

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

VLR 12/5/7  
NRHP 2/21/8

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 Auburn  
other names/site number VDHR No. 023-0002

2. Location

street & number 17736 Auburn Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Brandy Station vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Culpeper code 047 zip code 22714

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 X statewide      locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

McCarthur 1/8/08  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property X 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 this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

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**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**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>11</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>13</u>	<u>3</u> Total

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

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Single Dwelling</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Agricultural Outbuilding</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Storage</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Agricultural Field</u>
<u>DEFENSE</u>	<u>Military Facility</u>
<u>DEFENSE</u>	<u>Battle Site</u>

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>Single Dwelling</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>Secondary Structure</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Agriculture Outbuilding</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Storage</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>	<u>Agricultural Field</u>

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: Greek Revival

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation BRICK
- roof ASPHALT
- walls WOOD
- other SYNTHETIC: Vinyl

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

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**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.)

- 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)

AGRICULTURAL ARCHITECTURE; ARCHITECTURE  
POLITICS  
MILITARY  
ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

**Period of Significance** 1855-1955

**Significant Dates** 1855-1856, 1862-1869

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) Botts, John Minor

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** Unknown

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(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: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreege of Property** approximately 425 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing				
1	18	244210	4266600	2	18	244398	4266554	3	18	245841	4265380	4	18	245866	4265182

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 Ashley Neville & John Salmon  
organization Ashley Neville LLC date September 19, 2007  
street & number 112 Thompson St., Suite B-1 telephone 804-798-2124  
city or town Ashland state VA zip code 23005

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**Additional Documentation**  
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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 Sarah Witten & William Martin Barron and Crimora Witten Ayers  
street & number 17736 Auburn Road telephone (540) 825-8990  
city or town Brandy Station state VA zip code 22714

=====  
**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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 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



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**Auburn  
Culpeper County, Virginia**

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Auburn is located off Route 685, aptly named Auburn Road, on gently rolling fields about one-and-a-half miles northwest of the village of Brandy Station. The Blue Ridge Mountains provide a dramatic backdrop for the property. U.S. Route 29 now forms the southern boundary of the farm, and the house is oriented southeast looking toward the village and former Orange & Alexandria Railroad (now CSX) that runs through the village. The house stands in a cove of trees surrounded by open fields and pastures. Board or wire fences enclose most of the fields.

The house appears to have been built about 1855–1856. It replaced an earlier dwelling there that James and Dolley Madison frequently visited. No buildings survive from that early period, but the house and a detached kitchen remain from the antebellum period. The house is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style executed in wood, with a large two-story portico on the front of the gable-end entry. The rear has a smaller and more delicate one-story pedimented Greek Revival–style porch, now enclosed. The house has a central-passage, double-pile plan and interior details such as mantels, doors, and stairs that maintain the Greek Revival style. A one-story, one-room brick kitchen that appears to be contemporary with the house stands to the rear.

The remaining buildings were constructed between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s to support a successful farming operation. There are a total of fifteen buildings and structures on the property. The antebellum house and kitchen, and twentieth-century garage, chicken house, meat house, and machine shed form the domestic center of the farm. With the exception of the machine shed, these domestic outbuildings are located in a row to the rear of the house where Civil War–era photographs show a row of outbuildings. Of the buildings shown in the historic photographs, only the kitchen remains. Two barns and a large corncrib stand as a group in the field about 1,000 feet northeast of the house, and two tenant houses are located northeast of the barns just off Auburn Road. The earlier tenant house has two sheds, both of which are noncontributing. There are ten contributing buildings, two noncontributing buildings, two contributing structures, and one noncontributing structure.

### INVENTORY

1. House. ca. 1855–1856. Contributing building.
2. Kitchen. ca. 1855–1856. Contributing building.
3. Meat House. 1915–1930. Contributing building.
4. Chicken House. 1915–1930. Contributing building.
5. Garage. 1915–1930. Contributing building.
6. Machine Shed. ca 1950. Contributing building.
7. Long Barn. ca. 1900. Contributing building.
8. Gambrel-roof Barn. ca. 1935. Contributing building.
9. Silos (2). 1950–1955 Contributing structures.
10. Silo (1). 1979 Noncontributing structure.
11. Corn Crib. ca. 1935. Contributing building.

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12. Tenant House No. 1. ca. 1900. Contributing building.
13. Tenant House No. 1, Shed. ca. 1950. Noncontributing building.
14. Tenant House No. 1, Plywood Shed. ca. 1980. Noncontributing building
15. Tenant House No. 2. 1915–1920. Contributing building.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

Auburn includes about 425 acres of open pastures, hayfields, and woodlands today. The open fields with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background create a striking setting for the Greek Revival–style house and its dependencies, which spread out across the open fields northeast of the main house. The house is accessed from Auburn Road along a gravel farm lane that approaches the front of the dwelling before curving to the right and terminating in a circle on the side and in front of the three white frame outbuildings. The yard around the house is enclosed with a white board fence, and boxwood line the north side of the drive inside the yard. Mature deciduous and evergreen trees also stand in the yard, with evergreen bushes around the front portico. A white board fence frames the entrance to Auburn and board and wire fences delineate the property along Auburn Road and enclose the pastures and fields.

**House**

The house at Auburn is an imposing three-story, frame, Greek Revival–style dwelling with a monumental two-story portico. The house, three bays wide by three bays deep, is oriented with its gable end to the front. The weatherboards are now covered with synthetic siding. The original windows are six-over-six-light, double-hung sash, all flanked with shutters. Two tall, interior, brick chimneys pierce the gable roof.

The two-story portico with its heavy entablature including triglyph and metope frieze dominates the front of the house. The third story and peak of the gable roof rises above the top of the portico. The entrance features a four-panel door with a five-pane transom and sidelights, which are flanked by pilasters and topped with a heavy cornice. A more delicate one-story porch is centered on the rear. Although the porch was long ago enclosed, the original details remain. Half columns resting on a balustrade (now covered with weatherboard) support the pedimented gable roof. The rear door, like the front, is four panels with transom and sidelights.

The interior of the house features a double-pile, central-passage plan with four major rooms on each floor. The exception is the large front room on the third floor, which spans the width of the house. Throughout the interior, fine Greek Revival–style details illustrate each room’s hierarchy or importance, with the most elaborate woodwork located in the most important rooms. The interior of the front doorway echoes the exterior details with paneled pilasters supporting a cornice. This theme of paneled pilasters and cornice is carried though in the major first-floor rooms on the windows and the passage doorways. These doorways have pedimented cornices, which are not found elsewhere in the house. The living room windows have paneled pilasters, tall flat cornices with panels beneath the windows. The dining room windows and doors have molded architrave trim and heavier cornices than the living room. Both rooms have tall, heavy baseboards.

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The doors in the major rooms and first-floor passage are four-panel doors, while the doors of the secondary and upper level rooms have two panels with a simpler architrave trim. One six-raised-panel door is located on the third floor, perhaps a survivor from the first house at Auburn. The Greek Revival-style mantels are simple with plain pilasters, frieze, and shelf. An additional piece of molding on the pilasters is the only distinction between the mantels in the major rooms and the secondary and second-floor rooms.

The center passage is divided by a doorway at the rear of the stairs, which limits access to the rear rooms. The passage also contains the open well stair that rises to a half-space landing with several steps ascending to the rear rooms and a separate short flight providing access to the center passage and front rooms. The primary newel is a heavily turned affair, while intermediate newels are more subdued with turnings only at the top and bottom. The newels, well-proportioned round handrail, and slender round balusters are all stained. The stair has plain brackets and a spandrel paneled with tall vertical panels.

The house at Auburn retains a very high degree of architectural integrity. The only major interior alteration occurred when the Ratrie family purchased the farm in 1915. Shortly thereafter, the passage doorways to the two front rooms were widened to accommodate double-leaf doors. However, the paneled pilasters were reused and the pedimented cornices were replicated. Bathrooms have been sensitively inserted between the rooms.

## **SECONDARY RESOURCES**

### **Kitchen**

The kitchen stands behind the house and is separated from it by a tall hedge. An identical building that served as the office once stood next to the kitchen to the south, but it is no longer extant. The kitchen is a one-story, two-bay, gable-roofed building constructed of brick laid mostly in common bond. The brick has been repointed and part of the south end was rebuilt when the chimney and roof collapsed around 1970. The kitchen has a brick corbelled cornice and a gable roof of asphalt shingles. There is an interior-end chimney on the south end. A batten door and a single six-over-six-light, double-hung sash window pierce the façade. The interior features a one-room plan with a loft above. The walls are plastered, and vertical boards and a batten door enclose the stair that rises on the exterior side wall adjacent to the front door. A large cooking fireplace occupies the south wall of the building.

### **Meat House, Chicken House, and Garage**

These three buildings are aligned in a row with the kitchen, behind and slightly north of the house. Civil War-era photographs show a line of dependencies standing in a row in this location. These buildings were constructed at the same time, shortly after Turner Ratrie purchased the farm in 1915, and they appear to have been constructed by 1930. Although these buildings were used for different purposes, all three are almost identical with unusual framing to create additional interior headroom. The ceiling joists, instead of continuing all the way across the width of the building from eave to eave in these three buildings, end about two feet out from the plate at a framing member that runs from front to rear parallel to the plate. Only one or two joists continue across the entire width of the building. This method of framing results in the interior being open to the gable peak.

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All three buildings are one-story, frame, gable-end-entry buildings on poured concrete foundations with weatherboard siding. The gable roofs are covered with standing-seam metal and have boxed eaves. The meat house is one bay with a batten door. The chicken house has a central batten door flanked by six-over-six-light, double-hung sash windows with another window above the door in the gable end. The garage has a sliding wooden door.

**Machine Shed**

The vehicle shed is located to the rear and across a farm lane from the three outbuildings. Constructed about 1950, this is a long, one-story pole shed with a gable roof of corrugated metal. The rear and sides are enclosed with vertical boards.

**Long Barn**

The long barn was standing when Turner Ratrie purchased the farm in 1915. It appears to have been constructed either shortly before or just after 1900. It is a long, two-story, heavily framed barn with a one-story shed along the north side and a mid-to-late-twentieth-century one-story addition to the west end. The building is sheathed with vertical boards except for the gable ends, which have weatherboard siding. There is a break in the sheathing of the south side at the top of the first floor to allow for ventilation. Standing-seam metal covers the gable roof and there is a gable peak supported by plain post brackets over the hayloft opening.

The first floor of the main barn is divided into two parts with a row of stalls on the south side and a walkway or aisle on the north side. The walkway provided access for people and machinery to provide feed for the livestock in the stalls. The shed on the north side was used for livestock but is now used for equipment storage. The second floor was used for hay storage.

