

VLR-9/20/88 NRHP-12/19/90

1918

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 03 1990

NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wheatland
other names/site number CHI File no. 28-44

2. Location

street & number VA Highway 17 N/A not for publication
city, town Loretto N/A vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Essex code 057 zip code 22509

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u> structures
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<u>5</u>	<u>9</u> objects
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 9/22/89
Signature of certifying official Date
VA Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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): _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling
Domestic: Secondary Structure
Commerce: Wharf

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling
Domestic: Secondary Structure
Commerce: Wharf

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Wood
roof Metal/asphalt shingles
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Located on a large tract on the Rappahannock River, Wheatland is a remarkably intact and unaltered example of a mid-nineteenth-century plantation. A unique and extremely significance component of the property is the still-functioning wharf located on the bank of the river a short distance from the two-story frame Greek Revival residence that was constructed between 1849 and 1851. A smokehouse and kitchen, the latter now used as a garage, are located in close proximity to the west end of the house.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Wheatland is situated on an approximately 350 acre tract on the south bank of the river in Essex County near the small community of Loretto. A significant portion of the property, like the land around it, is still under cultivation, a factor that greatly contributes to its undisturbed appearance. An unpaved drive leads from Virginia Highway 17 towards the river; this drive bisects fields of crops before terminating to the east of the house. The surroundings, consisting of planted fields, an open landscaped clearing around the house and the bank and view of the river, are virtually unaltered. Several non-historic agricultural and wharf buildings are located on the property. These functional buildings are inconspicuously sited and do not detract from the setting.

The house is sited on a slight rise above the river towards which it is oriented. It is surrounded by an expanse of lawn and large trees, predominately tulips, cedars and magnolias. A large flower garden with a recently constructed gazebo is located to the east of the house. Evidence of brick walks remain around the perimeter of the house and at one time a walk likely led towards the river. Non-historic boxwood replace those sold to Colonial Williamsburg and line the path that commences from the river side of the house and terminates in a circle of boxwoods near the river bank. Also found on the river side of the house is a historic bird house, built by the current owner's grandfather, that is a minature of nineteenth century portion of the house.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture
Commerce
Transportation

Period of Significance
1849-1937

Significant Dates
1849-51
1916

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wheatland, a mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival plantation house, is located on a bluff in Essex County and overlooks a bend of the Rappahannock River. The house was constructed by John Saunders, probably between 1849 and 1851. Saunders, who was a merchant as well as a planter, built the plantation wharf that is still in use and is probably the only such wharf remaining on the river. During his ownership and that of his son Walton Saunders, the plantation wharf was a locus of river transportation and commerce for Essex County and nearby communities. From the middle of the nineteenth century until 11 September 1937--for almost a century--steamboats plied the waters between Fredericksburg, Tidewater Virginia, and Baltimore, and Saunders wharf at Wheatland was a regular stop for passengers and freight. Improvements in highway and railroad transportation finally put an end to this traffic that had enabled the plantation to survive intact the Reconstruction era.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Wheatland is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A the house is eligible because of its association with the themes of commerce and transportation. During the ownership of John Saunders and Walton Saunders the plantation wharf was used by Rappahannock River steamboats that traded among Baltimore, Fredericksburg, and points in between, carrying both freight and passengers. The house is eligible under Criterion C as a well-preserved example of a mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival plantation house. It appears to be the only plantation on the Rappahannock River to retain its wharf--once a nearly universal feature of such properties.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

The main portion of Wheatland, constructed between 1849 and 1851, consists of a two-story, five bay frame residence with a raised brick basement and hipped roof. The building is perfectly symmetrical, with two identical front elevations, one facing the river and the other the road, and a double-pile central hall plan. The entire structure is clad with weatherboards and the roof is covered with standing seam metal. A pair of interior brick chimneys pierce the east and west roof slopes. Two-story porches, embellished with typical Greek Revival pediments and Italianate decorative balustrades, are located on the two principal facades. Windows throughout are six-over-six double-hung with louvered shutters. A simple one-story gable-roofed frame wing is connected on the west elevation.

