

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 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 Howard- Bell-Feather House

other names/site number Bell-Feather House; Old Feathers Place; 60-24

2. Location

street & number South side of VA Rt. 669 at intersection with Elliot not for publication N/A

city, town Riner Creek vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Montgomery code 121 zip code 24149

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: Prehistoric and Historic Resources of Montgomery County

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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 of certifying official Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Date

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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Three-room plan

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls STONE: limestone

roof METAL: tin

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Howard-Bell-Feather House is sited in rolling farmland south of Christiansburg and east of Riner on a hillside immediately above Elliot Creek. It faces due east toward the creek on its downhill front. The coursed-rubble exterior features symmetrical three-bay fronts on the west and east elevations. The west or uphill facade contains a central door flanked by early six-over-six double-hung windows. The door frame and windows feature early molded and beaded backbands, while the door, which has been replaced in the early twentieth century, has an oval glass panel. The west side, which is whitewashed, is sheltered by a modern concrete-floored porch. The stone wall stops below the eaves. Two wide beaded boards of unequal width, affixed with hand-headed nails, sheath the area above the stone. The rafters protrude and the porch rafters are nailed on. Rough stonework below the porch indicates that either the ground level was higher on the west or a porch across the west was planned from the start.

The east wall, because the house was built in a bank, is a full two stories in height and has a door centered in the three-bay facade on each floor. The upper windows are slightly more closely spaced than those on the lower floor. All the window and door frames were altered in this century. The northern window on the upper floor was lengthened. The upper door is early, but has had its upper panels replaced with glass. A porch must have sheltered this side at some period, but no trace remains other than a wide concrete porch floor or terrace on the ground level. Modern weatherboards fill the space between the stone wall and the roof edge.

Large fully-exterior chimneys rise at either gable end. The chimney at the south end is 7'-8" x 3'-8" in size, and the north chimney is 6'-1" x 2'-9". Both chimneys have shoulders: the north chimney has shoulders above the garret level to allow a fireplace on that floor, while the south chimney's shoulders are below the garret floor. The gable walls, rather than being built of stone, as would have been typical, are framed with weatherboarded studs. The upper section of each gable retains early beaded weatherboards. The north chimney is flanked by early garret casement openings. Evidence in the interior indicates that only one opening, to the west side of the chimney, lit the south end of the garret interior.

The upper-floor interior features plastered walls and ceilings throughout. This level is today divided into two rooms of unequal size by a stud partition to the north side of the

 See continuation sheet

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

Period of Significance

ca. 1810 - ca. 1910

Significant Dates

N/A

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.

The house and its site are significant under criterion C. It is the only stone house in the county that was built before the Civil War. The dwelling is also the only three-room plan house identified in the New River Valley region. The three-room plan is widely distributed throughout the Shenandoah Valley, as is the use of stone as a building material. The plan is associated by some architectural historians with the German ethnic tradition in the region, but there is no evidence that this type of three-room plan, clearly related to the hall-parlor form, is part of that tradition. The house has been altered to some extent, but its form and decorative elements are either intact or are clearly discernible from remaining evidence. The house is one of a group of perhaps eight buildings to survive in the county from the period before ca. 1825.

The house has been credited to William Howard as "the first stone mansion in southwest Virginia" by a Howard descendant (Howard, G. L.), Howard, said to have died in 1815 (Howard, G.P.), had a son William, Jr., who also had land in the area. William Howard, Sr., had 545 acres in the Elliot Creek area before 1799, when he paid 71¢ tax. In 1805 he added 250 acres and 106 acres, the last referred to as the homeplace in the land tax books with a value per acre double that of the other tracts. In 1805 his lands were grouped under an inclusive survey, in a new patent for 1,320 acres (D.B. K, p.653). In 1807 he paid taxes on two tracts, one, "the homeplace", of 1320 acres, and another of 800 acres. He continued to pay taxes on the homeplace tract and "mills" at the same location. William Howard, Jr., sold a tract of 1220 acres to John Bell in 1832, which included the land in the homeplace tract (D.B.K, p. 653). In the following year he paid taxes on property on Elliots Creek worth \$3178, \$1800 of which were for buildings. Since Claudius Crozet shows the house as "Dr. Bell's House" on a canal survey of 1827, Bell must have rented the house previous to 1832. A John Bell is buried in the adjoining cemetery (died 1833). The Feather family is associated with the house in deeds going back to the nineteenth century. Local tradition suggests interim ownership after the death of Dr. Bell by the Staples family (Morrell).

