

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

VLR- 10/18/95  
NR-HP- 1/22/96

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 **Brooklyn Tobacco Factory**  
other names/site number **Hightower & Barksdale Tobacco Factory: VDHR Site No. 14-2**

2. Location

street & number **N. side Rt. 659 0.25 mi, E. of jct. w/ Rt. 820** N/A not for publication  
city or town **Brooklyn** N/A vicinity  
state **Virginia** code **VA** county **Halifax** code **083** zip code

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 X nationally     statewide     locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Julie A. Benik 11-8-95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action

- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
4		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
AGRICULTURE	processing
AGRICULTURE	storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
WORK IN PROGRESS	

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	BRICK
walls	BRICK
roof	METAL
other	WOOD

Narrative Description

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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 fifty years.

**Period of Significance**

Ca. 1855-1881

**Significant Dates**

Ca. 1855

1881

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Cosby, Dabney M., Jr. (attributed)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approximately 3.94 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	17 665740	4060700	3	
2			4	

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 J. Daniel Pezzoni  
organization J. Daniel Pezzoni, Preservation Consultant date June 29, 1995  
street & number PQ Box 7825 telephone (703) 366-0787  
city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24019-0825

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Virginia Gentry  
street & number Rt. 1 Box 189 telephone (804) 753-2439  
city or town Sutherlin state VA zip code 24594

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### Inventory

1. Factory. Ca. 1855. Contributing building.
2. Pack House. Ca. 1880. Contributing building.
3. Pack House. Ca. 1880. Contributing building.
4. House Ruins. Ca. 1855. Contributing site.

### Factory Exterior

The Brooklyn Tobacco Factory is located in the village of Brooklyn in southwest Halifax County, Virginia, on the north side of a historic road linking the communities of Halifax and Danville (now Route 659). The functional, two-story building has exterior walls constructed of four-course American-bond brickwork with pencilled mortar joints. Projecting above each end of the metal-sheathed gable roof are brick chimney flues. The gabled front and rear elevations each feature a wide entrance hung with double doors; the only other gable-end openings are a pair of windows in each gable. The side elevations have a row of seven windows on each story; these were formerly provided with nine-over-six sashes. An exterior stair formerly rose to a second-story window on the northeast corner.

### Factory Interior

The factory interior is also functional in character. On the first floor, brick partition walls divide the interior into a large pressroom and smaller (one-bay) end sections subdivided into two rooms each. The brick walls are whitewashed, floors are sheathed with boards, and the ceiling has exposed circular-sawn joists. Running down the center of the pressroom are three stout wood posts, supported by a brick footing wall and supporting in turn a summer beam made up of several scarfed segments. Stencilled on this beam are the dates 1855 through 1860. (The stencilled dates 1855 and 1856 also appear on the lintel of a window in this room.) The ghost impression of a sorting bin appears on the north wall, and near the east wall are three ceiling joists with notches and mortises (some plugged with iron spikes) where heavy screw presses were formerly secured to the ceiling. The floor under these press emplacements is undergirded by a double set of log joists (see architectural analysis).

The south end of the first floor has access to the exterior through the south gable-end doors. Directly inside the doors is the shaft of a former lift. The lift was operated by a rope that passed over a wood pulley attached to a ceiling beam. The room is also occupied by a ladder stair with broad treads notched into a stringer supported at floor and ceiling. A tenon on the end of the

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**Description (continued)**

middle tread passes through the stringer and is secured by a peg, making the tread serve as lateral bracing. Painted on the stringer are several inscriptions, one of which reads "1867/H&B/T.J.C." The whitewash on the wall above the stair has been worn through to the brick where workers have brushed against it or placed their hands on it for support. Standing in the space under the stair is a wood work table--probably original to the room--with multiple holes for vises and other attachments.

Opposite the stair, which rises at the east end of the front room, is a frame partition with a door leading into the office. The partition's unpainted board sheathing is covered with stencilled, painted, and pencilled inscriptions. The office behind the partition features a shallow brick fireplace cut into the gable-end wall, with a board mantel suspended by iron rods with threaded ends. The office door is constructed of battens with bevelled cross members, and features a clay knob and butt hinges. More inscriptions, mostly written in pencil, appear on the whitewashed brick walls and partition inside the office.

The north end of the first floor has a larger room with a boxed stair (apparently a twentieth-century replacement of an earlier stair) and a smaller room divided from the larger room by a brick wall. The larger room is entered through the north gable-end doors, which, like the other doors opening into the room, bear the painted inscription "No Smoking." In the ceiling over the entrance is a hatchway or trap door opening. At the top of the walls in this room are several flue openings, one with a section of flexible iron stove pipe protruding from it. Next to the exterior door is a head-height board with nails hammered into it for use as coat and hat hooks. The smaller room, which has a whitewashed ceiling and walls, features a regular series of wall indentations that indicate the former presence of shelves or machinery.

The second floor has much the same character as the first, although there is less graffiti. Most of the floor is occupied by a large work space that functioned as a lump-making room. The lift shaft has simple handrails, and a stair similar in construction to the first-floor stair rises to the attic. Suspended from the ceiling joists are crude racks constructed of boards (circular-sawn and straight-sawn) and machine-cut nails. At the north end of the room is a staggered frame partition sheathed with unpainted circular-sawn boards attached with machine-cut nails. In the room behind this partition are flue holes, piles of windows and plug-making equipment, small battens nailed over the cracks in the ceiling boards, and a section of whitewashed partition smeared with a black substance (probably licorice) at table height. On the floor of the room are four small trap doors that are positioned directly above the location of the former sorting bin on the first floor. Also, several sticks of tobacco are suspended from the ceiling racks, which continue into

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**Description (continued)**

this room.

