

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word process, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Niswarner Tract (preferred)

other names Sherwood Property

2. Location

street & number Chestnut Hill Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Harpers Ferry

☒ vicinity

state West Virginia

code WV

county Jefferson

code 037

zip code 25425

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth 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 officer/Title

Date

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 officer/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ 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):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ Private
☐ public-local
☐ Public-State
☒ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ Building(s)
☐ District
☒ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	1	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic Properties of Harpers Ferry National Historical
Park

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function of Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Defense/military facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape/park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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Physical Description:

The 126 acre Sherwood Property is located on the west side of Chestnut Hill Road, on the western face of Loudoun Heights in Jefferson Co., West Virginia. The buildings associated with the Sherwood Property, also known as the Niswarner Tract, are in an extreme state of decay. Vacant since 1979, the buildings have become so overgrown with vegetation they are difficult to observe. The property is now nearly impenetrable with the growth of young deciduous trees and undergrowth. Only the house remains standing along with remnants of outbuildings. The property once included a barn, springhouse and a collection of domestic and agricultural outbuildings, as identified in The Loudoun Heights Archaeological and Historical Resources Study, 1992.

The house is a two story, three bay light weight frame building covered with asbestos shingle siding. It has a central entrance with windows on either side, and only two windows at the second story level, following a late 19th-early 20th century vernacular form. A porch supported by large square posts extends across the front. The house is L-shaped with a shed extension attached at the rear.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a Significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property 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 entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property as yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

Period of Significance

1861-1862

Significant Dates

September 12-15, 1862

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (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:

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Statement of Significance:

The Niswarner Tract (Sherwood Property) is significant under National Register Criterion A for its documented association with Civil War encampments. Through 1861 and 1862, Loudoun Heights was occupied variously by elements of both the Confederate and Union armies. Artillery placed by Confederate Gen. T. J. Jackson on the western plateau occupied by the Niswarner farm, helped bring about the much needed surrender of the Union troops at Harpers Ferry on September 15, 1862. The XII Corps, 2nd Division of the United States Army of the Potomac encamped at that same location, from late September to the end of October 1862. In 1992, the National Park Service conducted an above-ground survey of the documented sites on Loudoun Heights. In their report, Loudoun Heights Archeological & Historical Resources Study, Susan E. Winter and Dennis E. Frye state: "Although the Nisewarner [sic] farm served as an encampment area, no apparent Civil War features were located at this site."¹ It is important to note, however, that this was an above-ground survey and that information may be available below the surface. Features relating to the domestic occupation of the site were found during the 1992 archeological survey, including various foundations and building remnants.

Resource History

The Niswarner Tract played a significant role in the story of agricultural and economic development of the Harpers Ferry area. While most of the buildings associated with the 18th and 19th century occupation of the site are in ruins, documentary evidence of the colorful history of the site is recorded in the "Domestic Occupation on Loudoun Heights" chapter of the above mentioned report by Winter and Frye.²

Beginning in 1818, Catherine Niswarner purchased the 151 acre tract, located on a plateau on the west side of Loudoun Heights, from Lord Fairfax. Catherine's son John received title to the property, which he had occupied for ten years, in 1828. Following John's death in 1833, the farm passed on to his wife, Catherine, and their children. Widow Catherine, her seven older children, and an unspecified number of younger children, continued to live and work on the hillside farm. An 1850 tax assessment of \$6,280, apparently much higher than the value assessed on nearby farms, indicated the Niswarner farm to be a remarkably successful one. Perhaps the farm's location on the western plateau of the mountain gave a climatic advantage. A letter from Brigadier General John W. Geary while encamped on the Niswarner farm in 1862 described the site as a "pleasant position . . . in the midst of a beautiful orchard . . ."³

¹Susan E. Winter and Dennis E. Frye, Loudoun Heights Archeological & Historical Resources Study, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, 1992, p. 70; domestic features recorded on pp. 196-198.

²Ibid, pp. 79-88.

³Winter and Frye, p. 24.

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Experimentation with the cultivation of apples had begun in the western counties of Virginia (West Virginia after 1863) in the late 18th century. In the Eastern Panhandle county of Jefferson, local farmer William Miller, located northwest of Harpers Ferry along the B & O Railroad line, had begun cultivating apples and peaches as early as 1850, and by the 1870s was transporting his produce to Baltimore by rail.⁴ It is possible that the Niswarner family was also experimenting early with the cultivation of fruit for markets. Following the 1879 purchase of 121 acres of the Niswarner tract by George W. Green, the farm became known as the "Fruit Hill Farm" indicating its function as an orchard farm.

