

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 an 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 processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Spitler, Isaac, Homenpace
other names/site number VDHR File No. 69-67

2. Location

street & number 2948 Oak Forest Lane N/A not for publication
city or town Luray vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Page code 139 zip code 22835

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 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] 4/11/97
Signature of certifying official/Title date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
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 commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 _____

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	
5	0	buildings
2	0	sites
0	0	structures
3	0	objects
10	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic / single dwelling
- Agriculture / agricultural outbuildings
- Domestic / secondary structures

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic / single dwelling
- Agriculture / agricultural outbuildings
- Domestic / secondary structures

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL

FEDERAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone : Limestone

walls Brick

roof Metal

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

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

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Exploration / Settlement

Ethnic Heritage: European (German)

Period of Significance

ca. 1740 to 1857

Significant Dates

ca. 1740, 1826, 1857

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Spitler, John - builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 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: Dept. of Historic Resources
221 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219

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Isaac Spitler Homeplace
Page County, Virginia

Narrative Description

The Isaac Spitler Homeplace is a farmstead located in a rural setting in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains about three miles south of Luray, Virginia. The architecture, association, and feeling of the surviving cluster of buildings reflect the eighteenth-century settlement and early-nineteenth-century development of the self-sustaining German immigrant farms of the lower Shenandoah Valley.

The family residence is the dominant building in the farmstead. It is a two-story farmhouse similar to many seen in south-central Pennsylvania, western Maryland and the lower Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is built into a hillside in the center of what was the original farm settlement, about two hundred feet east of Mill Creek which flows through the farmstead. Its exterior walls are red brick. The completed building, that is the original building and a later wing, has gable-end interior chimneys, symmetrical window placement, and a three-room floor plan typical of other early-nineteenth-century Germanic homes in the area.¹

Completed in 1826², the dimensions of the original building are 27' x 36'. The construction of the wooden elements of the original building employed hand-hewn timbers with mortise and tenon joinery fastened with wooden pegs. A 22' x 22' wing was added in 1857.³ The plan of the later wing is nearly identical to that of the original building, turned and positioned to create the current L-shaped structure. Its exterior architectural details are even more restrained than those of the original house. However, the basic construction method is somewhat more modern than that found in the original building. The attic mortise and tenon joinery, with wooden pegs securing the rafters at the roof peak, for example, gave way to cut nails and a ridge board. Saw marks on the wooden members show that, in both sections of the house, the wooden elements were cut by an up-and-down sawmill.

This expansion of the building also included some modifications to the original house. These involved changing the two separate entrances on the east elevation to a single door with a four-light transom and sidelights. The later wing has two separate entrances on the north elevation that lead into the new living room and kitchen. The 1857 modification included the relocation of an interior stairwell in the original house. The relocated stairwell, which is in the center of the house and leads straight away from the new single main-entrance door with transom and sidelights, reflects the owners' attempt to convert the original house to what they may have regarded as a more fashionable central-passage single-pile plan. This major modification also included the addition of a three-level porch at the rear of the building. The wooden structural elements of both sections of the house, such as joists, beams and rafters, are yellow (heart) pine.

The walls in both sections of the farmhouse are solid brick. The exterior brickwork of the original house is laid in Flemish bond at the front and five-course American bond at the sides and rear. The bricks were probably fired on the farm. A molded brick cornice extends across the front and rear elevations, and it has an unusual iron support rod which encircles the original house just beneath the cornice. The brickwork of the 1857 addition is laid in Flemish bond at the front and seven-course American bond at the sides and rear. The bricks are a slightly different color and texture than those in the original house and were probably made elsewhere. There is no molded brick cornice on this wing and there is no iron support rod. The gable roof on both sections of the house is now covered

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with seamed metal.

The building has four chimneys which vented eight fireplaces. The windows on the main level of both wings have nine-over-six double-hung sash, except for the new entrance foyer and garage additions, which have six-over-six. Windows are six-over-six sash on the other two levels.

Unlike the original brick house, in which no provision for a kitchen was made (the kitchen was in a wood-frame or log addition, with fireplace, attached to the rear of the building), the later wing had a kitchen within its brick walls. That room contained a large cooking fireplace. With the coming of wood-burning cooking stoves in the late 1800s, a 12' x 13' shed-roofed wood-frame room was added to the rear of the later wing. This extension accommodated a wood-fired cooking range and became the new kitchen. The former kitchen became a large dining room for the family of ten then living in the home. No other modifications, with the exception of an interior bathroom installed in the original house in the late 1930s, were made until a renovation of the entire building was done in 1990.

About 1900, the building was electrified. Exposed knob and tube wiring provided power to ceiling light fixtures in all rooms. The power source was a small family-owned hydroelectric plant located nearby in Mill Creek.⁴ In the 1920s, this was replaced with a gasoline engine generator and storage batteries located in the lower level of the 1857 wing. That power source served until rural electrification reached the farm in the late 1930s.⁵ The exposed knob and tube interior wiring remained in place and functional until 1990.

The interior of the home features five staircases, massive woodwork on its door and window frames, plank ceilings, heart pine floors, and the original clothes presses and cupboards. A number of doors show the artificial wood-grain effect created by the nineteenth-century painting technique known as combing. The original fireplace surrounds remain, including one elaborate example with beautifully carved mantel and pilasters. Many window lights contain early hand-blown cylinder panes. The original wrought-iron hinges, latches, knobs, and locks are evident throughout the building. Iron pegs, nails and hooks, the products of home blacksmithing, are also there.

Perhaps the most historic site on the property is what remains of a double-unit stone outbuilding which sheltered and sustained the original settlers (about 1738-1739⁶) and two succeeding generations. It is the ruin of a 16' by 50' building constructed of partly coursed limestone, quarried on the property. Although not much remains of this structure, from the nature of the ruin, earlier photographs, and written descriptions, a clear picture can be made of how it looked.

According to photographs and a verbal description in the 1936 WPA Historical Inventory of Page County, Virginia, there was a 16' x 16' opening between two enclosed rooms. A single gable roof covered the open area and the rooms on each side of it. This arrangement created a central semi-protected area which may have served as a summer kitchen. It also provided cover for the entrance door into the west room. This central area could be enclosed in the winter by barn-like doors on each open side and heated by a 6½-foot-wide cooking fireplace. The manteltree is a large wood beam, 17" square and 9' long. The fireplace has two iron cranes, still operating, from

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which the cooking pots were suspended. Next to the fireplace is the foundation of a brick bake oven. The 16' x 17' west room, *very likely the living quarters* of this unusual building, contained a fireplace and a one-half-story loft. It had a built-in cupboard and was nicely finished with plastered walls. The chair rail and other woodwork were painted red and the ceiling was made of wide inch-thick tongue-and-groove boards.⁷ Beneath the wood floor, in one corner, a 4' x 4' stone-lined pit may have served as a small root cellar. This area could also have served as a hiding place, and it has been so described in at least one study.⁸ An exterior covered stairwell of limestone steps leads to the below-ground level of this house, which contained a spring. The other fully enclosed room of this building, 16' x 14' on the east side of the open area, probably served as a smokehouse. This room has two 2" x 24" slits in each of three walls to permit the passage of smoke to the outside. It is a common misconception in the local area that this room was a defensive fortification. This error is made in the 1936 WPA historical inventory and repeated in the Spitler family genealogical study. In an extreme situation, it could, perhaps, have served as a fort.