In the attic are circular-sawn rafters, collar beams, and roof boards. The rafters are butted and nailed at the ridge; the collar beams are notched and nailed to the rafter couples. The brick gable walls are considerably thinner than the walls below. Flues angle up across the interior surfaces of the gables.

**Outbuildings**

Outside the factory, extending from the north gable end and connected to the factory by a covered breezeway, stands a v-notched hewn-log pack house with a metal-sheathed gable roof, stone and clay chinking, sawn rafters and ridge boards, and an ordering pit underneath. Standing approximately twelve feet from the southeast corner of the factory is a second hewn-log pack house, this one with square notching, log chinking, log floor joists and pole rafters, and a celotex interior. This pack house too has an ordering pit with racks constructed of boards nailed to vertical poles.

Located approximately 200 feet north of the factory, near the back property line, are the remains of a nineteenth-century log dwelling. The south-facing, square-notched dwelling is composed of a partially collapsed west pen and a completely collapsed east pen with a brick chimney fall separating the pens. The west pen has a two-bay front elevation with a door and an unglazed window. Other features include log floor joists, hewn ceiling joists, log pole rafters connected to the plates with cut nails, and a whitewashed interior. The west pen retains the remnants of a metal-sheathed gable roof; the east pen formerly had a wood shingle roof, which probably accounts for its poorer state of preservation. In the dirt of the lane that passes in front of the dwelling are numerous shards of historic ceramics and glassware. To the northeast of the house ruins, apparently located outside the nominated parcel, is a twentieth-century frame corncrib constructed of circular-sawn lumber and wire nails, with a metal-sheathed gable roof, slatted walls, stone footers, and a later shed addition on three sides partially enclosed with weatherboards.

**Integrity Statement**

The Brooklyn Tobacco Factory preserves excellent exterior and interior integrity. The building's use as an agricultural warehouse until fairly recently encouraged later owners to maintain it in serviceable condition, and its size and brick construction--unusual for rural tobacco factories--

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**Description (continued)**

have contributed to its survival. The building has suffered little damage from weather and vandals, considering most of its windows have been missing for at least sixty years. Presently (June 1995), the factory is in the early stages of stabilization. Double-sash windows with divided panes will be returned to the window openings, securing the building from the elements and from unauthorized entry. The future use of the building is uncertain, but the present owner is committed to finding a use that minimizes alteration to the historic fabric.

**Architectural Analysis**

Tobacco factories were once a common fixture of the Virginia-North Carolina borderland, but today buildings like the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory are extremely rare. In Virginia, four other examples from the antebellum period are known, two in Richmond and one building each in the cities of Danville and Lynchburg (see justification of criteria, section 8). The surviving urban factories are multi-story brick buildings, whereas archival sources suggest most rural factories were relatively small buildings of frame or log construction. Claude Allen's Plug Tobacco Factory in Milton, North Carolina, is probably representative of the antebellum rural factories, even though it was built after the Civil War; the plainly detailed, one-story, frame building contained an unpartitioned workroom with exposed structural members and a broad ladder stair rising to a garret storage area.<sup>1</sup> In size and construction, the Brooklyn factory has less in common with the Claude Allen factory and shares more similarities with the urban factories of its day.

The functional division of space within the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory may be reconstructed from the survival of interior features. The manufacturing process began literally at the front door, where loose cured tobacco was transferred to a lift located just inside the wide entry.<sup>2</sup> Hoisted to the main room of the second floor, the tobacco leaves were hung from racks (analogous to the tier poles of a pack house) so that they would absorb moisture in the air, either ambient moisture admitted from the windows, or steam moisture generated by a stove at the north end of the room.<sup>3</sup> Once the leaves were "put in order," or made supple enough to handle, they were stripped of their central stems by workers known as stemmers. The leaves were then flavored by steeping them in large kettles containing a hot syrup of licorice and sugar, and hung up to dry. The stemming probably took place in the same room where the tobacco was put in order, with the flavoring and drying performed in the partitioned-off space at the north end of the second floor. Evidence of the flavoring process may be seen in the black substance--probably licorice--that has stained a whitewashed section of the north room's partition. The room was heated by one or two stoves, and there are small battens nailed over the cracks in the ceiling

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boards to make the room air-tight—evidence of a drying operation.

After flavoring and drying, the leaves were apparently returned to the main second-floor room, where factory hands known as lumpers worked at rows of tall benches. According to tobacco industry historian Nannie Mae Tilley,

Every lumper had an assistant whose duty it was to remove the stem from the wrapping leaf. With agility and skill the workman moulded a quantity of tobacco, still pliable from the application of rum and flavoring, into a rectangular cake which he measured, trimmed, and weighed. Receiving a stemmed but unflavored wrapping leaf from his assistant, the lumper then encased the moulded cake or filler in a beautiful yellow leaf.<sup>4</sup>

Each plug (lump and wrapper) weighed a specific fraction of a pound, and after the plugs were inspected by an overseer they were sorted by weight and dropped through trap doors in the floor of the north room. Ghost impressions on the first-floor wall below these trap doors indicate that the plugs fell into a sorting bin divided into four compartments. The bin was located in a corner of a large room known variously as the "pressroom" or "prizing room" where the plugs were further processed. Evidence on the ceiling joists of the Brooklyn factory's pressroom—including the survival of two large iron spikes—suggest the room contained three or multiples of three (six or nine) hand-operated screw presses. Plugs were loaded into these presses in metal trays known as shapes, and the shapes and plugs were then subjected to a pressure of 200 to 300 tons for several pressings. After pressing, the plugs were put in stencilled boxes that were apparently made in the south or front room of the factory (the same room where the lift is located), an interpretation suggested by the old work table in this room—which is similar to tables that appear in historic photographs of tobacco factory carpenter shops—and by the concentration of stencilled labels and graffiti on the walls of the room.<sup>5</sup> After boxing, the plugs were ready for shipment.

