

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NRHP 4/12/02
VLR 6-14-00

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Advance Mills

other names/site number Fray's Mill DHR File No. 002-5024

2. Location

street & number Intersection of Routes 743 and 641 not for publication N/A
city or town Advance Mills vicinity xxx
state Virginia code VA county Albemarle code 003 zip code 22903

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 2/12/02
Signature of certifying official 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 or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register _____

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register _____

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register _____

 removed from the National Register _____

 other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

xxx private

xxx public-local

 public-State

 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

 building(s)

xx district

 site

 structure

 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
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<u> 18 </u>	<u> 6 </u> buildings
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<u> 2 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
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<u> 3 </u>	<u> 1 </u> structures
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<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
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<u> 23 </u>	<u> 7 </u> Total
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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>single dwelling, secondary structure</u>
<u>Commerce</u>	<u>department store, warehouse</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>agricultural outbuilding</u>
<u>Industry/Processing</u>	<u>manufacturing facility, waterworks, energy facility, industrial storage</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>road-related (vehicular)</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>school house</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>single dwelling, secondary structure</u>
<u>Commerce</u>	<u>department store</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>road related (vehicular)</u>
<u>Industry/Processing</u>	<u>waterworks</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Federal
Colonial Revival
Other: I-House
Other: Pratt and Pony Truss
No style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation brick, concrete, stone
 roof slate, metal, asphalt
 walls wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete
 other wood, brick, metal, concrete,

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.

Advance Mills Historic District

Albemarle County, VA

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a 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
- Commerce
- Industry
- Transportation

Period of Significance 1810-1948

Significant Dates ca. 1810, 1833,
ca. 1900, 1905,
1943, 1946, 1948

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder William Tulloch
James Dickerson

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 85 acres

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

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	3	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peter Gardiner Hallock, Jr; Margaret Pickart

organization Albemarle County Dept. of Community Development date 1/20/2000

street & number P.O. Box 138 telephone (804) 293-6704

city or town Keswick state VA zip code 22947

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name See Continuation Sheet

street & number _____ **telephone** _____

city or town _____ **state** ___ **zip code** _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Advance Mills Historic District
Albemarle County, VA

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Summary Description

The Advance Mills Historic District is located in the northern part of Albemarle County, Virginia at the intersection of County Routes 743 and 641. Advance Mills, once a prominent milling village, is centered around a dam on the North Fork of the Rivanna River. The community was built—and shaped—by the Fray family who moved to the area in 1833. The Fray family was responsible for the construction of all the historic resources in the district except the J.M Fray House, the bridge and the new general store.

Advance Mills is a small community composed of four houses, a general store, a mill site, a dam and a metal truss bridge. There are a total of 30 buildings and structures in the village, with 23 of them contributing to the significance of the district. Most of the buildings resulted from a construction boom time that occurred about 1900, although several of the resources pre-date this period by several decades. Until their destruction by fire in the 1940s, the most prominent structures in the district were the Mill and the Advance Mills Supply store; these resources are contributing sites in the district. Contributing structures include the bridge, the dam and the millrace. Today the district has a much more rural residential character with the principle structures being the Gaines Fray (II) and J. M. Fray houses.

Detailed Description

Advance Mills is a well-preserved example of a milling community that operated well into the 20th century. The mill, dam and the store site, with their 19th-century stone foundations found along side the 20th-century poured concrete structures, graphically illustrate the evolution in building technologies during these periods. The two I-houses also demonstrate turn-of-the-20th- century workers' housing, while Sunnybank (the Gaines Fray House), a 1901 colonial Revival brick house, exhibits a higher style design. Finally, the J. M. Fray house, with its impressive collection of original outbuildings and the bank barn demonstrate the agricultural self-sufficiency that was needed even in these regional economic centers.

The majority of the resources in Advance Mills remain in good condition with few alterations. The most altered building in the district (not considering the two archaeological sites) is the J. M. Fray House, which underwent its last renovation (the removal of a late-19th-century Victorian style porch) in 1958. All other standing buildings remain in almost original condition, accurately reflecting a late 19th- to early-20th century planning and building aesthetic.

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Advance Mills Historic District
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Inventory

Advance Mills Bridge (VDHR #02-0541)

Route 743 over North Fork of Rivanna River

This two-span, cast-iron truss bridge was built circa 1900 and was moved to its present location in 1943. The western truss is a Pratt pony truss; the eastern truss is a full Pratt truss. The bridge measures 204 feet in length and is supported by two poured concrete piers.

Advance Mills Supply (Site) (VDHR #02-2158) "J.M. Fray and Co."

West side of Route 743, overlooking the Rivanna River

The oldest section of this site was built in 1884 and currently lies beneath what is now the Advance Mills Store. The remnants consist of a random rubble foundation built of flat fieldstone. An addition was made to the store circa 1900, and its poured concrete foundation can still be seen to the southwest of the store, built into the bank that slopes down to the river. The foundation has three window bays on the northwest side facing the river and a stairway leading down into the foundation on the side (northeast) nearest the store.

Advance Mills General Store (VDHR #02-2158) "Advance Mills Store"

West side of route 743, overlooking the Rivanna River

Built in 1948 this front gabled, concrete block store stands on the random rubble field stone foundation of the earlier "Advance Mills Supply". The front (southeast) elevation of the simply designed structure has a central entrance flanked by plate glass windows. The entrance is filled with a double-leaf door constructed of sheet metal fastened to a wooden frame. All the windows and doors have rectangular, concrete lintels. A single two-over-two metal framed, sash window is found in the gable. Three metal "turbine" ventilators are evenly spaced along the ridgeline of the building. The front elevation features a three-bay porch composed of simple posts on poured concrete piers, supporting a pitched roof covered in asphalt shingles. The porch columns are wood. The floor and the four stairways (two on the front and one on either side) are constructed of poured concrete. Stair railings are constructed of iron piping. The building has a single-bay concrete block addition on its eastern side. The addition has its own foundation and a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles. A metal overhead garage door provides access from the front.