The design of this double-unit building was simple but very functional. The quality of the stonework in the mostly intact four walls of the east room evidence the skill of the builder. In the 1920s, the fireplace and chimney in the west room fell away from the building, taking most of the west wall with it.⁹ In 1974, the deplorable condition of the building prompted this recorded comment: "Now little more than a shell, the Isaac Spitler House is a poignant reminder of the possible fate of many of Virginia's earliest structures."¹⁰ The west room of the building was later demolished, and all that remains is its below-ground level.

The farmstead also includes the stone chimney and other masonry remains of an 18' x 24' log building. This was probably the first building erected in the farmstead and very likely served as habitation for the original settlers during their first Virginia winter. Later, according to local reports, it served as additional living space, to house a loom, as a summer kitchen and as living quarters for servants. The large wood beam manteltree and fine nature of the stonework on the chimney is evidence that it might also have been built by the original settlers. A photograph taken in the early 1900s shows that vertical board siding had been fastened to the exterior log walls. This building is located near the double-unit stone outbuilding.

A 22' x 12' gable-roofed wellhouse and dairy, constructed of coursed limestone, is near the remains of the log building. The excellence of the stonework in this small building also indicates that it was built by the same hand that constructed the log house and the double-unit stone outbuilding. This building is in good condition. Its wooden shingles have been replaced by corrugated metal roofing and the original windlass and bucket, and later wooden pump, have been replaced by an electric freeze-proof hydrant. The well, about three feet in diameter, is lined with stones to a depth of about twenty feet to the surface of the water. After 260 years, the well is functional and the water is good. The appearance of the wellhouse is much the same as when it was built, probably in the 1740s.

A rare example of the large vernacular Switzer or Swisher barns erected by the early German pioneers is a pivotal building in the farmstead.¹¹ The interior part of this building, probably erected in the 1750s, is the original smaller barn constructed of very large V-notched yellow (heart) pine logs. Six of these logs, positioned high in the upper

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part of the inner structure, are sixty-five feet long. A wood frame, weatherboard, gable-roofed outer structure was later built around and over the smaller log barn. This was obviously an ingenious plan from the beginning, and was most probably completed sometime before 1800. The dimensions of the complete building are 50' x 65'. It is about 50' high at the peak of the gable roof. The main floor contains a central threshing floor, two large haymows, general storage space, and a granary. The lower level has five large enclosed areas, separated by walls and fences, to accommodate different species of livestock. A tack and harness room was at one end, outside of the log structure. The general appearance of the structure today differs very little from its appearance during the nineteenth century.

A 14' x 16' one-room gable-roofed building is located near the stone wellhouse and dairy. This wood-frame building, of unknown construction date, has weatherboard siding and was used at various times as a house for hired farm labor, a poultry barn and a mechanical shop. A one-hole privy is located in a closet under a stair leading to a loft in the building. Its wood shingles have been replaced by a seamed metal roof.

A 24' x 24' combination wagon shed and corncrib is another farm outbuilding located within the farmstead. Its construction date is also unknown. Its hand-hewn timbers were obviously taken from another older structure of mortise and tenon construction, perhaps the kitchen addition to the original farmhouse. It has vertical board siding. In addition to the corncrib, this gable-roofed structure contains two covered areas, one of them a drive-through, for storage of wagons and other wheeled equipment. Its original wooden shingle roof has been replaced with seamed metal.

Additional contributing resources in the farmstead are a set of stone steps which were used to assist persons in mounting horses and getting into wagons, and two eight-foot-high stone gateposts with the date DE 2 1843 inscribed on one of them. The location within the farmstead of other outbuildings, such as an icehouse, a large woodshed, a hoghouse, several poultry sheds, a water-powered up-and-down sawmill, and the hydroelectric plant, are known, but little or no trace of them remains. A three-fourth-acre recreational pond, constructed in 1985, is situated on the south side of the cluster of buildings described above. The pond lies within the perimeter fence of the farmstead which has been extended to include it.

Also located on the farm are a lime pot, a quarry, and a number of stone walls most of which are in good condition. A small family cemetery, containing nine graves, is a few feet over the fence line on an adjoining farm. The cemetery was located on the Isaac Spitler Homeplace until a land division within the family occurred in 1894. These resources, and the Elk Run meeting house, are not included in the property that is the subject of this nomination.

The present owners, Chester and Rita Taylor, purchased the Isaac Spitler Homeplace in 1984. They promptly took steps to prevent further deterioration of the buildings and structures and instituted conservation practices to restore the fertility of the land and to check erosion on its rolling terrain. For the latter effort, they received the Page County Conservation Farmer of the Year Award for 1985 presented by the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District.

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Until 1990, the farmhouse had, over its lifetime of 175 years, seen very little in the way of modernization. That year, it was renovated by the present owners. Particular attention was paid in the renovation to preserving the original fireplace surrounds, doors, plank ceilings, heart pine floors, window sash, other interior woodwork and the early hardware. Three porches, including the three-level porch at the rear of the building, were replaced. They were structurally unsound because of wood rot. The three-level porch replacement added three large enclosed rooms, one on each level. A gable-roofed double garage and a gable-roofed foyer at the kitchen and living room double-door entrance to the 1857 wing were also added. Central heating, air conditioning, insulation, ~~and~~ new electrical and plumbing systems, a relocated kitchen and three and one-half new bathrooms were added. Seven of the eight fireplaces were rebuilt. Careful planning went into maintaining the historic integrity of the building, preserving its traditional farmhouse character, and interpreting the evolutionary manner in which it came to its present configuration.

Steps have been taken to preserve the large barn and other outbuildings. Nothing in this regard has been done with the double-unit stone outbuilding. However, the present owners intend to restore at least the smokehouse portion of that building.

1. Garret, Historical Atlas, p.42.
2. Land Books, 97th Regt. Shenandoah County, Woodstock, VA 1825-1831. 1827, p.30.
3. Land Book, Page County, Luray, VA, 1858, p.40.
4. Shirley, Thomas R., Jr., Personal communication, March 6, 1996.
5. Ibid.
6. Spittler, The Descendants of John Spittler, p.3.
7. Work Projects administration, WPA Historical Inventory, p.465.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Architectural Survey of Page County, Virginia, pages unnumbered.
11. Wayland, The German Element, pp. 191-192.

