virginia
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.9

UTM References

1 17 686291 4345003
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheets

Boundary Justification

See Continuation Sheets

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary E. Kuykendall (property owner) with Erin M. Riebe (WV SHPO)
organization date September 2009
street & number HC 66, Box 24 telephone
city or town Romney state WV zip code 26757

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.
- CD with electronic images if digital photographs.

Floorplans for individual listings

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

name Mary E. Kuykendall
street & number HC 66, Box 24 telephone
city or town Romney state WV zip code 26757

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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LOCATION AND SETTING

Fort Van Meter is located nine miles south of Romney and 15 miles north of Moorefield along the South Branch of the Potomac River Valley in West Virginia. The fort is located approximately one mile from where the South Branch River passes through a gorge called the Trough, a seven mile-canyon carved through the mountains during the glacial age. The fort, which has a southern view of the Trough and a northern view downriver, sits on high ground in the middle of the valley which is bordered by mountains on the east and west.

The valley consists of gently rolling hills with generally open fields for crops or grazing. The current parcel on which Fort Vanmeter is situated includes 10 acres and four additional buildings. A house is situated approximately 20 yards from the fort to the southeast, and a nineteenth century grainery, corn shed and barn and the remains of a blacksmith shop are located approximately 50 yards to the west. At the center of the two-story, stucco-covered house is a log cabin of undetermined age. The outbuildings and house are not associated with the significance of the fort and have thus been drawn out of the boundary. Furthermore, numerous changes have been made to the house and thus its integrity has been compromised. This nomination includes only the fort and immediately adjacent land. This boundary includes a hand-dug, stone-lined well and a large stone purported to be a native grinding stone. The well is considered noncontributing and the stone has not been counted.

DESCRIPTION

For VanMeter

Fort VanMeter, constructed c.1754, is a small rectangular stone building with side a side-gable roof. The roof has exposed rafters and cedar shake singles. The building measures approximately 19.6 feet long and 13.8 feet wide and is constructed of uncoursed stone. The stones range in size from small (3-6 inches) to large (18-24 inches) blocks, many of which are square or rectangular. The walls are approximately 15 inches thick.

The front of the fort has a centered double-door entrance with two wood plank doors and a hand-forged latch lock. To each side of the doorway is a small rectangular firing port (loophole). Three loopholes are situated symmetrically above the door and lower loopholes. On the exterior, loopholes throughout the building range in size from approximately 6-12 inches long and 2-3 inches wide. On the interior, the loopholes flare out to allow rifles to point from side to side and are several inches wide. The gable ends each have two loopholes on the lower portion and a rectangular, wooden vent on the upper portion. The rear elevation has six loopholes; two on the bottom half and four above.

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The interior of the fort includes only one rectangular room with a flagstone floor of various sizes stones. There is no separate attic space, although ceiling rafter beams are exposed. Interior walls are covered with stucco.

In the nineteenth century a wood addition was constructed on the south side of the fort and the stone was removed. In the early twentieth century, the addition fell into disrepair and was eventually removed. In 1987, when the roof was replaced, the south wall was reconstructed.

Well

A hand-dug stone well of indeterminate age is situated just southwest of the fort building. The well is 39 feet deep and 3 feet in diameter. It was hand-dug and is lined with stone. A modern concrete pad and opening covers the well and was built c.1930. Due to the changes and indeterminate age, it is considered noncontributing.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Van Meter is locally significant under *Criterion A: Military* and under *Criterion C: Architecture*. Under Criterion A the building was an important fortification to many local families who sought safety from raids during, first, the French and Indian War, and later, Pontiac's War. Under Criterion C the building is distinctive in the area for its construction of stone rather than log and as an uncommon fort type. The period of significance is c.1754, the construction date, to c.1764, the end of Pontiac's War when the frontier, and thus hostilities, pushed further west.

HISTORY

Fort Van Meter was constructed c.1754 at the start of the French and Indian War, the first war that began in the New World in a long series of wars between England and France. Due to the lack of frontier defenses at the beginning of the war, the Virginia Colony created the Virginia Regiment and began constructing a series of military fortifications. Such actions of the Colony prompted frontier settlers to organize a volunteer militia, create a scouting system to observe enemy movements, and construct residential forts. The forts were the anchor of the defense system serving as both an operational base for the militia and scouts and a place of refuge. Although there were larger military campaigns, settlers relied on this local defensive system for protection which allowed for the gradual settlement of rugged and disputed territory.¹