The framing of this barn reflects the changing building methods that occurred in Virginia after the Civil War as the war spread technology and building practices into new areas. This change is most noticeable in the frame of this barn and the predominate use of up braces rather than the down brace, which is commonly used in Virginia and throughout the South. Up braces were more common in New England and the northern states. All of the timbers appear to have been sawn and not hewn. The framing for the north shed where it attaches to the main block is built to allow hay to be thrown down from the hayloft to feed livestock. The current owners have gone to great lengths and expense to maintain this barn and keep it standing.

**Gambrel Roof Barn**

This barn, built about 1935, is located immediately adjacent to the corncrib and both are located near the long barn. This is a one-story, frame barn with flanking sheds. It is sheathed with vertical boards and has a gambrel roof of standing-seam metal. There is a door on each end for the center aisle on the first floor and a large opening

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on each end of the large hayloft where the hay was loaded into the barn. Gambrel-roof barns gained in popularity in the 1930s because of the additional storage space provided by this roof type. A concrete-stave silo stands immediately on the west end of the building.

**Corncrib**

This is a one-story, frame building with a gable roof of standing-seam metal. The corncrib, built circa 1935, has a center aisle with flanking cribs that are sheathed with loosely fitting horizontal boards that allow for air circulation. Vertical boards sheath each gable end.

**Silos (3)**

There are two contributing silos; one at the east end of the long barn and one at the west end of the gambrel-roof barn. Both are of poured concrete construction and measure 16 feet in diameter and are 50 feet tall. These two silos were built in the first half of the 1950s. The third silo, a noncontributing structure, stands in a field west of the house. Built in 1979, it is also of poured construction and measures 20 feet in diameter and is 60 feet tall. There is no barn or other agricultural building associated with this silo.

**Tenant Houses**

Two tenant houses are located about 1,500 feet northeast of the house just off Auburn Road. A farm lane provides access from the highway and continues on to the barns. The land around the tenant houses is open with only a few deciduous trees in the yards of the houses. The architecture of both dwellings is similar even though they were built several decades apart. The stucco covering and the two-story height of the houses is typical domestic architecture for houses in the mid-range size in this region of Virginia.

**Tenant House No. 1**

This is the older of the two tenant houses with a construction date of around 1900. It appears to pre-date the purchase of the farm by Turner Ratrie and his subsequent building campaign. It is oriented to face the barns and main house with its back to Auburn Road.

This is a two-story, three-bay, frame dwelling on brick piers with concrete-block infill and is sheathed with stucco. Standing-seam metal covers the side-gable roof and it has a central brick chimney with a stack that has been rebuilt. Its sills are hewn with circular-sawn floor joists lapped over the sill. The house has a one-story, single-bay front porch with hipped roof, and the windows and doors are replacements. It originally had semi-detached kitchen that was connected to the house by a breezeway. Some time after 1915, the breezeway was removed and the existing kitchen moved and attached to the rest of the house. The rear ell has a concrete-block stove flue. There is a one-story, frame addition with lapped siding on the side of the ell.

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This tenant house has two small outbuildings, which are noncontributing resources. They include a one-story, single-bay, gable-roof building sheathed with stucco that was moved here about 10 years ago from Warrenton, Virginia and a plywood shed built about 1980.

**Tenant House No. 2**

This is a newer dwelling and was built during the Rattie tenure after 1915 but is similar in form and materials to the earlier tenant house. It faces the farm lane that provides access from Auburn Road. Like the older tenant house, it is a two-story, three-bay, frame dwelling with stucco covering. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal and there is one interior chimney flue. A two-story rear ell has an interior-end chimney flue. The house has a one-story, three-bay, shed-roofed front porch and a partially enclosed shed-roofed porch on the side. The original windows have six-over-six-light double-hung sash, but most windows are one-over-one-light replacement windows. Recent work on this house revealed that the house originally was sheathed with weatherboard siding and that the rear ell is an addition.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Auburn, located in Culpeper County near Brandy Station, was constructed in the Greek Revival style for James A. Beckham about 1855–1856. Beckham devoted himself to improving the two-thousand-acre farm, and by 1860 it was a notably productive estate. Auburn was the home of Virginia politician John Minor Botts from January 8, 1863, until his death exactly six years later. A nationally known figure from his first term in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1839, Botts had an uneven political career. His abrasive personality and overblown rhetoric—even in an era replete with assertive personalities and fiery rhetoric—made him a force to be reckoned with, if not beloved. Arrested under Confederate martial law in 1862 in Richmond for Unionist activities, Botts was ordered exiled to the interior of Virginia and decided to settle in Culpeper County. According to a lawsuit filed against him after the war, he cheated Beckham, who was ill and feeble, out of the Auburn property. There Botts lived until his death in 1869, entertaining at his table such Union officers as Ulysses S. Grant and George G. Meade, fighting his own private war against the Confederacy, and nonetheless cosigning the bail bond for former Confederate president Jefferson Davis in 1867. Beckham's heirs recovered Auburn through a decision handed down by the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in 1879. Although the property was sold out of the Beckham family in 1901, it has remained in the hands of sympathetic and appreciative owners to the present day, not only retaining its architectural integrity but also serving as a noteworthy example of a Piedmont Virginia farm with a lengthy agricultural history.

**JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA**

Auburn is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Civil War in Culpeper County. It is also eligible under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage relating to the African Americans laboring on the property and the laws governing them. It is eligible under Criterion B for its association with John Minor Botts, a notable Virginia politician who served in the Virginia House of Delegates and the U.S. Congress. He also was an ardent and outspoken Unionist and a thorn in the side of Confederate civil and military leaders. Auburn is the sole surviving dwelling associated with Botts. Auburn is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Greek Revival-style dwelling with surviving outbuildings related to slave labor and agriculture, which are not well represented in Culpeper County. Auburn retains the integrity of its historic location, association, setting, feeling, design, materials and workmanship.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The tract on which the house called Auburn stands was assembled primarily from three large parcels that Morgan Battly, John Haddock, and William Pannill patented in June 1736. Francis Thornton later bought Battly's and Haddock's tracts, as well as other adjoining parcels, and then bequeathed them to his son, George Thornton. George Thornton subsequently purchased the Pannill tract from Pannill's son. In 1773 and 1774, Gerard Banks paid Thornton for the tracts, which totaled an estimated 887 acres, from Thornton, although the deed transferring the property to Banks was not executed until December 15, 1780. Isaac Winston, formerly of Hanover County, bought the combined parcel from Banks on May 2, 1799.<sup>1</sup>

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Winston resided in a dwelling, now gone, on his newly acquired property. A prominent planter and landowner, Winston was married to Lucy Coles, a maternal aunt of Dolley Madison, wife of James Madison. The Madisons had business dealings with Winston and often visited him at his Culpeper home en route to and from Washington, D.C., where Madison served first as Secretary of State (1801–1809) under President Thomas Jefferson and then as president (1809–1817). On April 6, 1802, John Strode, of Culpeper County, invited Madison to stay at Strode’s house for a change: “Should You, Your Lady and family make a Visit this Spring to Your Seat in Orange; pray confer on me the honor of taking my House in Your route, for One Night at least; Capt. Winston I must grant has the highest Claim to the favour of both You and Your Lady; but it cannot be consistent with the principles of equity or Justice that He Should engross Your whole time, while in the County; pray then, Spare a few hours on me.”<sup>2</sup>

Isaac Winston gave his son, Walter Coles Winston, four hundred acres of the tract on December 24, 1803, and then gave him the remainder on April 14, 1814. In the latter deed, the name of Auburn—also the name of Isaac Winston’s former homeplace in Hanover County—appears for the first time. In 1815, a year of specially imposed taxes to help provide revenue to pay the expenses of the War of 1812, the buildings on the property were valued at \$2,100 under the category “houses in the country.” If the \$2,100 value was assigned only to the dwelling and not other structures, it must have been a substantial house. Winston’s taxable personal property included nineteen slaves, eleven horses, thirty head of cattle, two sideboards, five chairs, and one secretary or bookcase. The 1820 land tax book, in which a value for buildings on a property begins to appear on an annual basis, appraised the buildings on the Auburn tract at only \$550. This value may suggest that a modest frame dwelling stood on the property at that time, perhaps a replacement for the house that was there in 1815. In 1840, when the property was reassessed, the value for buildings was \$500; probably the dwelling and other buildings had deteriorated slightly from age.<sup>3</sup>

Walter Coles Winston sold Auburn on June 28, 1843, to James A. Beckham, of Fredericksburg. A survey of the tract showed that it contained 948.5 acres by then. The value of the buildings on the property remained at \$500 until 1856, when the land tax book reported an increase to \$1,500, a value it held for the next several years. This significant increase, in addition to the mid-century popularity of the dwelling’s Greek Revival style, strongly suggests that the house that stands at Auburn today was constructed for James A. Beckham about 1855–1856.<sup>4</sup>

Beckham was a merchant who lived in Spotsylvania County and Fredericksburg before moving back to Culpeper County, where he was born about 1801 as the eldest son of Thomas Beckham (1770–1855). According to the Beckham family genealogy,

James A. Beckham was a man of great enterprise and unusual business capacity. He was a natural leader of men, and easily gained influence and control over those with whom he came in contact, as he possessed much force of character and executive ability. He was a large landowner, and was possessed of considerable property to the time of the Civil War; but loss of property, with bad health, followed him later in life.<sup>5</sup>

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Local records suggest Beckham's increasing prosperity. The Spotsylvania County personal property tax books list him as owning from four to eight horses between 1836 and 1838, while the tax books for Fredericksburg recorded that he owned from one to three slaves over the age of twelve, four to six horses, a carriage or buggy valued from \$175 to \$400, and two gold watches at various times between 1837 and 1842. He appears not to have owned real estate. Beckham married Frances J. Alcocke about May 23, 1837, when he took out a marriage bond in Fredericksburg. As the Alcockes were locally prominent, Beckham may have acquired additional wealth through his marriage.<sup>6</sup>

The 1850 census of Culpeper County listed James A. Beckham and his large family at Auburn. Besides Beckham himself, whose age was given as forty-five (evidently an estimate) and whose occupation was "farmer," with \$32,000 in real estate, the census noted his wife, Frances J. Beckham, age thirty-one, Anne E. Beckham, age eleven, Abner K. and J. Thomas Beckham, whose ages were given as seven, Beverley M. Beckham, age five, John G. Beckham, age three, and Mary P. Beckham, age one. Isaac G. Bailey, a twenty-two-year-old "clock repairer" who had been born in New Hampshire and owned real estate valued at \$2,100, also lived in the household. At the bottom of the page, the census taker wrote the following odd note: "Mr. Bailey begged that he be numbered among the people of the U.S. and was." The census taker also reported that Beckham owned thirty-seven slaves: twenty-two males between the ages of six and twenty-seven, and fifteen females between the ages of five and twenty-six.<sup>7</sup>