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Page County, Virginia**Statement of Significance**

The Isaac Spitler Homeplace, located in the Mill Creek area of Page County, Virginia, about three miles south of the town of Luray, is an early German farmstead that reflects the building traditions and cultural values of German immigrants who settled in the lower Shenandoah Valley in the colonial period and prospered. The property is architecturally significant for its notably complete collection of early domestic and farm buildings, illustrating agricultural developments in the lower Valley from the mid-18th century through the Civil War. Preserved on the property from the 18th century are an exceptionally rare Switzer log barn, a stone dairy and well house, and the stone ruins of a log house and stone outbuilding, both of which are believed to have been built between 1740 and 1753 by John Spitler, a stonemason and the first settler on the property. The dominant feature on the four-acre remnant of the original homestead is a simple Federal-style brick farmhouse, constructed by his grandson, Isaac Spitler, in 1826 and expanded in 1857. Incorporating such traditional German architectural elements as an asymmetrical floor plan and two central front entrances, this dwelling served as a frequent gathering place for the German Baptist Brethren in Page County until the Elk Run meetinghouse was erected nearby in 1846. John Spitler's heirs and descendants resided on this property until 1934. The present owners, Chester and Rita Taylor carefully renovated the brick farmhouse in 1990.

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Page County, Virginia**Historical Background**

During the 1726-1746 period of first settlement in the lower Shenandoah Valley, three distinct ethnic German neighborhoods developed. The first such area, settled in 1726, was the Massanutten Colony on the South Fork of the Shenandoah in what is now Page County, Virginia.¹ This settlement expanded over the following ten or fifteen years to merge with the Opequon Colony, grown out of the original Jost Hite group and located near Strasburg, and the Shenandoah Colony located south of Woodstock on the North Fork and the western slope of the Massanutten mountain.² This settlement pattern provided the new inhabitants with some protection, the familiar cultural society of their homeland, the common use of the mother tongue, and made mutual assistance possible. The German immigrant farmers were, for the most part, industrious, gentle and devout people. They were Lutherans and Reformed from southern Germany, and Mennonites from the Palatinate and the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. There also were Brethren, officially German Baptist Brethren, but also called Dunkards or Dunkers.³

The first settlers of the nominated property were John and Elizabeth Spitler.⁴ Their church affiliation was Brethren, and they emigrated from the Palatinate to America because of religious intolerance or, perhaps, to avoid military service, to which the sect was opposed. In 1736, like many Germans before them and later, they traveled down the Rhine to Rotterdam, and from there took passage for the arduous eight-to-twelve-week voyage to Philadelphia.⁵

In living within the German immigrant community in Pennsylvania, probably Germantown (long since absorbed by greater Philadelphia), the Spitlers undoubtedly heard about the mountains and fertile valley, so like their homeland, which lay to the south.⁶ John, and certainly a number of other restless men new to America, decided to go and investigate. They probably used the summer of 1737 or 1738 to do this. They liked what they saw. During that exploratory visit they, most probably, marked their claims to the land each chose for himself in an area adjacent to the Massanutten colony and on the watershed to the east of the South Fork. The group collectively laid claim to a large area on both sides of Mill Creek and its upper tributaries. Within that area, John Spitler, alone, claimed over one thousand acres.

The following year, in 1738 or 1739, John and Elizabeth Spitler arrived at that place with a group of other German immigrant families from Pennsylvania.⁸ They arrived in mid-summer, having traveled by horseback and on foot because there were no roads into the lower Valley. They followed the ancient Indian trail to the southwest, forded the Susquehanna and the Potomac, and took the trail to the left where it forked around the north end of the Massanutten. The journey was slow and could have taken as long as two months because they probably brought other livestock, in addition to the horses, with them.⁹

Their first shelter was a hut, probably made of saplings and covered with the sheet of canvas used on the journey for overnight shelter. By that winter, through hard work and mutual assistance, all of the families probably had more substantial shelter in the form of a log building. John Spitler was a stonemason, and, unlike most of his neighbors who built their first permanent home of logs, he built his from the native limestone so abundant in the area.¹⁰ The stone building, of an unusual double-unit design, was probably finished within a few years after a log building was completed.

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Because of the uncertainty as to the exact location of the line marking the southern extent of the western reaches of Lord Fairfax's proprietary in the Northern Neck of Virginia, there was a delay before the Spitlers and their neighbors were able to obtain land title deeds from Lord Fairfax. The Fairfax Line was surveyed in 1746 and settled the question--the Mill Creek area was within the Fairfax Proprietary.¹¹ The deed from Lord Fairfax to John Spitler is dated September 16, 1749. It conveyed 400 acres on both sides of Mill Creek. This was, apparently, all that John could afford at the time. But, he continued to occupy the balance of the land he had claimed about ten years earlier. The deed refers to the creek as Mill Run in the metes and bounds description.

John Spitler was killed in 1753 in an accident incident to raising a log building.¹² That building could be the inner structure of the large Switzer barn which stands today on the farmstead. John had lived on his farm about thirteen years. He left his widow with two sons, Abraham and Jacob, ages six and three, both of whom were probably born in the double-unit stone building.

The Spitlers, and other Pennsylvania settlers in the lower Valley, lived in peace with the rather sparse Indian population in the area. However, about a year after John's death, tribes to the west, incited by the French, persuaded the few local Indians to join them in war against the white settlers. To the great consternation of the Valley settlers, the Indians left the area in 1754 to do just that.¹³ Thus commenced a decade of near constant fear and apprehension. Abraham and Jacob, and their mother who remarried a Mr. Hayes, came through this period physically unharmed. However, in 1758, a neighbor, John Stone, was killed by the Indians and his family carried off.¹⁴ The same year, a raiding party also killed Jacob Holtiman's family and plundered the Brubaker home.¹⁵ The Treaty of Paris ended the French and Indian War in 1763, but the slaughter did not stop. In 1764, Indians massacred the John Roads family.¹⁶ These were terrifying local events for the small Spitler/Hayes family.

In 1771, Lord Fairfax deeded Abraham, then 25 years of age, 300 acres adjacent to the 400 acres he had, under the law of primogeniture, inherited earlier by reason of his father's untimely death.¹⁷ The following year, Jacob, then 23 years old, obtained a deed from Lord Fairfax, for 390 acres higher on the branches of Mill Creek.¹⁸ This completed the transfer of title to his two sons of all the land claimed over thirty years earlier by John Spitler. During that period, the early years of subsistence agriculture had given way to an economic pattern of increasing prosperity based upon artisan labor and regional trade in the products of the developing farms.

The brothers, Abraham and Jacob, were both Revolutionary War soldiers, serving in Michael Reader's company of the Virginia militia.¹⁹ That unit was made up largely of the sons of the German pioneers in the lower Valley. Although the Brethren were opposed on religious grounds to taking oaths, to war as a means of settling disputes, and to bearing arms against their fellow man, many of these men, like Abraham and Jacob, set aside their religious convictions to fight the British.

