

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wells-Schaff House

and or common "Welkin"

2. Location

street & number 500 South Wells \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Sistersville \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state West Virginia code 54 county Tyler code 095

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Morton and Barbara Schaff

street & number 500 South Wells Street

city, town Sistersville \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state West Virginia 26175

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tyler County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Middlebourne state West Virginia 26149

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Wells-Schaff house, also called "Welkin", is the grandest example of Federal architecture at Sistersville, West Virginia. It was built in 1832 as the home of the pioneer Wells family. Here the setting of the original building, along with its handsome brick construction and the elegance of its scale and proportions, give it prominence and significance. It stands on a rise above the Ohio River, on the West side of West Virginia Route 2, facing onto a bottom land which represents the remainder of the original 3,000 acre farm. Its multipaned windows, fanlighted doorway and classical porch, mellow brick cornice, and superb siting on a slight eminence facing the river, make it an "important" house and one of local distinction.

The Wells-Schaff house is one of the few remaining buildings of its type remaining along the Ohio River front in this region of West Virginia.

The two-story brick house still bears the imprints of animal paws and fingerprints inbedded in the hand-made brick. The wide central hallway opens to the front and rear entrances to the house. The doorway has a fanlighted transom with the original glass panes and also features three-quarter-length sidelights. The 3-course corbelled brick cornices further evidence classical styling. There are still four working fireplaces with mantel shelves characteristic of the period.

Of particular note, regarding interior features, is the graceful stairway. It is a fine example of stair building. The simple, square balusters, continuous curving walnut hand rail, and scroll ornaments on the stringer combine with the wainscoting to give the hallway a spacious and formal appeal.

Alterations to the original plan include a c. 1894, one story front porch with classical round Doric columns and a non-obtrusive rear brick addition, constructed about 1935. The workmanship and brick generally match the construction of the original building.

About one hundred yards south of the main building there is a small c.1935 summer house constructed on the site of the old slave quarters. The same brick and style is carried out in this building.

The old Wells Family cemetery, located just below the house, between the house and the Ohio River, dates back to Charles Wells who died in 1815. He was the father of Eli Wells, builder of "Welkin". Charles Wells was the founder of Sistersville. The old cemetery is surrounded by a lovely black iron Victorian fence.

"Welkin" is well preserved. Its multi-paned windows, restrained Federal and Greek Revival styling, and bold corbeled brick cornice, are locally significant architectural features. The interior contains original wood trim, such as door and window casings. All the mantels are original save that in the living room.

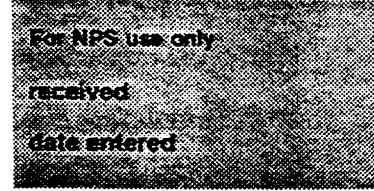
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# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Wells-Schaff House

Continuation sheet "Welkin", Tyler County, WV Item number 7

Page 2

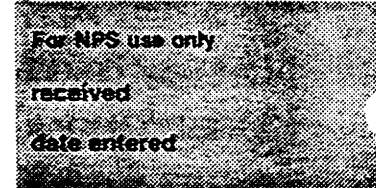


Restoration and renovation work of the c. 1935 period was carried out by architect Howard Sterling of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The major focus of this work was a rounded one-story frame entrance bay which was placed at the rear elevation between the angle of the ell and main block. Detailing of the entrance vestibule is in a subdued Neo-Classical style.

The main house, summer house, and cemetery are all contributing elements that reflect the history and evolution of an important local seat in West Virginia's upper Ohio Valley.

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Page 3

the Flemish bond front elevation brickwork, and stone lintels with corner blocks.