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Crozet, Claudius. "Canal Survey of Montgomery County," (map). 1827, Virginia State Library.

Howard, G. L. "Genealogy of the Howard Family." Typescript.

Howard, Grace P. "Childress History Recounted." News-Messenger (Centennial Edition). Christiansburg, Virginia: December 31, 1969.

Morrell, Gene A. "Small Stone House Teeming with History." Roanoke Times, 1979.

See continuation sheet

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 # Inventory
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

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| 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
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| 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 0 |
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at point A 2/10 s mile south of Va Rt 669, 2/10 s mile southeast of VA 679, proceeding north 30 feet, thence west 8 feet along the north wall of the privy, thence north 82.5 feet to point B, thence east 92.5 feet to point C, thence south 112.5 feet to point D, thence west 84.5 feet to the point of origin.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen to include the house, outbuilding and domestic-related space.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gibson Worsham

organization Gibson Worsham, Architect date January 1988

street & number Yellow Sulphur Springs, Route 2 telephone (703) 552-4730

city or town Christiansburg state Virginia zip code 24073

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7. Description (Continued):

entry doors. Evidence in the floor, ceiling, and walls shows that a similar partition divided the smaller room into two small rooms of equal size, and that the chimney protruded into the space to provide an angled corner fireplace in each of the small rooms. At some point in the early twentieth century or earlier, the dividing partition and the chimney breast were removed to create a larger single room, but the paired doors remain on either side of the former partition, each giving access from the large south room into the present north room. The doors are fine raised six-panel doors with pintle hinges and molded trim. The chair rail on the north wall of the north room was patched or replaced when the chimney was removed, and one of the former two mantels was installed at a newly-created firebox recessed in the north wall. The mantel has a plain shelf-and-architrave form, with a molded shelf similar to the house's other mantels, and features an inserted coal grate.

Both rooms have molded and beaded door and window trim and molded chair rails forming the window sills. The north room features 9 1/2-inch beaded baseboard and the south room has 5 1/2-inch beaded baseboard. The mantel in the south room, the house's most elaborate, is of the shelf and architrave type, and features an arched central panel above the small firebox and a dentil course below the deeply molded shelf. The firebox has an inserted late nineteenth-century grate. An enclosed winder stair, located in the southeast corner, extends to the garret above and the lower floor below. Both flights are closed by a raised six-panel door hung on HL hinges.

On the lower floor, lit only on the east wall, the angled north chimney remains, but evidence suggests that it held only one firebox. Both it and the still-open firebox at the south end, which is headed by a wooden lintel, show no traces of a mantel, and are small in size (c. 1'-6" x 3' x 10"). The lower floor is divided into two rooms, similar to the upper floor, by a beaded vertical-board partition containing a central batten door. The exposed stone walls are whitewashed and not plastered. While the ceiling in the south room has been covered with gypsum board in recent decades, the north room retains its exposed beaded and whitewashed joists. The floor is an early tongue-and-groove wood floor over sleepers. The stair from the floor above, located in the southeast corner, is enclosed but does not appear to have ever had a door at the bottom.

The garret contains two rooms similar to those on the lower floors separated by a board partition. The walls and ceiling of the south room are sheathed with wide boards. A knee wall to the east and west is also sheathed with horizontal boards. The north room, however, has been sheathed with late nineteenth-century narrow tongue-and-groove boards. A mantel in the north wall is a simple, smaller version of the shelf-and-architrave