At some point in his early life, Abraham left the Brethren Church and joined the Primitive Baptist denomination, in which he served as a lay minister for about sixty years.²⁰ During the late 1700s and early 1800s Abraham and his wife, Mary, reared a family of ten children in the stone building and the log building near it. The federal census of 1810 records that Abraham was the head of a household of ten. Two children were born later. Of the ten

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children of Abraham and Mary Spitler, five were daughters, all of whom married into other families in the German farming community. Two of them, with their husbands and children, and their two oldest brothers and their families, joined the general westward migration of the younger generation. They all resettled in what is now Fairfield County, Ohio, joining their cousins already there.²¹ That large family group was the progenitor of hundreds of John and Elizabeth Spitler descendants now living in the Mid-West and elsewhere farther to the west.

In 1821, Abraham and Mary Spitler divided their farm, conveying 225 acres to each of the three sons who remained in Virginia with them, Isaac, Abraham, Jr., and Daniel. The property transferred to Isaac included the original farmstead. Isaac and his wife, Esther, had two children at that time, Nathan and Rachael. The family moved from elsewhere on the farm into the double-unit stone building constructed by Isaac's grandfather. A third child, Matilda, was born there in 1823, and a fourth, Samuel, in 1825. Samuel was the last of at least sixteen children who were born in that building.

In 1825, Isaac's brother Abraham, Jr. and his wife, Mary, completed construction of a new home on the property conveyed to Abraham, Jr. in 1821. The parents, Abraham, Sr. and Mary, had moved out of the stone house to live in the new home with the family of Abraham, Jr. It was located about one-half mile to the south of Isaac and Esther's home and upstream on Mill Creek. The new home was named White Hall.²²

Isaac and Esther also began to plan a more comfortable home. In 1826, they completed construction of a brick farmhouse much larger than the stone building they had lived in for six years. The design of the new building reflected the English and Germanic traditions which influenced the architectural style of the more substantial nineteenth-century rural homes in the East. Like many similar homes found on German immigrant farms in southern Pennsylvania, western Maryland and the lower Shenandoah Valley, it incorporated gable-end interior chimneys, symmetrical placement of doors and windows, and an interior arrangement mindful of an asymmetrical plan typical of earlier homes in the Rhineland. Isaac and Esther located their new home in the midst of the group of structures which had risen within the farmstead since development began there seventy-five years before. The family of six moved into their new farmhouse and, the following year, the youngest child, Joseph, was born there.

Although his father and brother changed their religious affiliation, Isaac and his family remained devout members of the Brethren Church. The Brethren were officially opposed to slavery, but some families did own a few slaves.²³ The 1830 Federal Census records that one male slave lived with the Isaac Spitlers. But they, like the other German farmers of the Valley, did not rely on that source of labor. Their large families, and mutual assistance, provided that element of production. The slave or two owned by the head of the household worked in the home and in the field beside the family members.²⁴

The early Brethren settlers in Virginia, following the practice of the Church in Germany, did not build meeting houses. This was possibly because they wanted their religion to be family-centered and thus preferred to conduct group worship in their homes.²⁵ It is clear that they were clannish people and that family ties were extremely important to them. Records of the Brethren in Page County reflect a number of instances of services in the Isaac Spitler home. Elder John Kline, a pre-eminent Brethren preacher, organizer and political activist in Virginia,

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preached there several times in the 1830s and 1840s.²⁶ Worship services were usually followed by social events of a grand scale, characterized by much conviviality and great quantities of good food. All of this undoubtedly was centered in the large parlor in the Isaac Spitler home.

Before too many years, however, attendance at these worship services outgrew the capacity of the homes that had been built by the Brethren families. In 1846, Isaac Spitler and the Elder John Kline were two of four founding trustees of the Elk Run congregation.²⁷ That year, the trustees acquired a small plot within sight of Mill Creek and just off the main road on an adjoining farm owned by Esther's brother, Abraham Rothgeb, and built a mission meetinghouse there.²⁸ That simple structure, about one-half mile from the Isaac Spitler Homeplace, still stands. The name Elk Run was chosen to avoid confusion with the parent Mill Run congregation located near Port Republic and because it was said that an elk had been seen at one time in Mill Creek.²⁹ It also avoided confusion with the older Mill Creek meetinghouse (known also as the Mauck Meeting House) used at different times by the Mennonites and Baptists, located about two miles downstream in the village of Hamburg. Actually, most counties in the Shenandoah Valley have in them at least one Mill Creek or Mill Run.

Page County was formed in 1831. Abraham, Jr. became a civic leader and was appointed a Justice of the Page County Court. In 1845, he was appointed Sheriff. He translated many of the early German language official records of Page County into English.³⁰ Abraham, Jr. and Mary Spitler reared five children at White Hall. All of them, except the youngest son, Mann, emigrated to western Indiana in what is now Jasper and Newton Counties. Mann became a Colonel in the Virginia militia, served in the Civil War, and later represented Page County in the Virginia House of Delegates and the state Senate.³¹ He lived his entire life at White Hall. Regrettably, White Hall, an imposing structure within sight of the Isaac Spitler Homeplace, suffered great neglect and a fire in later years. It is now completely destroyed. Only a few traces of the foundation remain.

The civic activism of his father, brother and nephew were not matched by Isaac. As a devout Brethren, he did not seek a share of public or political life. This was because the Brethren wished to avoid show and display, because of their religious convictions in regard to formal oaths, and because the holding of certain offices might require them to violate their peace principles.³² However, this did not preclude Isaac and his sons from leadership in religious activities. When the Elk Run congregation was independently organized in 1850, Isaac was appointed as deacon. On at least three occasions, in 1850, 1853 and 1863 the Elder John Kline preached at the Elk Run meetinghouse, and stayed with Isaac and Anna Spitler.³³ In the 1850s, Isaac, a prosperous farmer, as were the Brethren farmers generally, purchased two nearby farms for his sons, Nathan and Samuel, both of whom became elders of the Church of the Brethren. They served the Mount Zion congregation in the Stony Man area of Page County in that capacity for many years. Elder Samuel Spitler died in the pulpit in 1898.³⁴

During the 1840s, Esther died and Isaac remarried a woman named Anna. No record of the date of Esther's death or of the remarriage can be found, nor has it been determined what Anna's maiden name was. The Federal Census of 1850 shows that "Ann" was then living on the farm with Isaac Spitler and his two youngest sons, Samuel and Joseph, then twenty-four and twenty-two years of age. In 1862, Isaac wrote his will, and in it he referred to "my beloved wife Anna."