The wing functions primarily as the kitchen. Of frame construction with weatherboard siding and a gable roof covered with asphalt, it is three bays wide, one story in height and has a single room. The structure rests upon a raised brick basement that is interrupted by a pair of double-hung windows on the north and south elevations and a door on the west end. A single bay porch resting on brick piers with a shed roof supported by a pair of square columns with simple caps and bases protects the central entrance and is flanked on either side by a double-hung window. Though a very simple structure, it is detailed with a boxed cornice. An interior brick chimney is located at the west end. The interior has been modified during this century for use as a kitchen. A frame hyphen connects the kitchen to the main portion of the house. Originally supported by brick piers, the hyphen has a continuous foundation due to concrete block infill between the piers.

The two principal north and south facades of the mid-nineteenth century portion of Wheatland are identical, as are the east and west end elevations, with the exception that the earlier one-story structure is attached to the west. The massing, plan and overall influence of the is predominately Greek Revival, however, some of the details are more closely associated with the Italianate style. Originally bracketed hood mouldings, not typically found on Greek Revival buildings, adorned the tops of the first floor windows. The porch balustrade of flat jig-sawn balusters is also not typical the otherwise classically-detailed Greek Revival porch embellished with a dentilled pediment and entablature and square columns with moulded caps and bases.

The house rests on a raised brick foundation that is punctuated with windows and doors that correspond with the regular fenestration of the upper two floors. The north wall of the foundation has five windows, the south has a door flanked on either side by two windows, the east has two windows and the west has one window and a door that accesses the basement

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

of the hyphen. The upper floors of the east elevation has two windows per floor, whereas the west elevation has a door in the place of a window that accesses the attached kitchen wing. Two pair of windows flank the central entrances of the upper floors of the north and south facades.

The boxed cornice of the house is very simple and unadorned. The central entrances on the first and second floors of the north and south elevations each access a porch. The double-doored entrances of the first floor consist of two-paneled wood doors with two-light transoms and narrow two-light sidelights with wood panels below. The second floor entrances have a single paneled wood door without transoms and slighter wider four-light double-hung operable sidelights.

The two-story porches of the north and south elevations are a dominant feature of the exterior and the most elaborately detailed. Supported on brick piers, the porches have two levels, each of which is supported by two pair of square columns the corners of which are slightly chamfered and the faces of which have a single vertical groove. Single pilasters are similarly detailed. The cornice of the first level has a dentilled cornice and the second level is covered by a pedimented gable roof. While the pediment is embellished with dentils, the cornice of the second level is not. The flat curvilinear slats of the railing are the most decorative feature of the porches.

Each of the three floors of Wheatland consists of four principal rooms and a wide central hall. With the exception of the basement which is masonry, floors throughout are of heart pine and the walls are of plaster. The interior is ornamented with details likely ordered by catalog and delivered by water to the wharf, such as the mantels and woodwork. The woodwork for the most part is simple, with some of the chair rail and cornice found in some of the rooms having been added by the present owners. The baseboards are embellished with a simple bead, the door and window surrounds consists of architrave mouldings with bulls-eye cornerblocks and the wood doors have four raised panels.

A focal point of the first floor hall is the open straight-run stair leading to the second floor and basement. It is detailed with turned balusters, heavy turned newel and curvilinear stair brackets. The entrance doors on the first floor have square bottom panels and elongated upper panels the tops of which are arched on the exterior. The hall has a chair rail and dentilled cornice. A single period light fixture hangs from the center of a round plaster moulding at the north end of the hall. Wood panels placed diagonally in the corners of the north end of the hall

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

- 2 1000

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

were added to disguise pipes. Two hammock hooks are located in the east and west walls at the north end of the hall.

The northeast room on the first floor functions as the parlor. This room has a dentilled cornice and chair rail added by the current owners. A Federal wood mantel is not original to the house. A door to the left of the fireplace leads to the library situated at the southeast corner of the first floor. The finishes in this room are similar, with added cornice and chair rail and bookcases on the east and west walls. The mantel is green and black Vermont slate and is original to the house. It is likely that the original parlor mantel was similar. A closet, is located to the left of the fireplace is an original feature of the room.

