

(Rev. 10-90)

VLR-12/10/98 NRHP-1/21/99

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 Signal Hill

other names/site number Mount Castle (DHR File Number 23-5023)

2 Location

street & number 16190 Germanna Highway not for publication N/A
city or town Culpeper vicinity X
state VA code 51 county Culpeper code 047
zip code 2

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Cathryn Kussner 12/14/98
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register _____

____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register

____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

_____ removed from the National Register _____

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
 of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- 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 | Non-contributing | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| <u> 4 </u> | <u> 1 </u> | buildings |
| <u> 0 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | sites |
| <u> 2 </u> | <u> 2 </u> | structures |
| <u> 0 </u> | <u> 0 </u> | objects |
| <u> 6 </u> | <u> 3 </u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC _____ Sub: single dwelling _____
AGRICULTURE _____ agricultural outbuilding _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC _____ Sub: single dwelling _____
AGRICULTURE _____ agricultural outbuilding _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Other

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof METAL/tin

walls BRICK

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

- N/A A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- N/A B removed from its original location.
- N/A C a birthplace or a grave.
- N/A D a cemetery.
- N/A E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- N/A F a commemorative property.
- N/A G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE _____

Period of Significance ca. 1900-1948

Significant Dates ca. 1900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Signal Hill
Culpeper (County), VA

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A
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)

N/A preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

N/A previously listed in the National Register

N/A previously determined eligible by the National Register

N/A designated a National Historic Landmark

N/A recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

N/A 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: Department of Historic Resources; Virginia Department of Transportation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 40 acres _____

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

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|----|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------------|
| 1. | 17 | 242050 | 4259820 | 3. | 17 | 242320 4259220 |
| 2. | 17 | 242340 | 4259800 | 4. | 17 | 242050 4259230 |

___ 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 Shirley Maxwell, historian; James C. Massey, architectural historian

organization Massey Maxwell Associates, Inc.

date October 19, 1998

street & number P.O. Box 263 Telephone 540-465-4566

city or town Strasburg state VA zip code 22657

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

Summary Description

Mount Castle (also known as Signal Hill; 16190 Germanna Highway), is located 2.5 miles west of the town of Culpeper, Culpeper County, Virginia, at the base of Mount Pony and south of the Brandy Station Civil War Battlefield. Approached by a long, tree-lined farm lane leading from present-day U.S. Route 3 (formerly known variously as Germanna Highway, Culpeper Courthouse Road, and Kirtley Trail), its main building is a handsome and substantial, two-story, asymmetrically cruciform brick house, constructed ca. 1900 in a refined, late-Victorian style, as the centerpiece of a 340-acre dairy and sheep farm. Square, two-story blocks in the northwest and southeast angles of the cross, and two-story bays at each end of the gable-roofed lateral rear section of the house, produce a pinwheel-shaped footprint. Gable and shed roofs are of standing-seam metal, and there are three corbelled-cap brick chimneys. A one-story, 13-bay, wraparound porch with a hip roof, low pediment, and simple square, capped posts stretches around the north, east, and west sides of the main block. The house has triple-hung 1/1 windows fronting the porch and 2/2 windows elsewhere, all with segmentally arched brick heads and stone sills. The main entry, a quietly distinctive ensemble of paneled door, sidelights, and transom, is offset near the east end of the north side, in the projecting north-south arm of the cross. A one-story gable-roof brick sun porch addition (ca. 1991) overlooks a modern concrete and tile swimming pool at the rear of the north-south arm and is connected to the original house by a low, gable-roof hyphen of brick. The well-maintained and virtually unaltered interior spaces and finishes of the house express the late-nineteenth-century upper-middle-class preference for chastely classical ornament and comfortable but elegant living arrangements. The complexity of the exterior house form is echoed in the interior layout, which switches from a side-hall plan at the front of the house to a center-hall plan at the rear. In addition to the house, there are three gable-roof frame barns, two concrete silos, two frame gable-roof sheds, and a small gable-roof pump house. The outbuildings appear to date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are typical of a family-run farm of the era. The main house is in excellent condition with few exterior and interior alterations and additions. The outbuildings are in good to fair condition. The environs also are relatively little changed since the early twentieth century, still offering a vista of pastures closest to the house and the wooded northern slopes of Mount Pony in the near distance, while the sight and sounds of traffic on the highway to the north are blunted by the foliage of many mature trees. Overall, the farm complex retains a high

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

degree of architectural and historical integrity and offers an unusually complete portrait of a prosperous turn-of-the-twentieth-century family farm.