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Isaac's youngest son, Joseph, lived his entire life on the homeplace. He was born in the new farmhouse in 1827 and died in it in 1885. In 1857, Joseph, then twenty-nine years old, and his father and stepmother, substantially expanded the farmhouse with the addition of a second wing. The plan of the new wing, also brick, was nearly identical to that of the original building, but turned and positioned to the rear so as to complete the L-shaped structure. The conservative exterior details of the addition closely reflected those of the original house. The modifications to the plan of the original house, involving a repositioned stairwell and replacement of the older style double-door main entrance with a single door having a transom and sidelights, however, reflected a readiness to depart from the Germanic tradition. The completed farmhouse, with these changes, had taken on aspects of a more English-American tradition. This reflected, perhaps, the diminished Germanic, and increasingly American, inclination of the family.

These were comfortable and peaceful times. Andrew Burnaby, an Anglican clergyman who traveled in Virginia in 1859, wrote as follows:

The low grounds upon the banks of the Shenandoah are very rich and fertile. They are chiefly settled by Germans, who gain a sufficient livelihood by raising stock for the troops and sending butter down into the lower parts of the country. I could not but reflect with pleasure on the situation of these people and think if there is such a thing as happiness in this life they enjoy it. Far from the bustle of the world, they live in the most delightful climate and richest soil imaginable. They are everywhere surrounded with beautiful prospects and sylvan scenes; lofty mountains, transparent streams, falls of water, rich valleys and majestic woods, the whole interspersed with an infinite variety of flowering shrubs, constitute the landscape surrounding them. They are subject to few diseases, are generally robust, and live in perfect liberty. They are ignorant of want and are acquainted with but few vices. Their inexperience of the elegancies of life precludes any regret that they have not the means of enjoying them; but they possess what many princes would give half their dominions for, - health, content, and tranquility of mind.³⁵

But, this was all soon to come to an end. There were clouds on the horizon. They gathered, darkened, and the storm broke over Fort Sumter in April 1861.

Isaac Spitler's will, dated April 19, 1862, refers to the farm, then 230 acres, as "my homeplace." No record exists of the date of Isaac's death, but his will was filed for administration on August 25, 1862, so it can be assumed that he died earlier that month. Isaac's will granted his homeplace to his youngest son Joseph. Joseph married twice, in 1861 to Charity Dovel, and 1863 to Elizabeth Roller. There were no children by either marriage. But a boy, John Shaffer, possibly connected in some way to Joseph's second wife, Elizabeth, came with the marriage to live on the farm.

As a Brethren, Joseph Spitler was opposed on religious grounds to war and military service. For this reason,

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although he was of age, Joseph declined to serve in the armed forces of the Confederacy. This has historically subjected the male members of the Brethren, as well as the Mennonites and the Quakers, to verbal and physical abuse and accusations of a lack of patriotism. Such persecution occurred during the Civil War, despite the enormous contributions of materiel made by such men in support of the war.³⁶ The intensity of this feeling was reflected in the suspicions cast upon the Elder John Kline, who was wrongfully thought to be a Northern sympathizer, if not a spy. In June of 1864, he was murdered by local bushwhackers who, on their own authority, had set out to rid the area of Unionists.³⁷

As the war raged up and down the Valley in 1862, 1863, and 1864 the large Isaac Spitler farm was undoubtedly a continuing source of sustenance to both sides of the conflict. Joseph gave food, supplies, and shelter freely to the Confederates, and involuntarily when confronted with the depredations of Yankee foragers. At different times, both Confederate and Federal soldiers occupied the Elk Run meetinghouse.³⁸

In the late summer of 1864, General Grant realized that he could not undertake a campaign to Richmond while a sizeable Confederate army remained on his flank in the Shenandoah Valley. He issued an order to General Sheridan, then fighting in the Valley, to destroy the ability of the Valley, the breadbasket of the Confederacy, to support an army. In issuing his own orders for this campaign, Sheridan in no uncertain terms directed his cavalry "to make this valley untenable for the raiding parties of the rebel army." In executing that order, Federal mounted troops burned over two thousand barns and over seventy mills in the Valley, destroyed huge stores of grain and hay, and killed or took away the livestock.³⁹ From that devastation came General Sheridan's famous appraisal that "a crow flying across this valley would have to carry its own provisions."

Probably because the Isaac Spitler farm cannot be seen from the main road (now State Route 616 or Leaksville Road), its barn is one of a very few in Page County which were overlooked by General Sheridan's cavalry in The Burning in October 1864. The entire farm is beyond a rise in the terrain which, in those times, was heavily wooded by a stand of large oaks. It has been estimated by one local historian that over three hundred other barns in the county were destroyed in a few days.⁴⁰

The winter of 1864-65 brought great suffering and near starvation to the inhabitants of the Valley. A local diarist wrote then: "For weeks (we) have lived on bread made of horse feed and a little milk."⁴¹ Marcus Buck, a citizen of Front Royal, wrote, "Went to Luray for some family supplies and saw more signs of destitution and suffering than I ever expected to behold in my once peaceful, abundant and prosperous land. I am informed that a feed of corn and hay cannot be found between here and Staunton. The terrible need of many would move a heart of stone!"⁴² Joseph, his wife, Elizabeth, his stepmother, Anna, and the boy, John Shaffer, occupied the brick farmhouse, probably with others, during that dreadful time.⁴³

The following spring, on April 9, 1865, about 100 miles to the south at Appomattox Court House, General Lee surrendered what was left of his army to General Grant. Eighty years later, in her book, The Shenandoah, Julia Davis was moved to write:

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It was over, and the beautiful Valley lay a barren waste. The weary soldiers limped home to blasted trees and blackened fields, stark chimneys rising out of crumbling walls, eyeless windows, silence and devastation. All that men could do to ruin the Valley had been done.--But the land remained, the limestone and the river, the courage and hope of human hearts, as frail and persistent as the grass.⁴⁴

Although the lower Valley suffered enormously during the war, reconstruction was more rapid there than elsewhere in the South. This was due to the industry of its people and the fact that the economy was not dependent upon slave labor.⁴⁵ The Confederate soldier returning to the Valley had, indeed, very little to begin with, but he had land and a willingness to rebuild. The results were soon apparent in new barns, mills, bridges, fences and roads. New companies were chartered, new factories built, turnpikes organized and railroads extended. The railroad came to Page County in 1881, opening new markets and bringing added prosperity.⁴⁶

Joseph Spitler, great grandson of the original settlers, his first wife Charity, and his parents Isaac and Esther, are buried in a small family cemetery on a slight hill about eight hundred feet from the farmstead. It overlooks the old double-unit stone outbuilding and the red brick farmhouse. There are five additional graves in the cemetery, but it is not known who is buried in them. It is likely, however, that Isaac's second wife, Anna, is also buried there. All the graves have headstones and footstones, but Joseph's is the only headstone that is inscribed.

