

VLR-4/17/90 NR+P-1/3/91

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 Miller, John W., House  
other names/site number Miller House

2. Location

street & number SE corner of intersection Routes 507 and 604  not for publication N/A  
city, town Boston  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Rappahannock code 157 zip code 22713

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>4</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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, an 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  
Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date  
19 Nov 1990

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  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural field  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural outbuilding  
FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC: secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural field  
AGRICULTURE: agricultural outbuilding  
FUNERARY: cemetery

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: I House  
LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
walls WOOD: Weatherboard  
roof METAL: Tin  
other PORCH: Limestone, Brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The John W. Miller House in Rappahannock County is located on an 18.35-acre parcel that is situated at the northeast corner of the intersection of Routes 707 and 604, east of the village of Slate Mills. It is directly across from the ruins of the Slate Mills, an industrial facility that was owned by John W. Miller during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. The Miller dwelling, built 1842-1843 in I-house form (a plan common in the region) was adorned in 1880-1881 with Italianate features, including an elaborate two-story front porch. The house was expanded during the early twentieth century when a two-story bathroom wing was constructed, adding a fourth bay to the previously-symmetrical front elevation. Sympathetically rehabilitated in 1986, the house is used as a private residence and is maintained in excellent condition. The main house, in addition to exhibiting characteristics that are typical in the region (such as the central-passage, two-story plan with interior end chimneys), asserts its prominence with its central gable, bracketed eaves, and two-story Italianate porch on a raised basement containing a polygonal second-story bay with arched French doors. The property includes four contributing buildings including the main dwelling, the kitchen/quarter (a combination separate kitchen and servants' quarters), the ice house, and the barn. The Miller cemetery is a contributing site. Two noncontributing buildings are present: a pump house and a shed.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The John W. Miller House stands on an elevated site at the foot of Grindstone Mountain, on the east side of the Hazel River in Rappahannock County. On a hill west of the Miller House is the village of Slate Mills, a tiny one-street community that grew up around the industrial complex known as the Slate Mills. Several hundred feet from the front elevation of the Miller House (but not within the current limits of its property boundaries) is a stone ruin that was part of the Slate Mills complex, which was owned by John W. Miller.



**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 N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1840-1925  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1842-1843  
1880-1881  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Located on a rolling 18.35-acre tract of land in the southernmost tip of Rappahannock County, the John W. Miller House is significant as a regional form of architecture, the I house, embellished with later Italianate ornamentation that surpasses in prominence many of its Rappahannock neighbors. Constructed by an unknown builder in 1842-1843, approximately seven years after the 115 3/4-acre parcel was acquired by John W. Miller, the house was adorned with its Italianate features in 1880-1881. The property's period of significance commences in 1840, when Miller first erected buildings on the property, and extends through 1925, approximately when the last outbuilding was constructed. Significant dates for the house include 1842-1843, its earliest phase of construction, and 1880-1881, when it was improved. The house also is significant to local history through its direct association with the Slate Mills, a nearby industrial facility that was owned by John W. Miller from 1844 to 1871. The milling operations that were carried out at the Slate Mills (which included merchant, country, saw, and plaster mills) are exceptionally well documented as are the agricultural traditions of the farm upon which the John W. Miller House stands.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The John W. Miller House, in Rappahannock County, Virginia, is located on acreage that lies on the east side of the Hazel River near the site of Slate Mills, an industrial complex that was in operation by 1814 and consisted of merchant, country and saw mills.<sup>1</sup> By the mid-1830s a small community (which consisted of four dwellings, a general store, a blacksmith's shop, cooper's shop, a wheelwright's establishment, and a post office) had grown up around the Slate Mills, a focal point of local activity. In

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The nominated acreage consists of mowed fields, woods, and gardens of roses, herbs, and grapes. A creek crosses the eastern edge of the parcel. The Miller family cemetery occupies a hilltop northeast of the main house. The main house and its outbuildings are snuggled into the southwestern corner of the site where Routes 707 and 604 intersect. Visible traces of an old road reveal that Route 707's forerunner crossed the Hazel River at a site downstream from its present right-of-way. Route 707's right-of-way probably was shifted in 1922 when a one-lane bridge was constructed to replace a crossing that traversed the Slate Mills dam.<sup>1</sup>