Exterior:

The house is two stories with a low attic. There is no basement except for a small furnace room, which is entered by outside concrete steps on the east side of the house. The walls are in dull brownish-red brick, laid in all-stretcher bond. The roofs and porches are covered with standing-seam sheet metal, painted dark green. There are three plain brick chimneys with corbeled caps. The trim, porch, and windows are painted white. At the rear is a brick one-story addition (1991).

The main north elevation (Photo # 1 and Photo # 2) has a plain five-bay wrap-around front porch that extends back along the east and west sides. There are plain square posts with a necking strip, plain lintels and a low pediment at the front entry. The porch floor is of concrete, replacing the wood original, near grade level. There are no visible "ghosts" marking the removal of ornament typical of the period, although some ornament, perhaps spindle work and small brackets, might be expected. The plainness of the porch is typical of the simplicity of the form of the brick house as a whole.

The main entrance is in the west corner of the main (north) elevation. There is a five-panel door of wood, with a tall two-light transom above and narrow sidelights with 1/1 double-hung sash. (Photo # 5) The door and windows are set in under a narrow, two-course brick low arch. To the west side of the front is a tall, narrow, floor-length triple-hung 1/1/1 sash window. The two-bay second floor has two 2/2-light double-hung wood sash, with louvered shutters. Around the left (east) window is a faint trace of what may have been a gabled porch or decorative features. What this may have been is not known, but a photograph of the house in a 1914 booklet (Culpeper Illustrated), although very fuzzy, does seem to indicate the presence of a feature here. Brick replacement also suggests possible locations of structural connections. The left or east side has a front-facing gable with plain eaves, and a four-light circular window, part of the asymmetrical cross plan. The right side, which looks as if it was infill on the second floor, has a flat roof, and is believed to be original.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

The left (east) side of the house (Photo # 1 and Photo # 4) is in three parts: The right, or front, portion has a continuation of the front porch in four bays. The center is a projecting gabled wing with bay windows on both floors, with brick laid in sawtooth fashion at the corners. The left (rear) is in one bay and is the location of the kitchen. The front end is the entrance hall, with a tall narrow floor-length triple hung 1/1/1 sash window, and a small window to the rear. All windows have two-course low-arch brick heads. The center projecting bay is the principal feature on this side, with the expansive bay window in 2/2 double-hung sash on each face. Under the bay is the basement furnace room entry down eight steps to a three-panel wood door. The left rear has a single 1/1 window replacing an original kitchen door. A single 2/2 window is on the second floor rear, and a bay window matching the first floor is at the center. The front has a single 2/2 double-hung window. The center roof is a projecting pediment extending out to the bay windows under a gable roofed wing. In the pediment is a 1/1 sash arch-top window.

The west or right elevation (Photo # 2) is similar to the east side except that the projecting gabled bay with bay windows is closer to the front, allowing for only a three-bay porch from the front. The longer rear or right side of the elevation has two windows, and there is a one-story section in the corner between the side and rear gabled bays, rather than two stories as on the east side. The one-story portion has two narrow, 2/2 double-hung windows. Otherwise, the elevation is a reversed match of the east elevation.

The rear (south) elevation (Photo #3) has four bays, two windows at right, a door in the center, and one window at left. The left (west) side has an attic gable with a small 1/1 light window, while the right (east) side has a flat roof section that is original.

To the rear of the original house is a one-story gabled brick addition, connected by a breeze way to the original rear door. Built about 1991, it is most compatible in style with the original. On the rear wall is a triple 1/1-light sash window overlooking the modern swimming pool. On the west side is a 16' x 20' flagstone patio; on the east side is a 10' x 16' brick patio. The brickwork on the rear of the main block shows the ghost of a rear porch, removed by a previous owner.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

Interior

Overall, the interior of the house--both plan and trim--is little changed from the time of construction except for the rear kitchen. The plan is unusual. On the first floor it can be seen as a rectangular block with projections and recesses. Actually, this form can be understood from the outside as an asymmetrical cross plan. There are four projecting gabled bays, each off center of the other and creating on the roof a flat center area where the gables stand each at its own corner of the square. This overall massing is completed by the inclusion of flat-roofed corner infills that initially look like additions but which are original, as there is no evidence in the exterior brickwork of their having been inserted at a later time.

