

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION
FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Ropp, R. C. House

other name/site number: H-162

2. Location

street & number: 2199 Harlan Spring Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Martinsburg

vicinity: N/A

state: West Virginia-WV

county: Berkeley

code: 003

zip code: 25401

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 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.)

Susan M. Pierce
Signature of Certifying Official

10/29/02
Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

Date

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

Date

Ropp, R. C. House

Berkeley

West Virginia-WV

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of property
(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	2	TOTAL

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

Number of contributing resources previously in the listed National Register N/A

Ropp, R. C. House

Berkeley West Virginia-WV

Name of Property

County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Domestic: Secondary Structure

Current Functions

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Domestic: Secodnary Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals:

Colonial Revival

Materials

Foundation Concrete

Walls Weatherboard

Roof Metal

Other

Narrative Description

(See continuation on sheets.)

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 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.

Ropp, R. C. House

Berkeley West Virginia-WV

Name of Property

County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Period of Significance

1928

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets.)

Ropp, R. C. House
Name of Property

Berkeley West Virginia-WV
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliographical

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

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 Berkeley County Historic Landmarks Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.684 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Quad Map Name: Hedgesville, WV

A 18 246602 4380230
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____
Zone Easting Northing

_____ see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(See continuation sheet.)

Ropp, R. C. House _____ Berkeley _____ West Virginia-WV _____
Name of Property _____ County and State _____

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Geoffrey B. Henry and Jared N. Tuk, Architectural Historians _____

Organization: GAI Consultants, Inc. _____ Date: June 2002 _____

Street & Number: 570 Beatty Road _____ Telephone: 412-856-6400 _____

City or Town: Monroeville _____ State: PA _____ Zip: 15146 _____

Property Owner

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

Name: Mr. and Mrs. Fred Dillard _____

Street & Number: 2301 Harlan Spring Road _____ Telephone: Unlisted _____

City or Town: Martinsburg _____ State: WV _____ Zip: 25401 _____

LOCATION AND SETTING

The R.C. Ropp House is located on the west side of Harlan Spring Road (CR 8/1) approximately 1 1/12 miles southeast of the hamlet of Harlan Spring, in the Hedgesville Magisterial District, in northwestern Berkeley County, West Virginia. The surrounding topography is gently rolling piedmont, rural, and agricultural. The R.C. Ropp property is bordered on the east by a farmstead with fenced pastures, on the north by open fields and pastures, on the west by mixed hardwoods, and on the south by a post-World War II residence. The immediate setting consists of a lawn on all four sides, planted with mature deciduous trees, and is bordered on three sides by a wooden picket fence. A short paved driveway at the southeast leads from the road to the house. There is a modern brick patio to the southeast of the main house.

CONTRIBUTING HISTORIC RESOURCES

The R.C. Ropp property contains two contributing buildings—the main house and a garage—and two non-contributing buildings—a chicken coop, and a hay barn.

MAIN HOUSE (1928)—Contributing Building

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The main house dates from 1928 and was constructed by owner R.C. Ropp from parts ordered from the Sears & Roebuck Company. It is a two-story, two-bay, frame vernacular house with some Colonial Revival features on the exterior. The house has a side gable roof covered with standing seam metal roof. The house is built on a slightly raised rusticated concrete block foundation.

The house is covered with painted weatherboard siding on all four elevations. It is trimmed with plain wooden corner board and a plain wooden cornice with gable-end returns, below which is a wooden molding strip.

There is a one-story, hip-roofed wrap-around porch that is four bays wide on the east elevation and three bays wide on the south elevation. The porch stands on concrete block piers and has brick steps on the east. Its roof is supported by wooden Tuscan columns. The porch has a wooden floor and narrow, beaded-board ceiling, as well as wide overhanging eave with a plain fascia and molding strip below. There is a one-bay, one-story ell on the southwest corner of the house that continues the porch roofline on the south.

Most windows are paired and have 1/1 double-hung sash with plain board surrounds. The paired windows are flanked by wooden louvered shutters. The windows are not paired on the north gable end. There are 1/1 double-hung sash windows on the attic levels of the two gable ends. The lunette window on the south was added by the current owner ca. 1998..

The main entrance is on the east and consists of a wooden door with a 15-pane window arrangement, flanked by narrow single-pane rectangular sidelights. The wooden Victorian-style screened door is not original. There is an additional entrance on the south, although this door is not original.