General Store Shed (non-contributing)

A single story, wood framed shed is located to the south of the General Store. Its shed roof is covered with corrugated metal and it is sided with vertical wooden boards. There are two bays across the front, both of them with single-leaf, vertical board, wooden doors. A dog or livestock pen is attached to the west of the main shed.

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Gaines Fray House (VDHR #02-2159) "Merchant's House"

West side of Route 743, just north of the Advance Mills Store

This two-story, wood-framed, side-gabled building was built in the vernacular I-house fashion and has a two-story rear ell. The house is nearly identical to the "Miller's House" (VDHR #02-2165), which is located across the river to the east. The roof of the house is covered with standing-seam metal, the walls are faced with horizontal weatherboards, and the foundation is constructed of random rubble stone. The two-bay front (southeast) elevation features six-over-six sash, an entrance with a single leaf paneled door with sidelights and transom, a bracketed cornice that finishes in decorative returns at the side gables, and a porch. The Colonial Revival-style porch is three bays wide and one story high. It features a plain entablature, Tuscan-style wooden columns, and a standing-seam metal roof. The house has two interior, brick chimneys -- one on the ridgeline in the middle of the main gable and one located on the ridgeline of the rear ell. A distinguishing feature of this house is the small, two-story, wooden tower with a pyramidal roof (also covered with standing-seam metal) on the northeast elevation.

Shed (contributing)

To the southwest of the Gaines Fray House is a small, one-story, gable-roofed shed. It has standing-seam metal roofing, vertical wood siding and a stone foundation. The front (east) elevation has a central paneled wooden door and window openings covered with wooden lattice panels.

Two Fallen Sheds (both non-contributing)

Situated to the north and northeast of the Gaines Fray House are the ruins of two sheds. The shed to the northeast is located across Rt. 743 from the main house.

Dam and Millrace (VDHR #02-2160 and -2161)

Across North Fork of Rivanna River at Advance Mills

The existing dam was built circa 1920 and remains in good condition. Sections of the original dam (built circa 1833 from random rubble field stone) can still be seen on both sides of the newer poured concrete structure. The entrance to the millrace is found on the east side of the dam.

The circa 1920 millrace runs along the east side of the Rivanna River and is constructed of poured concrete. It is approximately six feet deep and ten feet wide. Metal grating and stairs were installed over part of the race in the 1980s when it was converted to serve a small hydroelectric turbine.

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A.G. Fray Mill (Site) (VDHR #02-2160)

West side of the intersection of Route 641 and Route 743, on bank of Rivanna River

Scattered throughout this site are several random rubble stone foundations that are the remains of the mill works. The earliest record of milling activity here dates to 1833 when the Frays first moved to the area. The two largest sections of ruins are found at the beginning of the millrace, near the point where the millrace empties into its spillway. Evidence of a later mill, constructed in the early twentieth century, can still be seen in the large, poured reinforced concrete structure that is built into a bank near Route 641. All that is left above ground of this older mill, which succumbed to fire on March 15, 1948, is a four-bay-long reinforced concrete cellar and part of the interior walls. A metal hydroelectric generator, which was installed in 1984 by C.H. Atkins, is currently found on a metal platform over the end of the millrace. Other above-ground remains at the site include a metal turbine (which may date to the 1930s) located in the field east of the millrace.

Hydroelectric Plant Shed (non-contributing)

This circa 1984, one-story, one-bay, gable fronted, wood frame building is found atop the former mill site foundation, near the entrance to the millrace. It was built concurrent with the hydroelectric plant. The roof of the shed is covered in wooden shakes, and the walls are clad in board and batten siding. A nine-light, two-panel, single-leaf door fills the bay.

Bank Barn (VDHR #02-2162) "The Barn at Sunnybank"

South side of Route 743 (Advance Mills Road) 1/4 mile west of Rivanna River Crossing

This two-story, wood framed, gabled, high-drive bank barn was constructed circa 1910. It has a standing-seam metal roof, horizontal wooden weatherboards and a random rubble stone foundation. The front (northwest) elevation has a large entrance accessed by an earthen high drive and served by a pair of sliding doors mounted on an exterior iron track. Distinguishing characteristics of the barn include louvered window bays on the sides and long vents beneath the eaves. The upper section of the barn is used for storage and the lower portion contains stalls for livestock.

Gaines Fray House (II) (VDHR #02-2163) "Sunnybank"

North side of route 743, 1/8 mile west of Rivanna River

Built in 1909, Sunnybank is a two-story, brick, Colonial Revival-style building with a hipped roof and an English basement. Slate shingles cover the roof and the brick walls and foundation are laid in American bond. Shallow gabled wings project from the sides of the house and a single-story porch projects from the front. The front (southeast) elevation is symmetrically arranged in three bays, with a central entrance flanked by paired windows at both stories. The entrance bay has a simple plate glass, single-leaf

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door leading to a foyer and a more elaborate main door. Both doorways have sidelights and transom windows. A small six-light, fixed sash window is found in the pediment of the main façade gable, while the other three gables contain wooden louvers. First- and second-story windows have one-over-one double-hung wood sash and splayed brick lintels. The three-bay porch has a hipped roof covered with standing-seam metal, wood columns on brick piers, and entrance steps of poured concrete. Sunnybank has basement windows with six-light, fixed sash, a rear addition, and four brick chimneys with corbel detailing (including three exterior end chimneys and one larger interior chimney).

Two outbuildings are situated behind the house to the northwest.

Garage (contributing)

Built circa 1909, this small, hipped roof, wood framed building stands northwest of the main house. The roof is covered in standing-seam sheet metal and the walls are clad in horizontal weatherboards. The front (southeastern) elevation features a gable with a small, louvered window, two wooden overhead garage doors with six-light strip windows, and an eastern doorway filled with a pair of wooden Dutch doors.