The Green ownership would eventually lead to a completely new employment of the pleasant plateau on the western cliffs above the Shenandoah River. An 1889 advertisement in the Virginia Free Press, by Charles G. Green, who had purchased the property in 1887 from George Green, described plans for a large hotel to be constructed on the property overlooking the river.⁵ Summer tourism in the Harpers Ferry area began to grow as a business in the 1870s and 80s. Hotels and boarding houses flourished, enhanced by the convenient location of the railroad and turnpike, by the breathtaking scenery and mineral springs, and by the interest of the general public in John Brown's 1859 raid, which helped touch off the Civil War. The Green family's grand investment was perhaps also inspired by the 1882 construction of the toll bridge over the Shenandoah River, providing ready access to their mountain land. Construction of "Green's Mountain House" on Loudoun Heights was not actually completed until 1891 when the property had returned to the ownership of George W. Green. Tax assessments for the property rose from \$960 in 1890 to \$5,100 in 1891. George Green's resort hotel had a capacity of 250 guests and touted an "abundance of water flowing from Natural Mineral Springs," for which he took out three mortgages totaling \$6,000.⁶ By 1898, G. W. Green was broke, his "Mountain House" advertised for public sale. In 1899 the hotel was sold to Charles Roach and renamed the "Hotel Shenandoah." In 1902 the entire structure burned to the ground and was never rebuilt.⁷

Charles Roach sold his apparently abandoned property to William Daily in the year 1910. Tax assessments for that year of a mere \$70 for improvements on the property indicate that

⁴Dr. O.C. Stine, "Apples and West Virginia," Appalachian Apple Service, Martinsburg, WV, c. 1966, pp. 1-2.

⁵Winter and Frye, p. 84.

⁶Ibid, p. 84, quotation from 1898 newspaper advertisement.

⁷Ibid, p. 85; archeological investigations found no above-ground evidence of the hotel foundation, however the Spring Box (Feature DS1-F2) is thought to be from the hotel period, see p. 126.

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nothing had been constructed since the hotel fire. The property was sold to David J. Howell in 1912, when assessments on improvements rose to \$250 indicating the possible construction of a modest dwelling, probably the house still standing today but in an advanced state of decay. It is likely the land was returned to agricultural use at this time. Improvements were also noted in 1932 under the ownership of George and Mittie Staubs. In 1955 the farm was purchased by the Sherwood family from Mary Marquette. The Sherwoods held the farm until 1979 when it was purchased by the National Park Service.⁸

The use of the Niswarner farm during the Civil War for encampment and artillery emplacements has also been documented in the 1992 Loudoun Heights Archeological & Historical Report.⁹ September through November 1862 saw the most significant occupation of Loudoun Heights throughout the Civil War. The Niswarner farm was used for the placement of Confederate artillery on the final day of the September 12-15, 1862 Siege of Harpers Ferry, and for Union encampments following the retreat of the Confederate Army several days later.

Loudoun Heights, prior to 1863, was located in the Secessionist State of Virginia. In the Spring of 1861 the Heights were first occupied by Confederate troops under the command of Colonel Thomas J. Jackson. Jackson began the initial efforts to fortify Loudoun Heights, however, these fortifications, consisting of three blockhouses on the ridge of the Heights, were never completed. The Heights were occupied both by Confederate troops and Union troops, on and off, through 1861 and into 1862. No one seemed to think the Loudoun Heights to be of particular strategic importance because of their low elevation compared to Maryland Heights. General T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson (formerly Colonel), now commanding the Confederate attack on Harpers Ferry, knew the virtues of Loudoun Heights. On the evening of September 14th Jackson ordered four batteries of Stapleton Crutchfield's artillery, located on the School House Ridge, to the western plateau of the Niswarner farm on Loudoun Heights, to support an infantry attack on the Union left on the morning of September 15th. Jackson's plan brought a quick surrender of the 12,500 Union soldiers at Harpers Ferry, without which, Jackson, Hill, and Walker would not have been able to move quickly to Sharpsburg, Maryland to save Lee from total disaster on September 17th, 1862.

As the Confederate Army retreated up the Shenandoah Valley following their defeat at Antietam, Union troops once again occupied Loudoun Heights. Beginning around September 23, 1862, the 2nd Division, XII Corps, commanded by Brig. Gen. John W. Geary became familiar with the difficulties of life on the Heights. The one bright spot appeared to be the Niswarner farm. In an October 10, 1862 letter to his wife, Gen. Geary described his new head quarters, "... I now find myself esconsed [sic] in the midst of a beautiful orchard, with a full bird's eye view of

⁸Winter and Frye, p. 88.