On October 15, 1850, the census taker compiled a summary of Beckham's agricultural endeavors at Auburn, which by that time totaled about 1,600 acres, 1,200 of which were improved and 400 unimproved. He valued the Auburn farm at \$32,000, as well as \$4,000 in farm implements and machinery. Beckham owned ten horses, eight mules, twenty milch cows, twelve working oxen, eighty head of "other" cattle, one hundred and thirty sheep, and seventy-five swine, for a total livestock value of \$4,860. He raised 2,400 bushels of wheat, 3,500 bushels of Indian corn, 300 bushels of oats, 20 bushels of peas and beans, 40 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 80 tons of hay. The sheep yielded 650 pounds of wool and the cows produced enough milk to make 450 pounds of butter. Beckham had slaughtered \$650 worth of livestock during the past year.<sup>8</sup>

Beckham's growing expertise in agricultural subjects brought him an appointment to one of the committees "for the Award of Premiums" at the 1857 Virginia State Fair in Richmond. He was one of the judges of "The Horses of General Utility—2d Class" with representatives from Albemarle, Augusta, Charles City, and Hanover Counties.<sup>9</sup>

By the time the census of 1860 was taken, Beckham's wife had died. His household consisted of himself, Anna E. Beckham, age twenty-one, Abner Camp Beckham, age nineteen, James Thomas Beckham, age seventeen, Beverley W. Beckham, age fourteen, and John G. Beckham, age thirteen. James A. Beckham, again listed as a farmer, owned real estate valued at \$81,480 and personal property assessed at \$49,298. Beckham owned sixty-one slaves, including twenty-six males aged between six months and seventy years and thirty-five females aged between four months and sixty-five years. He also hired one or two slaves from other owners. In addition, an overseer lived in Beckham's household: Beverley W. Brown, age twenty-five.<sup>10</sup>

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The Auburn farm tract had grown to 2,037 acres (1,500 improved and 537 unimproved), when the census taker stopped by on June 20, 1860. The farm's value was the same as the amount given in the schedule of inhabitants, but the value of farm implements and machinery had declined to \$1,600 from \$4,000, perhaps indicating a greater reliance on slave labor. Beckham owned ten horses, thirteen mules, twenty milch cows, thirteen working oxen, seventy-two head of "other" cattle, only sixteen sheep (down from one hundred and thirty in 1850), and one hundred swine, for a total livestock value of \$1,548, a decline from \$4,860 ten years earlier. Wheat and corn production had risen sharply, from 2,400 bushels of wheat and 3,500 bushels of Indian corn in 1850 to 4,000 bushels of wheat and 10,000 bushels of corn in 1860. Oats were no longer grown, and the quantities of peas and beans (20 bushels) and Irish potatoes (40 bushels) remained the same as in 1850, while in 1860 Beckham grew 132 tons of hay in contrast with 80 tons a decade earlier. The sheep yielded only 147 pounds of wool instead of 650 pounds, but butter production had increased to 1,000 pounds, more than double the 450 pounds of 1850. The value of the livestock Beckham had slaughtered had risen to \$996 from \$650.<sup>11</sup>

At about the time that Beckham constructed the house at Auburn, his health began to deteriorate as the result of a series of strokes. According to those who knew him, Beckham had until then been "possessed by nature of a sound physical constitution and vigorous mind[.] Although entering life poor, by his great energy and industry, sound judgment and good management, Mr. Beckham, by middle age, had acquired the Auburn estate and much valuable personal property. He was the owner, at the commencement of the [Civil W]ar, of a large number of slaves, between twenty and thirty of whom . . . were laborers on his farm." Beckham suffered his first stroke in 1855, his second in 1856, his third in August or September 1862, and his fourth on December 3 of the same year. He recovered largely from the first and second strokes, but the last two left him "laboring under marked dementia," irritable, excitable, haggard, and worn out. The partisan ranger John S. Mosby, who stayed at Auburn for several weeks in March and November 1862, described Beckham as "feeble" and "the wreck of a man who had once been of a robust constitution."<sup>12</sup>

It was during this period of Beckham's declining health, in November and December 1862, that he sold Auburn to two men from Richmond, Franklin P. Stearns and John Minor Botts. They were ardent Unionists who wished to invest Confederate currency, which they had in abundance but in which they lacked faith, in real estate. The deed was recorded on December 15, 1862, and Botts and Stearns thus owned Auburn. Stearns bought a nearby property, Farley, for himself, and Botts moved into Auburn.<sup>13</sup>

Botts may have made improvements to the property immediately. The value of buildings reported in the land tax book for 1863 showed a \$500 increase over that of 1862, from \$1,500 to \$2,000. Several photographs taken during the Civil War show the house much as it looks today, and in excellent condition, with a long row of outbuildings on a plantation street visible behind the dwelling to the west. Long rows of fences and a well-kept lawn around the house attest to the high standard of living to which Botts was accustomed, and to which he was determined to adhere even as the war raged virtually at his doorstep.<sup>14</sup>

John Minor Botts was born on September 16, 1802, at Dumfries in Prince William County, Virginia, the son of Benjamin G. and Jane Tyler Botts. When his parents died in the Richmond Theatre fire on December 26, 1811,

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Botts and his siblings were reared by relatives in Fredericksburg, about twenty miles south of Dumfries. One of his brothers, Alexander L. Botts, became a member of the Virginia Council of State and later an attorney in New York, while another, Charles T. Botts, founded and edited the *Southern Planter*, a vastly influential agricultural journal. He later emigrated to California, where he practiced law and published the *Sacramento Standard*. John Minor Botts read law, was admitted to the bar in 1820, and practiced in Richmond until 1826, when he settled on his Henrico County plantation, Half Sink, to farm and raise racehorses.<sup>15</sup>

Botts did not remain in rural retirement for long, but entered Virginia and national politics. At first he was unsuccessful, losing in an 1831 contest for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates. He won in 1833 and 1844, lost in 1835 but was seated after a challenge, won in 1836, and lost in 1837 but again mounted a successful challenge and was seated in January 1838. He won another term later in the year, then campaigned successfully for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1839, a seat he held until he was defeated in 1843. He won reelection in 1847, then lost in 1849. He was elected to the Virginia constitutional convention that met in 1850–1851, the last time he served in public office. He aligned himself with the Whig Party until its demise early in the 1850s, although he often held positions on national issues more consistent with those of the Democratic Party, which he came to detest. He gained a reputation as a spirited and highly partisan politician who frequently changed his mind on fundamental issues. Botts first opposed and then supported the Second Bank of the United States, opposed the gag rule against antislavery petitions to Congress, and opposed the annexation of Texas. While a member of the 1850–1851 state constitutional convention, he supported the extension of voting rights to all white adult males and the popular election of the governor and other public officials. He often published his speeches in pamphlets and wrote a steady stream of letters to newspapers expressing his opinions.<sup>16</sup>

Botts ran for Congress again on the American (Know Nothing) Party ticket in 1854 but lost. He later became increasingly unpopular in Virginia, especially when he opposed the pro-slavery constitution proposed for the new state of Kansas. A group of southern Unionists nonetheless proposed him as a presidential candidate in 1860, hoping he could appeal across state lines to former Whigs, Know Nothings, and the new Republicans. Abraham Lincoln became the candidate, however, and after Lincoln's election Botts predicted that secession would follow. Botts was defeated as a pro-Union candidate to the Virginia secession convention but continued to fulminate against secession even after Virginia left the Union in April 1861. Lincoln considered him briefly for the cabinet, then decided against it. Botts kept on with his pro-Union, anti-secession speeches and writings, until finally he was arrested on March 2, 1862, the day after the Confederate Congress suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and jailed in Richmond until April 29.<sup>17</sup>

Margaret M. Blair, who lived in Botts's household, wrote an impassioned letter to Confederate president Jefferson Davis protesting Botts's imprisonment.

I appeal to your kindness to get you to answer me a few questions. First, what was Mr. Botts taken from his family for and cast into jail? Second, why is he kept there now three weeks without allowing him a trial? Mr. Davis, what has he done to cause his confinement? Could you but know the anguish of his distressed family you

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would not keep them tortured as they are. A family of girls without a mother, and their idolized father torn from them at such a time of danger as this! Have you children? How would you feel about them? Are you a member of the Church of Christ? Remember the Savior's holy words, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' Answer this speedily if you please.<sup>18</sup>

Davis's response, if any, is not known. Botts regarded him as "perhaps the most unscrupulous despot that has appeared since the days of Nero." Botts's family nonetheless maintained the pressure on Confederate authorities to either try him or release him. One of his daughters complained to John B. Baldwin, a member of the Confederate Congress from Augusta County, who in turn wrote Confederate secretary of war George W. Randolph on April 7 about Botts. Randolph replied on April 11 that "[Brigadier] General [John H.] Winder [provost marshal and prison commandant] has received instructions to permit interviews between Mr. Botts and his daughters in the presence of an officer, and that a court of inquiry has been ordered on his case." The court convened late in the month, and on April 25 issued an order paroling Botts and banishing him from Richmond to "Lynchburg, Danville, or Raleigh, or . . . such other place in the interior as may be selected by himself." Botts was compelled to sign a parole agreeing to the banishment, as well as to "do nothing to the injury of the Confederate government, nor express any opinion tending to impair the confidence of the people in the capacity of the Confederate States to achieve their independence." Botts signed the parole on April 28 and was released the next day. Although Botts had been directed to depart the Confederate capital immediately, Secretary of War Randolph amended the court's order to allow Botts to remain at his Henrico County farm until further notice. Botts remained there under house arrest for the next four months, then was permitted limited movement. He applied for permission to leave Virginia but was refused. "After this," he wrote at Auburn after the war, "I obtained a *pass* from the Secretary of War to visit the county of Culpeper to purchase the farm on which I am now residing, which I was urged by the then owner to come up and examine." (Beckham's heirs later gave an entirely different version of the sale of Auburn.) Botts's friend Franklin P. Stearns, "who was . . . an ardent political supporter of Botts, and shared his imprisonment," likewise moved to Culpeper County, to nearby Farley.<sup>19</sup>

Sometime after Botts settled in at Auburn in 1863, a reporter for the *New York Herald* had dinner with him there and described the farm and Botts's situation:

His plantation . . . comprises something over two thousand acres. His dwelling, in size, is in keeping with the place, with an immense portico, with high and massive pillars, a wide spreading and well shaded lawn, and [a] view of the surrounding country extended and picturesque. His family[,] consisting of three grown up and accomplished daughters and a son, live with him. Rebel cavalry have been encamped on his ground most of the time for months past. It is well known that he is now enjoying his freedom through favor of a parole granted by the rebel authorities. This, of course, places him under restraint in telling many things he might otherwise tell, but nothing has thus far, and nothing he says will prevent, in the future, his telling his hostility to the Confederate government and adherence to the policy and

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principles of those seeking to preserve the Union. He persistently says he will not violate his parole; but he wishes our generals knew half he knows of the rebels and their resources and intentions.<sup>20</sup>