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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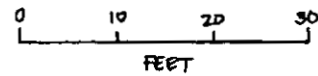
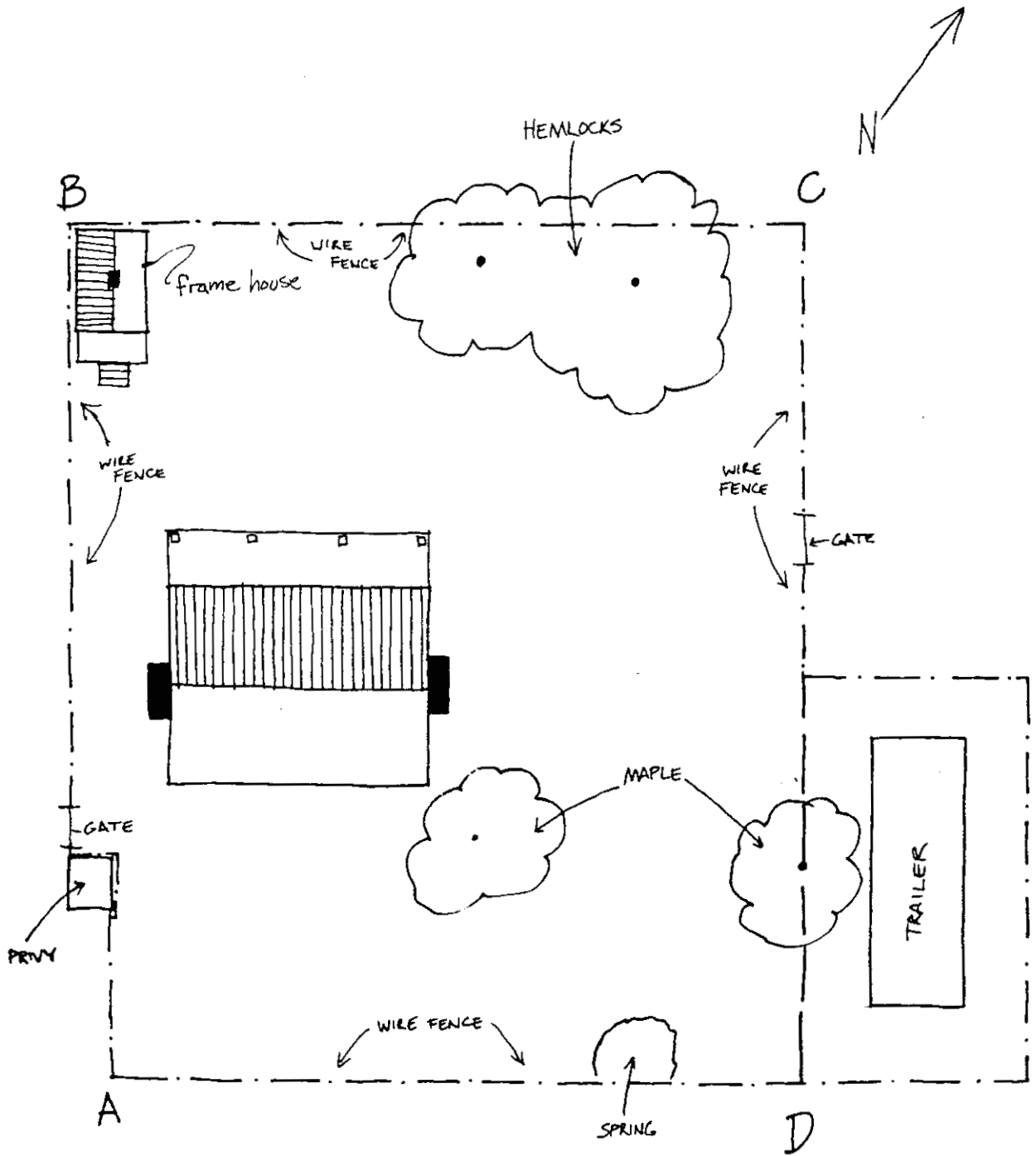
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