The main house, summer house, and cemetery are all contributing elements that reflect the history and evolution of an important local seat in West Virginia's upper Ohio Valley.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** C. 1832 **Builder Architect** Eli Wells, Builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Wells-Schaff house is significant because it is a well preserved example of pre-civil war Federal architecture in the upper Ohio Valley. Charles Wells seems to have been a man of unusual ability and prominence since he represented Northwestern Virginia in Congress for eight years between 1789 and 1810. The brick mansion, known as "Welkin", was built in 1832 by Eli Wells, a son of Charles Wells, founder of Sistersville, originally known as Wells Landing. Eli had gathered the brick and material for the building of a new house near the bank of the Ohio River but an unusually high flood in the Ohio, which overflowed all the surrounding land, demonstrated to him it would be wiser to erect the new house on higher ground. Accordingly, the brick and materials were all removed to higher ground and the brick dwelling house built. This house still stands on the southern outskirts of Sistersville, facing the Ohio River and near Route 2. It was used for twenty years or more by the Carter Oil Company for its offices in Sistersville prior to their removal to Parkersburg, and for a few years as a club house by the Sistersville Country Club.

The old Wells family cemetery, located below the house, dates back to 1815 and many of the pioneer names of Sistersville and Tyler County, West Virginia are represented in the old cemetery. Several of the twenty two children of Charles Wells and his two wives are buried here and on the face of the tombstone of Charles Wells is found the following inscription:

"Charles Wells, born April 6, 1745, died April 16, 1815; aged 70 years and 10 days; a native of Baltimore County, Maryland, immigrated to Ohio County, Virginia, 1775. He was a practical farmer and the father of twenty-two children by two wives, ten by the first and twelve by the second."

Ephriam Wells, son of Eli Wells, died in 1917 and is buried in the old cemetery. He was the last family member to be buried there. He was the builder of the historic Wells Inn in Sistersville, West Virginia.

The house was renovated and occupied by a great grandson of Eli Wells, John Wells Kinkaid, c. 1935. He occupied the residence until his death in 1974. Robert William Kinkaid, a son of John Wells Kinkaid, and his wife Barbara returned to occupy the house in 1978 from West Texas. Robert died an untimely death in 1980. The house is now owned by his widow and her husband since 1984, Morton Schaff.

The Wells House is a significant example of brick residential architecture in the Upper Ohio Valley, in an area bounded by New Martinsville, West Virginia, to the north, and St. Marys, West Virginia, to the south. The house's distinctive corbeled brick cornice of multiple courses, and center bay three-part window at the second story, are Greek Revival in spirit. The semi-elliptical fanlight above the sidelighted front door is a distinctly Federal feature. Other well preserved architectural details are

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Milton, Charles J. "Landmarks of Old Wheeling", : Charles J. Milton, 1943, pp. 94, 95.

Deed Book of Tyler County, Book 1, p. 14

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5 acres approximately

Quadrangle name New Matamoras, Ohio, WV

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	4	9	9	5	4	0	4	3	7	8	3	6	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Kinkaid Schaff

organization date September 9, 1985

street & number 500 South Wells Street telephone 304-652-8575

city or town Sistersville, state West Virginia 26175

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date November 15, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Wells-Schaff House