⁹Ibid., pp. 16-36.

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all the surrounding encampments.”¹⁰ Other descriptions, from men assigned to Knap’s Battery, were cited by Winter and Frye in their 1992 documentation to pinpoint the encampment. Knap’s Battery was reportedly relocated near the camp quarters of Gen. Geary. The men described the site “on a pretty level spot, about halfway up the mountain” and overlooking the towns of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar. Winter and Frye concluded: “As the Niswarner farm is the only level area halfway up Loudoun Heights on the west side of the mountain, these descriptions, along with the orchard mentioned by General Geary, identify Niswarners as a primary encampment area.”¹¹

Beginning around October 28, 1862, the mountain weary troops under General Geary were moved to Bolivar Heights. Only pickets remained on the ridge and western slopes of Loudoun Heights. Winter encampments were constructed on the eastern base of the mountain, leaving the Niswarner farm encampment all but abandoned. As fortifications and battery placements on Maryland Heights were improved in the summer of 1863, the defense of Loudoun Heights became less necessary, and its occupation by troops essentially ended.

Resource Evaluation

The Niswarner Tract (Sherwood Property) is part of the Multiple Property Documentation Form “Historic Properties of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.” The property is significant as a Military Site Property Type, in the context of Harpers Ferry in the Civil War, as a contributing element to the landscape of the Loudoun Heights defenses and encampments. A 1992 archeological and historical survey has established documentary evidence of Union encampments and artillery emplacements on the Niswarner Tract. Further, below-ground investigation has the potential to yield important information concerning the more temporary encampment pattern described on the Sherwood Property. Buildings and foundation remnants associated with the domestic occupation of the Sherwood Property are in a severe state of decay. The farm tract has returned to its original wild state to a point where it is no longer recognizable as a farm. The wild growth and the extreme decay of the buildings results in a lack of integrity of the site to its historic use as a farm and hotel resort.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 24-25.

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Major Bibliographical References:

Map of Jefferson County, Virginia, 1862, copied from S. Howell Brown 1852 Map of Jefferson Co., Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry, WV.

Michler, Capt. N., Military Map of Harpers Ferry, Virginia, 1863, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library, Harpers Ferry, WV.

Newspaper Microfilm Collection, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library, Harpers Ferry, WV.

Stine, Dr. O. C., "Apples and West Virginia," Appalachian Apple Service, Martinsburg, WV, c. 1966.

Winter, Susan E., and Dennis E. Frye, Loudoun Heights Archeological & Historical Resources Study, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, 1992.

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Acreage of Property 126.87

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

☒ See continuation sheet

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

name/title	Edith Wallace, Research Associate		
organization	Paula S. Reed and Associates, Inc.	date	6/99
street & number	105 N. Potomac Street	Telephone	301-739-2070
city or town	Hagerstown	state	Maryland
		zip code	21740

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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.

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

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

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park		
street & number	PO Box 65	Telephone	304-535-6298
city or town	Harpers Ferry	state	WV
		zip code	25425