The majority of fort building in what is now West Virginia falls into three distinct periods with each period slowing pushing the frontier west. During the French and Indian War and Pontiac's War in the mid-eighteenth century, most forts were constructed in areas in and around the current Eastern Panhandle. Settlement shifted west during Dunmore's War and the Revolutionary war in the 1770s and 1780s. With that shift, forts were constructed from the Northern Panhandle south through the Monongahela and Tygart Valleys to the Greenbrier and New River regions. The last period, dating to the late 1780s and early 1790s, sifted the frontier west again with forts constructed in the Kanahwa, Little Kanawha and Ohio River valleys. In 1795 the Treaty of Greenville established clear boundaries between American Indian lands which opened up to settlement and ended the dispute over land on the frontier. Frontier fortifications were no longer needed and fell out of use.²

Formal documentation of the land on which Fort Van Meter is situated began on June 11, 1749 when Thomas, Lord Fairfax conveyed Lot 2, consisting of 405 acres, to Henry Van Meter. The meters and bounds for the original patent describes measurements from various oak trees. Van Meter passed the property on to

¹ W. Stephen McBride, Kim Arbogast McBride, and Greg Adamson, "Frontier Forts in West Virginia: Historical and Archaeological Explorations" (Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, 2003), 20, 22, and 28.

² Ibid., 22-23, and 28-29.

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Abraham Van Meter in 1804 and then it was sold to William Millar in 1833. It passed through a number of property owners through 1882 when it was left to Hannah (Sloan) Kuykendall. The entire historic parcel remained in the Kuykendall family through the mid-twentieth century. In 1986 the buildings and ten acres were sold back to the Kuykendall family.

The best documentation of the fort appears in William Ansel's book, *Frontier Forts along the Potomac and Its Tributaries*, published in 1984. In this documentation, Ansel reports:

Isaac Van Meter caused the structure to be built not only as a haven for himself but also for his neighbors who would have included Luke Decker and John, his son, Conrad Hoffman, Samuel Dew, Garrett Decker, William Millar and son, Isaac, and numerous members of the Kuykendall family, all of who lived in proximity. It is doubtful that any troops were ever stationed at this place because it was too small to house a garrison. The stone walls made it impervious to musket or rifle fire and those inside, so long as they had ammunition, food and water were safe from the attack of even a large body of Indians.³

The work of constructing Fort Van Meter is attributed to Nathaniel Kuykendall or his son, Isaac, as both were skilled stone masons living along the South Branch River at the time. Until electricity arrived, Fort Van Meter was used to salt and store meat as verified by a huge aging hollowed out sycamore tree still crusted with salt, a huge barrel for taking hair off hogs and the hand-forged meat hanging hooks attached to the rafters.

Frontier forts in West Virginia can be classified into three main types. The first type was a residential fort known as a blockhouse. They were usually two stories with the second story cantilevered above the first. The second type of fort, known as a stockade, was common among both residential and militia forts. It simply was a log house with a surrounding wooden fence, or palisade, for protection. Large forts, the third type, were generally used only by the militia. They generally consisted of both cabins and blockhouses that were surrounded by a stockade. Blockhouses were constructed in the corners of the stockade with their upper story projected beyond the outer walls. In cases where settlers lived too far to take immediate refuge in the forts, they simply fortified their own home, usually by adding gun slots.⁴

Fort building was not a new to settlers of the New World. It was a centuries-old concept to many. The primary difference with forts on the frontier was the construction material. In the New World, where forests were thick and wood was plentiful, forts were usually constructed of log. In Europe forts were generally

³ William Ansel, Jr., *Frontier Forts Along The Potomac And Its Tributaries* (Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1984), 202-206.

⁴ McBride, 25-26.

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constructed of stone or earth.⁵ Unlike most others on the frontier, Fort Van Meter was constructed of stone. Since most private and militia forts in the area were constructed of log, many do not exist today.

Summary

Although not large and not a garrisoned fort, Fort Van Meter is significant to the history of the area nonetheless as it provided safety from raids and was a key element in the frontier defense system in the eighteenth century. It is an important example of a residential stone fort and a rare survivor. Despite the reconstruction of one wall, the fort retains excellent integrity.

⁵ McBride, 22.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY (works cited and referenced)

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Cook, Roy Bird. "Virginia Frontier Defenses: 1719-1795," *West Virginia History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 1940): 119-140. Accessed on 8 September 2009 at http://www.wvculture.org/HISTORY/journal_wvh/wvh1-2-4.html

Kercheval, Samuel. *History of the Valley of Virginia*. Strasberg, Va.: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1833.

Maxwell, Hu, and H.L. Swisher. *History of Hampshire County, West Virginia: From its Earliest Settlement to the Present*. Morgantown, W.Va.: A. Brown Boughner, 1897; reprint, Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1972.