The entire process was supervised from the office, located in the front southwest corner of the first floor. Through his door the manager could monitor the receipt of tobacco and the shipment of plugs. The rear or north entrance to the factory appears to have functioned as the employee entrance; a wood strip with nails affixed to the wall just inside the doors would have been used to hang coats, hats, bonnets, and so forth.<sup>6</sup> The back doors and the doors of adjoining spaces are painted with the words "No Smoking," a directive intended to safeguard the building and its flammable contents from fire.

The function of the two back rooms on the first floor is unclear. Both rooms were heated by

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**Description (continued)**

stoves and both have regular series of indentations in their brick walls that suggest the former presence of wall-mounted shelving or machinery. The rooms communicated with the partitioned-off space on the floor above, suggesting they may also have been used for the drying and flavoring of the tobacco leaves prior to plug-making.

The area outside the factory also figured in the production process. At other rural factories, the plugs were sun cured in trays that stood on trestles located in the yard.<sup>7</sup> When the Brooklyn factory was surveyed in 1968, a stair rose at the northeast corner of the building that may have been used to transfer leaves and plugs from inside to outside. Standing in close proximity to the factory are the two log pack houses, which may date to the 1880s operation of the factory, or that may be associated with a later use of the building as a tobacco warehouse. To the north of the factory stand the remains of a two-pen, antebellum log dwelling that could have served as housing for workers, a cook, or a caretaker.

Like a modern assembly line, the Brooklyn factory was organized rationally, with raw materials received at the front entrance, cycled through the specialized spaces of the interior, and returned to the front entrance as finished product. Unlike today's manufacturing plants, and unlike most postbellum tobacco factories, the Brooklyn factory relied exclusively on human muscle for motive power. Workers, not machines, hoisted the tobacco leaves to the upper level, stemmed the leaves, fashioned the plugs, and pulled the long levers that operated the screw presses. Two factors dictated this reliance on hand-power: the factory was established before the widespread application of steam-powered hydraulic machinery, and, perhaps more importantly, the factory management could avail itself of slave labor before the Civil War and an inexhaustible pool of free labor after the war.

Ultimately, the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory proved obsolete in the heavily mechanized industry of the post-war years. Its relative remoteness from rail transport also dampened its profitability--a particular irony, considering the railroad's penetration of Southside Virginia contributed to the factory's establishment (see section 8). The fact that the building was not modernized after the war has helped preserve evidence of an early phase in the development of American tobacco manufacturing.

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Description (continued)

Endnotes

1. Little-Stokes, "Milton," 13.
2. Most period accounts deal with factories located in cities, where the tobacco was delivered in hogsheads. Because the Brooklyn factory was located in the midst of tobacco country, the tobacco was most likely delivered loose at the factory. For accounts of loose tobacco delivery, refer to Arnold, "Study of Tobacco Manufacture," 15, and Siegel, *Roots of Southern Distinctiveness*, 123.
3. Vicky Arnold conjectures a similar hanging of tobacco in the second floor of Washington Duke's third tobacco factory, although the purpose there seems to have been to dry the tobacco (pp. 14-15).
4. Tilley, *Bright-Tobacco Industry*, 491-492.
5. Gravely Collection photographs.
6. A photograph in Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls* (p. 194) shows garments hung from nails in the stemming area of a nineteenth-century Richmond tobacco factory.
7. Gravely Collection photographs; Martinsville-Henry County Woman's Club, *Martinsville and Henry County*, 45.

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## NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary

The Brooklyn Tobacco Factory is apparently the best-preserved antebellum tobacco factory yet identified in Virginia, and it is one of the few buildings of its type and antiquity identified nationally. Located in southwest Halifax County, in the heart of Virginia's bright leaf tobacco belt, the two-story brick building was erected for planters Joshua Hightower and Beverly Barksdale II. about 1855, probably by noted Halifax County builder Dabney M. Cosby, Jr. The factory was uncommonly large and substantially built for its rural location, suggesting high expectations on the part of its projectors. Its whitewashed interior walls—untouched since the enterprise folded in the 1880s—and a wooden office partition are covered with stencilled labels and graffiti, a potentially important source of information on daily operations and workforce composition. The interior features a lump-making room, a pressroom, an office, and other specialized work rooms, and preserves remnants of a hand-operated lift and screw presses. This evidence of hand-powered machinery opens a window onto an early phase in the development of American tobacco manufacturing before the introduction of steam power.

### Justification of Criteria

The Brooklyn Tobacco Factory is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and D in the area of industry. The factory is eligible under Criterion A as a well-preserved example of a virtually extinct building type: the rural antebellum tobacco factory. Tobacco factories dotted the countryside of the Virginia-North Carolina bright leaf belt during the mid-1800s, but with the urbanization of the railroad era the industry concentrated in the towns and cities of the region, leaving most rural factories to under-utilization and decay. The Brooklyn factory preserves a remarkable degree of interior integrity, with original architectural features, evidence of functional zonation, and equipment emplacements clearly visible, and it illustrates a period in the development of the industry before the introduction of steam-powered machinery. The factory is also eligible under Criterion D for the information it is likely to yield on details of industrial process and workforce composition and organization, information that may be derived from an intensive examination of equipment emplacements, graffiti, chemical residues, and other physical traces. The period of significance for the factory begins circa 1855, the probable date of its construction, and extends to 1881, the final year of the factory's full operation.