Paperwork Reduction 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 listings. 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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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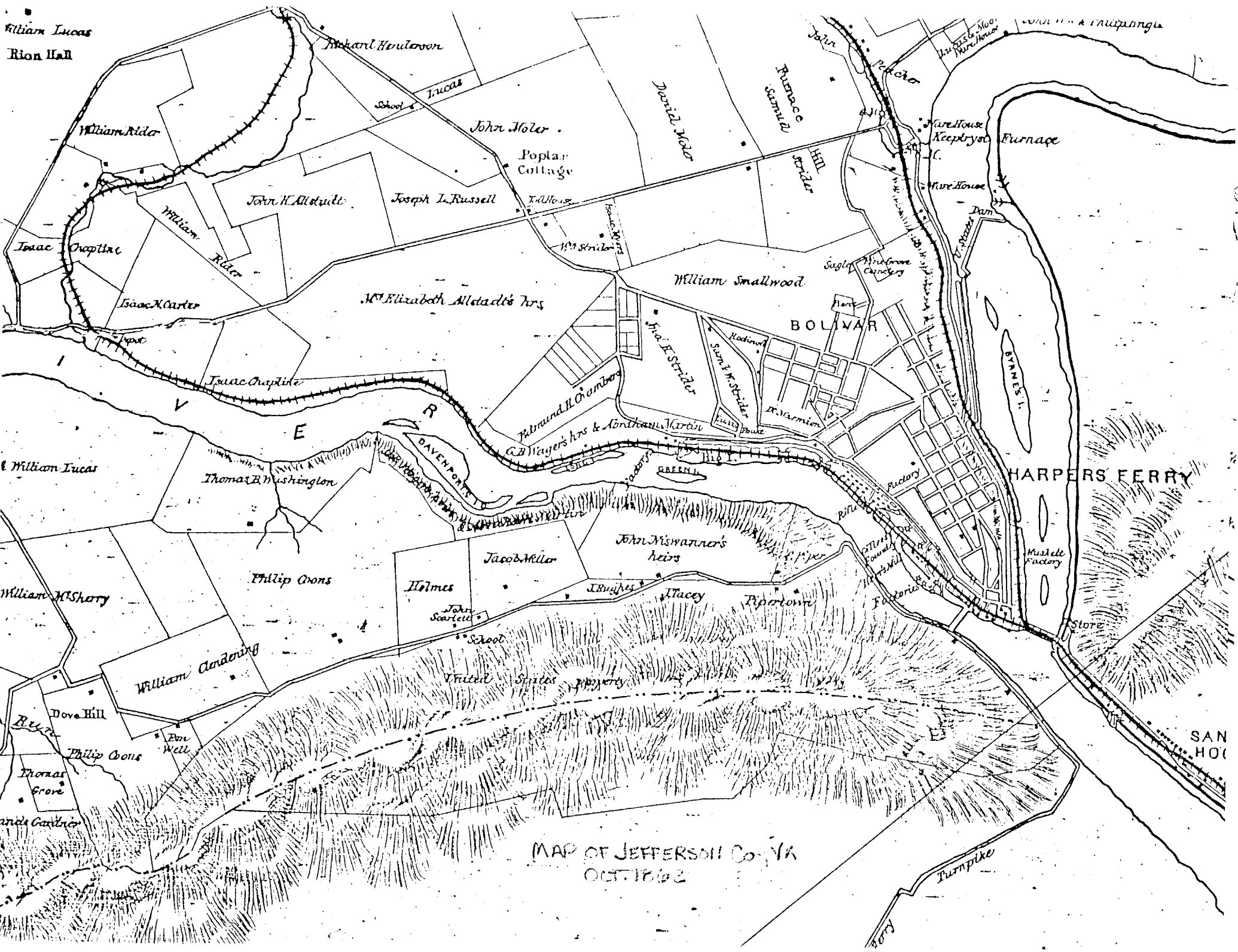
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Verbal Boundary Description:

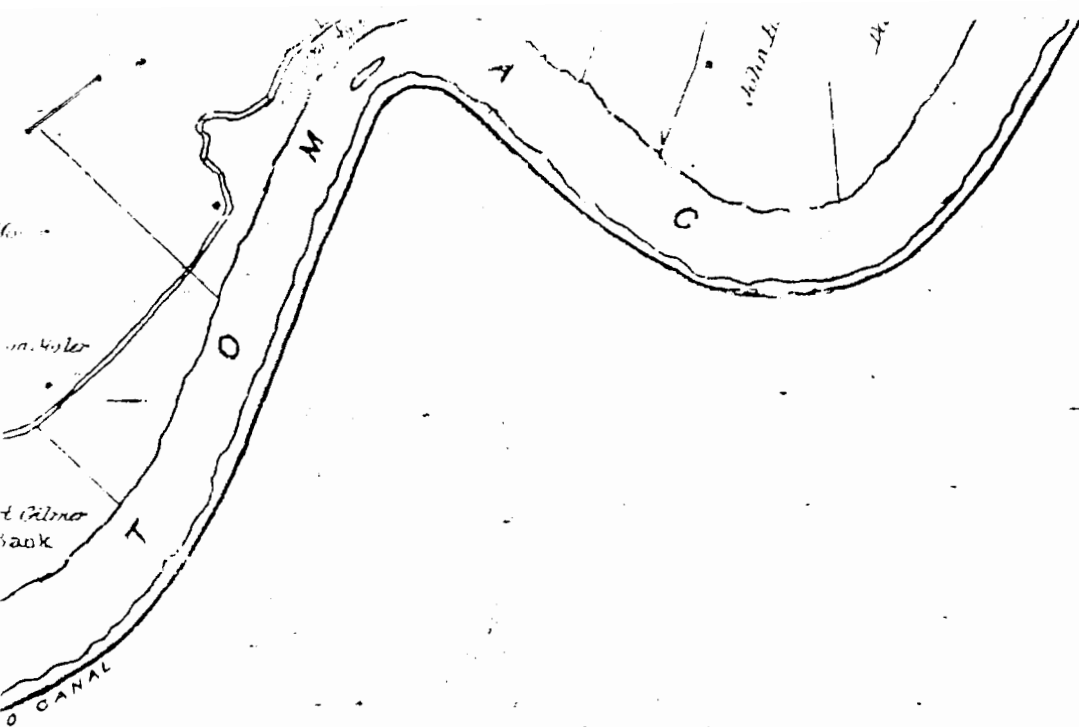
The property is described by the boundaries of Harpers Ferry District Tax Map #8, Parcel 16. Bounded on the east by Chestnut Hill Road and on the west by the Shenandoah River, and on the north and south by properties owned by the National Park Service, containing 126.87 acres.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary follows the historic boundaries of the Niswarner Tract following the 1855 sale of the westernmost 30 acres to William C. House (seen as Parcels 3.1 and 3.2 on HFD Tax Map #8).