If Botts thought he could live quietly apart from Confederates, he soon discovered otherwise. Botts later wrote, he

moved to the county on the 8th of January, 1863; but I had hardly gotten comfortably warm in the house before [Major]General J. E. B. Stuart came in with his whole cavalry force, took possession of every part of my premises (of 2200 acres), except my house, yard, and garden, turned his horses loose to graze in every field, to the exclusion of my own stock, which was left at the mercy of his highly-incensed command, without any effort or desire on his part to restrain them. They killed my hogs, drove off portions of my cattle with their own whenever they moved, and stole from me \$50,000 worth of horses, at Confederate prices, and in Confederate money. Daily and hourly I was subjected to all sorts of vexatious annoyances. I had neither peace nor rest, day nor night, from the time this cavalry force came upon me until the arrival of the Federal army under [Major] General [George G.] Meade in the month of September, except during the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, from both of which they came immediately back *to take care of me*.<sup>21</sup>

In May 1863, after the Battle of Chancellorsville, just west of Fredericksburg, Confederate General Robert E. Lee began to prepare for his second invasion of the North—an invasion that would end two months later at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He ordered his infantry to camp around Culpeper Court House, and posted his cavalry corps, commanded by Major General J. E. B. Stuart, between the county seat and the Rappahannock River, between the infantry and the Union army across the river in Fauquier County. Stuart's mission was to screen the infantry, protecting it from Federal observation as it marched west to the Shenandoah Valley, the avenue of invasion of the North. Stuart's cavalymen spread out over the countryside near Brandy Station, a depot on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Part of the corps camped at Auburn near Botts's house, irritating the staunch Unionist as the Confederate troopers helped themselves to his fence rails and raided his wood lots for firewood. No doubt because of Botts's memorable bombast and bluster, a remarkable number of Confederate and—later—Union soldiers and officers recorded their generally unfavorable impressions of him in their letters, diaries, and postwar memoirs. The Confederates disliked him because of his outspoken Union sympathies, while some of the Federals believed he was playing both sides against the middle, making claims of loyalty to whichever army occupied his land while seeking compensation for alleged outrages against his property.

Years later, a member of Stuart's Horse Artillery reminisced about his experiences at Auburn:

May 20th [1863] finds us at Culpeper Court House again, on the farm of John Minor Botts. I remember arriving there on a previous occasion with all of our cavalry and horse artillery. The night was wet and cold and we made fires of his good rails. He rode over to where we were, looking as sour as a lemon, and remarked: 'Ten

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thousand men burning rails and not one splitting any'; but we didn't care. He was Yankee at heart and had no sympathy for us. On the 22nd, Gen. [Wade] Hampton's, Fitz Lee's and W. H. F. Lee's brigades, with our battalion of artillery, were reviewed by Gen. Stuart, Gen. [John B.] Hood, Gen. Randolph and Lieut. Wigfall, besides many ladies and gentlemen from the neighborhood of Culpeper and the vicinity of our camp.<sup>22</sup>

Matters between Botts and Stuart reached a crisis early in June 1863. On June 5, Stuart held a grand review of his corps near Auburn for the benefit and entertainment of General Robert E. Lee as well as for local residents. When Lee was unable to attend, Stuart not only held the review anyway but repeated it on June 8, when Lee and his entourage were present. During one of the reviews, the massed cavalymen maneuvered through Botts's ripening cornfields, enraging the former congressman, who confronted Stuart. A local diarist recorded the episode and later published an account of it:

It was while I was at Mr. Bradford's that one of the most stirring events in Confederate history occurred. This was the trampling down of John Minor Botts's corn. Very good corn it was, dropped and killed by Southern negroes and growing on a large, fine plantation next to Mr. Bradford's; and a very nice gentleman Mr. Botts was, too; but a field of corn, however good, and a private citizen, however estimable, are scarcely matters of national or international importance. The trouble was that John Minor Botts was on the Northern side and the corn was on the Southern side, and that Stuart held a grand review on the Southern side and the corn got trampled down. The fame of that corn went abroad in all the land. Northern and Southern papers vied with each other in editorials and special articles, families who had been friends for generations stopped speaking and do not speak to this day because of it, more than one hard blow was exchanged for and against it, and it brought down vituperation upon Stuart's head. And yet I was present at that naughty grand review—afterward wrote in letters of blood upon hearts that reached from Virginia to Florida—and I can testify that General Stuart went there to review the troops, *not* to trample down the corn.

Afterward John Minor Botts came over to see General Stuart and to quarrel about that corn. All that I can remember of how the general took Mr. Botts's visit and effort to quarrel was that Stuart wouldn't quarrel—whatever it was he said to Mr. Botts he got to laughing when he said it. Our colored Abigail told us with bated breath that 'Mr. Botts ripped and rared and snorted, but Genrul Stuart warn't put out none at all.'<sup>23</sup>

To the contrary, after a while Stuart had enough, ordered Botts arrested, and confined him in the county seat for an hour or two, until Lee ordered his release.<sup>24</sup>

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After the Battle of Brandy Station on June 9, the armies departed Culpeper County as Lee marched north. By autumn, however, they returned—first the Federals, then the Confederates, and finally the Federals again. After the war, Botts wrote that

when General Meade fell back from Culpepper on the [11]th of October to prevent the flank movement of General Lee . . . Stuart, with his whole cavalry force, came in to follow up and harass Meade's rear, and he followed them to the Rappahannock, skirmishing as they went. Immediately before my door they had a very brisk little fight about four in the afternoon, which left twenty-five killed and wounded men of both sides almost within a stone's throw of my house, all of whom I had brought in—the dead to be buried and the wounded to be nursed; and while I was engaged in this work of mercy General Stuart's command returned from the Rappahannock just after night-fall, when the work of destruction began, which continued through the night, and until ten or eleven o'clock the next morning. When I reached my house with the last load of wounded men, I found the inclosure to my yard, garden, and corn-field all torn down, camp-fires burning in each, near enough, with a good wind, to endanger my buildings, four or five hundred horses turned loose into my orchard and corn-field, fence-rails blazing in every direction, and the men in a state of frenzied excitement; . . . except that none of my household were tomahawked or scalped, the scene reminded me more of what I had read of in Indian or savage warfare than any thing that had occurred among a Christian and civilized people.<sup>25</sup>

The combat in front of the house at Auburn involved the 4th and 5th North Carolina Cavalry, which were “charged in flank by the Eighteenth Pennsylvania [Cavalry] and broke in considerable confusion,” according to Confederate Brigadier General James B. Gordon. Stuart wrote that “our men broke and fled in spite of every effort on the part of the brigade commander and myself to rally them, and the enemy was not checked in the pursuit until the Seventeenth Virginia, which came up very opportunely, charged them in flank and cut off quite a number, who were either killed or captured.” It was the dead and wounded from this encounter that Botts tended.<sup>26</sup>

When Botts protested too vigorously the next morning about the damage to his property, Stuart ordered his provost marshal to “arrest John Minor Botts and send him to Richmond. Charges will be forwarded from these headquarters as soon as practicable. Don't allow him to annoy General Lee, but keep him as a prisoner of state.” Botts later alleged that the charges were “frivolous and contemptible”: that he had entertained Meade at his table and that he had been caught bearing arms for the Federals. Neither charge, he claimed, was true, although he had fed numbers of the officers and men of both armies at various times. Botts was held at the county seat for several hours and then released about 5 P.M. that afternoon.<sup>27</sup>

One of the Confederates encamped in the neighborhood later described Auburn and Botts in his memoirs:

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October 28 [1863]. We moved camp to-day, and are now about one mile west of Brandy Station, and not far from the residence of John Minor Botts. His house is situated about a mile and a half nearly west of Brandy Station and about half a mile from the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. It is located on a beautiful eminence which slopes gently down to a level plain that lies in front of the house and extends to the railroad. The house is large and plain, nearly square, built of wood and painted white; it faces toward sunrise and the railroad, and it has a large and stately portico in front. John Minor Botts is an eminent lawyer and politician, and a strong and pronounced Union man.<sup>28</sup>

Early in November 1863, the Federal forces returned to Culpeper County, this time to spend the winter. Camps soon sprawled all over the county, including at Auburn, where Botts “hosted” most of an entire corps of the Army of the Potomac. One of the officers later wrote of the experience:

The Sixth corps went into camp on the right of the army, two miles from Brandy Station. We occupied land belonging to John Minor Botts. Mr. Botts boasted that he owned six hundred miles of fence when we came upon his possessions. He could not say that when we had been there a week! His fences were burned, and his forests cut down; and it was generally known that our chief quarter-master was paying him immense sums of money for the wood used by our army.<sup>29</sup>

The subject of fences soon became a sore one for Botts, who complained long and bitterly about the disappearance of his rails.

Appearances now indicated that the army would remain for a time at this place and the soldiers proceeded to stockade their tents, construct chimneys, and make preparations for ‘winter quarters.’ Routine camp duties were resumed and details furnished for picket and fatigue purposes, building corduroy roads and repairing fences for John Minor Botts, upon whose plantation we were encamped. It was currently reported and generally believed that Botts, a former United States Senator from Virginia, was ‘carrying water on both shoulders,’ levying tribute from both armies, professing loyalty indiscriminately to the Union and Confederate governments, as the armies of each occupied alternately, his grounds, receiving payment from both governments for all damages to his buildings, fences and wood lots irrespective of which side was responsible for the damage. He made frequent complaints to brigade, division, and corps commanders of the alleged depredations of the soldiers. The well-seasoned split rails of the old-fashioned ‘stake-and-rider snake fences,’ which in ante-bellum days were so common in the Old Dominion, made excellent material for camp fires, and miles of these fences would disappear in the twinkling of an eye, whenever troops of either army were encamped in the

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neighborhood. The ire of Botts was temporarily appeased upon one occasion by the promise of one of our generals to issue an order permitting his men to take only 'the top rail.' It was not until all his fences had disappeared, that the indignant planter realized that under a strict interpretation of this order each rail in turn became a 'top' one. Being forbidden to cut down the trees on Botts' property, wood for fuel and building purposes became very scarce and many of the men were obliged to 'tote' it on their shoulders for more than a mile. Accordingly, in January, 1864, division camp was moved upon property belonging to some other owner, and model camps were soon constructed.<sup>30</sup>

An officer in the 17th Maine Infantry, which camped at Auburn in December 1863, wrote later of the regiment's brief tenure there.

Appearances indicated that we should remain a short time at this place, and the men set themselves to work stockading their tents and building chimneys, by which means we soon had a very comfortable camp. We remained here, furnishing details for corduroy roads, drilling and performing picket duty, with the usual routine of camp-life. Our encampment was upon the grounds of John Minor Botts, who owned (nominally) all the neighboring farms. We were forbidden to use wood from his place, and consequently were obliged to 'tote' it nearly a mile.

It appeared to be the opinion of the troops, unanimously, that J. M. B. was an 'unmitigated fraud.' Several complaints were made by him to General Meade, and it was finally decided to move our camps. Accordingly, on the morning of January tenth, 1864, we marched about three miles, and encamped in a fine oak grove.<sup>31</sup>

Brigadier General Régis de Trobriand found himself dealing with Botts over the fences and other matters, and he described the encounter and his assessment of Botts's motives, in his postwar memoirs.