The main house is sited prominently on a hillside facing southwest across Route 707. The two-story, single-pile, central-passage form with gable roof is characteristic of the I house, a style typical in the region. Its original three-bay symmetrical form with interior end chimneys probably was constructed in 1842-1843 when the property's tax assessment for buildings rose dramatically, from \$100 to \$1000. A catastrophe of unknown cause befell the property in 1855-1856, at which time the value of the buildings dropped from \$1000 to \$500.<sup>2</sup> A two-story bay that contains bathrooms and creates the dwelling's current asymmetrical form probably was added during the early twentieth century. Because of this addition, the chimney on the right side of the front elevation is no longer an end chimney.

Dominating the front or southwest elevation is an impressive two-story Italianate porch on a raised brick basement. This porch and the dwelling's other Italianate features presumably were added in 1880-1881 when the property's tax assessment for buildings increased from \$500 to \$1000.<sup>3</sup> The Italianate influence, a stylistic mode that has been identified nationally as early as 1837 and as late as the 1880s, may have been applied to the main house when improvements were made during 1880-1881, by which time the Miller family was recovering from the economic hardships it had experienced as a result of the Civil War.<sup>4</sup> The Millers may have been inspired in the postwar period by pattern books or by examples of Italianate and Italian Villa houses in the region such as Elmwood in Culpeper County (which has a similar sawn balustrade), the Hill Mansion and A. P. Hill Boyhood Home (both in the county seat of Culpeper), and Brentmoor in Fauquier County, the home of Colonel John Singleton Mosby from 1875-1877.<sup>5</sup> (Oscar Decatur Miller, John W. Miller's son, had been a member of Mosby's Rangers. He owned the house at the time of its Italianate

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improvements, and he may have been following the stylish lead of his distinguished former leader.<sup>6</sup> )

The richness of the house's Italianate decoration, characteristic of picturesque qualities popular during the period, differs from the bold simplicity of earlier Greek Revival or later Victorian porches of its Rappahannock neighbors. The first floor of the porch, which is located over an enclosed basement room, is reached by a run of twelve steps that have a plain balustrade. Chamfered posts are topped by decorative paired brackets below a bracketed cornice. The sawn balustrade (with inverted hearts under tulips) adds a Victorian flavor. Topping this porch is the second-floor porch with a polygonal pyramidal-roofed bay and a shorter sawn balustrade. Adding attention to the second floor porch is a central front gable projecting from the house's main standing-seam metal roof. The two front windows on the second-floor porch are actually French doors with fully-arched heads.

Other features of the exterior of the house include a deep bracketed cornice (with alternating short-and-long tear-drop brackets similar to bracket #433 in Asher Benjamin's sixth work, The Builder's Guide), six-over-six sash, 4" weatherboard siding, and modern nailed shutters. The brick basement and chimneys are executed in five-course American bond; the two chimneys have corbelled caps.

An Italianate one-story porch on the rear or northeast elevation exhibits more modest ornamentation than that on the front elevation. The hipped-roof one-story porch on brick piers has a sawn balustrade, bracketed posts, and bracketed cornice and is reached by a short run of steps. Added to the left of the three-bay rear facade is a nineteenth-century porch addition that the dwelling's current owners recently have enclosed as a closet.

The two-story bathroom wing on the right side of the house (or southeast elevation) takes up less than the full depth of the house, thus explaining the absence of one bay on the rear elevation. The southeast elevation also contains a basement entry that was excavated further by the current owners to achieve additional headroom. The left or northwest elevation is distinguished only by the painted brickwork of the chimney and the bracketed cornice.

The interior of the house is characterized by Italianate and vernacular features. Architectural features of the interior

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include a plan of two rooms per floor (one on each side of the central passage), 5"-wide pine plank floors, beaded baseboard, plaster walls and ceilings, paneled doors with plain architrave surrounds, and five fireplaces (two on each of the main floors and one in the basement). The basement has been divided into five rooms. All crown molding and the chair rail on the first floor are contemporary.