The Brooklyn Tobacco Factory possesses national significance for the extreme rarity of its type and for its exceptional architectural integrity, and therefore for its potential to illuminate the

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

workings of an important American industry of the antebellum period. To document the type's rarity and relative integrity in the core region of the industry--the Virginia-North Carolina bright leaf belt--historic site inventories and primary and secondary sources were examined for the two states, and historians and architectural historians with a particular interest in the subject were contacted.

Only five other surviving antebellum tobacco factories have been identified in Virginia and North Carolina: the Hamlin factory in Rockford, N.C.; the Hancock factory in Lynchburg, Va.; a factory in Danville, Va.; and the Turpin & Yarbrough and Grant factories in Richmond. These factories preserve varying degrees of integrity. The ca. 1850 Hamlin Tobacco Factory, like the Brooklyn factory, was established in a rural setting, although it is a much smaller building. The story-and-a-half frame factory has good exterior and interior architectural integrity, but early features associated with tobacco manufacturing are not documented.<sup>1</sup> The 1853 Ammon Hancock Tobacco Factory, a two-story brick building located in Lynchburg's downtown, possesses fair exterior integrity, but later commercial and industrial tenants have apparently effaced most interior traces of its original use.<sup>2</sup> The Danville example--a substantial brick building located in the city's tobacco warehouse district--was substantially altered in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The well-documented 1853 Turpin & Yarbrough Tobacco Factory at Franklin and 25th streets in Richmond preserves an original stair and a late-nineteenth-century elevator, but interior features such as machinery emplacements and early finishes have been removed or obscured, and an early box factory and steam drying plant (separate buildings) have been demolished. The interior integrity of the nearby Grant Factory is unknown.<sup>4</sup>

Based on this small sample, it appears that the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory is the best-preserved antebellum tobacco factory to survive in the Virginia-North Carolina heartland of pre-war tobacco manufacturing, and it is probably the best-preserved building of its type and period to survive nationally. The building's significance is further enhanced by its status as a rural factory with urban characteristics of size and construction (as discussed elsewhere in this document).<sup>5</sup>

**Acknowledgements**

The consultant was aided by a number of individuals in the preparation of this report. Virginia G. Gentry, the owner of the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory, sponsored the project and suggested several avenues of research. Halifax County historians Julia Carrington and Chip Pottage provided important clues. Others who assisted the project included Chandrea Burch and Michael T. Southern of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Rex Burrus of

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Rocky Mount, Va., owner of the Hamlin Tobacco Factory; John Byrne and Jeff Wyatt of the National Register staff in Washington; architectural historian S. Allen Chambers, Jr. of Washington and Lynchburg; architectural historian Richard C. Cote of Washington; David Edwards and John S. Salmon of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond; historian Gary R. Grant of Danville; tobacco historian William C. Hatcher of Kinston, N.C.; historian T. Gibson Hobbs, Jr. of Lynchburg; historian Gregg Kimball of the Valentine Museum, Richmond; architectural historian Anne Carter Lee of Rocky Mount, Va.; Marty Perry of the Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort; tobacco historian Oscar A. Pohlig, Jr. of Richmond; John Tackett, Assistant Director of the Duke Homestead State Historic Site in Durham, N.C.; and the staffs of the Halifax County Courthouse, the Virginia Room of the Roanoke Public Library, the Virginia Historical Society, and the Virginia State Library.

**Historical Background**

During the 1850s and briefly in the 1880s, the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory engaged in the manufacture of plug tobacco, the flavored chaw that American consumers of the antebellum period esteemed above snuff and smoking tobacco. Chewing tobacco's popularity encouraged the development of an important industry that concentrated in major urban centers and in the tobacco-growing states of Virginia and North Carolina, which produced 61% of the nation's manufactured tobacco in 1860.<sup>6</sup> In Virginia, the larger factories located in the principal tobacco cities--Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, and Danville--but a numerical majority of the 252 factories listed in 1860 operated in the countryside.<sup>7</sup> Most of the rural factories clustered in the Dan River basin of the western Piedmont, in a tier of counties that extends along the North Carolina border from Halifax on the east to Patrick on the west.<sup>8</sup>

Rural Virginia was ideally suited for tobacco manufacturing. The modest capital required in establishing a small factory, and the low-tech, labor-intensive processes involved in producing plug, made the industry attractive to rural entrepreneurs with slave labor at their command.<sup>9</sup> Also important were the special requirements of bright tobacco, the type preferred for plug wrappers. Prizing (compressing) and shipment in hogsheads to urban factories easily spoiled the delicate bright leaf. Rural manufacturers operating within the tobacco growing region received their leaf in loose form, enabling them to produce a superior plug.<sup>10</sup>

Inspired by the profits to be made from chewing tobacco, Halifax County planters Joshua Hightower (ca. 1805-ca. 1885) and Beverly Barksdale, II (1808-1867) positioned themselves to enter the industry in the early 1850s. In 1853, Barksdale purchased 438 acres at the village of

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 11Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.

## Statement of Significance (continued)

Brooklyn from the mercantile firm of William Easley & Company. By 1855, Hightower & Barksdale had commissioned the construction of a tobacco factory at Brooklyn, a substantial brick building that was probably the work of accomplished Halifax County builder Dabney M. Cosby, Jr.<sup>11</sup> The tobacconists timed the opening of their factory well: in September 1855, the Richmond & Danville Railroad completed its line to Barksdale Depot, located several miles south of Brooklyn, providing the firm with advantageous shipping capabilities.<sup>12</sup> Hightower & Barksdale's factory was much larger and more substantially built than those of rural competitors, suggesting the firm expected a degree of success on an urban scale of magnitude.