The plan generated by this offset "pinwheel" starts with a large entry hall at the northeast corner, with a five-panel entry door with a high transom and sidelights. The hall moves to the right in the center of the house, where it extends to the kitchen, with the rear door on axis. The two stairs and the principal rooms open off this hall. The corner entrance hall, 10 feet high, as are the other rooms contains a fine staircase against the east wall, turning west near the top. The natural finish heart pine stair has a closed string, a larger square paneled newel post with an unusual turned knob on top. The balusters are turned wood with square tops and bottoms and swell gently to the midpoint where there is an inward curve and a ring turning. The stair sides are paneled in natural finish heart pine, with the rails at staggered heights, while the stiles run top to bottom. (Photo # 6) The hall has a floor length window with triple hung 1/1/1 sash on the east wall. There is a pair of sliding five-panel pocket doors in operating condition opens to the parlor in the northwest corner of the house, also with pilaster trim, bulls-eye corner blocks, as is all trim in the house on doors and windows, natural finished in major rooms and painted elsewhere. The floors, also natural finish heart pine are 5" tongue and groove. There is a modern hanging lantern.

In the center of the house the hall moves to the right and there is a handsome fireplace set on a 45 degree angle in the niche where the hall moves right (Photo # 7). Typical of the period 1895-1905 it is in natural finish heart pine, with a mantel shelf on brackets and a central circular wreath decoration. There is a rectangular mirror and a upper molded shelf forming the entablature for a pair of four Doric columns that rise at the sides of the fireplace. The surround is

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 5

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

in green marble, as is the hearth. A modern iron heater has been installed in the fire box. To the rear of the hall now on axis to the rear door, are five panel natural finish heart pine doors to the dining room (west center), office (east center), and rear stair hall on the south.

The parlor is in the northwest corner of the house. There are two floor-length, triple-hung 1/1/1 sash windows, one each on the north and west walls. There are a set of operating five-panel pocket doors to the hall on the east. In the southeast corner is a 45 degree angled fireplace, typical of the 1895-1905 period, in natural finish heart pine with marble surrounds but no hearth. The firebox is covered by a *trompe l'oeil* painting of a fireplace with wood logs and brass andirons. The mantel piece has thin Doric columns with a double entablature over and a plain top shelf. There are circular wreath decorations on the ends of the upper entablature and horizontal reeding decoration on the lower. There is a plain 10" baseboard. Floors are 5" tongue-and-groove heart pine boards in natural finish. The windows have pilaster trim with bulls-eye corner blocks. The room is 10' high. There is a six-arm modern electric chandelier in vine-and-leaf pattern.

The dining room is on the west side of the house to the rear of the parlor. It is situated in the western projecting gable wing, with a generous bay window facing west. There is a single five-panel door to the hall, a door to the rear pantry, and an angled 45-degree fireplace similar to that in the living room, with the firebox closed in by plaster and without a hearth. (Photo # 8) The mantelpiece is supported by variant Doric columns on high plinth blocks. The entablature with delicate horizontal beaded decoration supports a dentil and molded shelf. Above is a backboard with circular wreath decoration at the ends and a simple molded cap. There is a 10" plain baseboard and pilaster trim with bulls-eye corner blocks to doors and windows, as are used throughout the house. The floor is of tongue-and-groove heart pine boards. All woodwork is in natural finish.

The office is across the hall from the dining room to the rear of the main stair case. It occupies the east-facing gabled wing and has a generous bay window facing east. On the west wall of the room is a fireplace and mantel similar to those in the parlor but with the trim removed. In addition to the bay window, there is a floor-length triple-hung 1/1/1 sash window opening north to the east side porch. There is pilaster trim with bulls-eye corner blocks, plain

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 6

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

baseboards, five-panel doors and tongue-and-groove board floors, all in heart pine with a natural finish. There are two closets, one on the north wall under the stairs, which has a small window to the porch, the other south of the fireplace on the west wall.

At the rear of the hall is a doorway opening to the rear stair hall. On the west side of the rear stair hall is a flight of stairs in two runs and a landing leading to the second floor. There is a lavatory under the stairs. The trim and stairs are painted white. Pilaster trim and five-panel doors continue to be used. There is one door north to the main hall, one south to the kitchen, one west to the lavatory, and one east to a closet opening off the rear stair hall.