Kitchen (contributing)

This small, wood framed, side gabled structure on a poured concrete foundation was constructed as a kitchen circa 1909. It has a standing-seam metal roof and is clad in horizontal weatherboards. The front (southeastern) façade features two symmetrically placed wooden vertical board doors. A large, brick chimney is situated on the rear (northwestern) elevation. Side elevations feature multipane double-hung windows, and end gables with full pediments and small louvered windows.

J.M. Fray House (VDHR #02-2164) "Holly Tree Farm"

South side of Route 641, 1/8 mile south of the Advance Mill site

Built circa 1810, this two-and-a-half-story, side gabled, brick house is one of the oldest structures in the district. The house has a standing-seam metal roof, a two-story rear ell, a cement parged English basement, side porches, additions, and outbuildings. The brick building has been painted white. The three-bay-wide front (northeast) elevation of the house features Flemish bond masonry and a central pedimented entrance porch flanked by bay windows at the first story. The porch has a standing-seam metal roof supported by simple wood columns on a brick foundation. It also has a concrete deck and a wrought iron railing. The bay windows are fitted with a combination of six-over-six and nine-over-nine double-hung sash. A six-panel wooden door fills the entrance bay and is

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surrounded by two, four-light sidelights and a two-light transom. The windows on the second story have six-over-six sash and shutters. Gabled dormers also have six-over-six double-hung sash. Side and rear elevations of the house have a five-course common bond brick pattern. Side elevations have small windows or vents in the gables and corbeled, interior end brick chimneys.

Holly Tree Farm has a remarkable collection of outbuildings. The outbuildings, except the carriage house that is situated to the northeast of the house, are arranged in roughly two parallel lines starting at the building's southeastern corner. They consist of a schoolhouse, a smokehouse, a kitchen, an icehouse, a chicken house, a machine shed and a barn. There is also a non-contributing, modern garage located to the southwest of the house. A non-contributing pool and pool house are found northwest of the main house.

Schoolhouse (contributing)

This building, currently a rental cottage, was built in the late 19th century. It is a small, one-and-a-half story, wood framed, side gabled structure with a standing-seam metal roof and horizontal weatherboards. The front (northwestern) elevation features a paneled door flanked by single windows with four-over-four double-hung sash, and a porch created by a shed roof supported by simple diagonal braces and a single vertical post. The porch roof is also standing-seam metal. The porch decking is wood and a small, random rubble stairway provides access. Side elevations have a variety of windows. An exterior end cinderblock flue is found on the back (or southeastern) side of the building.

Smokehouse (contributing)

The smokehouse was built in the late 19th century. It is a small, one-story gable roofed, framed building. Corrugated metal covers the roof, stucco has been placed over the frame walls and the building rests on a random rubble field stone foundation. The front (northeastern) façade has a wooden, vertical board door and a simple wooden cornice.

Chicken House (contributing)

The chicken house was built in the late 19th century. It is a long, one-story, wooden structure with a combination of shed and gable roofs. Standing-seam metal covers the roof, horizontal weatherboards are found on the exterior walls and the foundation is constructed of random rubble stone. The front (northwest) elevation has a central door sheltered by a simple wooden porch. The shed roof of the porch is covered with standing-seam metal and is supported by two chamfered, square posts. A simple wooden stairway provides access. Wooden boards cover the deck that is supported by field stone piers. The entrance to the chicken house is flanked by two small windows that have six-over-six

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double-hung sash. Four windows in the basement are currently covered with sheet metal. False rafter ends are exposed under the roofline of the chicken house .

Kitchen (contributing)

The kitchen was built in the mid-19th century. It is a small, one-story, side gabled building with a random rubble field stone foundation. Standing-seam metal covers the roof; the walls are clad in horizontal weatherboards. The front (northwest) elevation features a simple entrance, a single window with six-over-six double-hung sash, and a shed roof porch that is supported by unmilled cedar posts. Brick steps provide access to the wooden deck. A large, exterior end chimney is found on the southwest elevation of the building. The top half of the stack is brick and the bottom half is composed of random rubble laid fieldstone.

Icehouse (contributing)

The icehouse was built in the 19th century. (The walls could date from early to mid-19th but the roof appears to be more modern.) It is a small, one-story shed-roofed building. The walls and foundation are constructed of random rubble fieldstone and the roof is covered with standing-seam metal. The front elevation (northeast) has a vertical board door with decorative strap hinges.

Machine Shed (contributing)

The machine shed dates to the early 20th century. It is a long, one-story, shed-roofed, wood frame building with a concrete block foundation. Standing-seam metal covers the roof and horizontal weatherboards clad the exterior walls. The main elevation (northwest) has three open bays supported by unmilled cedar posts. A concrete slab serves as the floor of the shed.

Animal Shelter (contributing)

The animal shelter dates from the early 20th century. It is a unique, story-and-a-half, wood frame building with a gable roof and a poured concrete foundation. A small catslide extends to the west. The roof is covered with standing-seam metal and the walls are clad in horizontal weatherboards. There are three open bays across the front (southeast) side, with a large middle bay serving as an entrance. A one-story, one-bay porch covers the entrance bay. It has a shed roof and is supported by two square columns.

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Bank Barn (contributing)

The bank barn at Holly Tree Farm is almost identical to the other barn found in the district, VDHR #02- 2162. It is a two-story, wood framed, gabled bank barn that was constructed circa 1910. It has a standing-seam metal roof, horizontal wooden weatherboards and a random rubble stone foundation. The front elevation has a double-leaf sliding door mounted on an exterior iron track. Distinguishing features of the barn include louvered window bays on the sides and long vents under the eaves. The upper section of the barn is used for storage and the lower portion contains stalls for livestock. The barn has had several additions on the west side. A wood frame, gabled, one-bay extension has been added to the center of the elevation. It is supported by wooden stilts and has a standing-seam metal roof.