Antebellum census statistics are missing for the factory, but a rough account of its operations can be pieced together from secondary sources and from the evidence of the building itself. Beverly Barksdale II's son, Beverly III (1841-1912), who was also Joshua Hightower's son-in-law, served as the factory manager; according to one account, he assumed the post at the age of fifteen.<sup>13</sup> The factory workforce was comprised of slave laborers, some of whom may have been hired from local planters.<sup>14</sup> Preparation of the leaf and the making of plugs appears to have taken place on the factory's second floor, where hands known as lumpers and stemmers would have worked at benches, singing to accompany their work. On the first floor pressroom, the plugs were compressed in hand-operated screw presses; after prizing the plugs were boxed and shipped (see architectural analysis for a fuller discussion of the manufacturing process). Little is known about Hightower & Barksdale's product, but stenciling on a second-floor partition preserves the name of at least one brand: "Hightower Virginia Extra Golden Leaf."<sup>15</sup>

The factory ceased operations at the beginning of the Civil War, "1860" being the last of a line of dates stencilled on a first-floor summer beam. The younger Beverly enlisted in the Confederate army and served for the duration, thereby depriving the factory of its manager.<sup>16</sup> The Barksdale and Hightower families were continually called upon to deliver slaves to work on the "public defenses" at Richmond; this and the likely reassignment of slaves to agricultural work depleted the factory labor pool.<sup>17</sup> Hightower & Barksdale did not return to business after the war. Beverly Barksdale II died in 1867, and Joshua Hightower—who listed no real or personal estate in the 1870 census—went to live with his daughter and son-in-law, also virtually destitute.<sup>18</sup> Tobacco manufacturing in Halifax and other Southside counties remained depressed for a number of years after 1865; locally, only the nine-screw-press factory of Stephen Tucker generated sufficient product to qualify it for listing in the 1870 federal industrial schedule.<sup>19</sup>

By 1880, Beverly Barksdale III had apparently recovered to the point that he could make a new start in the family business. The factory—unaccountably absent from the industrial schedules of

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Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.

Section number 8 Page 12

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Statement of Significance (continued)

the 1860 census, and apparently out of commission during the 1870 census--first appears in the 1880 industrial schedules. This was fortuitous; as the census enumerator noted on his schedule, "The above firm of B Barksdale & Co Manufacturers of Tobac has just begun to work (commenced in March 1880 or April) and have not sold any of their products yet."<sup>20</sup>

The industrial schedule contains a wealth of information on Barksdale's enterprise. Capitalized at \$30,000, the factory was projected to employ a maximum of thirty hands, including eight men, one woman, and twenty-one children. The work year was to extend from May to November, and ten-hour work days were standard. An "ordinary laborer" received fifty cents a day (the pay for skilled workers is not recorded). Unlike his father and father-in-law, who apparently made only plug tobacco, Barksdale defined his business as "Manufacturing Tobacco [--] Smoking Chewing & Snuff," a response to the increasing diversification of the market.

The 1880 population schedules provide more details on the composition of Barksdale's workforce. Twenty-one individuals living in the Brooklyn vicinity were classified as tobacco factory workers on the schedules, which are dated June 9 through 11. All but two workers were black, perpetuating antebellum practice. Thirteen of the workers were men above the age of sixteen, four were women above the age of fifteen, and the remainder were children. This diverged significantly from the child workforce reported by Barksdale in the industrial census. It may be that Barksdale planned to employ adults as skilled start-up laborers, to be replaced over time by children, a more manageable and less expensive workforce. Like his father before him, Barksdale may have employed a younger family member to manage the day-to-day operations of the factory, in this case his brother Stith D. Barksdale (b. ca. 1860), whose pencilled initials appear in the office.<sup>21</sup> Another name that appears in the factory is that of Daniel E. Penick (b. ca. 1862), one of only two white Brooklyn-vicinity factory workers listed in the census.

According to most accounts, the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory closed for good in 1881, although pencilled dates from 1882 and 1883 may indicate lingering activity.<sup>22</sup> Like other rural tobacco factories of the Virginia-North Carolina borderland, the Brooklyn factory was rendered obsolete by changes in the industry. Throughout the post-war period, manufacturers abandoned rural locations to avail themselves of the superior shipping facilities and larger labor markets of emergent towns and urban centers such as Danville, Martinsville, and South Boston.<sup>23</sup> Many factory owners installed newly-developed machinery--hydraulic presses, plug machines, and continuous drying and ordering machines--that increased production, improved the quality of plugs, and decreased the reliance on manpower. Barksdale could not compete with the better-situated manufacturers of the towns and cities, and he apparently lacked the funds to replace his

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**Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.**

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

outmoded equipment with steam-powered machinery. Consequently, the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory has been preserved more or less in its original unmechanized condition. From the 1880s on, neighboring farmers used the factory as a tobacco warehouse, and in more recent years it has served for fertilizer storage.<sup>24</sup> In 1994, the building came under new ownership, and a rehabilitation is now being contemplated.

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Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Endnotes