Continuation sheet "Welkin", Tyler County, WV Item number 10

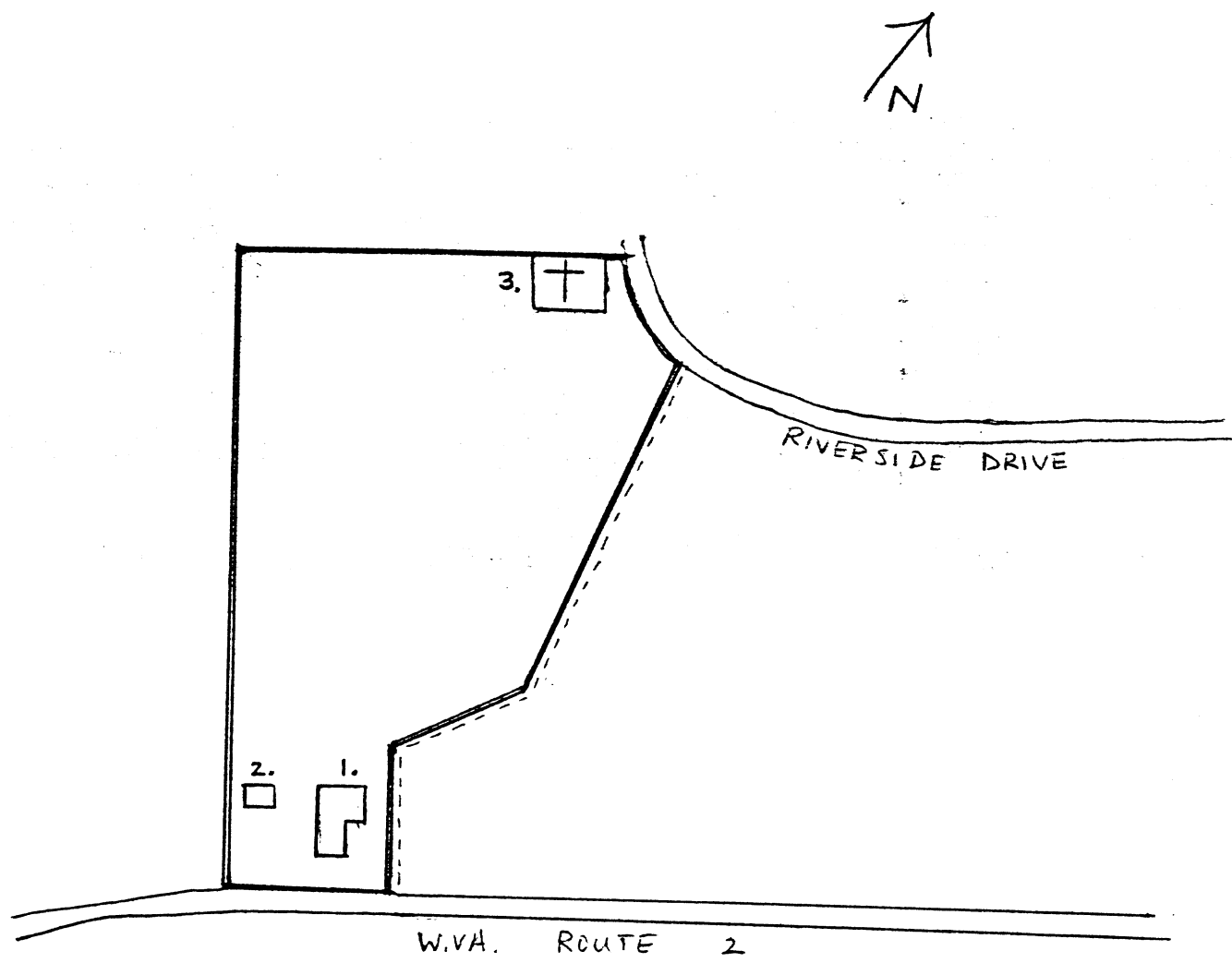
Page 2

Beginning at the point of intersection of the Sistersville corporate line with West Virginia Route 2 (north edge of Route 2), proceed northward approximately 600 ft. along the corporate line of the city to a point of intersection with the southern edge of Riverside Drive; thence approximately 150 ft. along Riverside Drive to the northwest corner of the Wells Cemetery, thence approximately 400 ft. in a straight line southwestward to include the west boundary line of the Wells Cemetery; thence in a straight line approximately 600 ft. southeastward to a point of intersection with West Virginia Route 2; and thence approximately 175 ft. along the north side of Route 2 to the point of beginning (see sketch map).

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"WELKIN", SISTERSVILLE, TYLER CO., W.VA.