The office is located at the southwest corner. It too has a Vermont slate mantel, added chair rail and cornice and an original door accessing the dining room to the north. The west wall of this room has two doors, one of which leads to a utility area and the other directly into the hyphen that connects this room to the earlier structure now used as a kitchen. The dining room at the northwest has a stone mantel that has been painted. It is similar to the other two stone mantels found on the first floor but has a more ornate center cartouche supporting a curved shelf.

The second floor is less elaborately detailed than the first. The wood trim is simple and is not moulded, though the chair rails are original. Mantels are of wood and are simply detailed with pilasters and shelves. The north end of the hall has been enclosed to accommodate two bathrooms. A ladder propped-up to a small door in the ceiling provides access to the attic. The southeast chamber has no chair rail and a simple mantel flanked on the left by a closet and on the right by book shelves. The northeast chamber has a heavy moulded chair rail and closet. The most elaborate mantel on the second floor is found in the southwest room which is connected to the northwest chamber by a closet passage with shelving. The northwest room has a simple beaded chair rail.

The basement plan is similar to the upper two floors. The space is more simply finished than the upstairs, though all of the walls are plastered and the spaces finished with simple woodwork. All but the southwest room have twentieth century wood floors. A battened door of beaded boards is located at the foot of the simple stair. A door at the south end of the hall leads to the area beneath the front porch. The opposite end of the hall has been enclosed and contains a modern kitchen. This area originally had iron bars on the window and a dirt floor. The original function of the northwest room is unknown. The northeast room is identically detailed and likely served as a dining room. The southeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

3 1980

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4

room, which possesses an added bath in the corner, was used as a schoolroom. The southwest room still retains its brick floor, a large fireplace with cooking crane and a door leading to the basement of the hyphen. This room now contains the mechanical equipment for the house.

The smokehouse is located a short distance from the southwest corner of the house. It is a square building with a dirt floor, pyramidal roof covered with asphalt shingles and a combination of weatherboard and wide flush board sheathing. A larger rectangular building is located nearby and was originally utilized as a kitchen. This building was adapted for use as a garage by cutting two openings in the south wall. One-and-a-half stories in height, the building has a dirt floor, corrugated metal-clad gable roof with wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafters with boxed ends and a loft illuminated by a single six-over-six double-hung window in the east gable end. A door originally located in the east end has been infilled and the fireplace and chimney have been removed. A carriage house was also located in this area but no longer remains. Some distance to the left are four corrugated metal silos and a barn sited on the far side of a grove of trees. These are not historic and are considered non-contributing.

The wharf is located on the bank of the river to the east of the house. Most of the frame, gable-roofed structure dates to 1916. The pilings of the earlier wharf are still visible. The wharf has a rectangular plan divided into three interior spaces and is sheathed with vertical boards. The roof is covered with corrugated metal. Livestock pens are located in the center of the building, with a waiting room for passengers to the east and a freight area to the west. The waiting room is finished with beaded boards and originally had an interior partition wall to segregate the space. Windows are six-over-six double-hung and a four-paneled wood doors lead to the livestock area and exterior boarding area. Two non-historic frame buildings are located a short distance to the south of the wharf and are considered non-contributing due to their recent date of construction, as is a gazebo recently added to the garden.

No longer standing is a granary once located on the slope of the bank a short distance from the wharf. This structure burned in 1951.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

3 1989

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The present-day Wheatland farm was settled by members of the Hawkins family prior to 1801. On 14 June 1801 William M. Hawkins insured the property, which he called Society Hill; at that time it consisted of a wooden one-story dwelling with a wood-shingle roof and a wooden barn about three hundred yards from the house. The buildings probably were constructed in the 18th century, because \$300 was deducted from the valuation "for decay or bad repair." The farm was occupied by an overseer, Thomas Gayle. On 3 August 1805 Hawkins altered the policy to reflect an increase in the value of the house from \$300 to \$500. He also noted that he was living on the property and had constructed a wooden kitchen sixty feet from the dwelling.¹

About 1808 Hawkins sold Society Hill to Mordecai Spindle,² who on 21 May 1816 reinsured³ the property--the dwelling and the barn--for \$500 and \$100 respectively. In 1820 the buildings on the property were assessed for taxes at \$1,000; this value held until the next statewide⁴ reassessment of real property in 1839-1840, when the value fell to \$300.