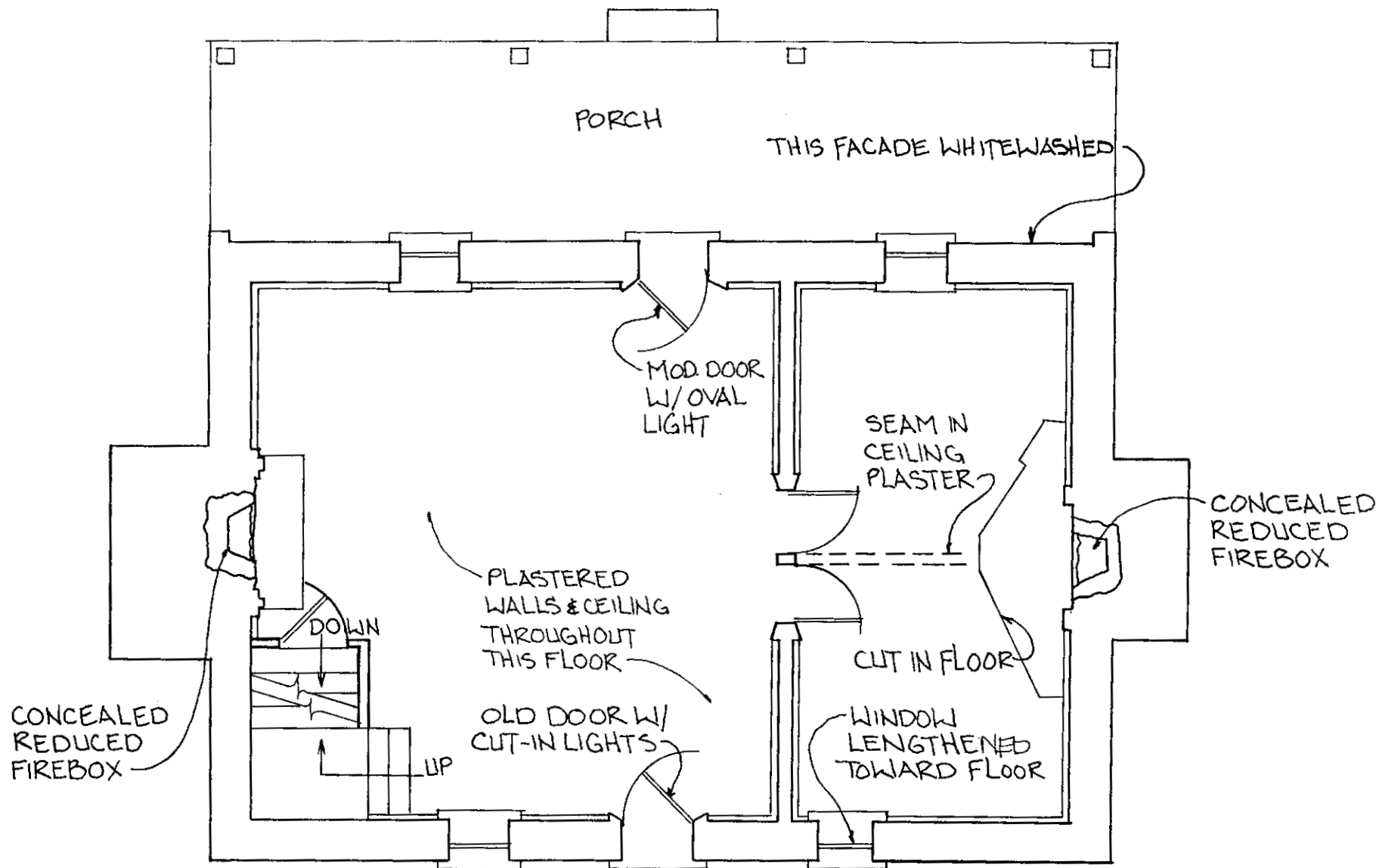
mantels on the floor below. The stair in the southeast corner is open, and is protected by a small chamfered post which rises from floor to ceiling and secures a board railing.