The modern kitchen (Photo # 9) extends across the rear of the house in one open space. It was originally a kitchen, servants' room, and two storage rooms. The south wall window replaces a former exterior door. There is a rear door to the new breeze way and addition and a west door to the pantry. On the north wall is an exposed brick fireplace with a modern screen, marble hearth, and a molded shelf above. The west side of the room (Photo # 9) is a dining area; the east side is the working kitchen. All the spaces have heart pine tongue-and-groove floors in a natural finish, and pilaster trim with corner blocks to the doors and windows, painted white. There is a modern ceiling fan/light combination. To the west side of the kitchen in the corner between the kitchen and dining room is the butler's pantry.

To the south, rear, of the kitchen, connected to it by a breezeway with French doors is a one-story brick sun room with triple windows on the south wall and single windows on the east and west. The floor is of terra cotta. The addition was built ca. 1991 on the site of what was apparently a summer kitchen (demolished before the present ownership). The new construction (architect, Charles Turner) follows the footprint of the surviving foundations.

The main stairs rise to the second floor hall with a 90 degree turn near the top. (Photo # 10) The newel posts are similar to the main newel, but without paneled sides. The railing balusters are the same as on the stairs. The northeast portion of the hall is set up as a seating area, with windows on the north and east walls, natural finish pilaster trim and 3" heart pine tongue-and-groove floors. Opening off the front hall is the northwest bedroom, with natural finish 3" tongue-and-groove floors, five-panel doors, pilaster trim and corner blocks to the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 7

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

windows, mantels, all painted white common to all the bedrooms. The second floor fireplaces have plastered surrounds, open back fireplaces, soapstone hearths, and a mantelpiece with 3/4" round pilasters and plinths, a simply beaded entablature, and brackets to support a plain mantel shelf. (Photo # 12) Each bedroom has a closet. The second bedroom is on the west side with a bay window to the rear of the northwest room. The third west bedroom is in the southwest corner. The fourth is in the east gabled bay. (Photo # 11) Bathrooms are in the rear of the house.

The attic is in one room, unfinished, with insulation between the joists. There is an air handler and ducts, and floor boards are of finished heart pine. The gabled roof is unfinished, with rafters and spaced roof boards. The ceiling is too low to permit standing except under the gable peaks. (Photo # 13) Access is by a modern folding ladder stair.

The basement is limited to a small furnace room under the first-floor office, entered by masonry stairs on the outside only. (Photo #14)

Outbuildings

To the southwest of the main house are a number of farm outbuildings and structures, all of which are early to mid-twentieth century and several of which appear to date at least to 1914. A contributing large frame three-bay barn with a steep gable roof (called the fat barn or cattle barn) (Photo # 20) faces west. It is covered in vertical boards and has an open center passage and shed-roof attachment on the south side. A contributing large concrete silo with flat top adjoins the barn on the west side. A second contributing concrete silo with domed roof is free standing (Photo #21) north of the large barn. A frame corn crib (Photo #18) has a steep standing-seam metal gable roof and vertical siding with a central drive-through passage. A wire chicken yard (modern) is on the east gable end. A contributing small frame barn (lamb shed) (Photo # 19), covered in horizontal boards and with a standing-seam metal gable roof, has a lower gable-roof addition on the west end; a shed addition used as a garage is on the west end of the lower gable-roof section, and there is a second floor with an interior stair in the higher portion of the building. A non-contributing gable-roof frame shed (Photo # 18) in deteriorated condition is south of the small barn. A non-contributing small well-house with a gable-roof and

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 8

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

a door on the north side is located southwest of the house. A non-contributing large concrete swimming pool is immediately south of the house in a fenced enclosure.

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

Statement of Significance

Signal Hill (originally called Mount Castle), 16190 Germanna Highway, near Culpeper, Virginia, is a large and well-preserved, two-story, brick farm house constructed ca. 1900 and little changed since then. It is the center of a still-active farm complex set amid rolling pastures that lie in the shadow of Mt. Pony. The house and its outbuildings, along with the 40 acres of farmland included in this nomination, exemplify Culpeper County's agricultural heritage of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period when the small family farm that characterized the area after the Civil War was gradually transformed into a modern paradigm of mechanization. Built for a prominent and progressive Culpeper County dairyman and horse breeder, Signal Hill is locally significant under criterion C as one of Culpeper County's finest examples of turn-of-the-century domestic architecture, illustrating an era when railroads, modern sawmills, architectural and millwork catalogs, and a booming timber industry made a broad range of excellent domestic designs available to builders in rural as well as urban areas. The property contains a total of nine resources. They include four contributing buildings (the main house; a cattle barn or fat barn; a corn crib; and a smaller barn or lamb shed); one non-contributing building (a shed); two contributing structures (two concrete silos); and two non-contributing structures (a well house and a modern swimming pool). There are no sites or objects.