Joseph Spitler's ward, John Shaffer, married Fannie Varner in 1883. Fannie was the seventh of ten children of Joseph's older sister Matilda and, therefore, a fifth generation descendent of the farm's first settlers. John and Fannie Shaffer farmed Isaac Spitler's homeplace, and in 1894 they purchased it from trustees holding for the estate of Joseph's widow, Elizabeth. The complex financial and trust arrangement, controlled by Matilda, also set aside a large portion of the farm for another daughter, Fannie's younger sister, Rebecca, who had married John Black, a cousin of John Shaffer. The sale to John Shaffer and John Black was reported, in part, as follows by the local newspaper: "This is considered to be a good farm and no one knows its value better than Mr. Shaffer, as he was raised on it, having lived many years with its former owner, Joseph Spitler."⁴⁷

Because of land divisions within the family, and land sales otherwise, by 1894 the farm had decreased to its present size of ninety-three acres. John and Fannie Shaffer reared eight children there. Their oldest son, Vernon, moved to Mauertown and later represented Shenandoah County in the Virginia House of Delegates. John Shaffer died in the national flu epidemic in 1918, leaving the farm to his widow.

In 1922, the Shaffers' youngest daughter, Linda, married Thomas R. Shirley, a son of one of the trustees who had held the farm from 1885 to 1894. Through the prosperity of the 1920s and into the depression of the 1930s, the Shirleys operated the farm and cared for the widowed Fannie Shaffer until the year before her death in 1933. The Shirleys were the parents of three sons, all born in the red brick farmhouse in which Linda, herself, had been born. The oldest son, Thomas R. Shirley, Jr. became a prominent member of the banking community in the Page Valley.

In 1934, in the trough of the Great Depression, the estate of Fannie Shaffer sold the Isaac Spitler Homeplace to B.

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Theodore and Roberta Grandstaff. The Grandstaffs were forced to relocate because most of their farm on the Blue Ridge Mountains had been subject to a forced sale in the land acquisition process for the new Shenandoah National Park. Thomas and Linda Shirley, and their boys, moved to live on Thomas's parent's farm near the South Fork and within the bounds of the original Massanutten colony.

Thus ended a period of nearly two centuries in which eight generations of a single accomplished family first settled and thereafter continuously occupied and developed their family farm. The history of those generations is a witness to human endurance in the face of war, intolerance, and the perennial problems of earning a living and rearing a family. The heritage left to us by those generations, and the qualities they brought to the new nation they helped to build, exemplify the working-level contributions made by many like them to the broader fabric of American rural society. The Isaac Spitler Homeplace uniquely reflects the times and the way of life in which those contributions arose.

1. Strickler, Massanutten, p.6.
2. Wust, The Virginia Germans, p.37.
3. Strickler, A Short History of Page County, p.49.
4. Spitler, The Descendants of John Spitler, p.1.
Note: References in this historical background to births, marriages, deaths and family locations and movements are taken from this genealogical study and from the Hottel and Roadcap family histories. Property transfers are taken from deed books, except for a few early transfers which are reported in other sources.
5. Strassburger, Pennsylvania German Pioneers, p. 163; Bly, From the Rhine to the Shenandoah, p.2.; and Smith, The Pennsylvania Germans, pp. 12 and 13.
6. Wust, p.194.
7. Ibid., p.37.
8. Spitler, p.1.
9. Wust, p.36.
10. Spitler, p.3.
11. Strickler, p.58.
12. Wayland, The German Element in the Shenandoah Valley, p. 76; and Spitler, p.1.

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13. S rickler, p.67.
14. Ibid., p.68.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p.69.
17. Spitler, p.1.
18. Ibid.
19. Strickler, pp.389-390.
20. Wust, p.151.
21. In 1805 and 1806, Isaac Spitler's older brother, Jacob, and his wife, Nancy, sold their farm, and they, and the five oldest of their eight children and some grandchildren, emigrated to Fairfield County, Ohio. It is reported that this relocation was made for religious reasons associated with the issue of slavery. Another reason, of course, may have been the availability, through new government land offices in Ohio, of credit to buy prime farm land at \$2.00 per acre. (Collins, *The Story of America*, p.141).
Jacob and Nancy's oldest son, Johannes, was an amateur wood worker. His hobby provided decorated blanket chests to his sisters and other relatives. He also made and decorated cases for floor clocks. His handiwork, finished with colorful primitive painting ranging from geometric patterns to representational motifs of flowers and animals, became a matter of historical interest 170 years later, and examples are now of great value. A Johannes Spitler blanket chest and a floor clock are, today, part of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection at Colonial Williamsburg.
22. Kerkhoff, Old Homes, pp.33-35.
23. Wayland, p. 186-187.
24. Wust, pp.124-126.
25. Sappington, The Brethren in Virginia, p.36.
26. Ibid., p.129.
27. Strickler, p.259.

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28. Ibid.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Strickler, pp.122 and 136.
 31. Ibid., pp.187 and 382.
 32. Wust, p.130.
 33. Sappington, pp. 129 and 130; and Funk, Life and Labors of Elder John Kline. The Martyr Missionary. Collated from his Diary. pp. 211 and 427.
 34. Spitler, p.218.
 35. Sappington, p.23.
 36. Sappington, p.81.
 37. Wust, p.128.
 38. Strickler, p.259.
 39. Davis, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I-Volume XLII-Part I, pp. 30-31; Letter from P.H. Sheridan, Major General to Lieutenant General Grant, October 7, 1864. For a more precise local report of the destruction in adjoining Rockingham County, see Zigler, A History of the Brethren in Virginia, p. 146.
 40. Strickler, p.175.
 41. Hale, Four Valiant Years, p.490.
 42. Ibid., p.489.
 43. Abraham Spitler, Jr., died at White Hall on January 29, 1865. Although he was seventy-seven years of age, it may be inferred that the disastrous conditions in the winter of that year hastened his death.
 44. Davis, The Shenandoah, p.268.
 45. Wayland, pp. 186-187.

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46. Strickler, pp. 194-195.