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Ropp, R.C. House
Berkeley County, West Virginia

The exterior of the R.C. Ropp House retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Exterior alterations include the lunette window on the south elevation, the brick porch steps, a replaced window on the north, and a partially built wooden deck on the west elevation.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The R.C. Ropp House interior consists of a kitchen, pantry, dining room, living room, and stair hall on the first floor, and three bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. In addition, the house has a partially finished attic and basement.

The first story has retained most of its original hardwood floors and is trimmed with plain board baseboards and plain window and door surrounds. The stairhall has a staircase that rises in two stages from the southeast corner of the house. The staircase has a molded handrail, a square section newel post, two plain balusters for each step, and acorn finials at the bottom of the two exposed stairposts. Each stairpost is trimmed with egg-and-dart molding.

An enclosed stairway on the west leads to the partially finished basement. At two locations above this staircase are original, dated (27 March 1928) paper delivery labels from the Sears & Roebuck Company (catalogue number 8282) to the house's owner R.C. Ropp of Martinsburg, West Virginia.

A single door with a ten-pane window leads from the stairhall to the living room on the north. This room retains its original hardwood floors, plain board trim and window surrounds. This room leads to the dining room on the west. The floors in the dining room have been replaced. To the south is the original kitchen, although the cabinets and appliances are not original. A small pantry is located to the south of the kitchen.

The three bedrooms on the second floor retain their hardwood floors, plain board trim and surrounds, and original wooden doors with pressed glass knobs. A narrow closet stands between the southeast bedroom and the northeast bedroom. The southeast bedroom has been converted to a bathroom by the present owners. A door on the west of the central hall leads to an enclosed stairway to the attic.

Garage (1928)—Contributing Building

A one-story, one-bay, gable-roofed frame garage stands to the south of the main house. It has vertical board siding, a metal roof, and exposed rafter ends. The vehicle entrance is on the east. Although there are no identifying marks on the building materials, the garage appears to have been built at the same time as the main house, probably from materials bought from Sears & Roebuck.

Chicken coop (ca. 1935)—Non-contributing Building

To the southwest of the main house is a one-story, shed-roofed frame chicken coop covered with vertical board siding. According to the current owner, it was built after the main house and garage, probably ca. 1935. It is vacant and in fair condition.

Hay barn (ca. 1935)—Non-contributing Building

At the far southwest corner of the property is a two-story, gable-roofed frame hay barn with an overhang on the east, and entrances on the east and north. According to the current owner, it was built after the main house and garage, probably ca. 1935. It is vacant and in fair condition..

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The R. C. Ropp House is significant under Criterion C for Architecture on the local level as a well-preserved and documented example of a residence in Berkeley County assembled from building parts shipped by the Sears & Roebuck Company. The period of significance is 1928. At two locations above the basement staircase are original, paper delivery labels from the Sears & Roebuck Company (catalogue number 8282) dated 27 March 1928 to the house's owner "R.C. Ropp of Martinsburg, West Virginia." An architectural survey conducted in Falling Waters and Hedgesville Magisterial Districts in 2000-2001 identified the R.C. Ropp House as the only documented example of a house assembled from parts manufactured by Sears & Roebuck in this area. Sears & Roebuck first began selling building parts in 1895 and brought out its *Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans* in 1908. Immensely popular from its inception, Sears' Modern Homes program offered affordable, well-built houses in traditional architectural styles geared to America's expanding middle- and upper middle-class families. It is estimated that nearly 100,000 houses were sold in the United States by Sears between 1908 and the closing of the company's Modern Homes Department in 1940. The R.C. Ropp House design is not known to have been taken directly from any Sears catalogue designs, however. The R.C. Ropp House is in good condition and retains nearly all of its original exterior and interior features intact.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest deed references for this property include a July 8, 1823 deed between the heirs of George Harlan III to Solomon Ropp (Berkeley County Deed Book 34, page 97) and a July 10, 1865 deed from John Scott Harlan and Sarah E. Harlan to Daniel Ropp (Berkeley County Deed Book 69, page 454). Daniel Ropp's will, dated 17 October 1873 devised the property to Baker W. Ropp (Berkeley County Will Book 23, page 45). On 29 December 1921, the two children of Baker Ropp, R. Culler (R.C.) Ropp and Nancy Ropp divided their father's real estate holdings. R.C. Ropp received a five-acre tract (part of the larger 148-acre farm) located on the west side of the road to Harlan Spring (Berkeley County Deed Book 141, page 521).