The central passage is entered through front or rear four-panel doors, with sidelights of two panes of glass over a paneled base. The front door gives a more formal appearance with its four-light transom. The Italianate open-string stair dominates the central passage, rising along the southeast wall. The stair divides at the rear wall with its rail wrapping around the open well in a graceful curve to the left. Rising behind a stocky newel (similar to #572 in O'Steven's Illustrated Price list from Waite's, Architectural Elements: The Technological Revolution) are the turned balusters, grooved with three rings near their top and bottom, and placed two to a tread. L-shaped stair brackets with cavetto curve on the open end brace each tread and riser. The wall supporting the stair is paneled with descending trapezoids on top of five smaller squares and a triangle. That wall then curves to complement the curve of the balustrade directly above it. The stairhall also has a plain, beaded baseboard and modern chair rail.

The hierarchy of rooms is indicated both in door decoration and room size. The parlor, located to the left of the passage, is entered through a four-panel door, which, like the door to the bedroom above it, is six inches wider than the doors on the right side of the house. In addition, the panels on the doors left of the passage are recessed, whereas the doors on the right of the passage have raised panels. The rooms on the left side of the passage are larger than those on the right by fifteen to seventeen square feet. The parlor mantel is the most elaborate of the house's five mantels. Plain pilasters on plinths support the frieze which is pierced below by a Gothic arch around the fireplace opening and above by a shaped keystone. A scalloped mantel shelf tops the frieze. Modern brick hearths are located on this and the other four fireplaces in the house. The parlor also contains contemporary crown molding and original beaded baseboard.

The dining room is located to the right of the central passage. A four-panel door leads into this room. The fireplace mantel

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contains a plain frieze which is supported by plain pilasters on plinths. A door is located on either side of the fireplace. The raised-panel door to the right of the fireplace, flush with the fireplace wall, leads into the bathroom. The heavier door to the left, with recessed panels like those of the parlor door, is flush with the rear wall. This door differs from the style of other doors on the right side of the house because it was originally an exterior door, leading to a porch that was recently converted into a walk-in closet. The room also contains modern crown molding and original beaded baseboard.

Upstairs, at the top of the stair landing, one must turn left or right, then ascend three steps to respective bedrooms. Both bedrooms contain fireplaces matching that of the dining room. The bedroom to the right, like the dining room directly below, contains a four-panel door on either side of the fireplace, in this case leading to an 18"-deep closet and a bathroom. An 18"-deep closet flanks each side of the fireplace in the left or northwest bedroom. Beaded baseboard is the only wall trim in the upstairs bedrooms and hall. Beyond the door to the left bedroom lies the Italianate sunporch. The heavily-molded surrounds of the arched doors accentuate their elliptical shape. A one-over-one double-hung sash fills each of the other two walls of the porch. The fourth side, or entry to the room, contains a paneled door.

The basement of the house is reached from the rear of the first-floor passage by an enclosed stair with pine rail and plain square newel. The stair wall is clad with flush, beaded, vertical-panel walls in random widths. The basement has been renovated as kitchen, den, laundry room, pantry, and flower room. The den contains a mantel salvaged from another house in the county. Pilasters on this mantel extend all the way to the shelf. Modern bookshelves are located on either side of the den fireplace. An old five-panel door leads to the pantry. The room under the front porch, used for flower drying and arranging, contains six six-over-six windows on the three exterior walls. The walls of this room are constructed of coursed rubble up to the bottom of the window sills and topped with brick.

A 1930s WPA photograph (Figure 1) of the house shows few differences from the dwelling's appearance today. The Italianate porch looks exactly the same except that the arched French doors on its second level have two-over-two glazing instead of the current single-pane glazing. No shutters are on the house in the photo. The house appears to have been painted a color and trimmed

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in white. A picket fence with variegated picket lengths and center-open gate is sited in the immediate front yard.