The immediate domestic space is surrounded and defined by a wire fence. A small frame house built early in the twentieth century is located to the immediate southwest. It features a gable-end entry, a central flue, two-over-two sash window, a pressed metal shingle roof, and a concrete stoop. The eaves feature exposed decorative rafter ends, and a circular louvered vent is located over the door in the east gable. An open spring is located to the northeast of the house, and an old roadbed can be seen to the south, both outside the boundaries. A cemetery (not included in boundaries) is located to the west on top of the nearby hill. It includes a grave of the Reverend John Bell (died 1833) and a barrel-roofed poured-concrete grave house sheltering the grave of Mary Simpkins (died 1917). It includes other graves of Simpkins and Feather family members, and several large yew trees.

60-24 HOWARD-BELL-FEATHER HOUSE

G. WORSHAM
K. MARTIN 10/87



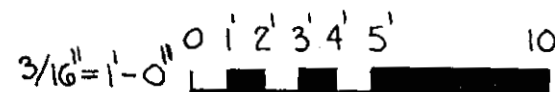


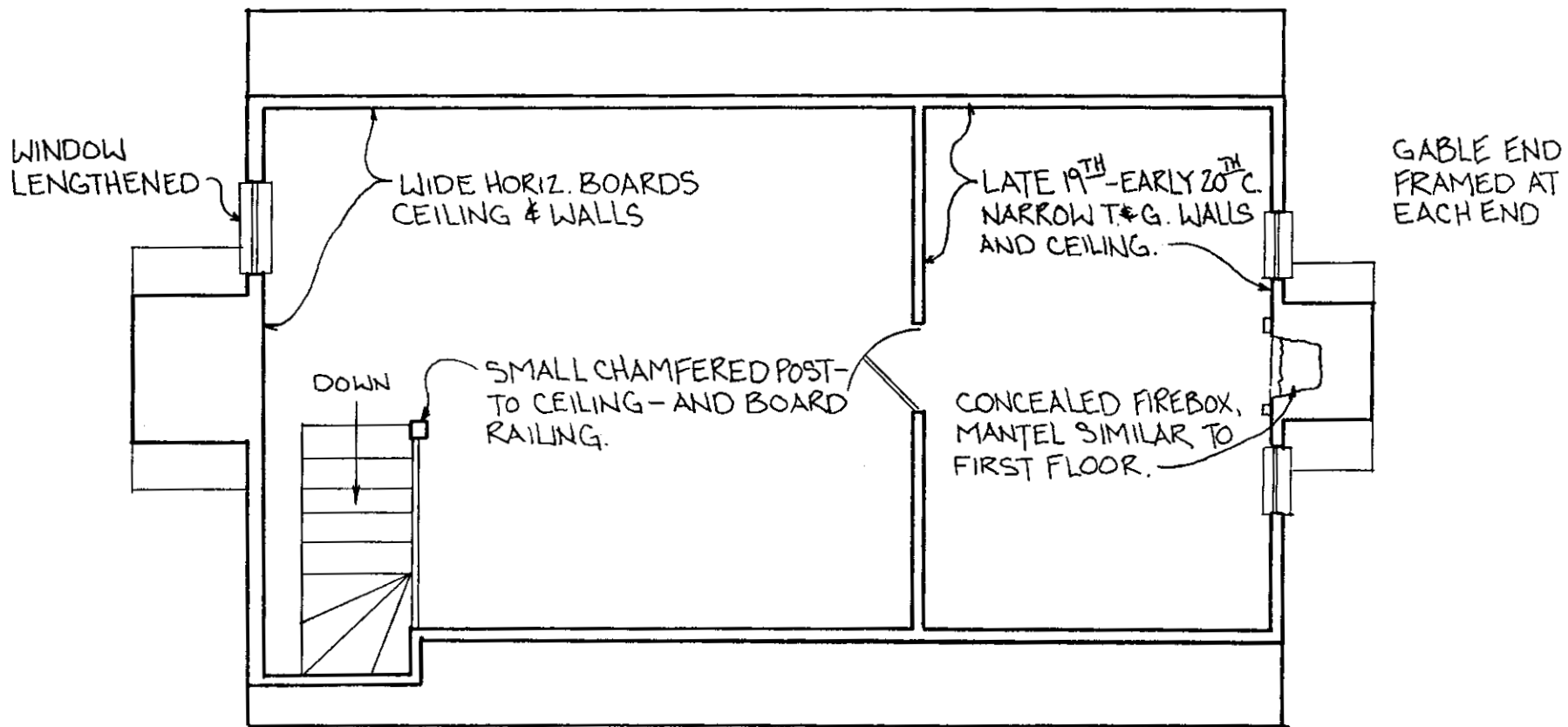
HOWARD-BELL-FEATHER HOUSE MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VA

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SURVEYED BY: G.W. JAN. 1986, DRAWN BY M.J.C.