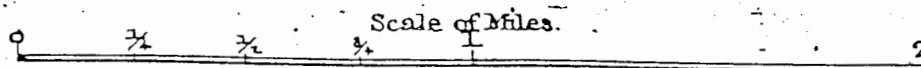


MAP OF JEFFERSON CO. VA
OCT. 1862



MAP OF
JEFFERSON COUNTY
VA.

*Photographed for the Bureau of Topographical Engineers
Oct, 1862*



LOUDOUN HEIGHTS DOMESTIC SITE 2 Niswarner Tract

Features

- F1 - springhouse
- F2 - springhouse
- F3 - Sherwood house
- F4 - outbuilding
- F5 - depression
- F6 - outbuildings
(cornerb/pig pen)
- F7 - stone foundation
(bark barn)
- F8 - depression
- F9 - dry-laid
stone wall

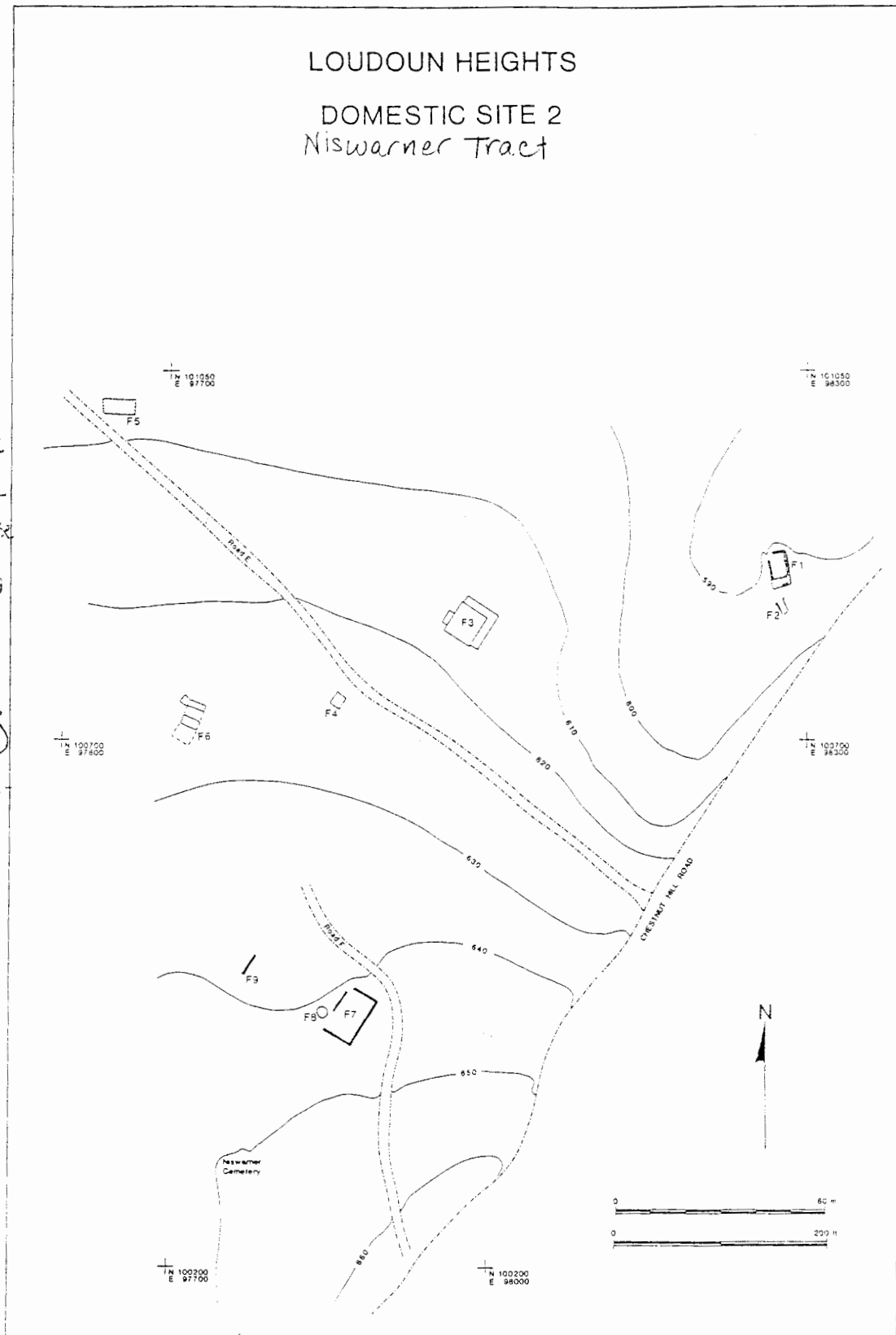
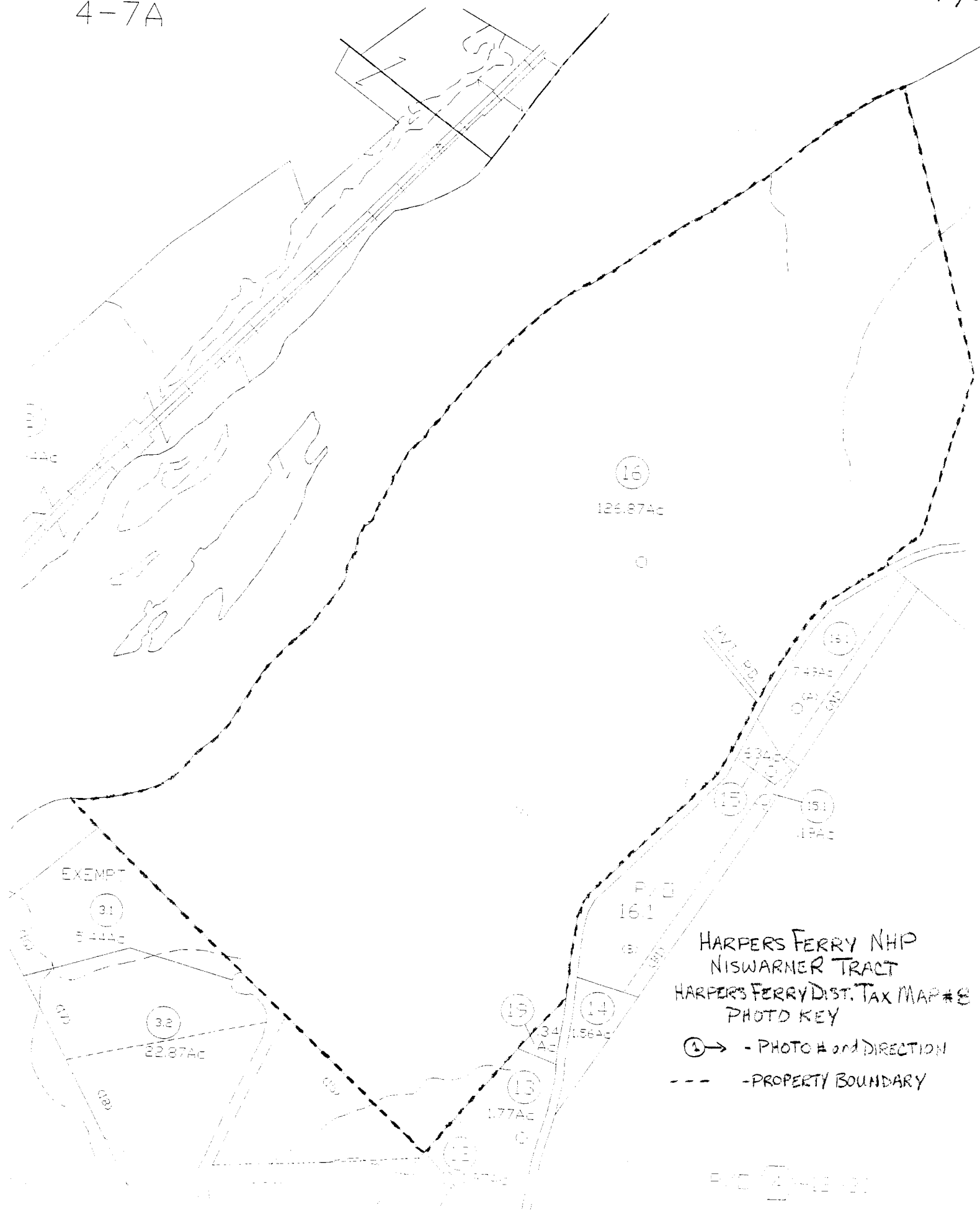