1. Rex Burrus, owner, personal communication; Glass, "Hamlin Tobacco Factory." Brent D. Glass's 1974 HAER survey of the Hamlin factory includes good photographic coverage of architectural features on the interior of the building but no views of machinery, specialized work areas, etc., suggesting such features no longer survive, or that they were too subtle to be detected.
2. S. Allen Chambers, Jr. and T. Gibson Hobbs, Jr., personal communication; Chambers, *Lynchburg*, 154-156. Buildings associated with the antebellum John W. Carroll Tobacco Factory may also survive in Lynchburg.
3. Gary R. Grant, personal communication.
4. Gregg Kimball and Oscar Pohlig, personal communication; Pohlig, "Lot 56;" and Tilley, *The Bright Tobacco Industry*, 489. Much of Richmond's tobacco manufacturing district was destroyed during the Civil War.
5. Tobacco was also manufactured at various locations in Kentucky before the war and in the nation's larger cities. No antebellum Kentucky factories have been identified by the Kentucky Heritage Council through its site survey program. As for the cities, a century and a half of continual growth and rebuilding may be assumed to have wiped out any vestiges of antebellum tobacco manufacturing. A key word search of tobacco resources listed in the National Register turned up no individually listed antebellum tobacco factories anywhere in the nation, other than the Moss Tobacco Factory in Clarksville, Virginia, an 1850s building that was demolished in 1980. Architectural survey in Virginia's Southside and other tobacco-producing sections of the South is by no means complete, suggesting more rural tobacco factories may come to light.
6. Robert, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 169; Tilley, *Bright-Tobacco*, 489. The 61% figure excludes the manufacture of cigars. Only grain milling surpassed tobacco manufacturing in importance to the economies of Virginia and North Carolina during the period, and tobacco factories were the largest industrial employer in Virginia in 1860 (Robert, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 161, 170).
7. Arnold, *History of the Tobacco Industry*, 58.
8. Siegel, *Roots of Southern Distinctiveness*, 122-123; *Times Dispatch*, April 29, 1906.

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Halifax Co., Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

9. Siegel, *Roots of Southern Distinctiveness*, 122-123; Pezzoni, "Brooks-Brown House."

10. Siegel, *Roots of Southern Distinctiveness*, 123-124.

11. Halifax County Deed Book 55, p. 146. Barksdale paid \$3,800.50 for the tract. The ca. 1855 date for the factory is circumstantial, based on the 1853 purchase date, the "1855" date stenciled on the building's interior, and the coming of the railroad in 1855. The date is generally accepted among local historians (Edmunds, *History of Halifax*), although some accounts state that Hightower & Barksdale began manufacturing tobacco in the 1840s (perhaps in another building).

Halifax County deed and tax records are inconclusive with regard to the evolution of structures on the property. The value of buildings at Brooklyn stood at \$1,500.00 throughout the 1840s. In 1850, during William Easley & Company's ownership, the value jumped to \$2,500.00 and the assessment noted "improvements increased." From 1852 to 1859, the value of buildings stood at \$2,000.00. These values appear insufficient to account for the factory, Brooklyn Store, Barksdale residence, and presumably other buildings located on the property.

The attribution of Dabney M. Cosby, Jr. as the builder of the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory is based on the quality of the building's brickwork, on the fact that Cosby completed other projects for members of the Barksdale family, and on the fact that Cosby was Halifax County's leading builder of the period (Richard C. Cote, personal communication). Accounts in Cosby's "Day Book" stop just short of the presumed 1855 date of completion for the factory.

12. Clark, "The First Quarter Century of the Richmond & Danville Railroad," 33. It is not known whether Barksdale Depot was named after Beverly Barksdale, II, or some other member of Halifax County's numerous Barksdale clan.

13. Ragland, "Brooklyn Tobacco Factory." The story about the younger Beverly lends additional support to a begin date of factory operations in the mid-1850s.

14. Morgan, *Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt*, 60. According to Morgan, 87% of Richmond's 2,000 tobacco factory hands were hired slaves in 1860. The ratio would presumably have been less in a rural factory like that of Hightower & Barksdale. Hightower, for example, owned thirty slaves in 1860, many of whom presumably worked at the factory (1860 Halifax County slave schedules).

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Brooklyn Tobacco Factory  
Halifax Co., Va.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

15. Other stencilled brand names, which may or may not belong to the factory, include Trojan and Little.
16. Barksdale, *Barksdale Family*, 362.
17. Halifax County General Index to Court Orders, 1752 to 1900. Tobacco factories in Richmond and Danville were also idled by the war; several of these gained infamous war-time reputations as military prisons.
18. Barksdale, *Barksdale Family*, 358.
19. Arnold, *History of the Tobacco Industry in Virginia*, 65; 1870 Halifax County industrial schedules. The Tucker Tobacco Factory appears to have been located in the Brooklyn vicinity; whether it had some connection to the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory--or whether it occupied the same building--has not been ascertained. A "T. J. Corbin" left his name and the date "1867" at several locations in the front carpentry shop, perhaps indicating a brief period of activity shortly after the war.
20. William M. Barksdale, the enumerator, dated his schedule June 25, 1880.
21. According to Ragland, "Brooklyn Tobacco Factory," local merchant William Haynes (b. ca. 1831) assisted in the management of the factory.
22. Ragland, "Brooklyn Tobacco Factory." An 1882 tobacco trade journal cited in Tilley, *Bright-Tobacco Industry* (p. 685) listed "B. Barksdale & Co." among active tobacco manufacturing concerns. The journal misidentified the location of Barksdale's factory as the village of Bachelors' Hall in Pittsylvania County.
23. Pezzoni, "Brooks-Brown House;" Glass, *North Carolina, An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites*, 39; and Arnold, *History of the Tobacco Industry*, 58-59.
24. Virginia G. Gentry, personal communication.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory nominated parcel are shown in Exhibit A.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Brooklyn Tobacco Factory nominated parcel correspond to the present boundaries of the parcel on which the factory and associated contributing resources stand.

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Halifax Co., Va.