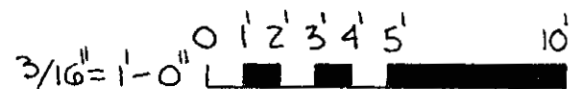
NO. 60-24

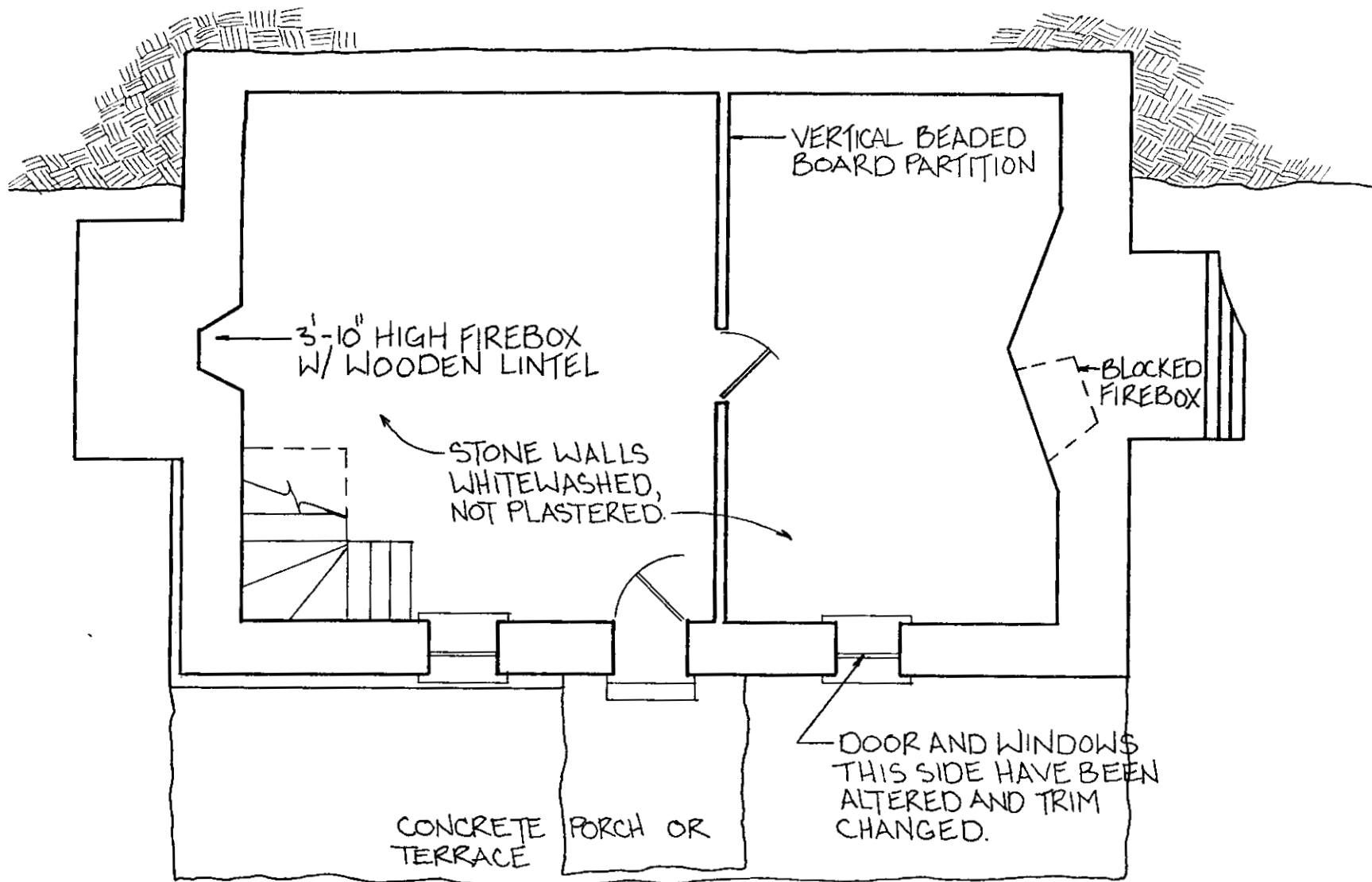




HOWARD-BELL-FEATHER HOUSE MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VA

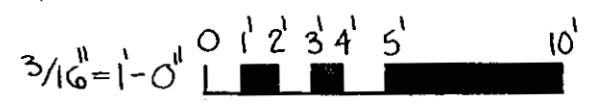
GARRET
 SURVEYED BY G.W. JAN, 1986, DRAWN BY M.D.C.
 NO. 60-24