Carriage House (contributing)

The carriage house was built at the end of the 19th century. It is a two-story, wood framed structure with a gable roof and a poured concrete foundation. Standing-seam metal covers the roof and the exterior walls are clad in weatherboards. Three bays span the first floor of the main (northwest) façade of the building. The entrance is located to the south and is a half-glass door with six lights and three panels. The second story has two bays. The southern bay has an entranceway fitted with a single-leaf door with nine lights. Windows have six-over-six double-hung sash. A wooden deck extends from the second floor. It is supported by wooden columns and has stairs descending from its northern side. A brick chimney extends from the middle of the building's ridgeline.

Garage (non-contributing)

The garage is a modern, gable fronted, wood framed building with a cinderblock foundation. Corrugated metal covers the roof and T-111 siding covers the exterior walls. The garage floor is a poured concrete slab. The front (northeast) elevation has two overhead sliding metal doors.

Pool and Pool House (non-contributing structure and non-contributing building)

An in-ground pool and small pool house are situated to the west of the driveway and garage. Vegetation screens the pool area from the main house.

Ballard House (VDHR #02-2165) "Fray's Mill Miller's House"

North side of Route 641, east of Holly Tree Farm

The Ballard house, built circa 1900, is a two-story, gable roofed, wood framed I-house with a rear frame ell. It has a standing-seam metal roof, horizontal weatherboards and a random rubble stone foundation. The two-bay front (south) elevation has six-

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over-six double-hung sash windows and a single-leaf, four-light, half-glass wooden panel door. The house has two interior ridgeline brick chimneys -- one in the middle of the main gable and one on the rear ell. The one-story, three-bay porch also has a standing-seam metal roof. The porch has turned columns that support a minimal cornice.

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Statement of Significance

The significance of the Advance Mills Historic District is as a milling and crossroads community in Piedmont Virginia from circa 1833 until the mid-20th century. The community is representative of a small milling village and contains examples of both high style and vernacular architecture. In addition, the mill and store sites are likely to reveal information pertaining to the construction, operation and evolution of small, regional fiber and gristmills. The district is also significant for its association with the Fray family in general and A.G. Fray in particular. Currently the village's appearance dates to the mid-20th century when the store and mill were lost, the bridge was moved to its current location and the new Advance Mills General Store was constructed. All other resources, except the J.M. Fray house which had a porch removed in 1958, remain as they appeared at the turn of the 19th century. The Advance Mills Historic District is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criteria A and C with significance in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, Industry and Transportation.

Historical Background

Colony To Nation (1750-1789)

Northern Albemarle County's economy was marked by agricultural pursuits throughout the colonial and early Republic periods, although farmers gradually shifted from tobacco to cereal grain production as the eighteenth century ended. This emphasis on grain agriculture had the effect of creating a demand for both trading centers and gristmills, particularly along streams and rivers. Some of Albemarle County's earliest mills, although not Advance Mills, date from this period, reflecting this important change in the county's agriculture.

Early National Period (1789-1830)

The period from the end of the Revolutionary War into the early part of the nineteenth century was characterized, in this area, by the continued shift away from tobacco and the almost exclusive reliance on grain as a cash crop. The economic advantages of grain made it possible for local farmers to improve their farms and buildings. A number of surviving farmhouses from this era exist in the surrounding area. However, the farmers were somewhat hampered in their efforts to improve their cash position because of the lack of mills in the area. It is also during this period that the J.M Fray house (Holly Tree Farm, VDHR #2-2164) was built. The original owner is commonly thought to be

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William Tulloch, who built the house on land bought from Milton Payne in 1815, although parts of the house could date back to 1790.

Antebellum Period (1830-1860)

Advance Mills is one of Albemarle County's most recognizable milling communities and contains resources dating back to the early 1800s. The Fray family dominated the history of the Advance Mills community. Town founder John Fray operated a flourmill at this location beginning in 1833¹. For more than fifty years the village was known as Fray's Mill. The name was changed to Advance Mills in 1888 by the U.S. Post Office.

The Fray family, of German ancestry, descended from a John Fray who had settled in Culpeper County by the early 1760s. The Frays were presumably part of the larger migration of German settlers moving east from the Shenandoah Valley in the eighteenth century. John Fray's son, Ephraim Fray, built a mill in 1799 on Deep Run in Madison County (later known as Crigler's Mill), which Ephraim sold in 1810 to his son, John Fray. In 1833, the younger John Fray sold that mill and moved his wife and seven children to his newly bought property in Albemarle County, where he and his teenaged sons constructed a flourmill on the North Fork of the Rivanna River. Grist milling was a profitable enterprise during this period as Albemarle County farmers made the transition from growing tobacco to growing cereal grains. Over the next several years, Fray bought and sold almost 1,000 acres of land in northern Albemarle County²

The Fray family occupied a house beside the river, now called Holly Tree Farm (VDHR #02-2164). Oral tradition holds that the name derived from a holly tree that was planted north of the house by the children who attended the school that was located on the property (circa 1900). While a portion of the house may date to about 1790, it received several additions throughout its history³. It is a typical Federal-period house with finely detailed brickwork and some original fireplace mantels. A collection of nineteenth-century outbuildings remains on this property. These outbuildings include an icehouse, kitchen, smokehouse, a small schoolhouse, several sheds, and a barn. The barn is very similar to the bank barn (VDHR #2-2162) found on the south side of Route 743 and it is believed to have been built by James Diversion. The house and its outbuildings are significant for their association with the Fray family, as well as for the wide variety of building types and functions they represent.

Civil War (1861-1865)

Comparatively little military activity occurred in Albemarle County during the Civil War,

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and unlike much of the rest of Virginia, most of the county's farms and towns were spared. No military activity occurred in or around Advance Mills and the Fray family mills apparently continued to operate throughout the war years.