History:

Signal Hill (formerly called Mount Castle; 16190 Germanna Highway) is approximately 2.5 miles east of the town of Culpeper in Culpeper County, Virginia, on the south side of State Rt. 3, set well back from the road in rolling pasture land at the base of Mount Pony. The house and the forty acres immediately adjacent to it are part of a family farming enterprise that presently encompasses most of the same 1,500 acres that formed Mount Castle farm in the early twentieth century. The large brick house, embraced on three sides by a capacious wrap-around front porch, was built around 1900 by John R. Duncan. Duncan was described by a

(8-86) United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

contemporary writer as a "self-made man" who "began life without a dollar" yet managed by 1914 to accumulate land holdings of 1,500 acres, 1,000 of which were on his Mount Castle farm.¹

Duncan was born in 1855 in Culpeper County². He began his agricultural career on his parents' farm, Ashland, a portion of which he inherited.³ In a period in which the average Culpeper farmer owned less than 200 acres, Duncan's acquisition of land, through his inheritance and subsequent purchases, was certainly unusual, though not singular. Eugene M. Scheel in Culpeper: A Virginia County's History, notes that in 1892, out of a total of more than 1,300 farms in the county, only 95 contained at least 500 acres. Ownership of very large tracts was not necessarily a sign of particular prosperity in the economically depressed early 1890s, however. Scheel reports that the county's bankers warned the state Board of Agriculture at that time: "Farm property and farm products are scarcely recognized as security for money borrowers."⁴

On the other hand, the faltering economy presented opportunities for investors who were prepared to seize them. "Real estate in Culpeper partakes of the general depression," wrote George Morton Williams in an 1893 letter addressed "To the World". "Good farms can be

¹Culpeper County Illustrated, The Garden Spot of Virginia. (Culpeper, Va.: Enterprise Publishing House, 1914), p. 9. This brochure promoting the county features a number of Culpeper farms, with photographs and laudatory write-ups of their owners.

²1890 federal census.

³Culpeper Deed Book xx, p. xx.

⁴Culpeper: A Virginia County's History, p. 252.

(8-86) United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

bought cheap and offer great inducements.”⁵

Enterprising farmers such as Duncan were able to use small amounts of cash to capitalize on the nature of the rapidly mechanizing agricultural world around them. As machines replaced manpower, as guano and other fertilizers boosted crop yields, as new and more efficient breeds of dairy and beef cattle, hogs, and sheep were developed, and as an insatiable demand for timber from farm woodlots was created by steam-powered sawmills, the old ways of farming were clearly soon to be overtaken by the new. A thoroughly experienced 45-year-old farmer when the twentieth century dawned, John R. Duncan was clearly among those who were equipped to move with the modern trends into a new age of agriculture. Duncan focused, as his successors at Signal Hill have continued to do until the present time, on raising dairy and beef cattle, fine horses, sheep, hogs, and the large and small grains required to feed them, from corn to wheat.

By 1914, a regional promotional brochure entitled Culpeper County Illustrated called Duncan's thousand-acre farm (which was romantically named Mount Castle⁶) “one of the up-to-date farms of Culpeper County” and noted approvingly that its fields were “in a splendid state of cultivation, with modern buildings.” (The photograph included in the booklet suggests that several of the frame outbuildings still extant at Signal Hill, including the corn crib and at least one barn, may date from, or before, its publication.)

Duncan is referred to in the booklet as a “an extensive breeder of fine horses and fat

⁵“1893 Letter Furnishes Interesting Culpeper County Historical Data,” Culpeper Star-Exponent, n.d. (Ca. 1968). Clipping in vertical file, Culpeper County Library.

⁶ Eugene M. Scheel, Culpeper: A Virginia County's History, p. 252. Duncan was not alone in selecting a property name that evoked old English or Scottish antecedents. Scheel notes five others among the 15 or so farms listed in Culpeper County Illustrated: Rotherwood, Kinloch, Bonnie Doon, Bloomsberry (*sic*), and Stuart Field.