McBride, W. Stephen, Kim Arbogast McBride, and Greg Adamson. "Frontier Forts in West Virginia: Historical and Archaeological Explorations." Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, 2003.

Morrison, Charles. *Wappatomaka: A Survey of the History and Geography of the South Branch Valley*. Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1971.

Van Meter, James T. "Van Meters in America," (http://www.vanmetre.com/Papers/van_meter_pioneers_in_america.htm), accessed 9 September 2009.

Will and deed books. Available at the Hampshire County Courthouse.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated boundaries of Fort Van Meter are part of the parcel depicted on Tax Map 13, Tax Parcel 00330000 available at the Hampshire County Courthouse. The boundary begins at a point (lon: 61° 17' 46", lat: 39° 30' 04') north of the property on the current parcel boundary line. The proposed boundary travels southeast approximately 165 feet to a second point (lon: 61° 17' 38", lat: 39° 30' 02'), then turns southwest for approximately 475 feet to a third point (lon: 61° 17' 48", lat: 39° 29' 40'), then turns northwest for approximately 160 feet to the fourth point (lon: 61° 17' 55", lat: 39° 29' 43') before turning northeast for approximately 475 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Register boundaries have been delineated to include only the Fort Van Meter building and the immediately adjacent land, including enough property to convey setting. The property's original log house, which may have dated to the eighteenth century, has been incorporated inside a two-story, nineteenth-century house with numerous alterations (including stucco covering, replacement windows, and additions). Three nineteenth-century farm-related outbuildings are also situated nearby. At this time, no information has been uncovered to reveal any significance of these outbuildings or the house and they have thus been drawn out of the boundary. The westernmost and northern boundary line has been drawn to correspond with the current west property line, which appear to correspond with land use changes from aerial images. The southern and eastern boundaries have been drawn to exclude the main house and barn and are approximately 15 feet from these resources.

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Photographer: Dick Weber
Date: October, 2008

Photo 1 of 7 Southwest and southeast (main) elevations.

Photo 2 of 7 Northwest (rear) and southwest elevations.

Photo 3 of 7 Southwest elevation with well in foreground. Shows proximity to house.

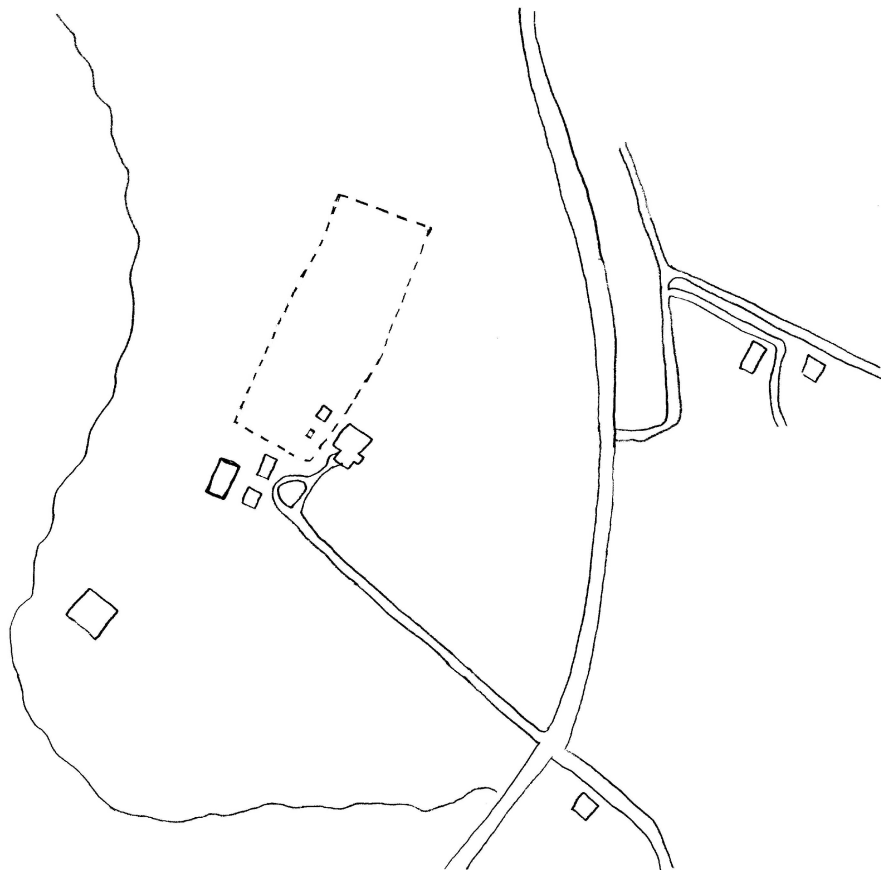
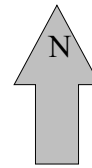
Photo 4 of 7 Interior showing loopholes and rafters.