Reconstruction and Growth (1865-1914)

Little information on Fray's Mill and the size and makeup of the surrounding community is contained in gazetteers and business listings from the antebellum period. However, the mill and the surrounding community are shown on a number of historic maps of Albemarle County published during and after the Civil War. The earliest known map of Albemarle County, the Gilmer map of 1864, shows two mills marked "Frays" on the Rivanna River, as well as farms in the surrounding area owned by "Mrs. Fray," B. Creel, Scribner and F. Marshall. The Hotchkiss map of Albemarle County of 1866 shows "Frey's Mill" and the same nearby farms⁴. So, too, does the Peyton map of Albemarle County of 1875, although by this time the Marshall farm is marked "Marshall's Distillery," and a Garrett family has joined the neighborhood.

The Fray family continued to dominate the economic and commercial life of the small Fray's Mill community and surrounding farms for several years. Other towns and villages from this period in Albemarle County, such as Batesville and Crozet, supported a number of competing stores and businesses. Fray's Mill, bypassed by the railroad and serving only the immediate farm community, remained something of a backwater and did not grow substantially beyond a small collection of houses and businesses, all owned by members of the Fray family.

The family of Albert Garriot Fray, John Fray's youngest son, continued to develop the family enterprises at Advance Mills in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Albert Garriot Fray had three sons: John Milton Fray, Robert Briggs Fray and Aubrey Gaines Fray. John Milton Fray and Aubrey Gaines Fray joined with their father in the milling and mercantile business and Robert Fray developed a substantial farming operation in the Advance Mills area, raising sheep, cattle, wheat and corn⁵. John Milton Fray became a leading citizen of Albemarle, serving 35 years on the Board of Supervisors from 1908 until his death in 1943, and part of that time as the Board's chairman.⁶ He was also picked to be a member of the Northern Virginia Regional Defense Council, which was organized in 1941 by Governor Price.

In the 1880s, the mill complex owned by the Frays and mill operations conducted by others produced not only flour and cornmeal but also wool. The size and scale of the operations were comparable to that of several other mills from this period in Albemarle County and Charlottesville. In gazetteers beginning in 1884, the community is first

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represented only in listings for the A.G. Fray mill appearing under corn and flourmills and the Albert G. Fray mill under woolen mills. Both of these were listed as being in Earlsyville, the nearest post office, although this community is three miles away⁷. In 1884, the firm of J. M. Fray & Co. was established by John Milton Fray and Aubrey Gaines Fray, sons of Albert Garriot Fray, and grandsons of the John Fray who established the first mill. This enterprise included a large general store, managed by A. Gaines Fray and the mills, under John M. Fray's direction.⁸ Advance Mills first appeared under that name in a gazetteer of 1888⁹. It had become a post office by this time, and tradition has it that the name Advance Mills was proposed by John Fray, who claimed that people frequently commented about all the advances being made there¹⁰. The post office, housed in the general store, gave new importance to both the Advance Mills community, and the Fray family, who served as postmasters for a number of years.

In 1888, listings in Chataigne's gazetteer for Advance Mills included the Fray corn and flourmill, two saw mills, two carpenters who are also contractors, one general merchant (J. M. Fray), one millwright, and one tanner. The A. G. Fray mill continued to be listed in Earlsyville under woolen mills and A. G. Fray also appeared listed in that community as a wool dealer. This was likely a holdover from earlier directories, and actually referred to the Fray mill complex at Advance Mills. Other directories in the next decade listed the same businesses and artisans, with the addition of a saddle and harness maker, a cattle dealer, an agricultural implements dealer, and a distiller.

Around the turn of the 19th century two frame houses with identical floor plans were built in the village to serve as the Fray general store merchant's house (VDHR #02-2159) and the Fray Mill miller's house (VDHR #02-2165; figure 6.2). The foundations of the miller's house are part of an older icehouse¹¹. According to Greene County native Cecil Wetsel, Gaines Fray lived in the merchant's house before he built his larger brick house on Route 743 north of the river, now called Sunnybank (VDHR #02-2163), around 1905. This handsome Colonial Revival-style house is in virtually unaltered condition and is an excellent example of domestic architecture from this period. The size and scale of this house are a further indication of the social and economic prominence of the Fray family in Advance Mills. John M. Fray's oldest son, Albert, served as a clerk in the general store and also lived in the store merchant's house at one time.

By 1906, J. M. Fray & Co. was described as dealers in "general merchandise, millers and undertakers." The two mills included one for grinding flour, cornmeal and feeds and another for grinding sumac, used in dyeing cloth. The flourmill produced 30 barrels a day using "the very latest Wolf Gyrator system" of machinery and the store served customers throughout northern Albemarle and southern Greene Counties¹². The store was evidently

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a very substantial operation; a 1912 advertising broadside proclaimed that ten clerks were on hand at all times to assist customers¹³.

The 1907 Massie map of Albemarle County showed the community had a telephone as well as a post office¹⁴. Along with nearby Earlysville, Advance Mills was the most important community in this part of Albemarle County. No churches are located in Advance Mills, but the wider community at that time contained two grade schools, one for black and one for white students. Colored School No.7 was just east of the village on Route 641 while White School No.21 was north of the village on Route 743. Neither building is known to still exist.

As roads improved during the early and mid-twentieth century, the need for a structurally sound bridge crossing over the Rivanna River at Advance Mills became more important. The date of the first bridge at Advance Mills is unknown. The Episcopalian Archdeacon Frederick Neve described in his memoirs crossing the Advance Mills bridge during a flood in the first decade of the twentieth century. He described the bridge as a plank structure with no sides¹⁵.

World War I To World War II (1914-1945)

By 1932, U. S. Route 29 (contiguous with then State Route 28) ran from Earlysville through the center of Advance Mills along present Route 743¹⁶. The present bridge (VDHR #02-0541) is a nineteenth-century structure moved to this location in 1943 after an earlier wooden bridge had been washed out by a flood¹⁷. The bridge is a two-span steel structure with one pony truss and one Pratt through truss supported on a concrete substructure. The Carnegie Steel Company built it at its Cambria, Pennsylvania ironworks sometime before 1901, when the company merged into U.S. Steel. These trusses were relocated to the District from an unknown site¹⁸. The bridge is one of a small number of Pratt trusses still standing in Albemarle County and is an essential element in the historic character of the Advance Mills community.