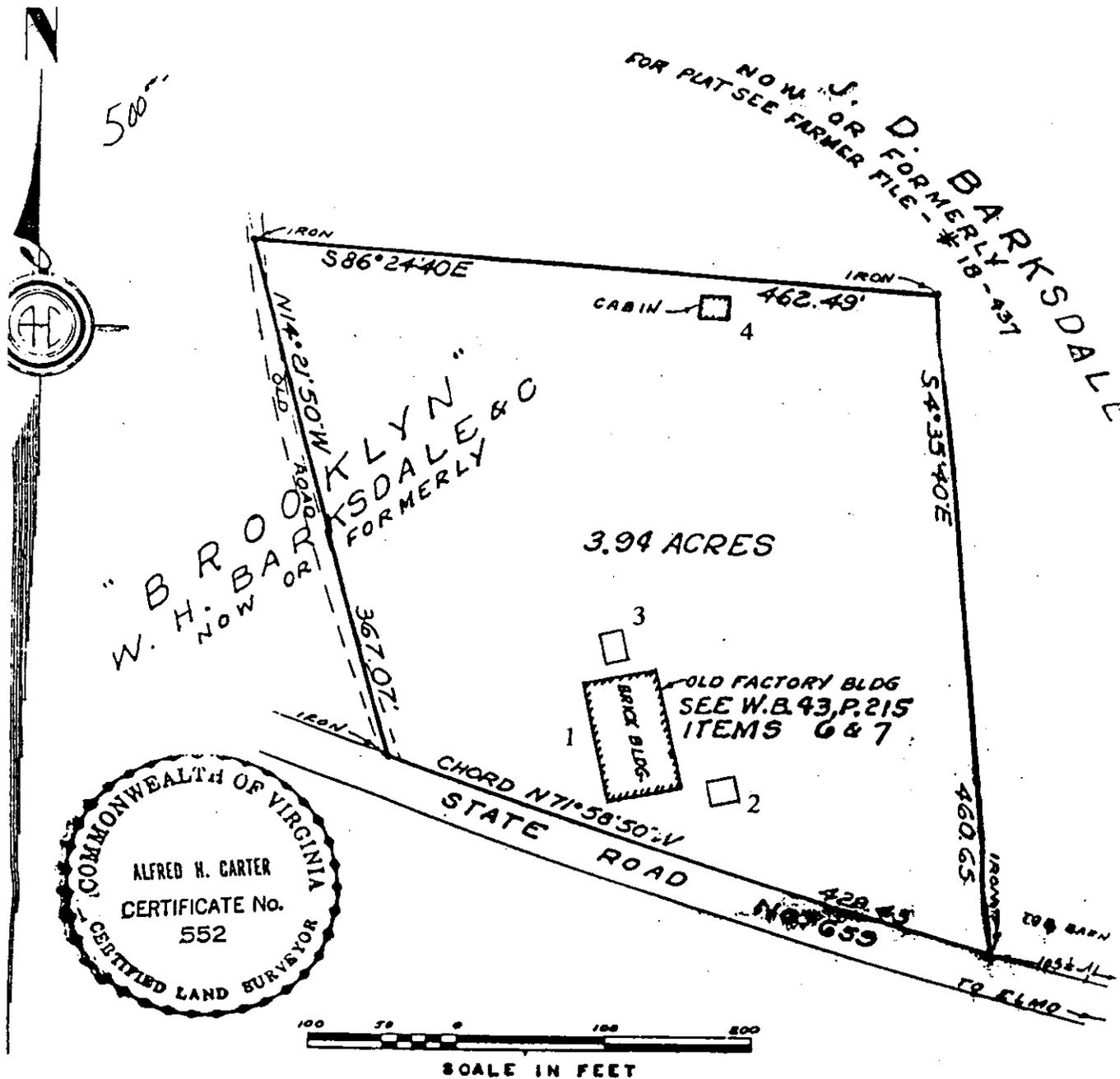


Exhibit A. Brooklyn Tobacco Factory nominated parcel, Brooklyn, Halifax Co., Va. Features 1 through 4 correspond to inventory in description section. Location and size of features approximate.

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Halifax Co., Va.