My brigade now encamped on the land of Mr. John Minor Botts, a Virginian, who had played a marked role in the old Whig party. He had adroitly maneuvered his bark in the midst of the political storms which immediately preceded the tardy secession of his State. Since then, he had made an opposition to the Richmond government, temperate in reality, but sufficiently noisy in manner to be able to take advantage of it with us, as an evidence of Union sentiments.

This able man had found means to feed at both racks. As soon as he saw us on his vast property, of which a part, it was said, was only a deposit left in his hands, by means of pretended sales, by rebels serving in the armies of the Confederacy, his first care was, naturally, to make as much as possible out of the circumstances. He immediately sought General Meade. He told him, in moving terms, of the persecutions to which he had been subjected on the part of the Confederates, and the

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devastations his property had had to suffer. On these grounds he demanded the protection of the general commanding, and finished by asking in regard to an indemnity for the losses caused by our troops. General Meade willingly acceded to his requests, and, as my headquarters were the nearest to the house, I received orders to call on Mr. Botts, and agree with him as to what could be done.

To my great surprise, I found a house surrounded by grounds in good order, and where no mark of the war was apparent, except in the reduction of the household service. The white fences were intact. Inside of them the sheep grazed, the turkeys gobbled, the chickens clucked, the geese ate the grass, and the plump ducks slept with their bills under their wings. This was a rural sight which we had long before lost the habit of seeing in Virginia. My aids were not less surprised than myself, and it appeared to us that, however great a victim the honorable Mr. Botts had been, he had nevertheless succeeded in saving some valuable remains from the shipwreck. A stairway of several steps led us to a piazza, covered by the protection of a Greek front, supported by high columns. The door was opened to us, and we passed into the house.

The parlor where we were received was furnished without taste, but solidly comfortable, and where nothing was wanting. On the wall a few of the pretentious daubs which the want of artistic intelligence of the South accepts as pictures were growing yellow. In fine, everything appeared to be in its usual condition, and nothing indicated that the cheap carpets had been soiled by the boots of the soldiery. The master of the house soon made his appearance, with the air that Marius must have borne when confronted by the legionary who was ordered to put him to death; but when I had made him acquainted with the object of my visit, modifying his expression, he took the initiative, and began his oration.

As I had not come there for flowers of rhetoric, but on the matter of trees cut down and fences burned, I hastened to give a more practical turn to the conversation. We had not the less to listen to the reading of a letter destined for the *Richmond Examiner*, and in which Mr. Botts complained bitterly of the excesses committed by the Confederate army to his prejudice. He inveighed particularly in the letter against General Stuart, who, little susceptible to the charms of eloquence, had, it appeared, caused the arrest of the orator, in order to rid himself of his complaints, which were either too long or too strong. But where Mr. Botts lacked cunning was in the communication to me of the reclamation for damages and injuries addressed to the rebel government. It appeared to me that to hold out one hand to Richmond and the other to Washington might be adroit; but to let me know of it was, at least, useless, especially when certain damages, which I knew had been the work of the enemy, were unjustly laid to the charge of our troops.

The conclusion was: firstly, we were to furnish a detail of a hundred men, with wagons, to put up the fences, protected by which the flocks of Mr. Botts could

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graze; that afterwards a special commission was appointed to assess the damage and present a report on the question of indemnity. As I left the army a few days later, I am ignorant of what happened.<sup>32</sup>

Botts delivered many of his complaints to Major General Marsena R. Patrick, provost marshal of the Army of the Potomac. Patrick, who was responsible for maintaining “law and order” in the army, was a logical target for Botts’s tirades, which Patrick wearily recorded in the diary he kept.

Sept. 21, 1863. I am struck by some statements of Mr. Botts to me, in regard to [Major General George B.] McClellan. One, to the effect, that Kirby Smith told him, that McClellan’s heart was with the South, and that, alone, prevented him from taking Richmond in ’62. Botts believes McClellan to be a thoroughgoing Traitor.

Sept. 27, 1863. An invitation today from Hon. Jno. Minor Botts to dine with him, with [Generals] Meade, [Alfred] Pleasonton and [William H.] French. Of course I did not go and would not, under any ordinary circumstances.

Nov. 12, 1863. John M. Botts came to see me and bring his long winded articles to read to me. It seems that Jeb. Stuart arrested him, took him to Culpepper, kept him a few hours and set him free, making no charges against him. Botts was desirous of being martyred by being taken to Richmond, but it is probable that Lee prevented it, fearing the consequences. He says that the Confederate Army has nearly ruined him, having carried off 3,000 bushels of Corn, 17 Stacks of Wheat and all the Corn they could lay their hands on. He makes very heavy complaints.

Jan. 16, 1864. This has been a very busy day. I rose at the usual hour this mornng. and have been all day on the jump. John M. Botts has been over today and has bored me some and pleased me Some. I would like very well to see him, at any time when I have 3 hours to Spare.<sup>33</sup>

Botts did not hesitate to offer advice to the army commanders, which hardly pleased them. An aid to Meade described one such encounter on November 13, 1863:

Here we continue to dwell in our pine wood [near Brandy Station], in grave content, consuming herds of cattle and car-loads of bread with much regularity. Yesterday, who should turn up but John Minor Botts, the tough and unterrified. The Rebs treated him pretty badly this time, because he invited General Meade to dine; burned his fences, shot his cattle and took all his corn and provisions, and finally arrested him and took him as far as Culpeper, but there concluded he was a hot potato and set him free. He was inclined to pitch into us, for not following sharper after the Rebs on Sunday morning, that is, the day after we forced the river [at Rappahannock Station, November 7]. He said the first of their waggons did not pass his house till two at night and the rear of the column not till ten next morning; that the roads were choked with footmen, guns, cavalry and ambulances, all hurrying for the Rapid Ann.

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In good sooth I suppose that a shade more mercury in the feet of some of our officers might do no harm; but, on the other hand, it is to be noticed that we had excellent reason to expect, and believe, that they would not *run*, but only retire to the ridges near Brandy Station and there offer battle. In this case, the premature hurrying forward of a portion of the troops might well have ruined the day.<sup>34</sup>

Officers were not the only ones who had to deal with Botts. A corporal in the U.S. Sharpshooters regiment described in a letter an encounter another enlisted man had with the owner of Auburn in December 1863.

I have just been to supper on beef, hard tack and coffee. Gilman is just going on guard, and Lewis is out on picket about 1/2 miles in front. Kimball is on guard over at Botts rail fence to keep the soldiers from carrying it off to burn. Now I will tell you about what kind of a man Botts is. Kimball and one other of our Co. went up to his house to try and buy a bundle of straw to lay on, and he would not sell any, and he refused to sell any to our Surgeon for the sick to lay on. Still we furnish 3-10 men a day to guard his straw and fence and other property, and he has a guard over his wood land to keep that from being cut. Now I believe he is as good a rebel as there is in Virginia and he is one. We can beat the South (which we shall in time) and a reb if they gain their independence and make either one that carries the day pay him for what property he loses. The boys and officers all hate him and say they would like to see his building all burning and so would I. He is over in our Camp about every day sneaking about like an old setting hen. He is a very good looking man in that he looks as much like Uncle Charles as anybody I ever saw. Just about his sise [*sic*] and build with Whiskers white as snow, and a tall white dickey.<sup>35</sup>

Other writers described the Botts house and grounds, and the Union army reviews that took place in front of the house in the spring of 1864. The army had been drilling and preparing for the approaching campaign, and also had a new commander in chief, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, who had chosen to accompany Meade and the Army of the Potomac in the field. Two reviews were held at Auburn in March and April 1864. E. W. Locke later wrote that

Near by [to his camp] is the mansion of John Minor Botts. It is an old-style, square house, painted white, about the size of the larger class of farm-houses in New England and New York. On the north and west, and a few yards distant, are small houses, mostly of logs, but some of them frame, perhaps eight or ten in number, occupied by the colored people. The plantation consists of a few hundred acres, the land of most excellent quality, though cursed with garlic. It is quite level, and the lawn, a short distance from the house, makes a splendid field for reviewing a division. When this takes place, the proprietor is usually present, riding with the

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officers, and treated with much consideration. If he is not in full accord with the general sentiment of the North, he is no rebel.<sup>36</sup>

An officer in the 10th Massachusetts Light Artillery Battery wrote of the March review in his history of the battery:

Wednesday, March 16, a corps review was had by Gen. [William H.] French, accompanied by Gen. [John] Sedgwick, near the residence of that uncompromising loyalist John Minor Botts. The gentleman himself came out to see the parade, and, while waiting for "Headquarters" to arrive, several of us engaged him in interesting conversation. He related to us some of his experiences when taken to Libby Prison early in the war, and described the battles that had taken place on his farm. He was one of the few men in the Old Dominion whom neither argument nor intimidation could swerve from an unyielding devotion to the Union.<sup>37</sup>

The second review at Auburn took place the next month.

Wednesday, the thirteenth [of April 1864], the division was reviewed on the grounds in front of the residence of John Minor Botts. Major-Generals [George B.] Meade, [Winfield Scott] Hancock, [Andrew A.] Humphreys, and [David B.] Birney, and Brigadier-Generals [John] Gibbon, [Gershom] Mott, [Joseph B.] Carr, [Alexander] Hays, and [J. H. Hobart] Ward, and several foreign officers of distinction were present. The troops had long been preparing for this review, at which it was expected our new commander, Lieutenant-General Grant, would be present; and probably a finer spectacle was never witnessed in the field. Nearly every soldier wore white gloves; the condition of arms, clothing, and accoutrements was faultless; and each man vied with his comrade in personal appearance and military bearing and deportment.

On Friday, the twenty-second of April, the Second Corps was reviewed by Lieutenant-General Grant [this review took place near Stevensburg]. The starry shoulder straps were out in goodly numbers, but General Grant was the 'observed of all observers.' This was the first opportunity our men had had of seeing their new commander.<sup>38</sup>

Another officer wrote of the review of April 13,

We went to a review of Birney's Division near J. M. Bott's house. The two brigades are under H. Ward and Alex. Hays. About 5,000 men were actually on the ground. Here saw General Hancock for the first time. He is a tall, soldierly man, with light-brown hair and a military heavy jaw; and has the massive features and the heavy

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folds round the eye that often mark a man of ability. Then the officers were asked to take a little whiskey *chez* Botts. Talked there with his niece, a dwarfish little woman of middle age, who seems a great invalid. She was all of a tremor, poor woman, by the mere display of troops, being but nervous and associating them with the fighting she had seen round the very house.<sup>39</sup>

Brigadier General Alexander S. Webb, whose brigade at Gettysburg bore the brunt of "Pickett's Charge" on July 3, 1863, twice dined at Auburn during the Federal encampment. He recorded both occasions in letters to his wife:

[November 22, 1863] I dined yesterday at Mr. Botts. Generals Meade, Humphreys, Warren, French, Birney, Pleasonton, Hunt, Prince, Mott, and Webb. Mr. Botts was very entertaining and in good spirits. We had a terrible storm to go through and had a dismal ride home but stood it well, since Mr. Botts had no wine to give us. I think we found that wine was not necessary to enjoyment.