Mrs. Frances Fray Ballard, born in 1927 in Advance Mills and the granddaughter of Robert Briggs Fray, remembered that during her childhood the Fray family mill was producing flour, cornmeal and animal feeds, although saw milling had ceased by that time. The J. M. Fray & Co. store was one of the largest general stores in Albemarle County in the first half of the twentieth century, and like most general stores, it carried a broad array of goods. Residents from the surrounding area sold their sumac, ginseng, and animal hides to the Frays as middlemen. Sumac was often stored near the store for later

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sale; there was once a sumac house in the field across Route 743 from the store. Clothes were also sold in the general store. An addition was made to the store in the early 1900s and men's suits were added to the inventory. There was also a millinery department, and the store dealt in caskets and had a horse-drawn hearse.

Gristmills, such as the Fray family mill, were once a common sight throughout Albemarle County and were an integral part of the county's agricultural economy. Before World War II, Cecil Wetsel, raised in nearby Greene County, remembered going to Advance Mills on many occasions with his father to deliver grain from his family's wheat farm for grinding. Farmers often stored their wheat there while waiting for it to be ground. According to Wetsel, the store paid a penny a pound for sumac (which had to be dry and bagged in burlap), but would pay a half cent more if the seller would take store coupons good for J. M. Fray merchandise instead of cash. Burnley Station was the closest railroad stop for the store and "fancy" goods that had to be shipped by rail were brought to the store by wagon¹⁹.

Modern Period (1945-Present)

J. M. Fray & Co. continued both milling and retail operations until fire destroyed the store in 1946. The mill burned on March 15, 1948. A diesel engine installed in the mill to supplement waterpower ignited that fire²⁰. The Fray Mill joined the ranks of numerous other gristmills in Albemarle County that succumbed to fire, flood, and economic hard times during the mid-twentieth century. There are no longer any operating mills in the county. Following the mill fire, the sites of both the store and mill were effectively leveled and the turbines were removed from concrete supports and left to rust²¹. The foundations of both the mill (VDHR #02-2161) and the store (VDHR #02-2158) still remain as visible reminders of these once important business operations.

Mrs. Ballard's husband, Ray Ballard, bought the burned out complex at auction for \$2,000 in 1948 and shortly thereafter built the existing cinder block store in which the Ballards opened Advance Mills Supply (VDHR #02-2158) around 1950²². A retired engineer, C. H. Atkins, bought the old Fray farm (Holly Tree Farm) and mill site in 1967.

In 1984 he put the remains of the existing dam to use by installing two turbines to generate electricity for his own home and up to fifty others²³. Remains of the original milldam, millrace, and the mill site can be seen on the east bank of the Rivanna River, south of the metal truss bridge.

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End Notes

- ¹ Charlottesville Daily Progress, February 24, 1985.
- ² Lewis, Florence. A History and Genealogy of John Fray of Culpeper County, Virginia. PP 5; 16-17.
- ³ Observer, May 10-16, 1990.
- ⁵ Ballard interview February 16, 1995 and Wetsel interview February 21, 1995.
- ⁶ Lewis, Florence. Pp 23-26.
- ⁷ Chataigne 1884/5, page 77.
- ⁸ Walker 1906: 39.
- ⁹ Chataigne 1888, page 94.
- ¹⁰ Honn interview February 8, 1995 and Ballard interview February 16, 1995.
- ¹¹ Ballard interview February 16, 1995.
- ¹² Walker, 1906: 39.
- ¹³ CDP: 5/10/1978.
- ¹⁴ Massie Map 6.4.
- ¹⁵ MACH 26:54.
- ¹⁶ Map, Va. Dept. of Highways, June 1, 1932.
- ¹⁷ Wetsel interview February 21, 1995 and Ballard interview February 16, 1995.
- ¹⁸ Va. Dept. of Highways, Truss Bridge Survey #49, 1974.
- ¹⁹ Wetsel interview February 25, 1995.
- ²⁰ CDP 2/24/1985
- ²¹ Observer: 4/15-21/1982.
- ²² CDP: 2/2/1986.
- ²³ CDP: 2/24/85.

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- Toledano, Roulhac. "At Advance Mills, The Old Fray Farm Is Still In Working Order". *The Observer*. May 10-16: 14
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- Virginia Landmarks Survey. "Fray (John) Farm". Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1979.
- Virginia Landmarks Survey. "J.M. Fray House". Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1995.
- Wheeler, Roy. "Executor's Sale At Auction of Fray Estates". Charlottesville, Virginia: Roy Wheeler, 1948. Advertisement
- Wheeler, Roy, ed. *Historic Virginia*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Roy Wheeler, 1949.

Interviews:

Ballard
Wheeler

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Albemarle County, VA

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Newspapers: Charlottesville Daily Progress and Charlottesville Observer

Gazetteers: Chataigne Gazetteers of 1884/1885 and 1888 and Walkers Gazetteer of 1906.

Geographical Data

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	17	724380	4229270
2.	17	724660	4228870
3.	17	724080	4228380
4.	17	723820	4228750
5.	17	723940	4229300

Verbal Boundary Description

The Advance Mills Historic District is comprised of the following tax parcels as identified on the tax parcel maps of Albemarle County, Virginia: Tax Map 20, parcels 13, 13A, 14, 15, 15A, 15B, and 15C.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Advance Mills Historic District were drawn to include all the buildings/sites that are associated with the Fray family and their milling activities. The boundary includes some open land that establishes the District's rural character. For convenience, the boundary follows the parcel lines shown on the Albemarle County tax maps. The result is a small, compact district with nearly all of its resources visible from public roads.