Contributing outbuildings on the property include a kitchen/quarter, an ice house, and a barn. Noncontributing outbuildings include a modern pump house and an undistinguished shed.

The kitchen/quarter is situated at the east corner of the house. The two-story building is of frame construction, clad in vertical boards. During a recent renovation, the kitchen/quarter was altered from its original gable-roof form with one-story shed addition to a two-story form overall. The roof and framing of the one-story shed were raised almost high enough to meet the line of the two-story gable. On the interior, the first floor contains a storage room (formally the shed addition) and large room with a remodeled fireplace. The original, but deteriorated, pine floors have been covered with tongue-and-groove oak flooring. The ceiling joists are exposed. The enclosed straight-run stair has been restored. Its wall contains a vertical plank door for the closet and a vertical plank door to close off the stair. On the second floor, one enters a single large room with a separate bath that was created when the roof was raised. Two vertical plank doors (one for a closet and one to close off the stair) are located on the second-floor stair wall. Original random-width pine floors remain on this level. The kitchen/quarter probably dates to 1840, the year that John W. Miller constructed \$100 worth of buildings on his property, its earliest dated taxable improvements.

The ice house, which is located behind the main house and near its north corner, is in original but deteriorating condition. The structure, like the kitchen/quarter, probably dates to 1840. Entry into the little stone building with its gabled standing-seam metal roof, is through an added enclosed entry, across a central platform to the rear cold storage room. The central platform is flanked by a drop of approximately fifteen feet on either side to water below.

The barn is located on the property line next to Route 604. It is constructed of heavy timber and clad in vertical wood siding. In the southeast gable end, a central double door is flanked by two windows. A small entry door is located on either side of the double doors. The gable end also has a deeply-overhanging roof on one end for protection from the elements. Inside, stables line



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either side of a wide central room. The barn, which probably dates to about 1925, is most likely the one that was mentioned in Cora Miller Green's 1927 estate inventory.<sup>7</sup>

The Miller family cemetery, identified by grave stones that are surrounded by a wrought-iron fence, is located on a hill east of the house. The earliest dated interment in the cemetery, a contributing site that contains the graves of nineteen members of the Miller family and their kin, is 1880. The cemetery tangibly demonstrates the Miller family's strong attachment to the farm upon which John W. Miller and his wife, Mary, resided.

A 1986 rehabilitation of the house executed repairs that were necessary after years of neglect and a fire in the dining room. Original windows were rebuilt on aluminum sliders. Sheetrock replaced plaster in the dining room. Some, but not all, sawn work on the porch was replaced. Porch decks and the standing-seam metal roof were replaced. New plumbing, electricity, and HVAC systems were added. Windows were replaced in the kitchen/quarter and a shed addition was torn off the barn. Regretably, grained woodwork on the left side of the central passage was painted.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, the John W. Miller House is architecturally significant because of the unusually elaborate addition of Italianate features to a house that originally fit into the local building tradition--an I house. The house rises above interpretation solely as a Rappahannock farm dwelling because of the sophistication of its Italianate ornamentation. The kitchen/quarter and ice house are architecturally significant as predecessors to the main house, and most likely were constructed at a time when money was available to meet only the most basic of needs. The barn contributes to the overall setting as part of the twentieth-century use of the farm. The cemetery is architecturally significant for its intact perimeter fence and graves. The pump house (of modern construction) and the shed (which is undistinguished and of unknown date) are considered noncontributing buildings. The combination of buildings and the associated cemetery, when considered in conjunction with the extensive archival records that are available for the property, provide a microcosm of life in rural Rappahannock County.

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ENDNOTES

1. College of William and Mary, A Phase II Architectural Evaluation of the Slate Mills Complex, Route 707, Rappahannock County, Virginia, Project: 0707-078-139-C503, p.49.
2. Rappahannock County Land Tax Lists 1842-1856.
3. Rappahannock County Land Tax Lists 1880-1881.
4. Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture, Volume 1, 1607-1860, p. 186.
5. Calder Loth, ed., The Virginia Landmarks Register, pgs. 112, 113, 145.
6. National Archives, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers from Virginia, microfilm 207,208,209,M324,1075.
7. Rappahannock County Will Book I:89.
8. Betty Jean Franklin, Personal Communication.