In 1832 Spindle sold the property to William Gray, who owned it until his death about 1845. In 1847 the executors of his estate sold Society Hill to John Saunders, a merchant who owned a store in the nearby village of Loretto.⁵

John Saunders began a construction campaign at Society Hill (which he renamed Hawkins)⁶ in 1849 that continued until 1851. It was most likely during this time that the wharf, which is still called Saunders Wharf, and the present-day Wheatland mansion were built. It seems probable that the new dwelling house was attached to the old one:

By 1850 the family of John Saunders living at Hawkins included not only his wife, Sophia G. Bentley, whom he had married in January 1826, but eight children and two employees, Mortimer Gravatt and William Terrell. Gravatt was a clerk in Saunders's store and Terrell was a salesman. Saunders himself was fifty years old and about to enter his most prosperous decade.

The value of Saunders's real estate, as reported by the census taker, rose from \$10,000 in 1850 to \$62,000 in 1860,¹⁰ and in the latter year his personal property was valued at \$17,000. In 1861, on the eve of the Civil War, John Saunders owned fourteen slaves over twelve years of age; in addition, twenty head of cattle, nine horses, five sheep, thirteen hogs, two carriages, a watch, and a clock were among his taxable personal

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

property.¹¹ By 1870, the next census year following the Civil War, the value of the estate had declined precipitously, to \$13,000 for real property and \$2,800 for personal property.¹²

The plantation itself was spared by the war. Several Union gunboats passed by the house during the course of the war, but not until 1864 was it threatened. A Union gunboat commander "came up to the house and ordered Mr. Saunders to evacuate the premises because they intended to shell the house. Instead Mr. Saunders gathered together all of the family and servants and they sat defiantly on the front steps."¹³ According to family tradition, the commander declined to shell civilians but destroyed a granary instead.

John Saunders did not live long after the war to witness this decline; he died in the spring of 1867.¹⁴ In 1866 he had sold Hawkins to his son Robert S. Saunders, who was a resident of Alabama.¹⁵ Robert sold the property to his brother Walton Saunders in 1869.¹⁶ It was Walton Saunders who named the plantation Wheatland in 1871,¹⁷ and it was during his tenure as the owner of the property that Wheatland was saved from sale or abandonment by its location on the Rappahannock River.

Steamboat traffic on the Rappahannock River, which had begun during the first half of the 19th century, reached its peak during the second half of the century. Riverside plantations had always been commercial centers as well as agricultural concerns; during the colonial period and afterward both domestic and foreign ships stopped at plantation wharves to take on tobacco and offload dry goods. As the 19th century wore on, cities and large towns took over much of this commercial trade, but landings such as Saunders Wharf remained essential to rural areas. John Saunders received shipments of goods there for his store in Loretto; neighboring farmers who lived inland brought their produce to the landing for transportation to the cities; and passengers bound for Baltimore, Norfolk, or Fredericksburg embarked there.

Most of the river traffic originated in Baltimore. In 1830 the Baltimore and Rappahannock Steam Packet Company began regular runs between Baltimore and Fredericksburg. In 1865 the name of the company was changed to the Fredericksburg Line, and a decade later it was taken over by the Weems Steamboat Company. The Weems line itself was absorbed by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1905 and was operated as the Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia Railway Company until 1923, when it was purchased by the Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company. In 1932 the company was sold to the Western Shore Steamboat Company; because of low profits the Rappahannock River route was curtailed at Tappahannock, several miles downriver from Saunders Wharf. On 11 September 1937 the steamboat Anne

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Arundel made a special excursion all the way to Fredericksburg; it marked the last time a steamboat passed the landing at Wheatland.¹⁸

Ironically, just as it was an improved transportation system that helped preserve Wheatland plantation, it was another improvement--the railroad--that helped put an end to the steamboat era. Although there was no lack of passenger traffic, it was the freight traffic that was most profitable, and by the 1930s the steamboats had lost those profits to the railroads (as well as to an improved highway and trucking system).