Figure 7.5

Harpers Ferry District Tax Map #8

HFD
m/8

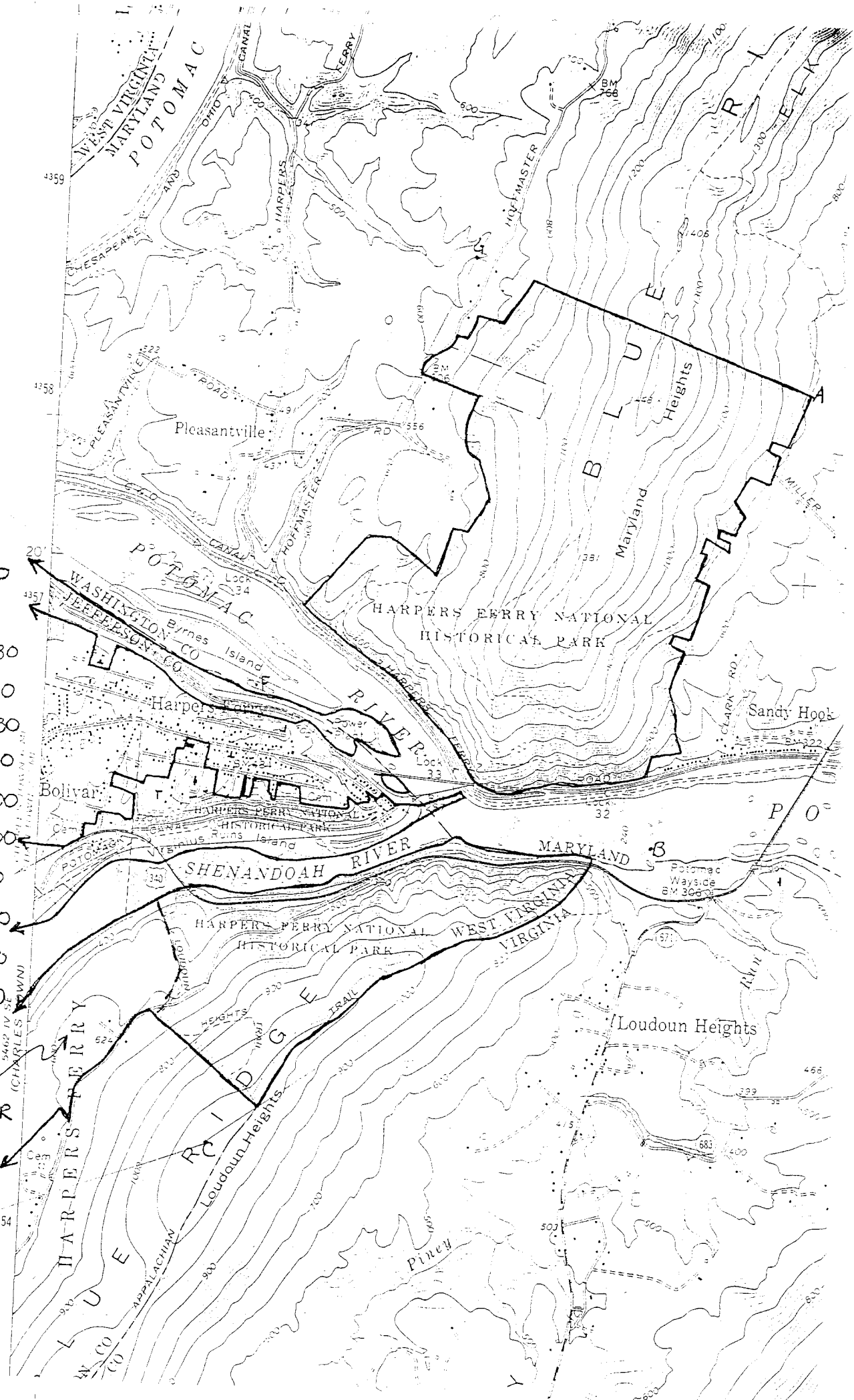
4-7A

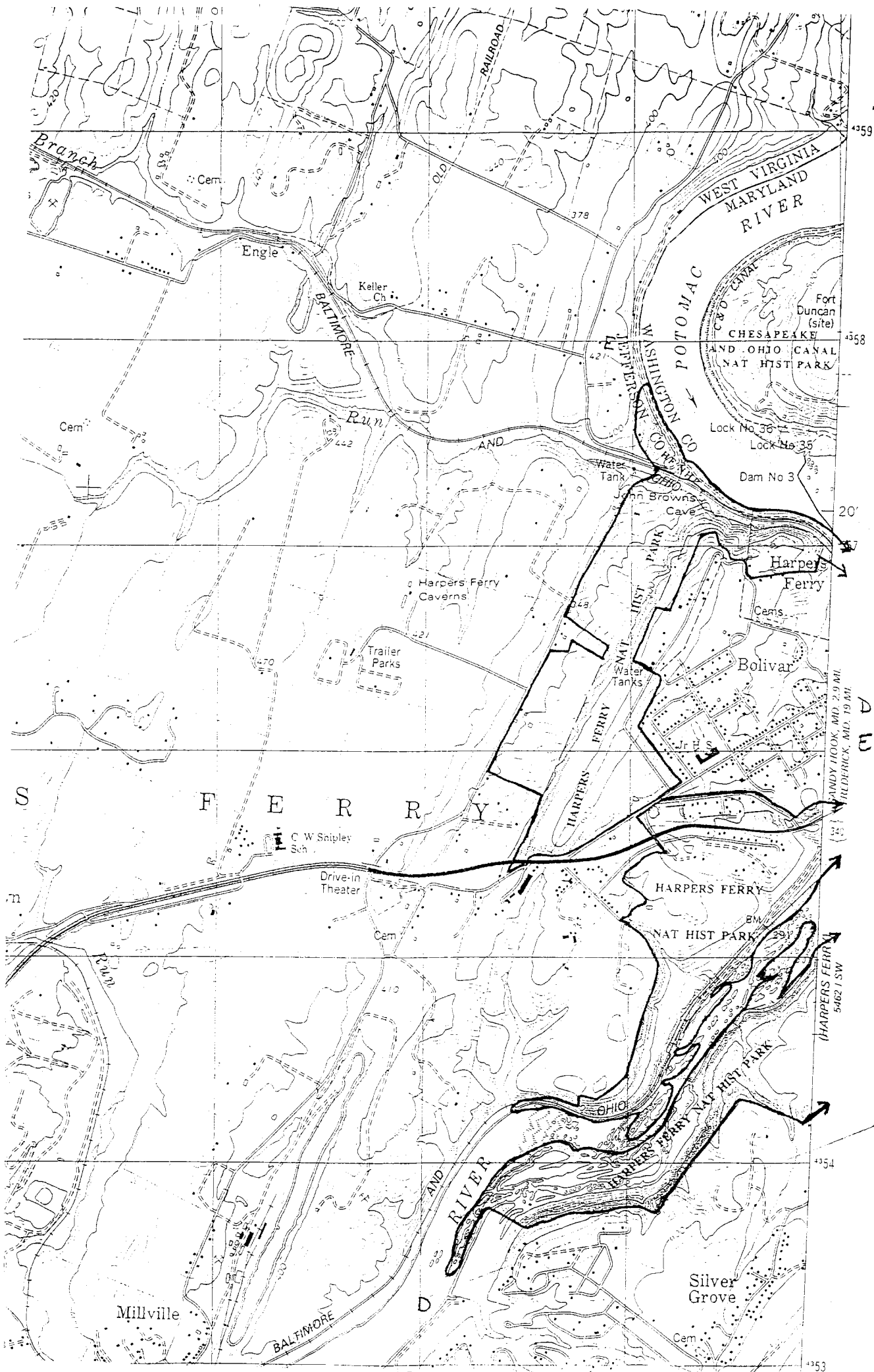


HARPERS FERRY NHP UTM REFERENCES:

- A 18/266590/4357980
- B 18/265840/4355790
- C 18/263800/4354380
- F 18/263960/4356560
- G 18/264980/4358600
- H 18/269780/4355600
- I 18/266890/4353110
- J 18/266670/4353600
- K 18/267610/4355360
- L 18/269180/4356100

NISWARNER
TRACT





HARPERS FERRY NH
UTM REFERENCES

D 18/261030/4353380

E 18/261880/4357920