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JOHN V. MILLER HOUSE,  
RAPIDANNOCK COUNTY

(CONT.)

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1833, John W. Miller, a Madison County native and the grandson of Henry Miller, one of that area's more prominent settlers, married and moved to Rappahannock County. That same year, he and William F. Nicol purchased from Daniel Snyder, owner of the Slate Mills, an aggregate of 115 3/4 acres (65 3/4 acres of undeveloped land and 50 acres that had \$500 in taxable improvements). The property Miller and Nicol bought contained a sawmill and a log yard and under their purchase agreement they were entitled to draw water power from Slate Mills' dam, as long as their usage did not interfere with its milling operations. In 1836 John W. Miller bought out the interest of his partner and became the sole proprietor of the 115 3/4 acres opposite Slate Mills. That same year, the county tax assessor described the tract (the only land that Miller then owned) as devoid of buildings, an indication that the sawmill and other structures that formerly were present had been destroyed or removed, or were worth so little they were not taxed. Daniel Snyder, the Slate Mills' owner since 1828, died in 1835, and for the next two years the mill complex was attributed to his estate. In 1838 it came into the hands of a new owner, Philip S. Menefie, who retained the property for the next few years.<sup>2</sup>

In 1840 John W. Miller erected a building worth \$100 on his 115 3/4 acres. Contemporary census records reveal that Miller's household then consisted of his wife and himself, their daughters Melissa, Amanda Mary, and Kate D. (who were under age five), a white male aged fifteen to twenty, and seven slaves, three of whom were adults. Three members of the Miller household were described as being engaged in agriculture and two were involved in commerce. The family's livestock consisted of two horses, asses, or mules.<sup>3</sup>

During the next two years the number of slaves and quantity of livestock that John W. Miller owned gradually increased, suggesting that he had become established and was beginning to prosper. Between the time of the tax assessor's visits in 1842 and 1843 the value of the buildings on John W. Miller's 115 3/4 acres increased from \$100 to \$1,000, an indication that he had made major improvements to his property. During that same interval Miller also purchased a 100-acre tract that was located nearby, land that had a building or buildings worth \$150. The value of the improvements on John W. Miller's two parcels remained constant through 1855.<sup>4</sup>

In 1844 the assessor credited John W. Miller with two taxable

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luxury items: a watch and a clock. That same year he purchased the Slate Mills complex, along with the two-acre lot upon which it stood, from the executors of Philip S. Menefie, from whom he also bought a 20-acre tract of mountain land. In addition, Miller acquired 1.96 acres of land at Slate Mills from Leroy Kilby. Five years later Miller added to his landholdings in the immediate vicinity of Slate Mills by purchasing 175 1/2 acres of undeveloped land.<sup>5</sup>

During the mid- to late 1840s the size of John W. and Mary Miller's family increased significantly with the birth of two more daughters (Gertrude and Cora) and a son (Oscar D.). In 1850 they produced another daughter, Fannie Florence Miller. When a census-taker visited the household during 1850, John W. Miller was described as a forty-one-year-old farmer who owned \$9,750 worth of real estate. Listed with him were his wife Mary (age forty-one), daughters Melissa (age fourteen), Amanda Mary (age twelve), Gertrude (age eight), and Cora (age six), and a son, John O. (age four). Omitted by the census-taker were two of the Millers' sons, Oscar D. (age two) and James N. (age ten). John W. Miller in 1850 owned eight slaves who were over age sixteen and one who was over age twelve but under sixteen. The Miller family's nearest neighbor was the household of John F. Bowlen (Bolen), a forty-two-year-old miller who owned no real estate. Bowlen's family (which lacked an adult female) included three teenage children and John W., his two year old son. The propinquity of the Bowlen and Miller dwellings, when viewed in light of Bowlen's occupation and lack of personally-owned real estate, raises the possibility that he was then employed by John W. Miller to operate the Slate Mills.<sup>6</sup>