(8-86) United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Page 12

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

cattle." His estate inventory⁷, made after his death at the age of 75 in 1930, may not present an accurate picture of the extent of his earlier and no doubt much larger farming activities, but it does suggest a broad range of animal husbandry. It lists his one-half interest in "17 Milch cows, 1 Bull, 10 milch cows (dry), 13 calves, 40 head of cattle, 9 shoats, 1 big sow, 1 small sow, 10 fattening hogs," as well as five mares, one horse, one suckling colt, 120 ewes, five bucks, and four old ewes. It is possible that, because of advancing age, Duncan may have reduced his farming. Much of his equipment and stock may have been sold--perhaps to his son, John E. Duncan, who appears to have farmed with the elder Duncan and who may, since John R. Duncan was a widower, have been the other half-owner of the goods listed in the inventory. John E. Duncan claimed the land on the south side of the highway when the property was partitioned to settle the estate among the three Duncan children⁸. If the 1914 Culpeper Illustrated account of the elder Duncan's acreage is accurate, it appears to have been reduced somewhat--from 1,500 acres to 947 acres--by the time of his death.

Just when the house at Mount Castle was built is not certain. Although the Culpeper Illustrated listing states that Duncan "has resided at Mount Castle for thirty years," suggesting that the house may have been completed as early as 1884, the architectural style suggests a later date, probably around 1900. Its features suggest simple, quiet, and rather refined design principles more in keeping with the classical revival or colonial revival styles of the later period than with the more ornate decoration typical of 1880s' Italianate or Queen Anne houses. This impression is strengthened by the well-proportioned and relatively chaste appointments of the well-preserved interior, including the paneled pine staircase and newel post and the economical yet elegant mantelpieces with carefully finished pine columns and mantel shelves. No architect is known for the building, and it seems likely that the design was selected from one of the period's many readily available architectural plan books and executed by a skilled local mason. The attractive interior appointments seem likely to have been chosen in a similar way from a

⁷Culpeper County Will Book 11, p. 281.

⁸Culpeper County Deed Book 86, p. 449.

(8-86) United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

millwork catalog and shipped to the site by rail car, a common practice of the era.

It is not clear either when the farm was renamed Signal Hill. This may have occurred around the time (after 1934) state historical markers were placed on Rt. 3 and Rt. 15 commemorating the Civil War signal station established atop Mount Pony by Federal forces in 1862.⁹ Certainly the name was in use by 1968 when it was used in a deed of sale for the property.¹⁰

In the twentieth century, the property passed through a succession of owners, until, in 1986, it was acquired as part of a larger parcel of land by a trust administered by Margaret S. Campbell, the present resident, and her sister and brother. The house has undergone few changes since its construction. The porch has been altered by the addition of a concrete floor in place of the original wood floorboards, and the square posts may be replacements. It seems likely also that a small second-floor porch or other decorative feature may once have existed on the north facade. However, the sole known historic photograph is not conclusive on these points.¹¹ The most significant alteration to the house is the addition of a gabled brick one-story section at the rear (ca. 1991)¹², which is attached to the main block by a low, gabled brick connector and overlooks a modern swimming pool. The present-day large modern kitchen replaced a smaller kitchen in the southwest corner, as well as a jumbled group of service areas, in the rear of the house.

In its current use, as well as in its physical appearance, Signal Hill continues to represent

⁹Marker J-15 on Rt. 3, 3.5 miles south of Culpeper and F-15 on Rt. 15,

¹⁰Culpeper County Deed Book 196, p. 439

¹¹Culpeper Illustrated, p. 9

¹²The architect was Charles Turner of Orange.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Signal Hill

name of property

Culpeper, VA

county and State

the architectural and agricultural heritage of Culpeper County, and the surrounding landscape, with its spreading fields and cluster of modest early outbuildings of weathered wood, is nearly pristine, despite the presence, a few hundred yards to the north, of the heavily trafficked Germanna Highway (SR 3).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 15

Signal Hill

Culpeper, VA
county and State

name of property

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10

Page 16

Signal Hill
name of property
Culpeper, VA
county and State

Verbal Boundary Description:

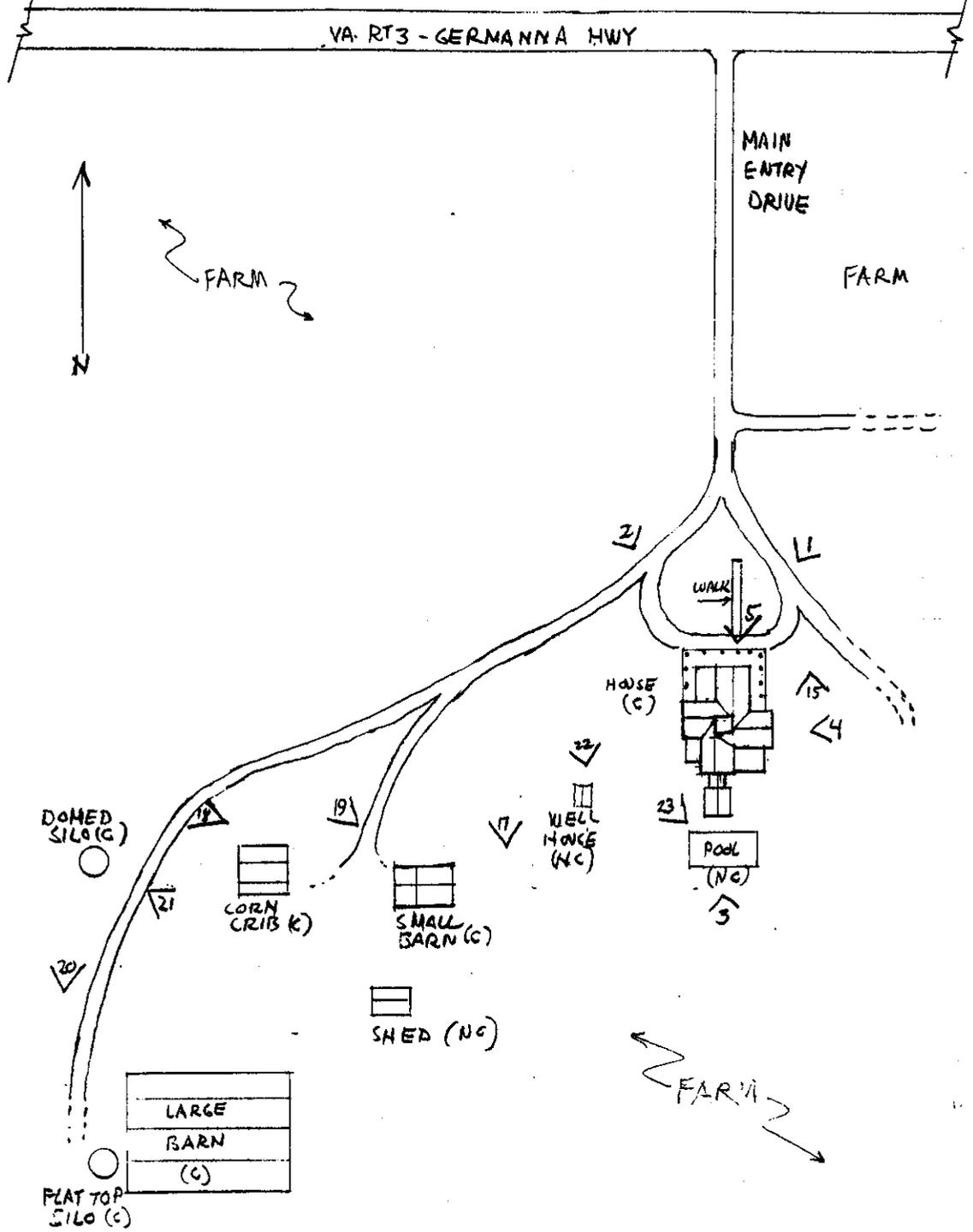
The property lies on the south side of Virginia Route 3, east of Culpeper, Virginia, as shown on Culpeper tax maps, Stevensburg District, Section 52, Parcel 15, in its entirety, as delineated on USGS Culpeper East Quad, included with this nomination.

Justification of Boundary

The north boundary of Signal Hill is a major highway, VA Rt. 3. Signal Hill lies on the south side of the road, with a frontage of approximately 900 feet, and extends southward approximately 1,940 feet to the rise of Mt. Pony. The house is set well back from the road with several contributing farm structures well behind the house, in all extending about 1,300 feet back from the road. Most of the property therefore contains contributing buildings and structures. To the south, Signal Hill extends an additional 650 feet to the rise of Mt. Pony, a distinctive geographical reference point which forms a natural southern boundary for the property. The east and west boundaries are formed by the Signal Hill property boundaries, forming a compact rectangle approximately 900' x 1,940'.

SIGNAL HILL - CULPEPER COUNTY VA.