County property tax records indicate that R.C. Ropp constructed a house and barn on the property sometime during 1928. At two locations above the basement staircase are original, paper delivery labels from the Sears & Roebuck Company (catalogue number 8282) dated 27 March 1928, delivered to the house's owner R.C. Ropp of Martinsburg, West Virginia.

The houses designed and shipped to homeowners by the Sears & Roebuck Company between 1908 and 1940 are an important and (until recently) overlooked aspect of American architectural history. It has been estimated that Sears produced and sold nearly 100,000 mail-order houses in the United States during this period (Jandl 1986: 3). Sears houses are found throughout the United States, in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Because Sears' customer records are not readily available, definitively identifying a house as having been designed by Sears & Roebuck is often difficult (Riddick 1998: 23).

The decision of several major catalogue-based department stores such as Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery Ward to enter the home building market was due to several factors. Probably the most important was the tremendous growth of inner cities during the early 1900s as the economic boom times brought waves of immigrants to America. In response, middle-class urban residents sought to move to suburbs newly opened by rail and streetcar companies, where both land and

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Ropp, R.C. House
Berkeley County, West Virginia

building costs were cheaper. Building technology had advanced to the point that houses could be economically assembled from standardized, pre-cut lumber in popular architectural styles.

Sears was neither the first nor the only company to sell mail-order houses (both Montgomery Ward and Aladdin Homes, among others, sold homes through their catalogues), but they were by far the largest (Jandl 1986: 12). The company had tentatively entered the house building market in 1895 when it began selling pre-cut building materials through its department stores. By 1906, however, this operation had become unprofitable (Emmet 1950: 128).

In that year, Frank W. Kushel moved from the chain's china department to resuscitate the building department. He believed that building materials could be sold directly from Sears' factories, thus reducing storage charges (Jandl 1986: 25). To advertise Sears' new and improved line of building supplies, the *Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans* appeared in 1908 (Riddick 1998: 2). In this catalogue were offered materials, plans, and instructions for building 22 different house styles "complete (and) ready for occupancy" ranging in price between \$650 and \$2250 (Jandl 1986: 14). The Sears Modern Homes program was immediately popular.

By 1911, Sears' Modern Homes catalogues included illustrations of house interiors, which provided prospective homeowners with blueprints for furnishing the house with Sears fixtures and appliances (Jandl 1986: 18). Buyers selected the building style and interior according to their taste and budget from the Sears catalogue. The entire house could be shipped by railroad, with pre-cut lumber and trim, window panes, stairs, fixtures, and even nails and varnish. The owner then hired a local carpenter to assemble and build the house according to Sears' specifications, although many owners modified or added onto the original design during construction.

Sears was not an innovator in architectural styles or construction technology. Its largely unknown staff of architects produced designs that reflected popular architectural styles as reflected in magazines, books, and building manuals of the day. Between 1908 and 1940 they produced 447 different house designs (Riddick 1998: 8). Styles ranged from simple vernacular cottages to elaborate Georgian Revival houses, and included variants of the Bungalow, Four Square, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial, and Cape Cod styles, among others. In 1923, the company began offering manufactured farm buildings, including barns, silos, and stables.

The Sears catalogue houses appealed to the cost-conscious buying public for many reasons. Sears estimated that the use of pre-cut and fitted pieces reduced a carpenter's labor costs by 40% or more. In 1911, Sears began to offer financing for home buyers, usually at a rate of 6% for five years, although often on longer terms as well. Between 1917 and 1921, mortgages were offered with no money down (Jandl 1986: 19). In the 1920s, Sears expanded its product lines to include many different price levels. The Honor Bilt line of Sears homes, for example were typically the largest and most expensive. Less expensive were the more basic Standard Bilt and Simplex Sectional houses, the latter little more than one-story frame shotgun houses or bungalows.

The year 1929 marked the high-water mark for Sears' Modern Homes program. The stock market crash forced many owners into bankruptcy, with the houses reverting to the company. In 1934, Sears liquidated nearly \$11 in home mortgages (Jandl 1986: 19). In 1935, Sears offered only houses for sale and discontinued its mortgage programs.

Identifying a Sears-designed house is often problematic. Few sales records are still kept by the company to verify sales to individual customers. Sears also has not retained most blueprints or architectural drawings. Some owners bought their houses through Sears' stores or offices, and thus were able to specify changes and alterations before the buildings were shipped. Others altered their houses on site in consultation with their carpenter or builder.