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Advance Mills Historic District Property Owners

"Ballard House"
Rodney R. Ballard
1968 Fray's Mill Road
Ruckersville, VA 22968
(Tax Map 20, Parcel 15)

"A. G. Fray Mill (Site)"
Robert A. Lodi
1310 Willow Oaks Trail
Matthews, NC 28105
(Tax Map 20, Parcel 15B)

"J.M. Fray House"
Robert D. Martin
1765 Fray's Mountain Road
Ruckersville, VA 22968
(Tax Map 20, Parcels 14, 14B)

"Advance Mills Store (Site)"
Sarah M. Morton
5600 Advance Mills Road
Ruckersville, VA 22968
(Tax Map 20, Parcel 15B)

"Gaines Fray House (II)" and "A.G. Fray
Mill (Site)"
Anne M. and James Novak
5542 Advance Mills Road
Earlysville, VA 22936
(Tax Map 20, Parcel 13a)

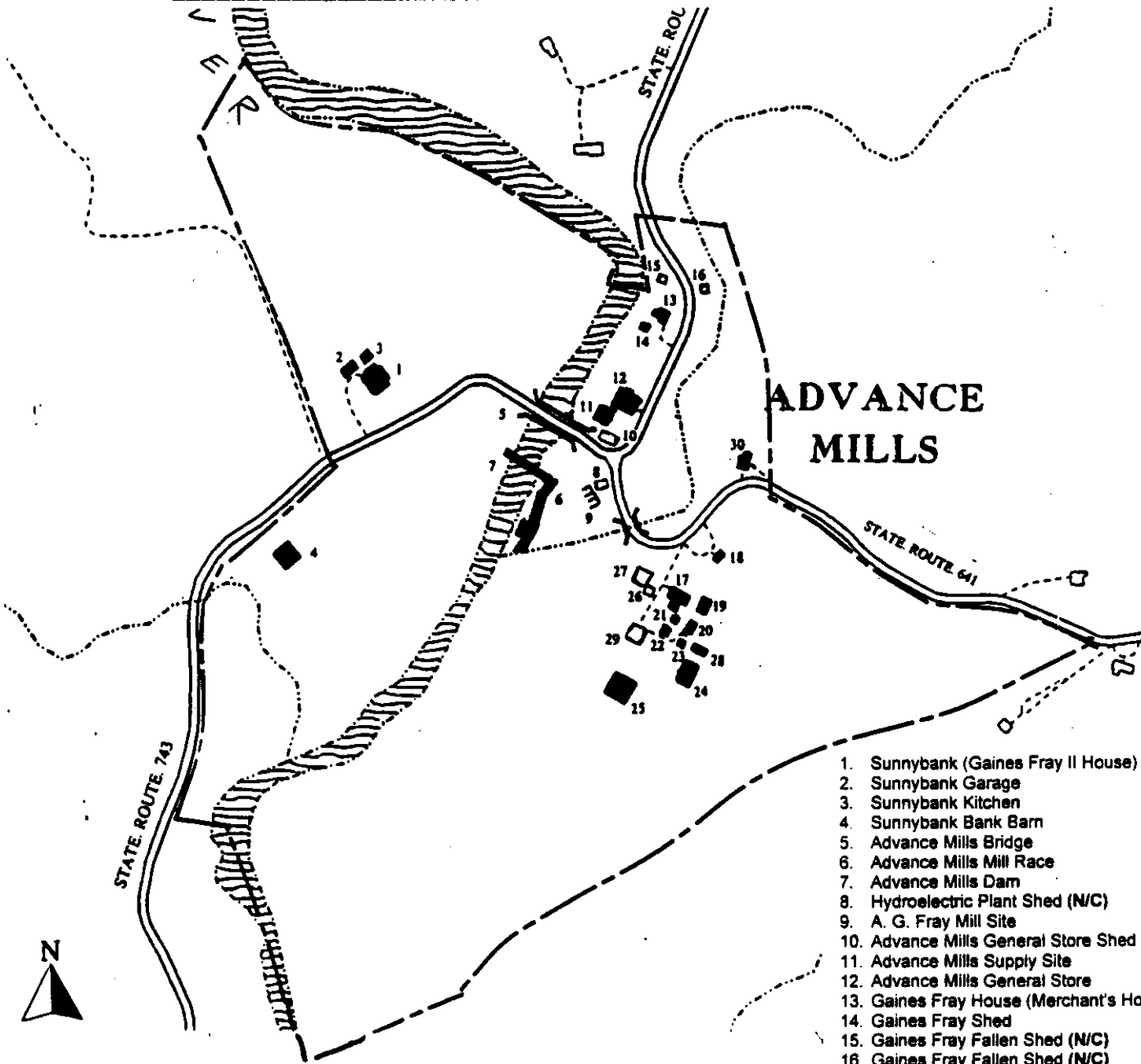
"Gaines Fray House"
William Jobes
5618 Advance Mills Road
Ruckersville, VA 22968
(Tax Map 20, Parcel 15C)

Advance Mills Bridge
Rt. 743 over the North Fork of the
Rivanna
Virginia Department of Transportation
1221 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