SITE PLAN

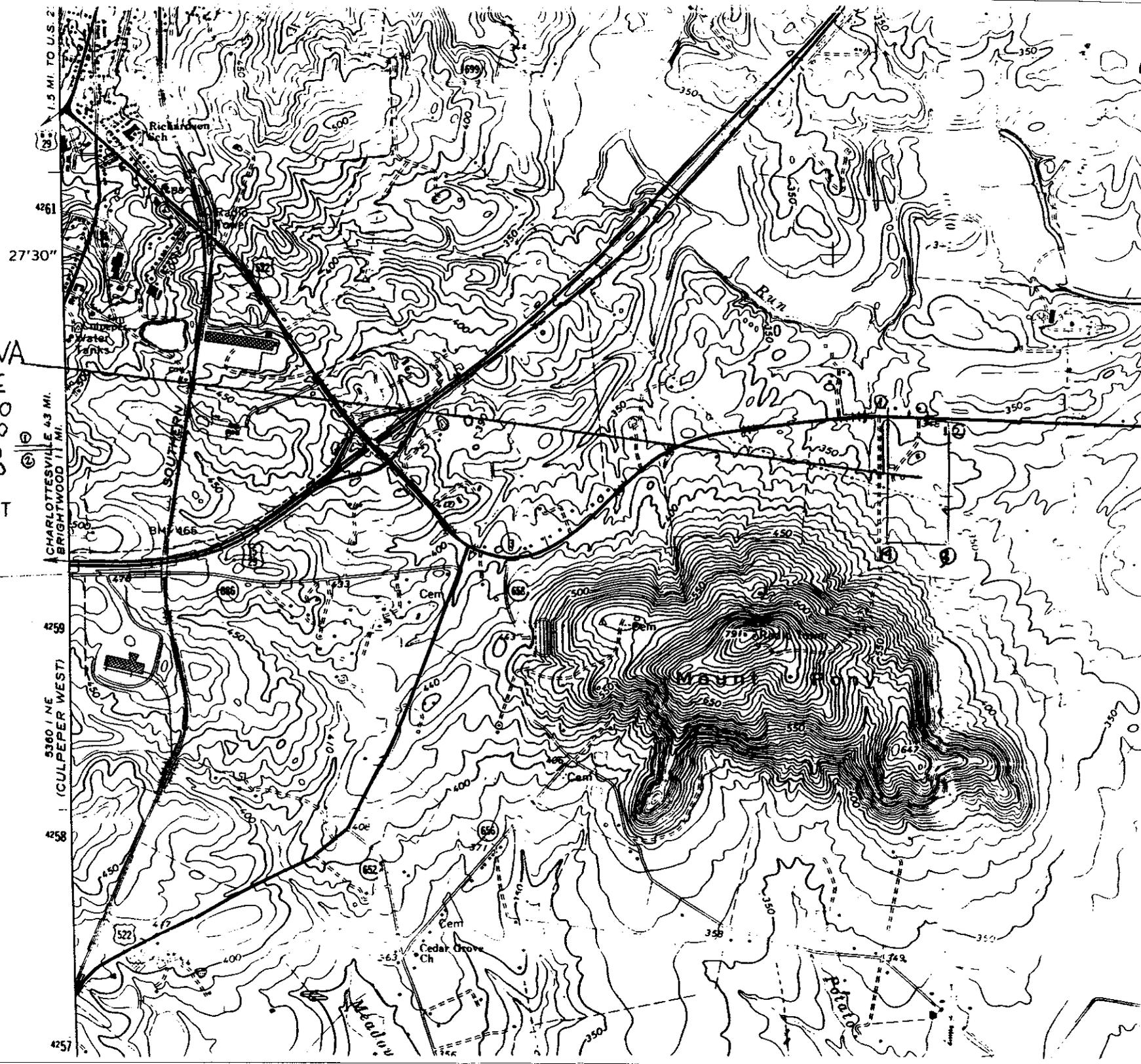


NOT TO SCALE - VADHR NO. 047-

PHOTO NO. + DIRECTION 2

J.C. MASSEY '98

SIGNAL HILL
CULPEPER CO., VA
UTM REFERENCE
1 17 242050 / 4259 320
2 17 242340 / 4259 100
3 17 242320 / 4259 220
4 17 242050 / 4259 230
CULPEPER EAST
QUADRANGLE



1.5 MI. TO U.S.

4261
27'30"

CHARLOTTESVILLE 4.3 MI.
BRIGHTWOOD 11 MI.

4259
5360 / NE
(CULPEPER WEST)

4257