The shipping label found on two locations on lumber within the R.C. Ropp House does offer nearly incontrovertible proof that the materials were manufactured and shipped to the owner by Sears & Roebuck. The design, however, cannot be identified with any depicted in its catalogues. Although there are no identifying labels on the garage building materials, from its appearance the garage was built at the same time as the main house, probably from materials bought from Sears & Roebuck.

On 24 January 1929 R.C. Ropp sold to Anna Blanch Ropp his five-acre property "on which a certain building consisting of a house, stable, and other outbuildings" were located (Berkeley County Deed Book 128, page 12). The current owner states that the two outbuildings till on the property (a hay barn and chicken coop) were built ca. 1935 after R.C. Ropp sold the house. Relatives Mary Catherine Downey and Frank L. Downey were willed the house and land by Anna Blanch Ropp (Berkeley County Will Book 31, page 353). They sold it to Nancy Rebecca Ropp on 9 July 1960 (Berkeley County Deed Book 213, page 412). On 8 October 1990 Nancy Ropp sold the house and property (by then reduced to .684 acres) to Fred D. and Joan Dillard (Berkeley County Deed Book 473, page 686).

SUMMARY

The R. C. Ropp House is significant as a well-preserved and documented example of a residence in Berkeley County assembled from building parts shipped by the Sears & Roebuck Company. At two locations above the basement staircase are original, paper delivery labels from the Sears & Roebuck Company (catalogue number 8282) dated 27 March 1928 to the house's owner "R.C. Ropp of Martinsburg, West Virginia." Sears & Roebuck first began selling building parts in 1895 and brought out its *Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans* in 1908. The R.C. Ropp House is not known to have been taken directly from any Sears catalogue designs, however. The R.C. Ropp House and its accompanying garage are in good condition and retain nearly all of their original exterior and interior features intact.

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Ropp, R.C. House
Berkeley County, West Virginia

REFERENCES

Berkeley County Deed Records, Martinsburg, WV

Berkeley County Land Records, Martinsburg, WV

Berkeley County Will Records, Martinsburg, WV

Emmet, Boris. *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck & Company*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1950

GAI Consultants, Inc. *Architectural Survey and National Register Evaluation: Spring Mills and North Mountain Area, Berkeley County, West Virginia*. (Monroeville PA), 2001.

Jandl, Ward and Katherine Cole Stephenson. *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears Roebuck & Company*. Washington DC: Preservation Press. 1986

Riddick, Reilly. *Homes in a Box: Modern Houses from Sears Roebuck*. Altglen PA: Schiffer Press

Ruth, Frances. *The Ropp House, Spring Mills* (Unpublished manuscript), 1976.

Sears Roebuck & Company. *Sears Roebuck Catalogue of Houses*. 1926

Wood, Don C. "Homestead". *The Berkeley Journal* (Issue 11), 1982.

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Ropp, R.C. House
Berkeley County, West Virginia

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property follow the solid black lot lines of the entire .684-acre parcel, known as "Lot A" as shown on a survey dated 28 February 1994, contained in Berkeley County Deed Book 473, page 86.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the entire area historically associated with the R.C. Ropp House and includes the historic approach from Harlan Spring Road, the main house, and associated contributing outbuilding.