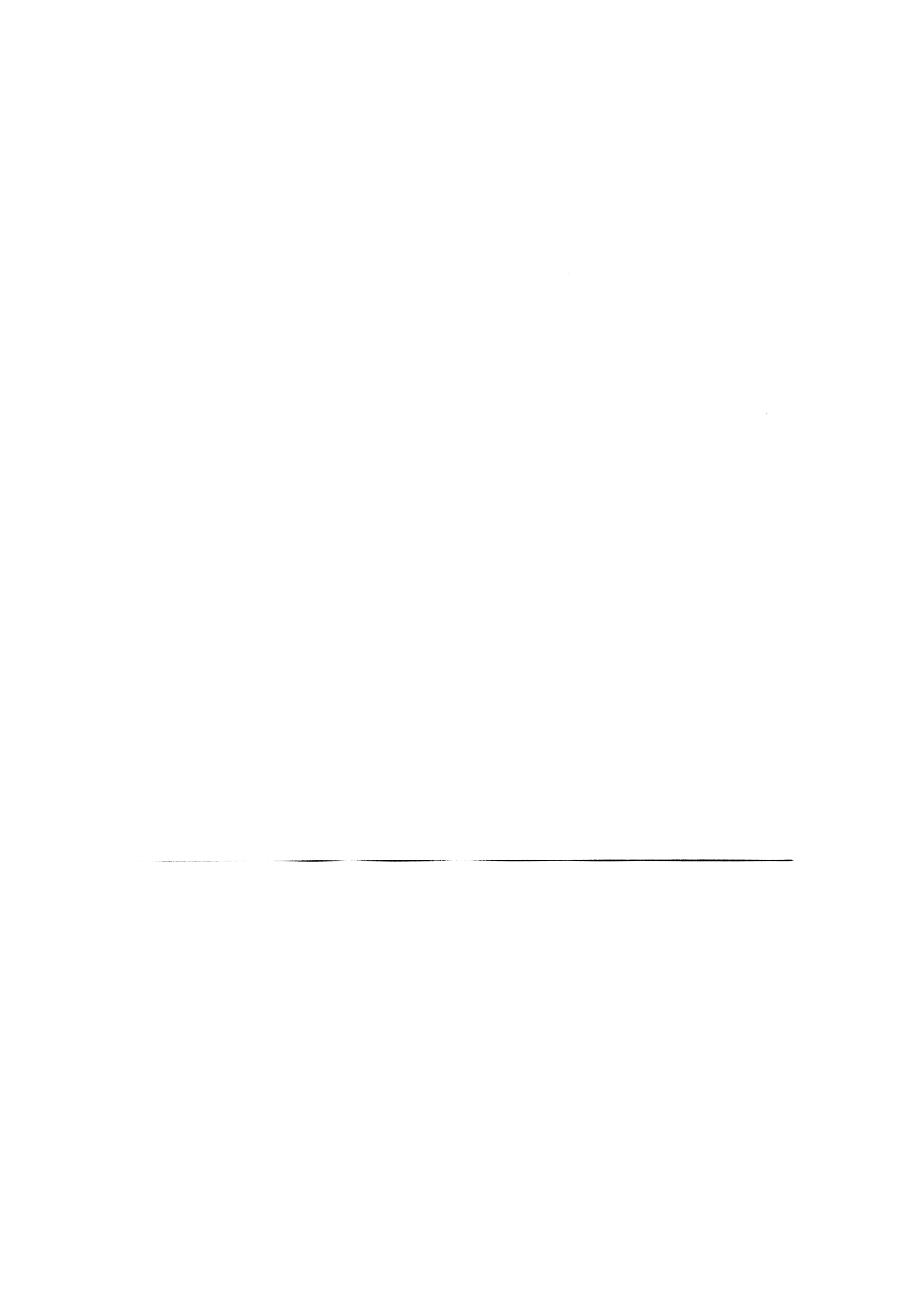
1. "WELKIN"