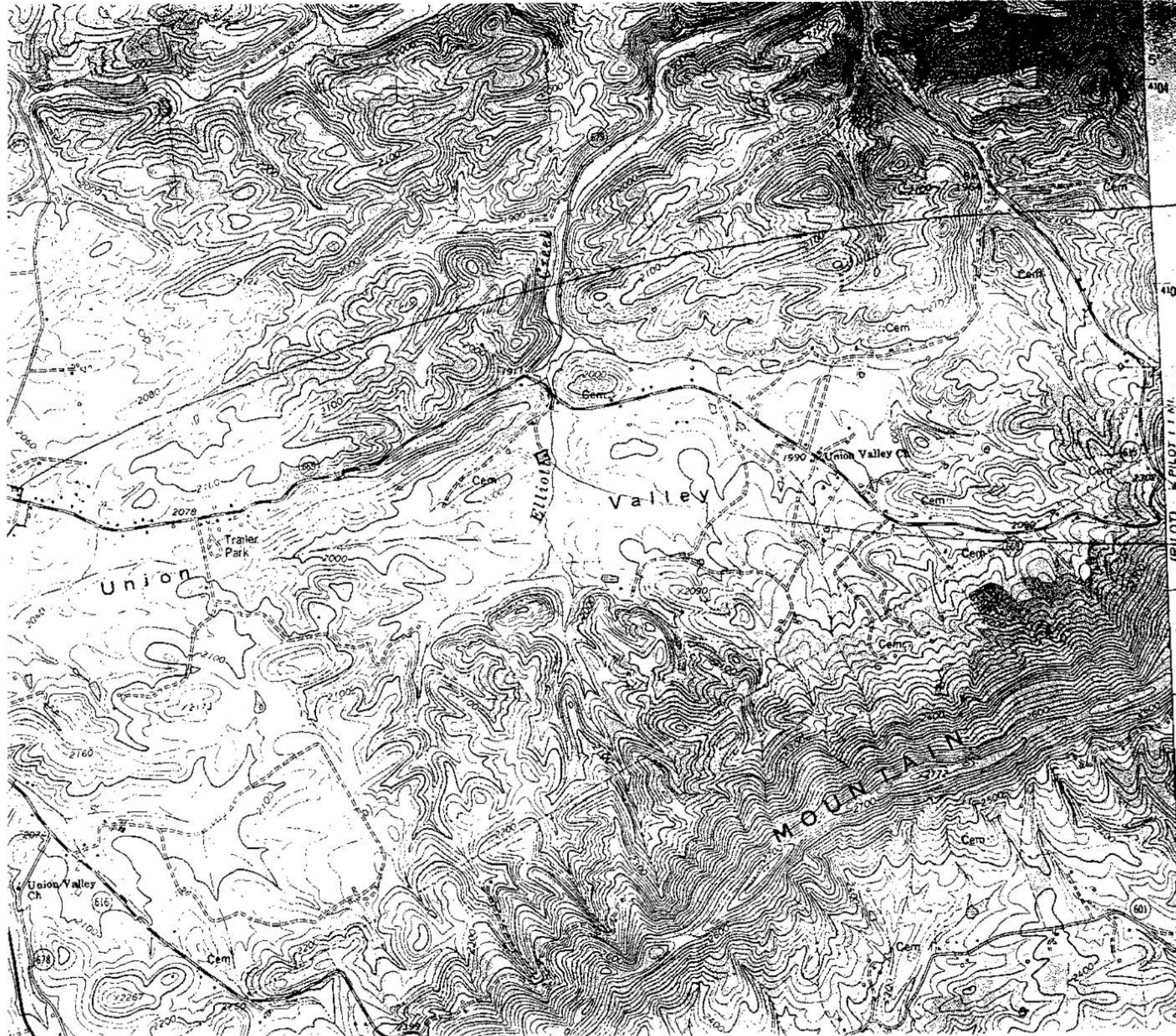




HOWARD-BELL-FEATHER HOUSE MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VA

BASEMENT PLAN
 SURVEYED BY: G.W. JAN, 1986, DRAWN BY M.J.C.
 No. 60-24





RIVER HISTORIC DISTRICT
17 5502A5 410221E
17 550100 410183E
17 550005 410214I
17 550230 410182I

PILOT 1 1 MI
PILOT 1 1 MI
4958 1/3 SE
FLOYD 1/4 MI

HOWARD-BELL-FEAT
HOUSE
17 552550 41022

RIVER
QUAD

2'30"