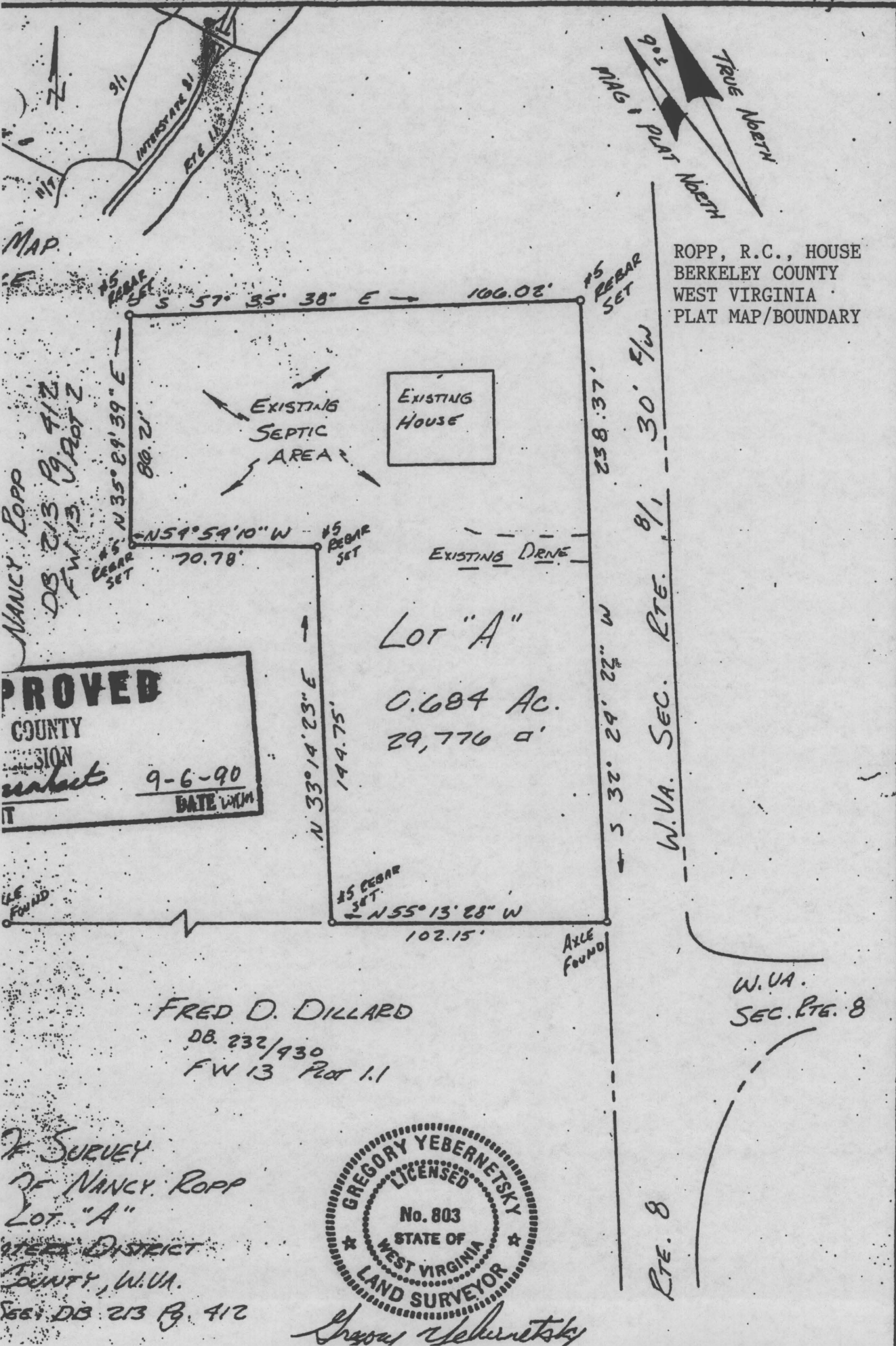
PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are of the Ropp, R.C. House, 2199 Harlan Spring Road, Martinsburg, WV 25401

Photographer: Geoffrey B. Henry, GAI Consultants, Inc. 28 August 2001

Negatives located at West Virginia Division of Culture and History (SHPO), Charleston WV

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Photograph 1 | Main House, Southeast elevation, facing northwest. |
| Photograph 2 | Main House, West elevation, facing east. |
| Photograph 3 | Main House, Living Room on first floor, facing southeast |
| Photograph 4 | Main House, Stair from first to second floor, facing south |
| Photograph 5 | Main House, Stair from first to second floor, facing north |
| Photograph 6 | Garage, East elevation, facing west |
| Photograph 7 | Barn (non-contributing building), facing southwest |



ROPP, R.C., HOUSE
 BERKELEY COUNTY
 WEST VIRGINIA
 PLAT MAP/BOUNDARY

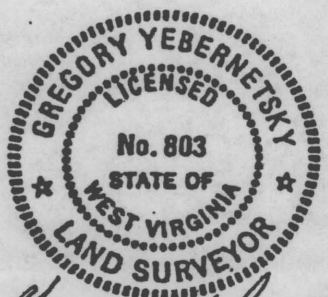
MAP
 NANCY ROPP
 DB 213 PG 412
 FW 13 PLAT 2

PROVED
 COUNTY
 DIVISION
 9-6-90
 DATE W.M.