Wheatland has survived, however, as a diversified farm. In addition, a tour boat--powered by diesel fuel instead of steam--makes regular runs from Tappahannock to Wheatland between May and October. Passengers are greeted on Saunders Wharf by the current owner, who as a boy stood on the wharf on 11 September 1937 when the last steamboat passed by.¹⁹

JSS

ENDNOTES

1. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Reel 2, Vol. 14, Declaration 456; Reel 4, Vol. 36, Declaration 323. In DHL Archives.
2. Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Book, Essex County, 1809, Archives Branch, Virginia State Library and Archives (VSL&A).
3. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Reel 5, Vol. 44, Declaration 2032. In DHL Archives.
4. Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Books, Essex County, 1820, 1840, VSL&A.
5. Ibid., 1833, 1846, 1848.
6. Ibid., 1857.
7. Ibid., 1850-1852. In 1850 the value of the buildings on the tract increased from \$300 to \$748; in 1851 it declined to \$500; in 1852 it rose sharply to \$3,000, where it remained until the reassessment of 1856, when it increased to \$4,000.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

8. Eva E. Wilkerson, Index to Marriages of Old Rappahannock and Essex Counties, Virginia, 1655-1900 (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1953), 208.
9. Virginia Census Schedules, List of Inhabitants, Essex County, 1850, p. 82, VSL&A.
10. Ibid., 1850, p. 82; 1860, p. 2.
11. Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Book, Essex County, 1861, VSL&A.
12. Virginia Census Schedules, List of Inhabitants, Essex County, 1870, pp. 174-175, VSL&A.
13. DHL File 28-44. Information provided by owner.
14. Auditor of Public Accounts, Personal Property Tax Books, Essex County, 1866-1867, VSL&A; Essex County, Circuit Court Bonds, Wills, Inventories, and Accounts, 1834-1902, Reel 64, pp. 46-53, VSL&A.
15. Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Book, Essex County, 1867, VSL&A.
16. Ibid., 1870.
17. Ibid., 1872.
18. Robert H. Burgess and H. Graham Wood, Steamboats Out of Baltimore (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1968), 2, 23-27, 83, 123, 138-139.
19. Richmond News Leader, 4 August 1988, p. A-8.

3 1989

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Richmond News Leader. 4 August 1988.

Virginia Census Schedules. List of Inhabitants. Essex County. 1850; 1860; 1870. Archives Branch, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Va.

Secondary Sources

Burgess, Robert H., and H. Graham Wood. Steamboats Out of Baltimore. Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1968.

Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks. File 28-44.

Wilkerson, Eva E. Index to Marriages of Old Rappahannock and Essex Counties, Virginia, 1655-1900. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1953.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

UTM REFERENCES

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	320750	4216400
B	18	320680	4216700
C	18	320540	4216720
D	18	321240	4217680
E	18	321380	4217620
F	18	321500	4217660
G	18	321860	4217420
H	18	321860	4216380