[April 29, 1864] I dined at Mr. Botts last evening. Genls. Grant, Sedgwick, Hancock, Birney, Humphreys, Gibbon, Williams, Ingalls, Robinson, Carr, Mott, Morris, Eustis, Rawlins and myself. The three misses Botts were present. We had a good time but a little too much of the Botts egotism. We were home by 11 p.m.<sup>40</sup>

The Union army departed Culpeper County and Auburn on May 4, 1864, to begin the final drive to Richmond known as the Overland Campaign. Although there were no more major battles or long-term encampments in Botts's neighborhood, Union and Confederate troop movements through the area continued for the remainder of the war. Botts, despite his parole, began passing information about Confederate troop deployments to Union commanders, if he had not been doing so earlier. On October 4, 1864, for example, Colonel Henry M. Lazelle, 16th New York Cavalry, supplemented an earlier report to his division's chief of staff:

I omitted to say that one week since [Confederate Major General Joseph B.] Kershaw's division left Culpeper Court-House for Gordonsville, and a few days since left Gordonsville to join [Lieutenant General Jubal A.] Early [in the Shenandoah Valley]. It was his division which attacked us before near Culpeper Court-House. It had just come down from the Valley there the day previous to my arrival, and was on its way to join Lee at Richmond. I have this information from the Hon. John Minor Botts, at Brandy Station.<sup>41</sup>

The next day, Lazelle wrote another report, in which he described the physical conditions of two notable Confederate commanders who were recuperating from wounds received recently.

There is some doubt about [Lieutenant General James] Longstreet having left Richmond at all for active service, so the Hon. Mr. Botts informed me; and he further said that it was extremely doubtful, in the opinion of the surgeons attending

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him, whether Longstreet would ever be able to resume active field service again, as his wound [suffered on May 6 during the Battle of the Wilderness] had been through the neck as well as the shoulder, and had deranged some nervous center, so that it was found necessary to keep him more under the influence of morphine. [Lieutenant Colonel John S.] Mosby was seen in Culpeper five days since by a son of Mr. Botts. He walks with a cane with difficulty, and was on his way up the county to join his band with a few of his men.<sup>42</sup>

Longstreet recovered and returned to service in November. Mosby, who had been wounded in the groin in an engagement at Centreville on September 14, returned to duty on September 29.<sup>43</sup>

Botts may not have limited his parole violations to passing information, but may as well have been involved with a subversive Unionist organization known as the Order of the Heroes of America. The group may have been formed as early as December 1861 and was centered in Raleigh and the piedmont region of North Carolina. It quickly spread, however, to the mountain regions of North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and Virginia, and even beyond. The Federal armies encouraged its members and protected them when possible; both Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant were members. In September 1864, Confederate secret agents John B. Williams and Thomas McGill visited Montgomery County, Virginia, a hotbed of anti-Confederate plotting, and attempted to infiltrate the organization. Employing the secret “sign, grip [handshake], and passwords,” the agents conducted muttered conversations with several members, including Daniel J. Hoge. When McGill told Hoge of his intention to slip through the lines to Alexandria, where the Unionist “Restored” government of Virginia was located, Williams wrote in his report,

Hoge told him he had better stay [in Confederate territory] and work in the cause and try to elect members to the Legislature who were favorable to the call of a convention of States to settle the war. Said he would like to see John M. Botts, and would write to him if he knew how to get a letter to him, as he thought Botts could give him a great deal of information. Thought they could devise some means to stop the war. I told him I would convey the letter. He then asked me if I would write a few lines to Botts and request him to write to him (Hoge), and that he would like to meet Mr. Botts in Lynchburg, as his daughter was going to school there and he could go down there and see him without creating any suspicion. I promised to write to Mr. Botts and also to him (Hoge).<sup>44</sup>

If Botts was not a member of the Heroes of America, Hoge at least believed that he would be sympathetic and helpful in the organization’s efforts to overthrow the Confederacy.

Botts himself was silent on the subject of the Heroes, but declared in his postwar book, *The Great Rebellion*, that he considered his parole to be valid only when he was within the Confederate lines. Whenever Auburn lay within the Federal zone of occupation, he believed that the parole “carried no moral obligation with it,”

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yet preferring to err, if at all, on the safe side, I was far more circumspect and reticent in my conversations with Federal officers than I was with the officers of the Confederate army, to whom I expressed my hostility to the government and the rebellion in the most unreserved and unmistakable manner.<sup>45</sup>

In his book, published in New York in 1866, Botts claimed to present the “secret history, rise, progress, and disastrous failure” of the secession movement, which he believed originated with John C. Calhoun some thirty years before the election of Abraham Lincoln. He dedicated the book to Grant, whom Botts held in high esteem,

not only for the deliverance of the Author, but of his native State, and the whole South, from the most oppressive, grinding, and detestable military despotism of which history furnishes a record since the blessings of freedom have been understood, and the true principles of Christianity introduced.<sup>46</sup>

More than two hundred pages later, Botts concluded, in his usual restrained and understated manner, that the secessionists responsible for sundering the Union as well as for the bloody war that followed

will, as I firmly believe, have to answer hereafter, both in this world and in the world to come, for the most atrocious and stupendous crime that has been committed since the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup>

To the main text of the book, Botts added another two hundred pages of appendices that included several of the extremely lengthy letters with which he had bored Marsena Patrick and other Federal officers. He also described in painful detail the many outrages that the Confederates visited upon him during the course of the war, including his arrest and confinement in Castle Godwin (named for its commandant, but which Botts referred to as “McDaniels’s Negro Jail”), as well as his sufferings at Auburn whenever J. E. B. Stuart was in the neighborhood. Botts assured his readers that he described the depredations at Auburn

for a purpose, and that is, when people who brought all their troubles on themselves shall hereafter prate about the vandalism of the Union armies, they may take this as an offset. Of all these facts I made a minute written report to General Lee. He replied civilly, and sent one of his staff-officers to see me, but if he took any official action upon it, I have not heard of it. The open account left standing between General Stuart . . . and myself was all settled by the early death of [Stuart] in the spring of 1865 near Richmond.<sup>48</sup>

Remarkably, despite his hatred of the Confederacy, his fulminations against secessionists, and his open contempt for Jefferson Davis, Botts was one of the signatories to the bail bond of the former Confederate president on May 13, 1867.<sup>49</sup>

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Botts appear to have emerged from the war with much of his property intact, recovering rather quickly from the vast losses that he claimed to have suffered. According to the 1865 personal property tax assessor, Botts owned twenty-one horses and mules, seventy-five cattle, one hundred and sixty sheep, seventy-five hogs, three carriages, one watch, one clock, one piano, \$1,000 worth of household and kitchen furniture, and \$600 worth of gold or silver plate.<sup>50</sup>

In 1866, the year after the war ended, a fight of another sort began that involved Botts. The Culpeper County court had appointed J. Thomas Beckham, the second son of James A. Beckham, as the “committee” to manage his father’s affairs, because the elder Beckham’s strokes had rendered him incompetent to do so. Young Beckham filed a suit on his father’s behalf against Botts and Stearns, claiming that James A. Beckham had been incompetent in November and December 1862, Botts and Stearns had exercised undue influence on him, and that the price agreed on for Auburn had been inadequate. They engaged local resident William B. Ross to act as their agent, primarily to convince Beckham, who allegedly had no interest in selling Auburn, to sell it regardless. Many of Beckham’s slaves had escaped to the U.S. Army, and Beckham, in his delusional state as his heirs claimed, lived in mortal fear of Union troops. He finally agreed, late in November 1862, to sell Auburn. When it came time to sign the deed, on December 10, Beckham was virtually paralyzed from the stroke he had suffered on December 3. According to witnesses, he “could neither speak nor write, nor could he move without assistance, and was utterly incapable, mentally and physically, of executing a deed or entering into or consummating any important contract. The very ‘mark’ intended for a signature was made by another holding his dead hand and guiding the pen so as only to make a cross-mark.” Beckham “died in poverty in the year 1868, a little upwards of sixty years of age.”<sup>51</sup>

Botts responded to the allegations in a manner that on November 15 brought a reprimand from the court, which stated that it was

improper in a Defendant to pronounce the Plaintiff’s statements to be ‘infamous falsehoods’ or to denounce ‘oaths in Chancery’ as ‘Custom house oaths’ and to suggest that the Plaintiff had he sworn to the Bill would have been guilty of ‘perjury’ or to declare statements in a Bill not only as unfounded but as ‘untruthful and Malicious’ or to use other like Epithets and words, . . . which if spoken outside of the course of judicial proceedings would be calculated to lead to breaches of the peace and be actionable under the statutes [as slander].<sup>52</sup>

The court ordered Botts to file new answers. On August 24, 1868, the court finally heard the case and ruled in Botts’s favor, finding that “there was no fraud or undue influence in the procurement of the contract [and the deed] . . . and that at the time of negotiating and signing the same the said James A. Beckham was neither insane nor in any sense of unsound mind but was capable in law of contracting.” Beckham having died before the case was heard, his heirs filed a memorandum with the court in November 1868 that they intended to appeal the decision.<sup>53</sup>

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As the case made its way to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, John Minor Botts died at Auburn on January 8, 1869. His obituary appeared the next day in the *Richmond Dispatch*, on page one. The anonymous author performed a remarkable exercise in damning Botts with faint praise while describing his postwar pursuits as well as his antebellum career.