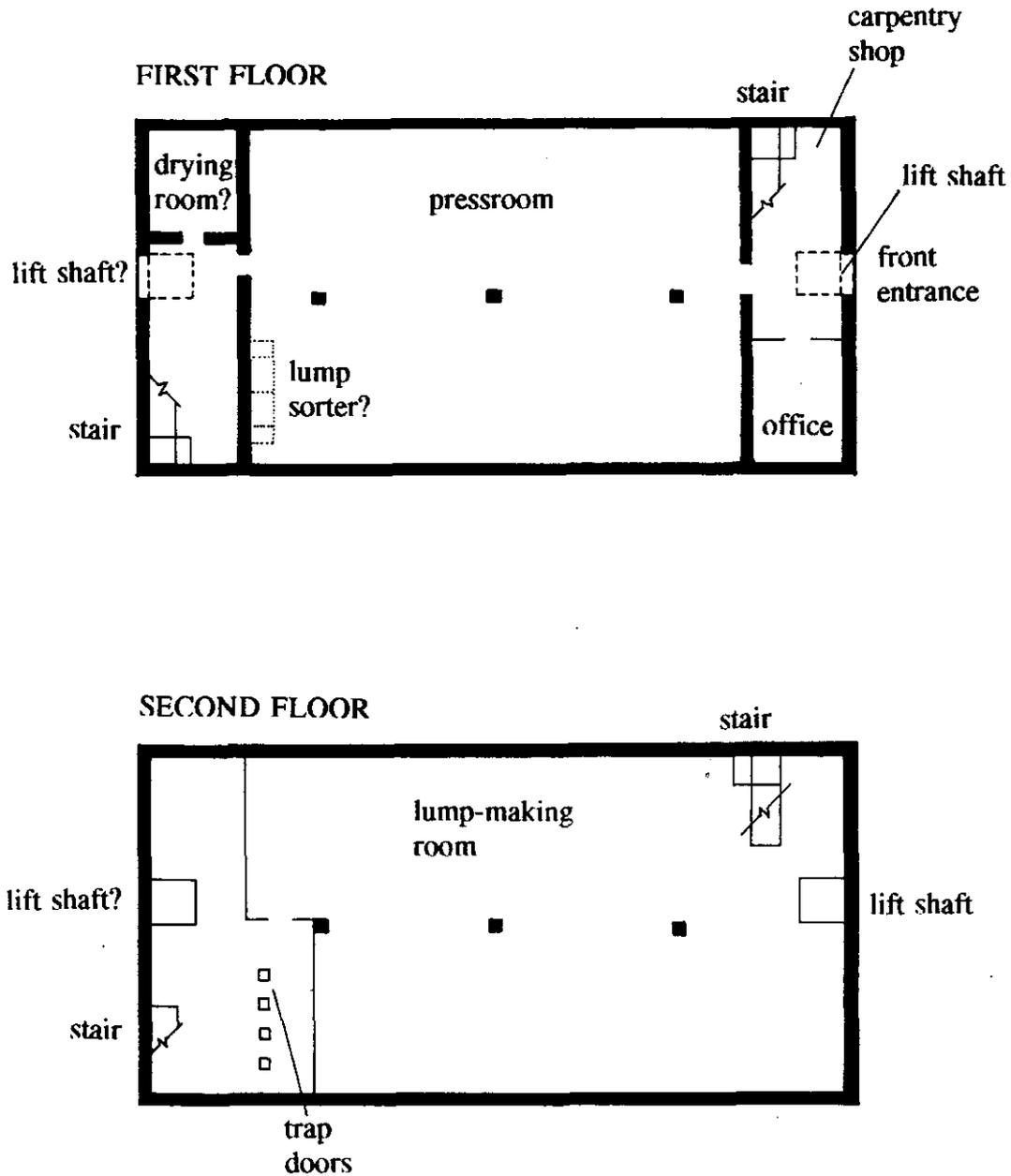
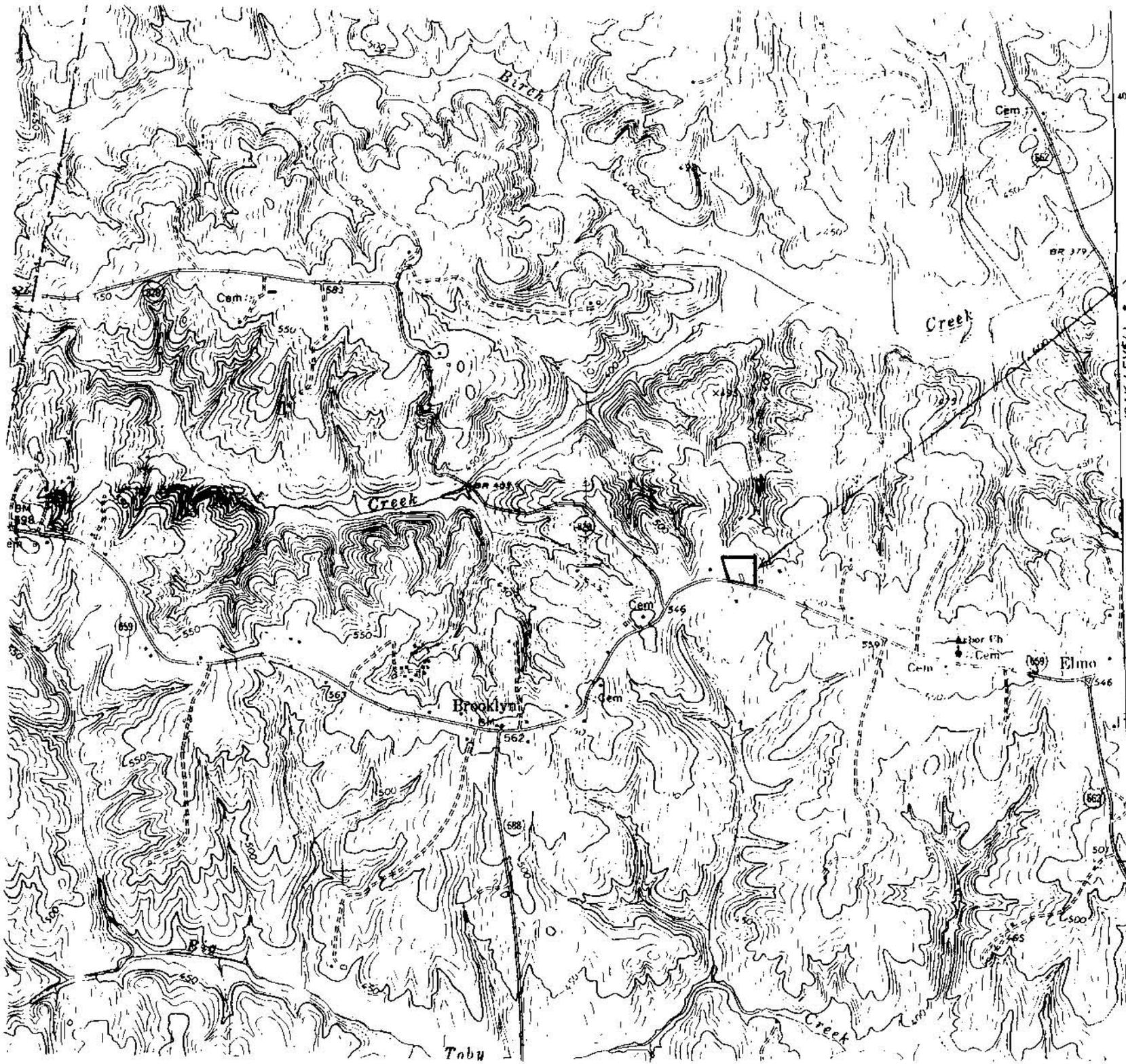


Exhibit B. Diagram of functional layout of Brooklyn Tobacco Factory. Not to scale.



Brooklyn Tobacco  
Factory  
Halifax Co., VA

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