Agricultural census records for 1850 reveal that John W. Miller had under cultivation approximately 60 percent of the land he owned (including his home tract) and that the fair market value of his farm was \$5,750. His livestock included 8 horses, 6 milk cows, 4 working oxen, 20 other cattle, 41 sheep, and 95 swine. During 1849 he raised 604 bushels of wheat, 350 bushels of corn, 40 bushels of oats, 52 lbs. of Irish and sweet potatoes, and 20 bushels of peas and beans. His land also had produced 3 tons of hay, 20 lbs. of flax, and 2 bushels of flax seed, and his household had sold \$149 worth of undescribed home manufactures. Miller's sheep had yielded 100 lbs. of wool and his dairy cattle produced 300 lbs. of butter. Thus, his farm appears to have been relatively self-sufficient.<sup>7</sup>

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In 1855 the tax assessor noted that John W. Miller had purchased a vacant lot in Sperryville and that the buildings on his home farm at Slate Mills were worth \$1,000, the value they had been assigned since 1843. Prior to the assessor's visit in 1856 a significant change occurred in the value of the buildings on the Millers' home farm, for they declined in worth to only \$500. Tax records fail to account for the reduction in the buildings' value by attributing it to their deterioration, destruction, or demolition. The value of John W. Miller's buildings remained constant, at \$500, through 1876, after which time they fell to only \$400. Tax assessment rolls indicate that Miller, during the years he owned the Slate Mills complex, added no new taxable improvements to it; he also failed to develop his lot in Sperryville. He was an active member of the newly formed Slate Mills Baptist Church, in which he served as clerk.<sup>8</sup>

In 1860 the Miller household consisted of John W. Miller and his wife, Mary, plus their seven children: five daughters and two sons, who ranged in age from eleven to twenty-four. Miller listed his occupation as farming. The fair market value of the Millers' real estate was \$13,000 and their personal estate was worth \$27,700, values which (according to contemporary tax records) indicate that the Millers were considerably more prosperous than many of their neighbors. Personal property tax rolls credit John W. Miller with seven slaves who were over age sixteen and nine who were over age twelve, plus sizeable herds of livestock. He was also in possession of a clock, a piano or harp, \$15 worth of gold or silver plate, a pleasure carriage, and \$200 worth of household furnishings. Miller, who in 1860 was fifty-one-years-old, was physically infirm, on which basis he was exempt from paying his poll or capitation tax.<sup>9</sup>

Agricultural census records for 1860 indicate that John W. Miller's landholdings had increased in size and that approximately 45 percent of his acreage had been under cultivation during 1859. His livestock, which was worth \$1,660, consisted of 16 horses, 2 working oxen, 15 milk cows, 24 other cattle, 55 sheep, and 60 swine. During 1859 his acreage had produced 300 bushels of wheat, 200 bushels of rye, 1,580 bushels of Indian corn, 50 bushels of oats, 2,800 lbs. of tobacco, 5 bushels of peas and beans, 100 bushels of Irish and sweet potatoes, 25 tons of hay, and 9 bushels of clover seed. His dairy cattle had produced 500 lbs. of butter. An apiary on the farm had produced 72 lbs. of honey and 3 lbs. of beeswax. Several gallons of molasses also had been produced during the previous year. Miller reported that he and his family

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had sold \$100 worth of homemade manufactures, perhaps part of the butter and honey that had been produced. The most noticeable changes that had occurred in the pattern of Miller's agricultural activities were his cultivation of large quantities of tobacco and four-and-a-half times as much corn as he had grown in 1850.<sup>10</sup>