Lot "A"
 0.684 AC.
 29,776 sq'

FRED D. DILLARD
 DB 232/430
 FW 13 PLAT 1.1

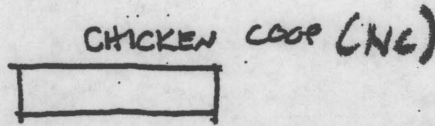
2 SURVEY
 OF NANCY ROPP
 LOT "A"
 DISTRICT
 COUNTY, W. VA.
 868 DB 213 PG 412



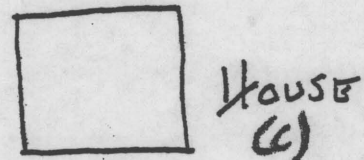
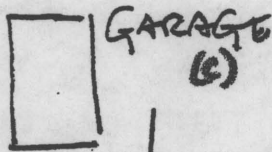
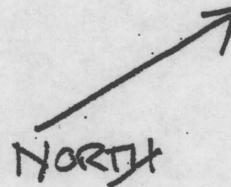
Gregory Yebernetzky

RTE. 8

W. VA.
 SEC. RTE. 8



C = CONTRIBUTING
NC = NON-CONTRIBUTING



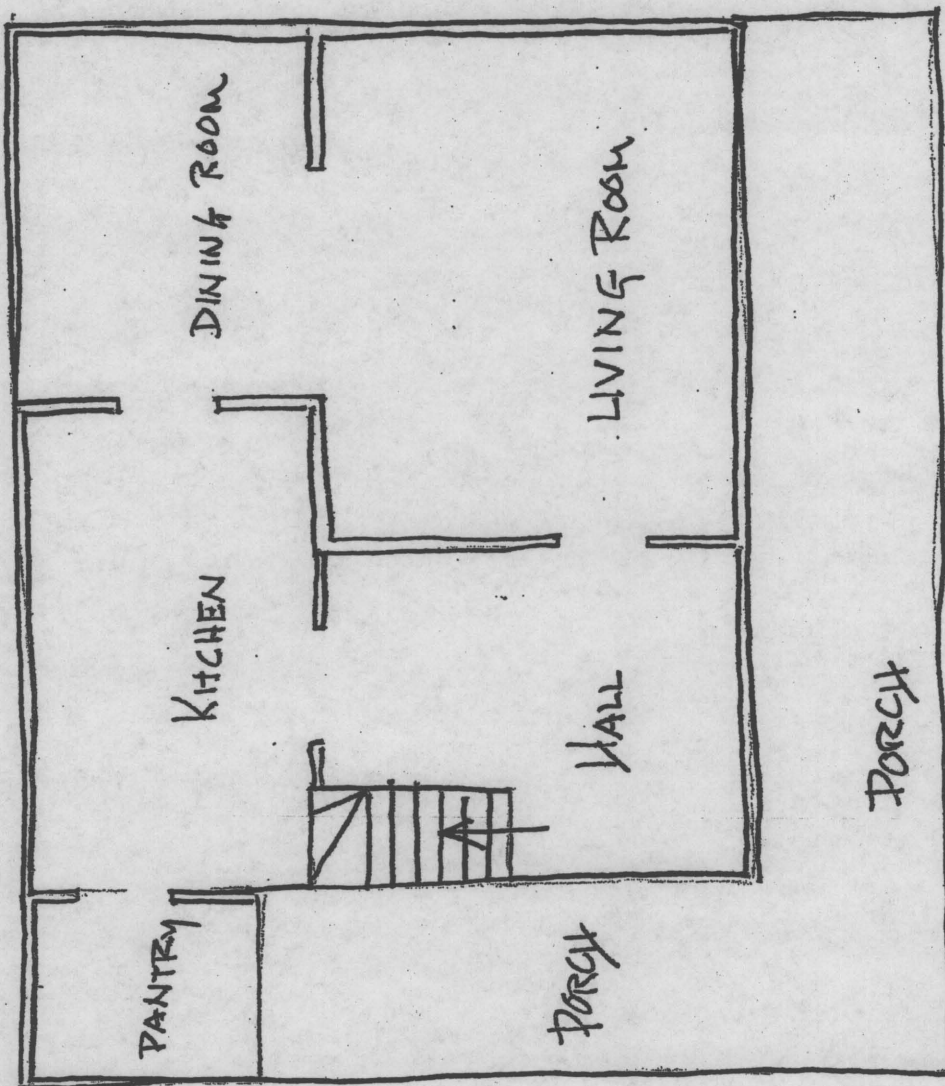
HARLAN SPRING ROAD (CR 8/1)