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Albemarle County, VA

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**ADVANCE
MILLS**

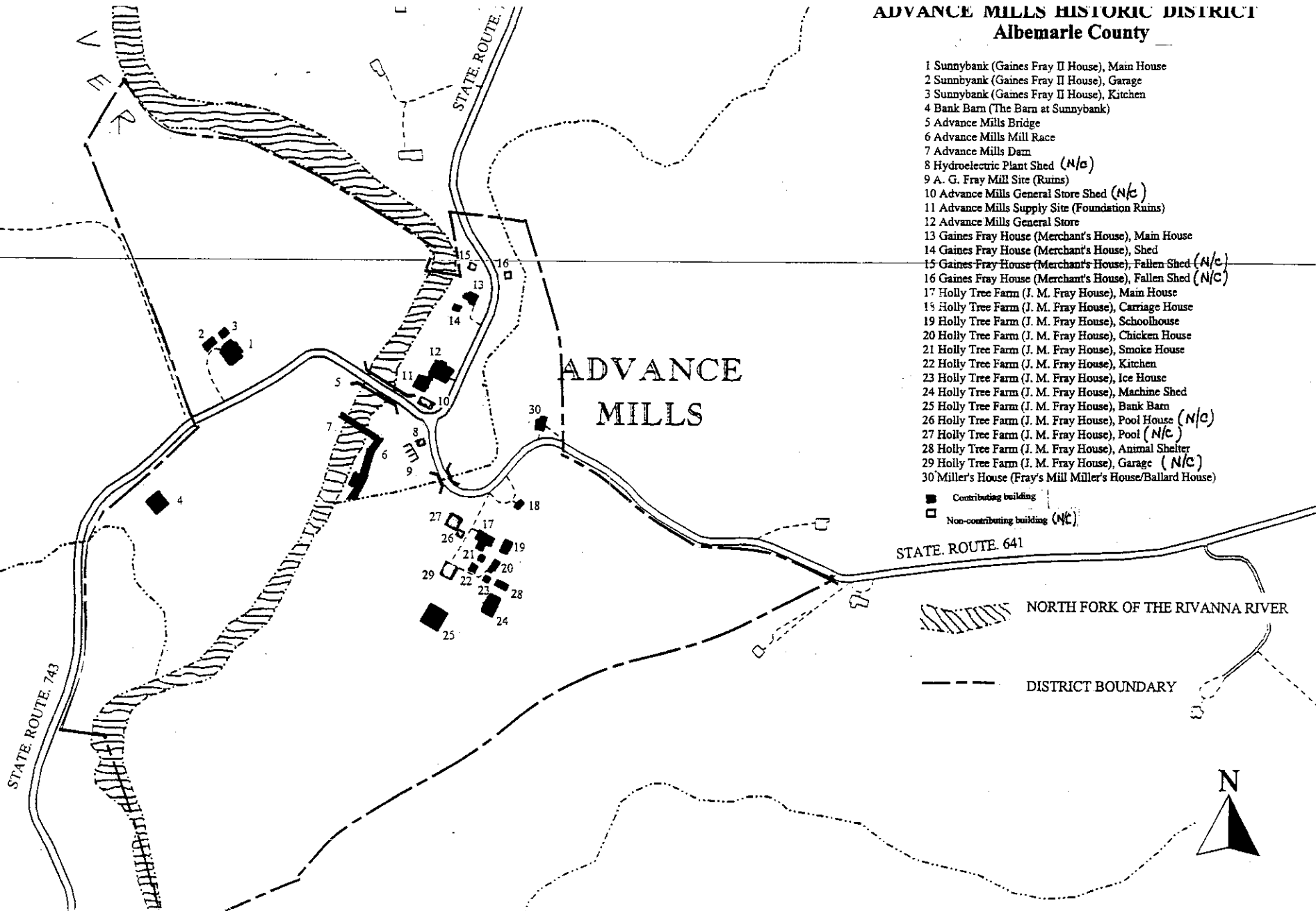
1. Sunnybank (Gaines Fray II House) Main House
2. Sunnybank Garage
3. Sunnybank Kitchen
4. Sunnybank Bank Barn
5. Advance Mills Bridge
6. Advance Mills Mill Race
7. Advance Mills Dam
8. Hydroelectric Plant Shed (N/C)
9. A. G. Fray Mill Site
10. Advance Mills General Store Shed (N/C)
11. Advance Mills Supply Site
12. Advance Mills General Store
13. Gaines Fray House (Merchant's House) Main House
14. Gaines Fray Shed
15. Gaines Fray Fallen Shed (N/C)
16. Gaines Fray Fallen Shed (N/C)
17. Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House) Main House
18. Holly Tree Farm Carriage House
19. Holly Tree Farm Schoolhouse
20. Holly Tree Farm Chicken House
21. Holly Tree Farm Smokehouse
22. Holly Tree Farm Kitchen
23. Holly Tree Farm Ice House
24. Holly Tree Farm Machine Shed
25. Holly Tree Farm Bank Barn
26. Holly Tree Farm Pool House (N/C)
27. Holly Tree Farm Pool (N/C)
28. Holly Tree Farm Animal Shelter
29. Holly Tree Farm Garage (N/C)
30. Miller's House (Fray's Mill Miller's House/Ballard House)

- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- ▨ NORTH FORK OF THE RIVANNA RIVER
- Contributing
- Noncontributing (N/C)

ADVANCE MILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT Albemarle County

- 1 Sunnybank (Gaines Fray II House), Main House
- 2 Sunnybank (Gaines Fray II House), Garage
- 3 Sunnybank (Gaines Fray II House), Kitchen
- 4 Bank Barn (The Barn at Sunnybank)
- 5 Advance Mills Bridge
- 6 Advance Mills Mill Race
- 7 Advance Mills Dam
- 8 Hydroelectric Plant Shed (N/C)
- 9 A. G. Fray Mill Site (Ruins)
- 10 Advance Mills General Store Shed (N/C)
- 11 Advance Mills Supply Site (Foundation Ruins)
- 12 Advance Mills General Store
- 13 Gaines Fray House (Merchant's House), Main House
- 14 Gaines Fray House (Merchant's House), Shed
- 15 Gaines Fray House (Merchant's House), Fallen Shed (N/C)
- 16 Gaines Fray House (Merchant's House), Fallen Shed (N/C)
- 17 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Main House
- 18 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Carriage House
- 19 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Schoolhouse
- 20 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Chicken House
- 21 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Smoke House
- 22 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Kitchen
- 23 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Ice House
- 24 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Machine Shed
- 25 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Bank Barn
- 26 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Pool House (N/C)
- 27 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Pool (N/C)
- 28 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Animal Shelter
- 29 Holly Tree Farm (J. M. Fray House), Garage (N/C)
- 30 Miller's House (Fray's Mill Miller's House/Ballard House)

- Contributing building
- Non-contributing building (N/C)



Advance Mills
Historic District
Albemarle Co., VA
Zone 17
E N

- 1. 724380 4229270
- 2. 724660 4228870
- 3. 724080 4228380
- 4. 723820 4228750
- 5. 723940 4229300