47. Page Courier, March 8, 1894, p.2.

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Verbal Boundary Description

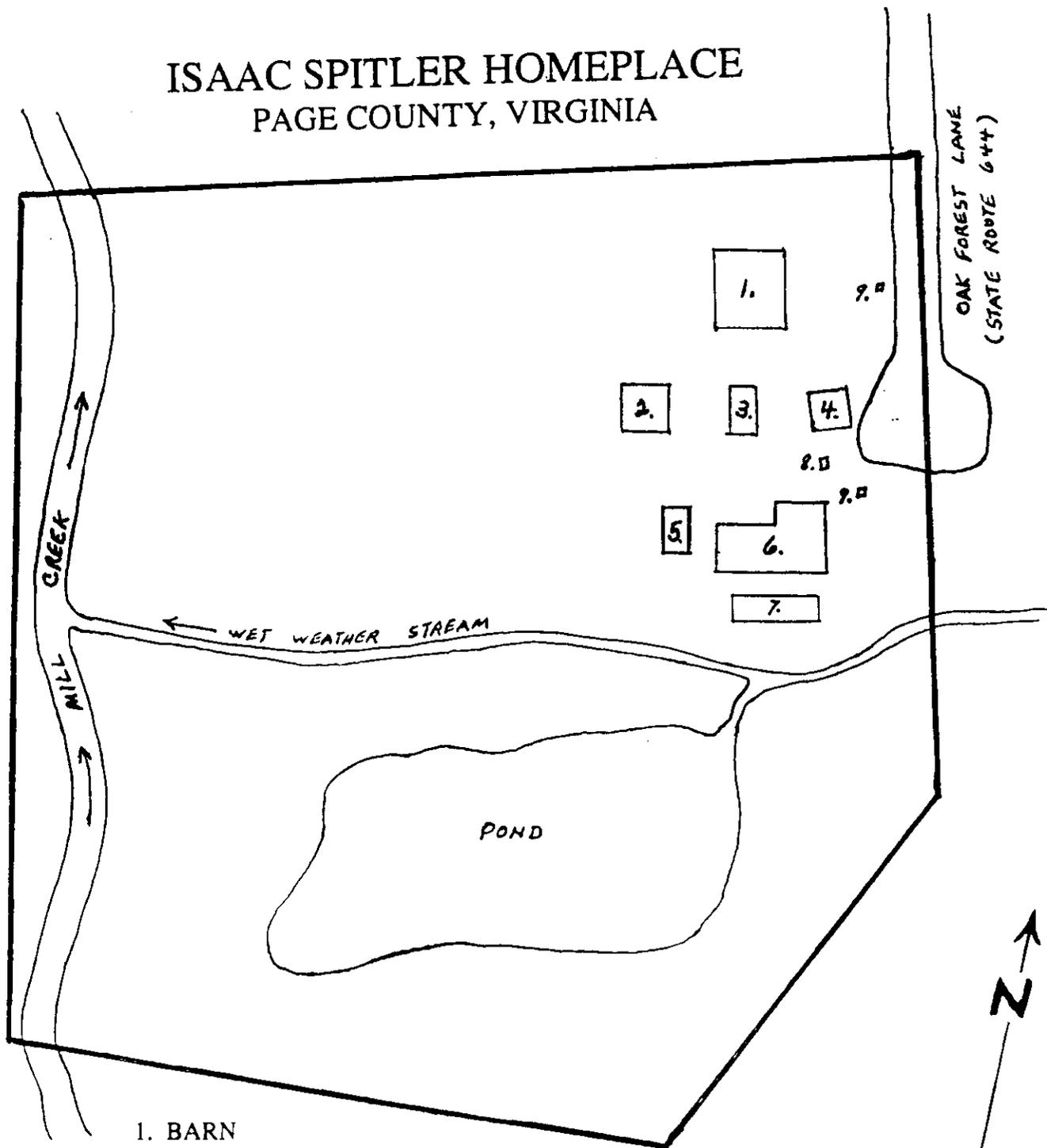
The following is a verbal boundary description of the farmstead portion of the Isaac Spitler Homeplace taken from the 30 October 1984 deed transferring ownership of the Isaac Spitler Homeplace from Glendon O. Grandstaff to Chester D., Jr. and Rita K. Taylor:

BEGINNING at a point corner to Copeland and in the center of Va. Rte. 644, thence with the center of Va. Rte. 644 and Martin 505° 44' 13" E 391.00 feet to a corner fence post, thence 561° 55' 22" W 293.00 feet to a corner fence post, thence N 79° 46' 20" W 215.00 feet crossing Mill Creek to a fence line, thence with the fence line due N 531.00 feet to a pipe found corner to Copeland, thence with Copeland N 82° 38' 32" E crossing Mill Creek and passing thru a pipe found at 342.31 feet, 350.80 feet in all to the point of beginning, the said tract of land containing approximately 4.00 acres, all as drawn on a certain survey by Bobby L. Owens, C.L.S., dated October 24, 1984, titled Grandstaff Property, Marksville District, Page County.

Boundary Justification

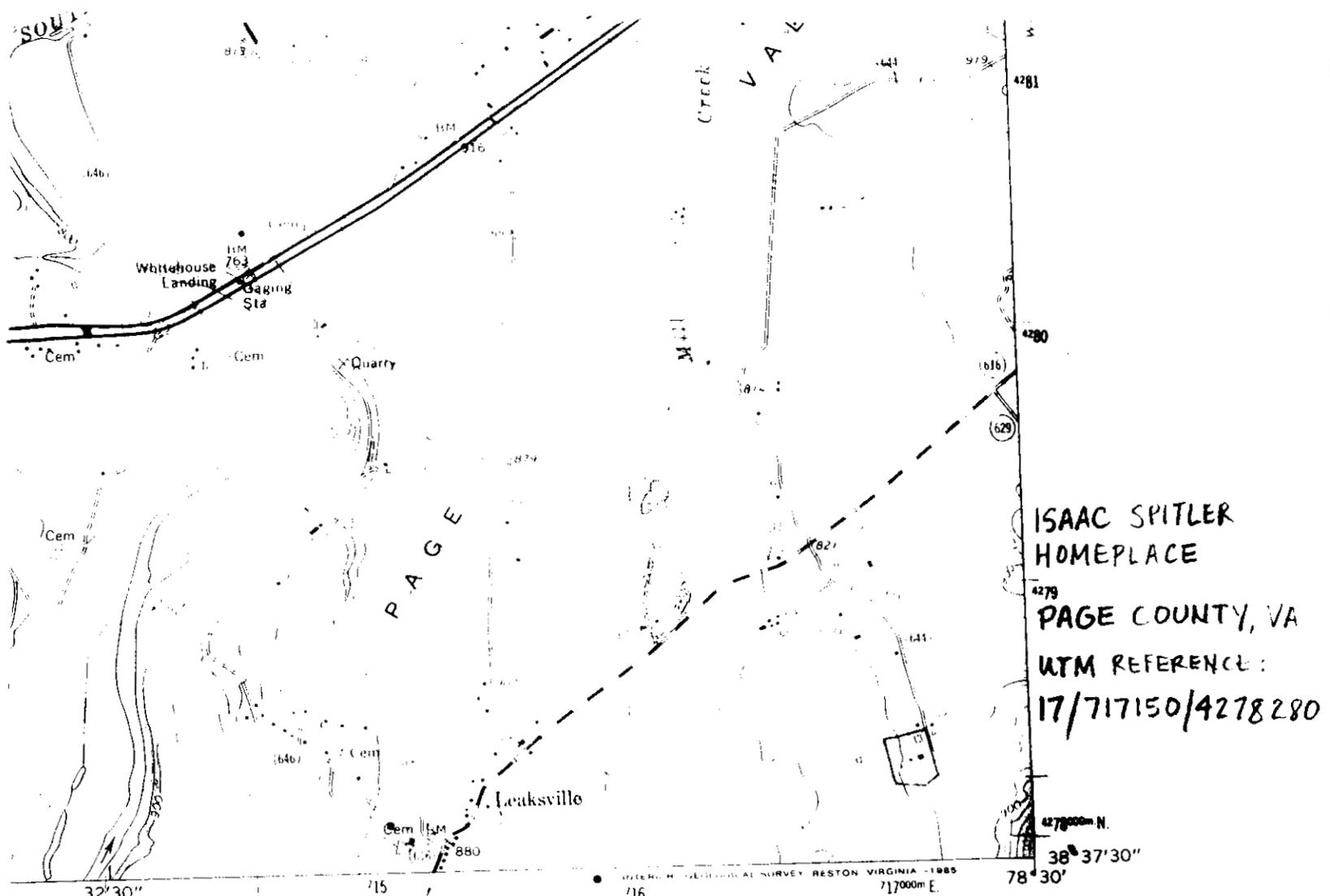
The above boundary description of the farmstead portion of the Isaac Spitler Homeplace, the nominated property, includes the farmhouse and outbuildings, the recreation pond, a short run of the course of Mill Creek and a small pasture in the north-west corner. The boundary follows an existing road (St. Rte. 644, Oak Forest Lane) and the fence line which encloses the farmstead and serves to keep the livestock out of it. The nominated property includes most of the historic resources associated with the Isaac Spitler Homeplace.