SKETCH SITE PLAN

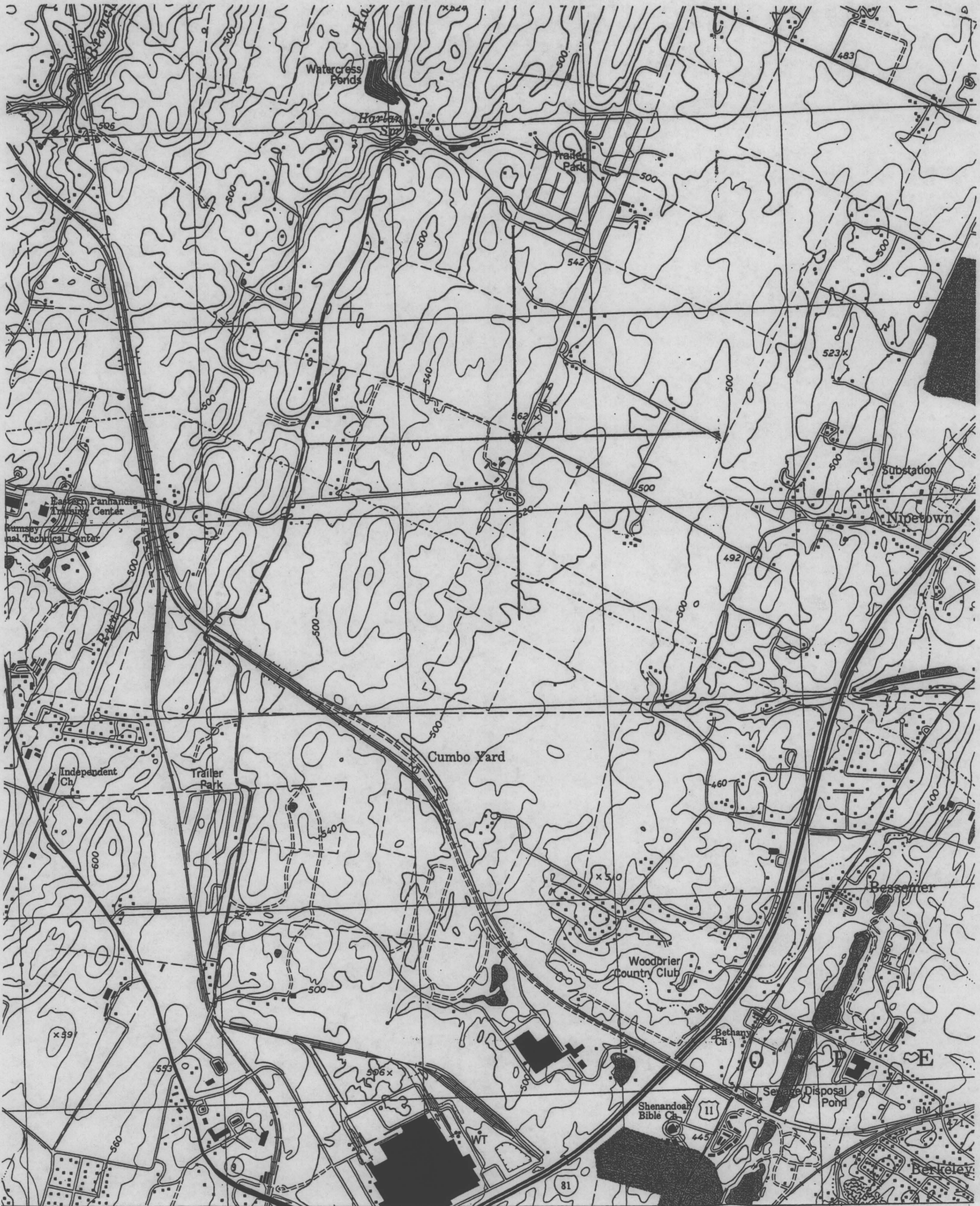
R.C. ROPP HOUSE, 2199 HARLAN SPRING ROAD
BERKELEY COUNTY, WV
(NOT TO SCALE)

G. HENRY 10/01

ROPP, R.C. HOUSE
BERKELEY, WU



SKETCH PLAN
R.C. ROPP HOUSE, 2199 KARLAN SPRINK RD.
BERKELEY COUNTY, WU
(NOT TO SCALE)
GEOFFREY HENRY 10/2001



SCALE 1:24 000