In 1860 William A. Bolen, a miller, was the John W. Miller family's nearest neighbor; he may have been employed in the operation of the Slate Mills, having taken over from John F. Bowlen who had been there in 1850.<sup>11</sup> Industrial statistics for 1860 reveal much about the scope of John W. Miller's milling operations at Slate Mills, which were said to consist of a water-powered merchant mill and a plaster mill. Miller reportedly had \$3,500 in real and personal capital invested in his merchant mill, which during 1859 had processed 3,000 bushels of wheat (worth \$3,000) and 3,000 bushels of corn and rye (worth \$2,365). Therefore, only a tenth of the wheat that Miller's merchant mill had processed during 1859 had been grown on his own farm, whereas he had produced approximately 59 percent of the rye and corn that had been ground. John W. Miller had employed in his mill one adult male whom he paid wages of \$18 a month. The 666 barrels of flour that during 1859 had been produced from the 3,000 bushels of wheat that were on hand at Slate Mills were worth \$3,360, whereas the corn and rye that had been processed there had an estimated worth of \$2,365. Thus, John W. Miller's profits from the merchant mill in 1859 equalled \$509 after he had paid the miller in his employ. Miller had invested \$500 in capital in his plaster mill at Slate Mills. During 1859 it had produced 60 tons of ground plaster from 70 tons of raw material, yielding a profit of \$90. Miller employed a hired hand who was paid \$10 a month. Thus, his plaster mill (if in operation for twelve months out of the year) appears to have been unprofitable. In 1860 there were seven merchant mills in Rappahannock County and six plaster mills. The amount of capital that John W. Miller had invested in his merchant mill made it the second most valuable processing facility of its type in the county.<sup>12</sup>

During the early 1860s John W. Miller's financial position appears to have been stable. It is likely, however, that the emancipation of his sixteen slaves (whose estimated worth in 1863 was \$11,000) was a severe blow to his financial resources. In November 1864 his son, Oscar D., who was then only sixteen years old, enlisted in the Confederate Army, becoming a private in Company E of Mosby's Rangers. An older son, James N., who was eight years his brother's senior, was a private in Company D. The departure of

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Miller's sons from the family farm most likely presented him with a considerable hardship, especially if he himself were physically infirm. In 1869 he was obliged to mortgage the Slate Mills.<sup>13</sup>

John W. Miller's plight at the end of the Civil War is revealed by various official records that were compiled during 1870. A sixty-one-year-old farmer, Miller and his wife and their three daughters and a son were living on the family farm. Oscar D. Miller, who was age twenty-two, was described as a farm laborer. Although the Millers' investment in real estate was still intact (despite the fact that the Slate Mills complex was mortgaged), they had no livestock and their taxable household furnishings were worth only \$30. In 1871 the county tax assessor noted that the Slate Mills had been sold to John W. Taylor and Silas Mazingo in 1869 but had not been deeded to them. The mill property was still credited to John W. Miller, an indication that the two purchasers were then in the process of paying him for it, but Taylor himself was operating the mills. During the 1870s John W. Miller continued to be credited with the properties that had been in his possession earlier on, despite the fact that they had been posted as collateral in order to secure a debt to creditors in another part of the state. The tax assessor still attributed the Slate Mills tract and its improvements to Miller, even though they were being bought by John W. Taylor and his partner, who were operating the mill. In 1878 when John W. Miller's creditors sought to have his property sold, his son, Oscar D. Miller purchased the 44-acre home farm and 131 acres of contiguous land.<sup>14</sup>

Mrs. Mary B. Miller died in 1880 and John W. Miller, who was then age seventy-one, transferred to his son, Oscar D. Miller, virtually all of his livestock, farming implements, household furnishings and his pleasure carriage. The tax assessor continued to credit the elder Miller with his real estate, despite the fact that technically it was owned by his son. In 1880 approximately 59 percent of the Miller farm's acreage was under cultivation. Although the size of the family's livestock herd was considerably smaller than it had been during previous years, wheat, corn, oats and potatoes were still being raised. The Millers' three-acre apple orchard, which consisted of 40 trees, had produced 85 bushels of fruit, some of which had been sold. Farm hands had been hired for 12 weeks during 1879. Across the Hazel River, John W. Taylor was operating the Slate Mills, described as a flour and grist mill. During 1879 2,200 barrels of wheat flour, 50,000 lbs. of corn meal, and 1,320 lbs. of livestock feed had been processed at the mill. The value of the products produced at the Slate