Hon. John M. Botts died yesterday morning at his residence, near Brandy Station in Culpeper county. . . . He was remarkable for his independence (or willfulness and want of judgment, as some called it), and voted either in the Twenty-seventh or Twenty-eighth Congress with John Quincy Adams and others for the repeal of the law which forbid the reception of abolition petitions by Congress. . . . [He supported] the abolition of the veto power; a protective tariff; the distribution of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the several States; and (we think) the bankrupt law. Most of these measures failed; but Mr. Botts never failed to advocate them or their author when time and opportunity allowed. . . . Whilst a member of [the state constitutional convention of 1850–1851], and when it was proposed to extend the jurisdiction of justices of the peace to sums not exceeding fifty dollars, Mr. Botts raised the question that this could not be done because the Constitution of the United States gave to every man a right to a trial by jury when the amount involved exceeded twenty dollars, and, self-opinionated as usual, would not surrender the point until Daniel Webster had written him a letter explaining what the constitutional provision meant. He also demanded on one occasion of Hector Davis to know what he meant by the word ‘sequacious’—a word rarely used, but perfectly familiar to Mr. Davis. He also, in the kindness of his heart, and in a patronizing way, said some very handsome things of James Neeson, Esq., now of this city, who was then a very young member of the convention from what Mr. Botts no doubt considered ‘the backwoods.’ These little incidents indicate, and indicate truly, that he was careless and indolent in his studies, kind of heart, and not a bad judge of men. . . . He earnestly and with bitter words and powerful appeals opposed the secession movement. After the secession of Virginia he remained quietly at home until, when martial law was proclaimed in Richmond, he was arrested on suspicion of being in active sympathy with the Federal authorities. He was tried by a court-martial and acquitted; but in leaving the court-room he made it understood that he was as good a Union man as ever. This reputation he preserved throughout the war, though it has been truly said that if the Confederate States had gained their independence Mr. Botts could not have been convicted of treason to it, nor of any act which would have endangered his property or his citizenship. No one doubts, we suppose, that he was at all times true to the Federal Government, though he was known to entertain at his house in Culpeper, to which he removed from this city during the first years of the war, first Confederate and then Federal officers. After the close of the war he did not take as active a part as the people generally through he ought to have done in

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aiding in the restoration of the late ‘rebels’ to their rights under the Constitution, but, on the contrary, was supposed to be favorable to the continued disfranchisement and disqualification of those who had come under the ban of the Federal Government. He, however, opposed at first the proposition to confer suffrage upon the negroes, principally because, as he said, the Democrats would get the negro vote, but eventually came out in favor of the measure. He was to the last, therefore, exceedingly unpopular in Virginia, though there is no reason for doubting that he was sincerely attached to his State and desirous of doing whatever he could to promote her welfare.

Mr. Botts was a man of genius—that is to say, a man of extraordinary natural abilities. He was a fine stump speaker; and in his better days could always carry a majority of his own party in this city with him notwithstanding the active opposition of most of those who were considered its leaders. He was true to his friends and true to his own convictions of duty. Higher praise than this no man can have. But he never sacrificed his convictions for the sake of those of his friends, and therefore could not keep these latter when one or the other had to be surrendered. He always, however, exhibited a great lack of good judgment, and had none of that ‘rascally virtue prudence.’ He was a giant in intellect, but a pigmy in practical common-sense. Men having less than half his mental calibre could bind him hand and foot. He scorned concealment and temporizing expedients. Whatever he thought, he declared publicly. His life was therefore not a bed of roses, and was no doubt regarded by himself as in a great measure a failure. Let the tomb hide his faults. He was for years ‘among us but not of us,’ yet surely we can now bury our griefs ‘in the grave with Caesar.’<sup>54</sup>

After lying in state in the Senate Chamber in the Virginia State Capitol, Botts was interred in Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond on January 10, 1869.

On November 25, 1875, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals reversed the decree of the lower court and ordered that Auburn be returned to the Beckhams because Botts had obtained it fraudulently. After various maneuvers by Stearns and Botts’s heirs, the court issued its final decree on January 23, 1879, and Auburn became Beckham family property once more.<sup>55</sup>

C. E. Beard purchased Auburn from the executors of J. Thomas Beckham on January 1, 1906. Beard died about two years later, and his heirs decided to sell Auburn. On August 29, 1913, real estate dealer and insurance agent A. W. Pulliam advertised Auburn in the *Culpeper Exponent* as an “extra attractive colonial [*sic*] blue grass stock and grain farm” of 975 acres. The advertisement noted that the farm had

about 500 acres in blue grass sod, or under the plow, balance in woodland. The land lies exceptionally well, as a traction engine can be used over nearly every acre

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of the cleared land. The soil is the famous dark chocolate or red soil of the noted Piedmont Section, and is admitted by soil experts as the most productive and easily worked soil in the United States. Fenced and cross fenced to hold cattle and is exceptionally well watered.

Large colonial frame dwelling of twelve rooms, bath, etc., in excellent condition, situated in a shady well turfed yard and commanding picturesque view. Several large frame barns, stable and cattle sheds.

Orchard of two or three acres, about 140 trees, from 20 to 25 years old.<sup>56</sup>

Turner Ratrie, a livestock broker, purchased Auburn from Beard's heirs in October 1915. He constructed several farm buildings that still stand, including at least one tenant house, in the 1920s or 1930s. The property has descended in the Ratrie family to the current owners, William and Sarah Barron, who own the central tract with the house and other buildings, and Sarah Barron's sister, Crimora Ayers, who owns parcels but no buildings on the eastern and western ends of the property. Since 1915, beef operations have been the principal focus at Auburn Farm, which included about 600 acres when Ratrie bought it. Today, the farm consists of about 425 acres, including 116 acres of cropland (all in hay) and 309 acres of pasture. About 500 tons of hay, some of it raised on other tracts, is cut each year. As of 2006, Auburn Farm carried 210 to 225 brood cows, and about 200 calves were sold annually.<sup>57</sup>

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Culpeper County, Virginia**

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

UTM REFERENCES (continued)

5. 18 244779E 4264949N
6. 18 244434E 4265147N
7. 18 244495E 4265289N
8. 18 244200E 4265685N
9. 18 243992E 4265909N

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property consists of tax parcels 32-31, 32-31A, 32-31B, 32-31C, and 32-31F as shown on a survey of the property dated September 1, 2006 and on the Culpeper County GIS map. These parcels correspond to the property description as Plat Cab. 3/344 and Auburn: Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries for the nominated property include the land historically associated with Auburn during the period of significance that still remains in the hands of the family that has owned it since 1915. The tract includes all known historic buildings associated with the property and reflects its agricultural and military significance.

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**Auburn  
Culpeper County, Virginia**

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

All photographs are common to:

**PROPERTY:** Auburn

**LOCATION:** Culpeper County

**DHR FILE NUMBER:** 020-0002

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Ashley Neville

**DATE:** February 2007

**NEGATIVES STORED AT:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

View: House facade, view to the northwest

Negative Number: 23635: 23

Photo 1 of 8

View: House rear and north side, view to the southeast

Negative Number: 23636:17

Photo 2 of 8

View: Front door interior, view to the southeast

Negative Number: 23635: 14

Photo 3 of 8

View: Center passage and stairs, view to the northwest

Negative Number: 23635:7

Photo 4 of 8

View: Dining room, view to the northwest

Negative Number: 23635:3

Photo 5 of 8

View: Kitchen, view to the northwest

Negative Number: 23635:12

Photo 6 of 8

View: Meat house, chicken house, and garage, view to the northwest

Negative Number: 23635:14

Photo 7 of 8

View: Barns, corn crib, and silos, view to the north

Negative Number: 23636:22

Photo 8 of 8

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**END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Culpeper County, Deed Book K, 1779–1781, Reel 6, pp. 329–331, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. (LVA); *ibid.*, Deed Book U, 1798–1800, Reel 10, pp. 271–274.

<sup>2</sup> Emily J. Salmon and Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., eds., *The Hornbook of Virginia History*, 4th ed. (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1994), 123, 125; James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986–2002), 2:274, 3:106; James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984–2004), 2:407; James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1962–1991), 17:147–148.

<sup>3</sup> Culpeper County, Deed Book GG, 1813–1817, Reel 15, pp. 82–83, LVA; Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Book, Culpeper County, 1815, LVA; *ibid.*, Land Tax Books, Culpeper County, 1820–1840.

<sup>4</sup> Culpeper County, Deed Book 6, 1842–1844, Reel 24, pp. 374–376, LVA; Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Books, Culpeper County, 1843–1856, LVA.

<sup>5</sup> James M. Beckham, *Genealogy of the Beckham Family in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: O. E. Flanhart Printing Co., 1910), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Spotsylvania County, 1836–1838, LVA; *ibid.*, Fredericksburg, 1837–1842; Therese A. Fisher, ed., *Marriage Records of the City of Fredericksburg, and of Orange, Spotsylvania, and Stafford Counties, Virginia, 1722–1850* (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1990), 11.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census, Schedule of Inhabitants, 1850, Virginia, Culpeper County, Reel 75, p. 269, LVA; *ibid.*, Slave Schedules, Reel 119, pp. 965–966.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census, Agriculture Schedule, 1850, Virginia, Culpeper County, Reel 129, pp. 73–74, LVA.

<sup>9</sup> *Southern Planter*, September 1857, p. A21.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census, Schedule of Inhabitants, 1860, Virginia, Culpeper County, Reel 143, p. 809, LVA; *ibid.*, Slave Schedules, Reel 191, pp. 10–11. Frances J. Beckham may have died before 1853, as there is no listing for her in the Culpeper County death registers, which begin in that year, through 1860.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census, Agriculture Schedule, 1860, Virginia, Culpeper County, Reel 196, pp. 109–110, LVA.

<sup>12</sup> Peachy R. Grattan, *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: A. F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1880), pp. 393, 395–398.

<sup>13</sup> Culpeper County, Deed Book 14, 1858–1864, Reel 28, pp. 543–544. Stearns purchased Farley from William N. Wellford for \$110,000 on Feb. 28, 1863 (Culpeper County, Deed Book 14, 1858–1864, Reel 28, pp. 556–557, LVA). The house at Farley served as headquarters for Major General John Sedgwick, commander of the Union army's VI Corps, during the winter encampment of 1863–1864.

<sup>14</sup> Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Books, Culpeper County, 1862–1863, LVA; Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection Web site, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>, accessed June 10, 2007, exhibits eight distinct digital images of Auburn at various distances and angles, including two photographs of Botts and his family on the front porch. The photographs probably were taken during the winter and spring of 1863–1864, when the Army of the Potomac (U.S. Army) camped throughout Culpeper County and on the Auburn property.

<sup>15</sup> Sara B. Bearss, John T. Kneebone, J. Jefferson Looney, et al., eds., *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* (Richmond, Va.: Library of Virginia, 1998–), 2:114. Half Sink is no longer extant.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 114–115.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 115–116.

<sup>18</sup> Robert N. Scott, ed., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), Ser. 2, Vol. 2, pp. 1545–1546.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1546–1547; John Minor Botts, *The Great Rebellion: Its Secret History, Rise, Progress, and Disastrous Failure* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1866), 279, 288–290, 293–294; John Minor Botts Papers, 1842–1869, Accession 38840, LVA, 1862 clipping from unidentified newspaper quoting a letter about Botts published in the *Grenada Appeal* (Mississippi). Botts's statement that Beckham urged

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Culpeper County, VA

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him to come to Culpeper County and examine the Auburn farm is, of course, in direct contradiction of the postwar testimony of witnesses in the Beckham family's lawsuit to recover the property.

<sup>20</sup> John Minor Botts Papers, 1842–1869, Accession 38840, LVA, undated clipping from unidentified newspaper quoting *New York Herald* reporter.

<sup>21</sup> Botts, *The Great Rebellion*, 294.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Shoemaker, *Shoemaker's Battery: Stuart Horse Artillery, Pelham's Battalion, Afterward Commanded by Col. R. P. Chew, Army of Northern Virginia* (Memphis, Tenn.: S. C. Toof and Co., 1908), 37.

<sup>23</sup> Myrta Lockett Avery, ed., *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War, 1861–1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1903), 238–240.