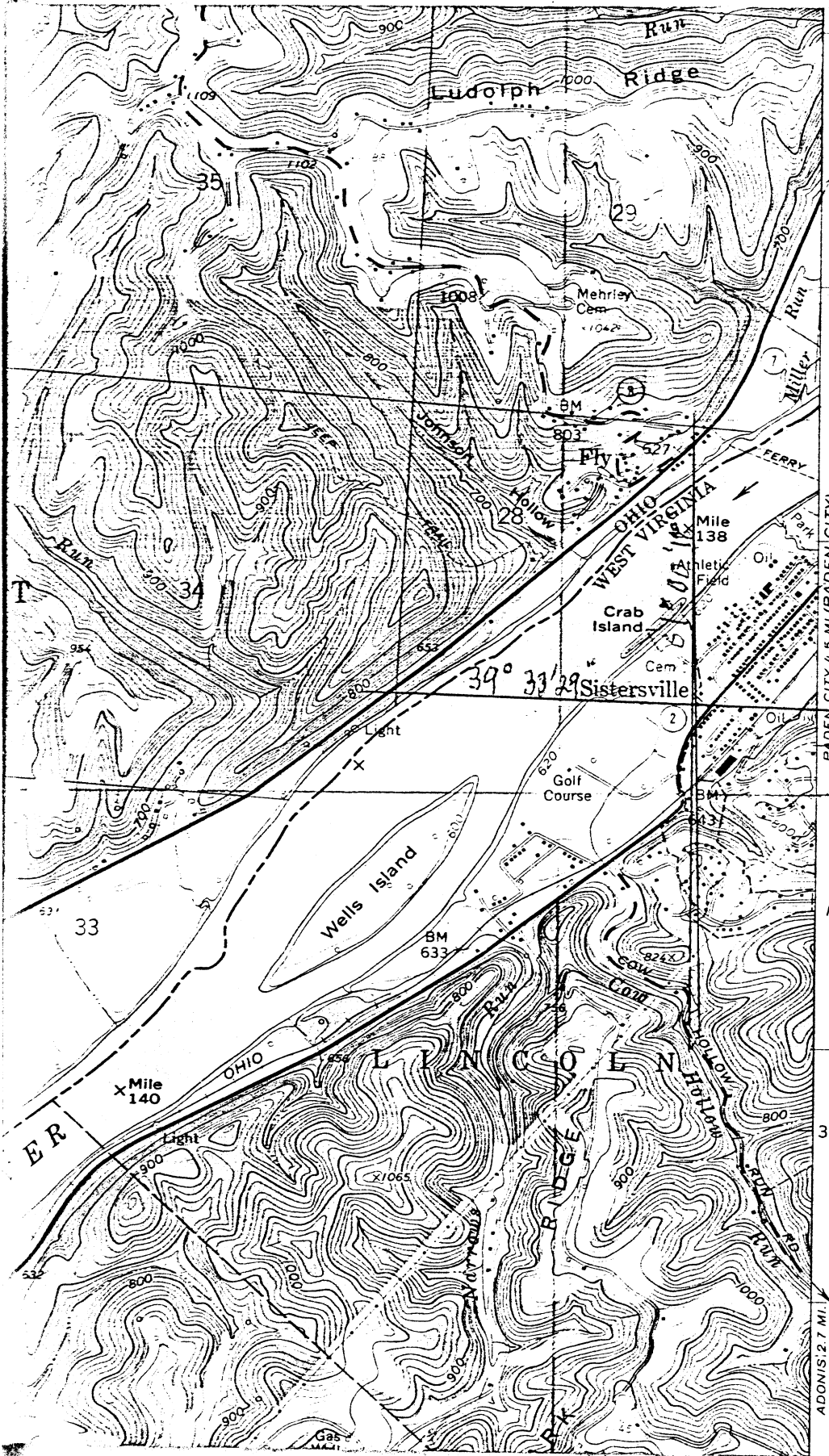
2. SUMMER HOUSE

3. WELLS CEMETERY

— boundary of nominated property  
- - - - CORPORATE BOUNDARY (CITY LIMIT)

1 IN. = 200 ft. APPROXIMATELY





"WELKIN"  
 500 SOUTH WELLS ST.  
 SISTERSVILLE,  
 TYLER COUNTY,  
 WEST VIRGINIA  
 UTM:

7/499540/4378260

NEW HATAMORHS  
 OHIO-VI.VA.  
 QUAD.

7.5 MINUTE

32'30"

SARDIS 5.9 MI.

ADONIS: 2.7 MI.

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