ISAAC SPITLER HOMEPLACE PAGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA



1. BARN
2. SMALL WOODEN BUILDING
3. WELLHOUSE AND DAIRY
4. CORNCRIB AND WAGON SHED
5. RUIN OF LOG BUILDING
6. FARMHOUSE
7. RUIN OF STONE HOUSE
8. STONE STEPS
9. STONE GATEPOSTS

100 FEET
SCALE



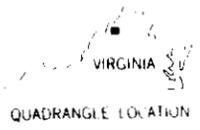
ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	—————	Light duty road, all weather, improved surface	—————
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	- - - - -	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather	- - - - -

() S Route

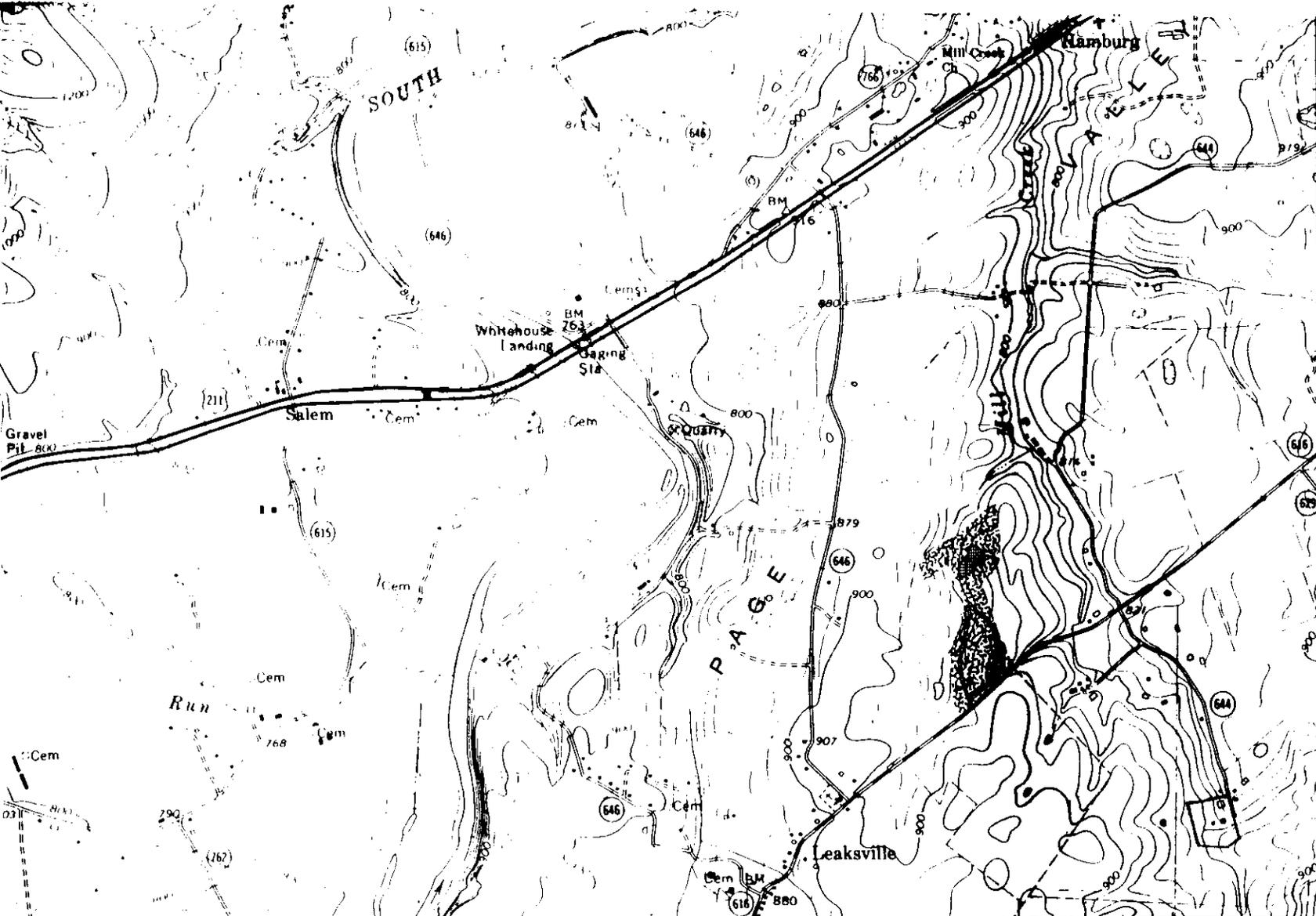
State Route

(BIG MEADOWS) 3
5361 III SW

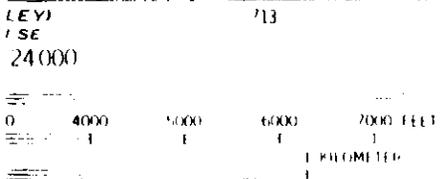


QUADRANGLE LOCATION

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 PHOTOINSPECTED 1984
 1967
 PHOTOREVISED 1978
 AMS 5261 II NE—SERIES V834

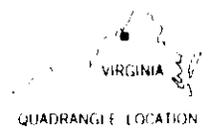


ISAAC SPITLER
 HOMEPLACE
 4279
 PAGE COUNTY, VA
 UTM REFERENCE:
 17/717150/4278280



RVAL 20 FEET
 TICAL DATUM OF 1929

VAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 IRVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225,
 'IRGINIA 22092



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
- Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface
- Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
- Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

- U. S. Route
- State Route

HAMBURG, VA.

N3837.5—W7830/7.5
 PHOTOINSPECTED 1984

(BIG MEADOWS)
 5361 111 SW