<sup>24</sup> David S. Sparks, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of General Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1964), 306.

<sup>25</sup> Botts, *The Great Rebellion*, 295–296.

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *The War of the Rebellion*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 1, pp. 443, 460.

<sup>27</sup> Botts, *The Great Rebellion*, 302–304.

<sup>28</sup> George M. Neese, *Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery* (New York, N.Y.: Neale Publishing Co., 1911), 231–232.

<sup>29</sup> George T. Stevens, *Three Years in the Sixth Corps* (New York, N.Y.: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), 289.

<sup>30</sup> Gilbert A. Hays, *Under the Red Patch: Story of the Sixty Third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers* (Pittsburgh: Sixty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers Regimental Association, 1908), 220–221.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin B. Houghton, *The Campaigns of the Seventeenth Maine* (Portland, Me.: Short and Loring, 1866), 152–154.

<sup>32</sup> Régis de Trobriand, *Four Years with the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1880), 551–553.

<sup>33</sup> Sparks, *Inside Lincoln's Army*, 289, 291, 306, 330.

<sup>34</sup> Theodore Lyman, *With Grant and Meade from the Wilderness to Appomattox*, ed. George R. Agassiz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 46–47.

<sup>35</sup> [Corp.] Henry H. Crowell, Co. E, U.S. Sharps Shooters, "Camp U.S.S.S., Brandy Station, letter, Dec., 13, 1863, to "Dear Mother and Father" [New Hampshire], unpublished typescript, photocopy in possession of William Barron, Auburn Farm, Brandy Station, Va.

<sup>36</sup> E. W. Locke, *Three Years in Camp and Hospital* (Boston: George D. Russell and Co., 1870), 283–284.

<sup>37</sup> John D. Billings, *The History of the Tenth Massachusetts Battery of Light Artillery in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: Hall and Whiting, 1881), 143.

<sup>38</sup> Houghton, *Campaigns of the Seventeenth Maine*, 160–161.

<sup>39</sup> Lyman, *With Grant and Meade*, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Stewart Webb, Papers, MS No. 684, Yale University Library, Manuscripts Collection, typescript notes, photocopy in possession of William Barron, Auburn Farm, Brandy Station, Va.

<sup>41</sup> Scott, *The War of the Rebellion*, Ser. 1, Vol. 43, pt. 2, p. 275.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 291–292.

<sup>43</sup> Patricia L. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 445; Jeffrey D. Wert, *Mosby's Rangers* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 209, 220.

<sup>44</sup> John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 137, 162; Faust, *Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, 565; Scott, *The War of the Rebellion*, Ser. 4, Vol. 3, pp. 806–807.

<sup>45</sup> Botts, *The Great Rebellion*, 307.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, dedication page.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Circuit Court, *The Bail Bond of Mr. Jefferson Davis, late President of the Confederate States: with all the original signatories thereto* (Richmond, Va.: James G. Watkin, 1895), broadside, Special Collections, LVA.

<sup>50</sup> Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Culpeper County, 1865, LVA.

<sup>51</sup> Grattan, *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 1880, pp. 385, 393, 399–413.

<sup>52</sup> Culpeper County, Chancery Order Book 5, 1859–1870, Reel 66, pp. 252–254, LVA.

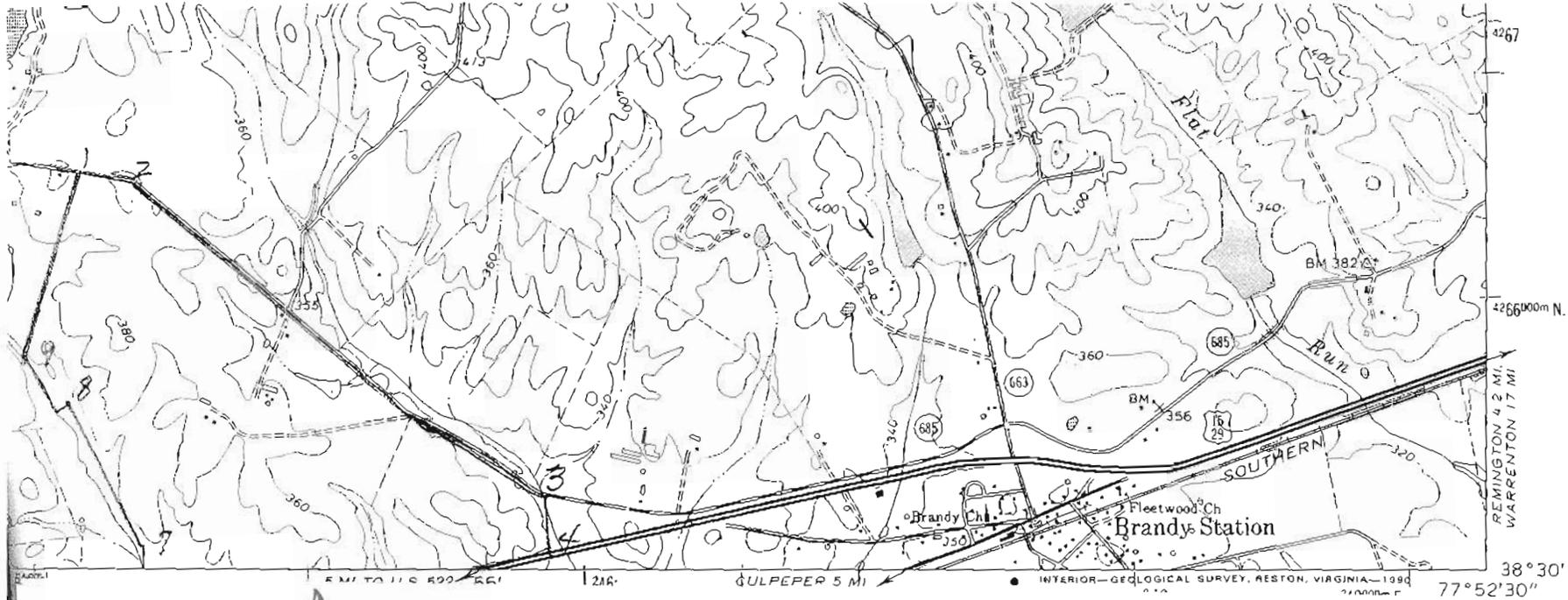
<sup>53</sup> Grattan, *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia*, 1880, p. 432; Culpeper County, Deed Book 16, 1868–1871, Reel 73, p. 13, LVA.

<sup>54</sup> *Richmond Dispatch*, January 9, 1869, “Death of Hon. John Minor Botts.”

<sup>55</sup> Grattan, *Reports*, 1880, 379–381, 433–435.

<sup>56</sup> Waite, Perry & Jeffries, Attorneys at Law, Culpeper, Virginia, “Abstract of Title to ‘Auburn’ made October 6th, 1915, for Turner Rattie”, photocopy in possession of William Barron, Auburn Farm; *Culpeper Exponent*, August 29, 1913, clipping in possession of William Barron, Auburn Farm.

<sup>57</sup> Personal communication, William Barron, Auburn Farm, to John Salmon, August 15, 2007.

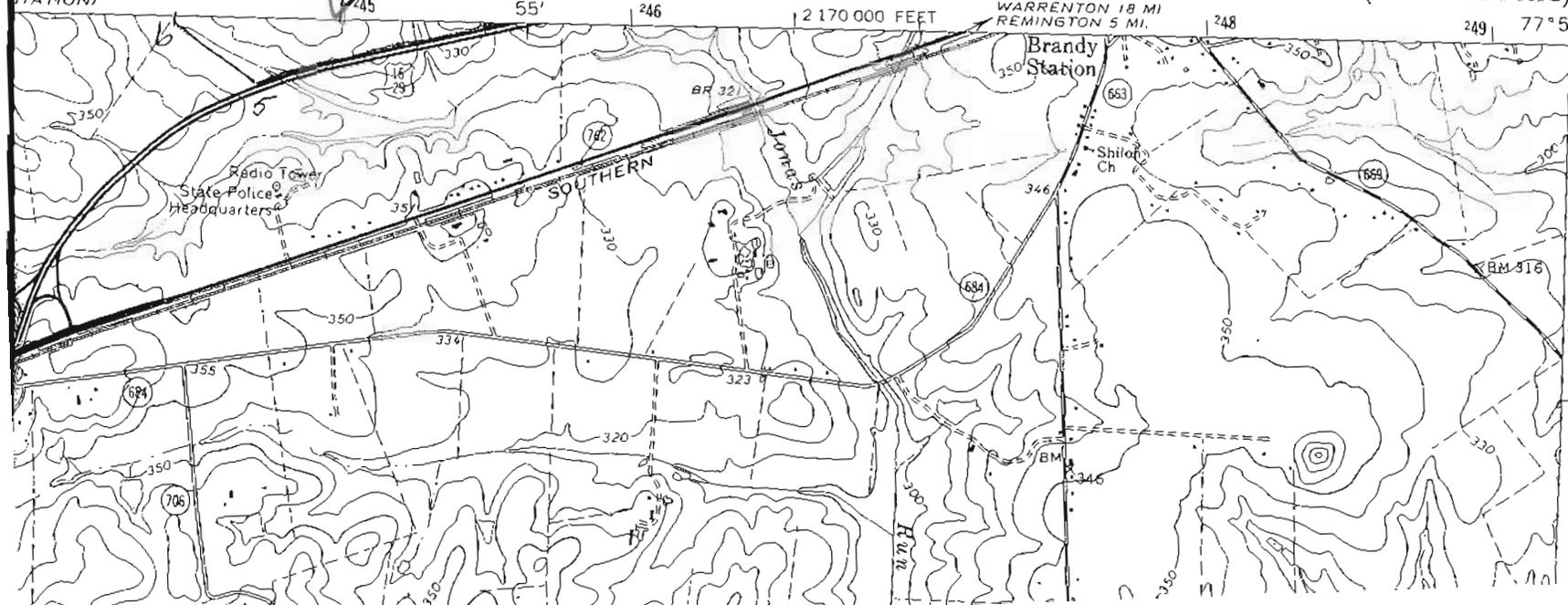


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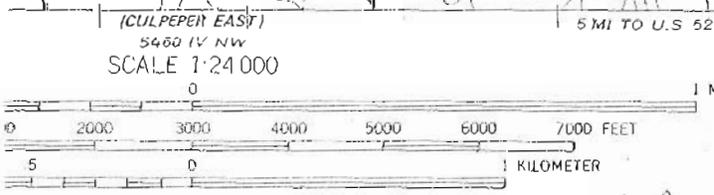
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CULPEPER EAST QUADRANGLE  
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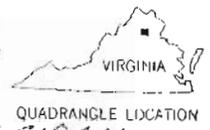


CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET  
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 TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

*Handwritten:* Nabun (020-0002)  
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QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy duty		Light duty	
Medium-duty		Unimproved dirt	
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		Slate Route	

BRANDY STATION, VA.

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