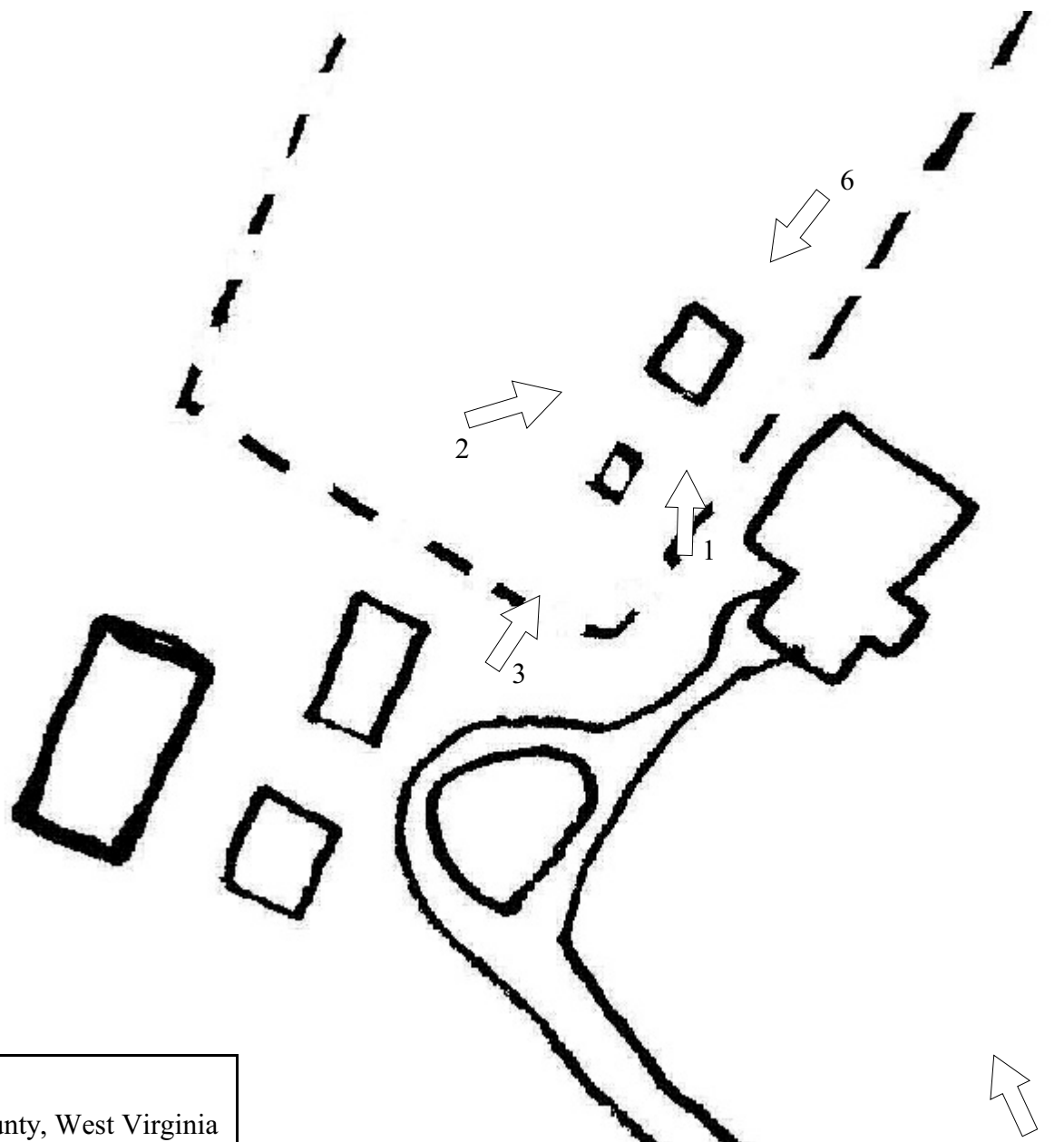
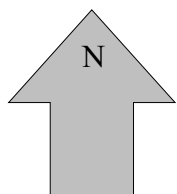
Photo 5 of 7 Interior showing floor.

Photo 6 of 7 Northeast elevation showing proximity to house and outbuildings (excluded from boundary).

Photo 7 of 7 Fort building to rear of house showing setting (house is excluded from boundary).

Fort Van Meter, Hampshire County, WV





Fort VanMeter
Hampshire County, West Virginia
Photo views