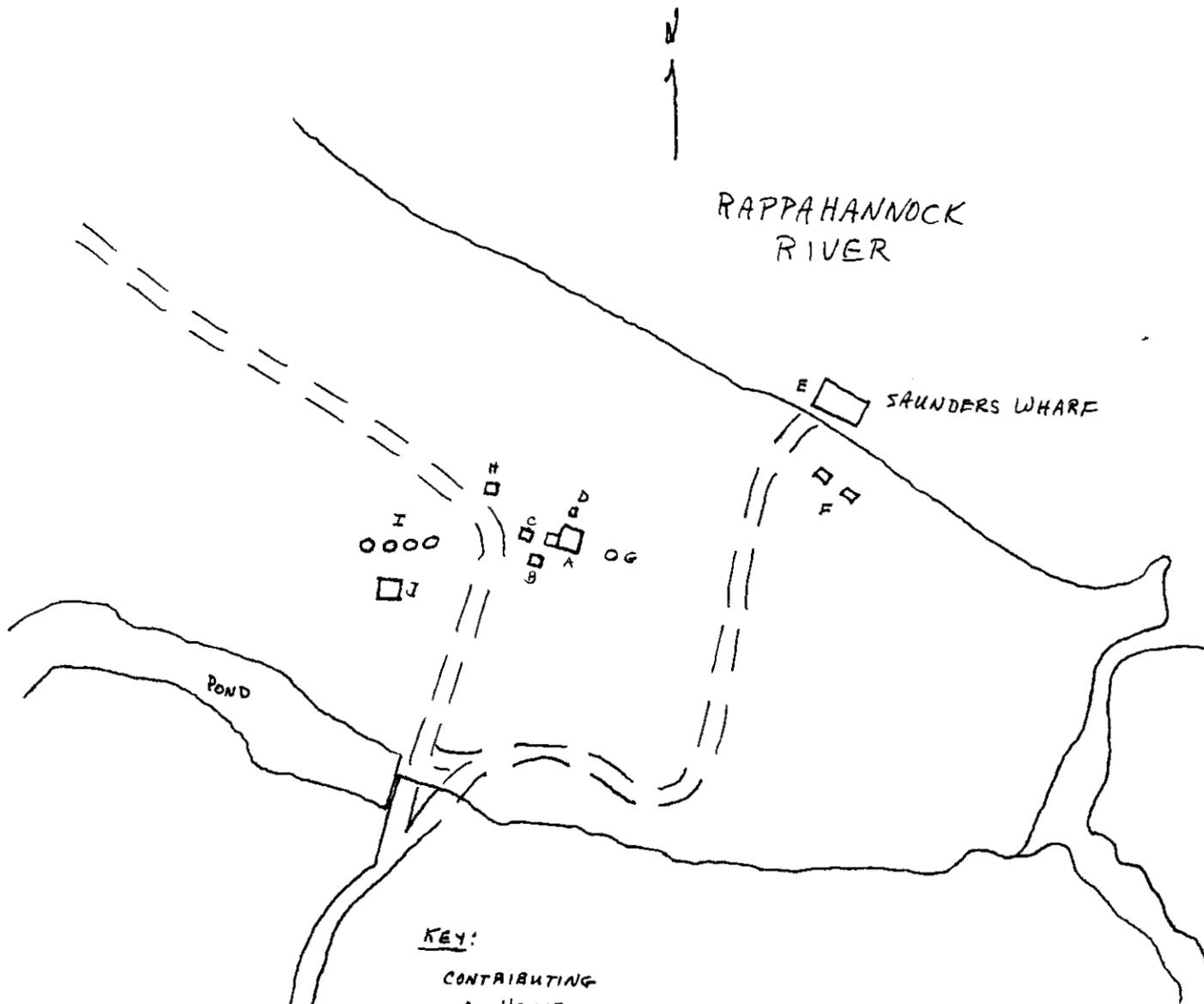
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 3 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Wheatland, Essex Co., VA



KEY:

CONTRIBUTING

- A - HOUSE
- B - SMOKEHOUSE
- C - GARAGE
- D - BIRDHOUSE
- E - WHARF

NONCONTRIBUTING

- F - STORAGE BUILDINGS (2)
- G - GAZEBO
- H - GARAGE
- I - SILOS (4)
- J - BARN

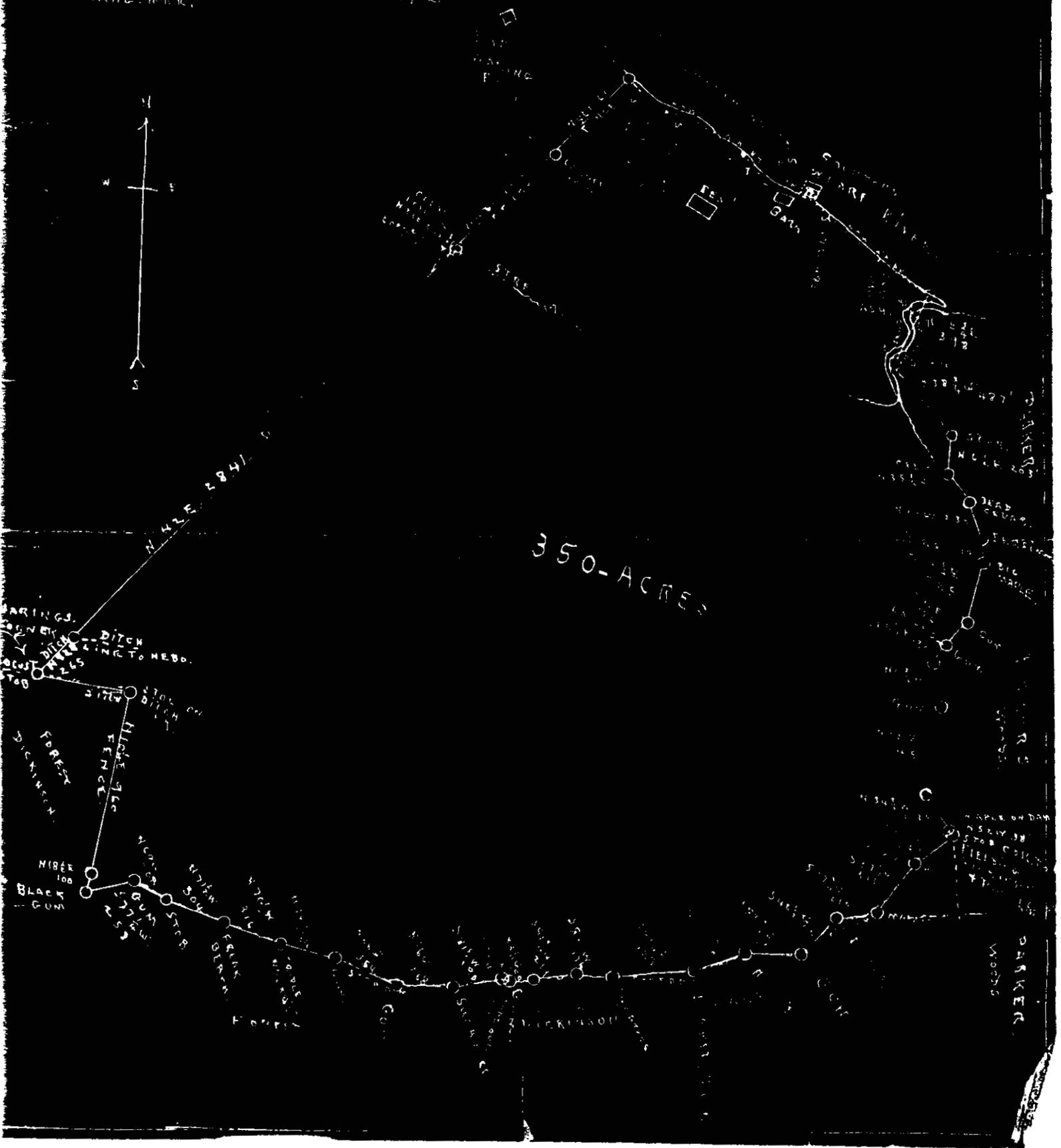
WHEATLAND - FARM

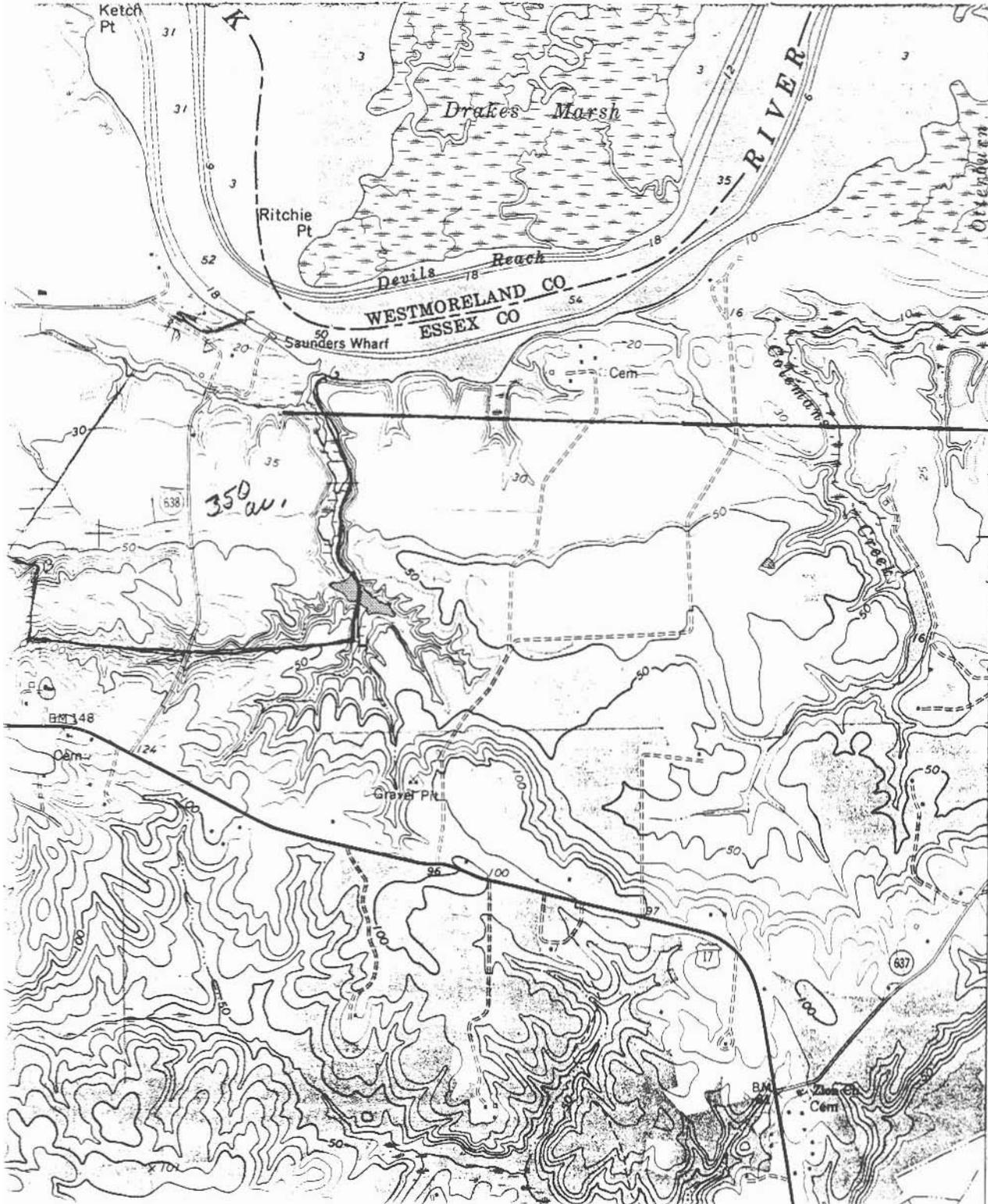
350 ACRES, IN UPPER EMBLA CO., IA

SURVEYED, JAN. 18 - 1935.

SCALE 500 TO 1
INCH = 100 FEET

H. W. JENSEN
SURVEYOR





WHEATLAND
ESSEX CO, VT

UTM REFERENCE:

- 4217 A 18/320750/4216
- B 18/320680/4216
- 5' C 18/320540/421672
- D 18/321240/42176
- E 18/321380/421762
- F 18/321500/421766
- G 18/321860/421742
- H 18/321860/42163

OCT 3 1989

(CHAMPLAIN)
5660 III SW