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Mills was \$13,000. It is likely that John W. Miller was still reaping profits from the milling operations, for he had not totally relinquished ownership of the property.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1880 and 1881 the value of the buildings on John W. Miller's home farm rose from \$500 to \$1,000. In 1884, his unmarried daughter, Cora A. Miller, acquired the legal title to the property, procuring it from her brother, Oscar D. Miller. Commencing in 1885 the tax assessor continued to credit her with the home tract and the land that lay adjacent, noting that the property formerly had belonged to John W. Miller. The Miller farm's improvements were valued at \$1,000 through the mid-1890s, by 1899 declining to only \$660. During 1899 Cora A. Miller married W. N. Green. The couple may have made modest improvements to the house, for by 1900 its assessed value had risen to \$790. It sustained that figure through 1912. John W. Miller died at his home in Slate Mills in 1905, at age ninety-six.<sup>16</sup>

In 1921 when Mrs. Cora A. Miller Green died, she left to her unmarried sister, Fannie F. Miller, life rights to their parents' home farm and personal property. In 1927, when Miss Miller died, Mrs. Green's executor settled her estate, inventorying her real and personal property. Her inventory made reference to the house, outbuildings, and barn that were located at the home farm, as well as other parcels of land she had owned. Mary Virginia (Jenny) Miller purchased the home farm from Mrs. Green's executor in May 1927; she sold it to Francis O. Somerville in 1956. When Somerville conveyed the property to James L. Jones in 1963, he had it surveyed. Two years later, Jones, an absentee owner, subdivided the tract, selling 18.84 acres that contained John W. Miller's domestic complex to James J. Galloway and his wife. They, in turn, deeded it to Robert K. Dittler in 1971. He retained the property for only two months, selling it to Lois Waldron. In February 1986 she sold the property to Thomas E. Franklin and his wife who in November of that year conveyed it to Philip S. Milton and his wife, Barbara R., the dwelling's current owners.<sup>17</sup> Nineteen members of the Miller family and their kin have been interred in the small cemetery that is located on the property.

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1. A merchant miller purchased wheat and corn, processed it and then sold it, sometimes for export. The operator of a so-called country mill ground the corn and grain brought to him by local residents, charging them a toll or fee for his services. Saw mills converted raw timber into lumber.
2. Rappahannock County Deed Book A:86,240; Land Tax Lists 1833-1838; Elizabeth B. Johnson and C. E. Johnson, Rappahannock County, A History, 201; Mrs. Katherine Knuepfer, personal communication.
3. Rappahannock County Land Tax Lists 1840; Census 1840; Personal Property Tax List 1840.
4. Rappahannock County Personal Property Tax Lists 1841-1844; Land Tax Lists 1841-1855; Deed Book D:313.
5. Rappahannock County Personal Property Tax Lists 1844; Land Tax Lists 1844-1849; Deed Book E:236;F:86,371;H:62.
6. Rappahannock County Census 1850.
7. Rappahannock County Agricultural Census 1850.
8. Rappahannock County Land Tax Lists 1855-1876; Johnson and Johnson, Rappahannock County, 168.
9. Rappahannock County Census 1860; Personal Property Tax Lists 1860.
10. Rappahannock County Agricultural Census 1860.
11. William A. Bolen and John F. Bowlen may have been kinsmen.
12. Rappahannock County Census 1860; Industrial Statistics 1860.
13. Rappahannock County Personal Property Tax 1860-1863; Land Tax Lists 1869; John Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, 1896:491.
14. Rappahannock County Census 1870; Land Tax Lists 1870-1879; Personal Property Tax Lists 1870; Deed Book M:391;Q:295.
15. Rappahannock County Personal Property Tax Lists 1880; Land Tax Lists 1880; Agricultural Census 1880; Industrial Statistics

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1880.

16. Rappahannock County Will Book H:400; Land Tax Lists 1880-1912; Deed Book Q:295;S:340.

17. Rappahannock County Will Book H:400;I:89,118-121;J:107;Deed Book 34:193;66:334;79:215-223;83:439;99:267,633;155:653;160:372.

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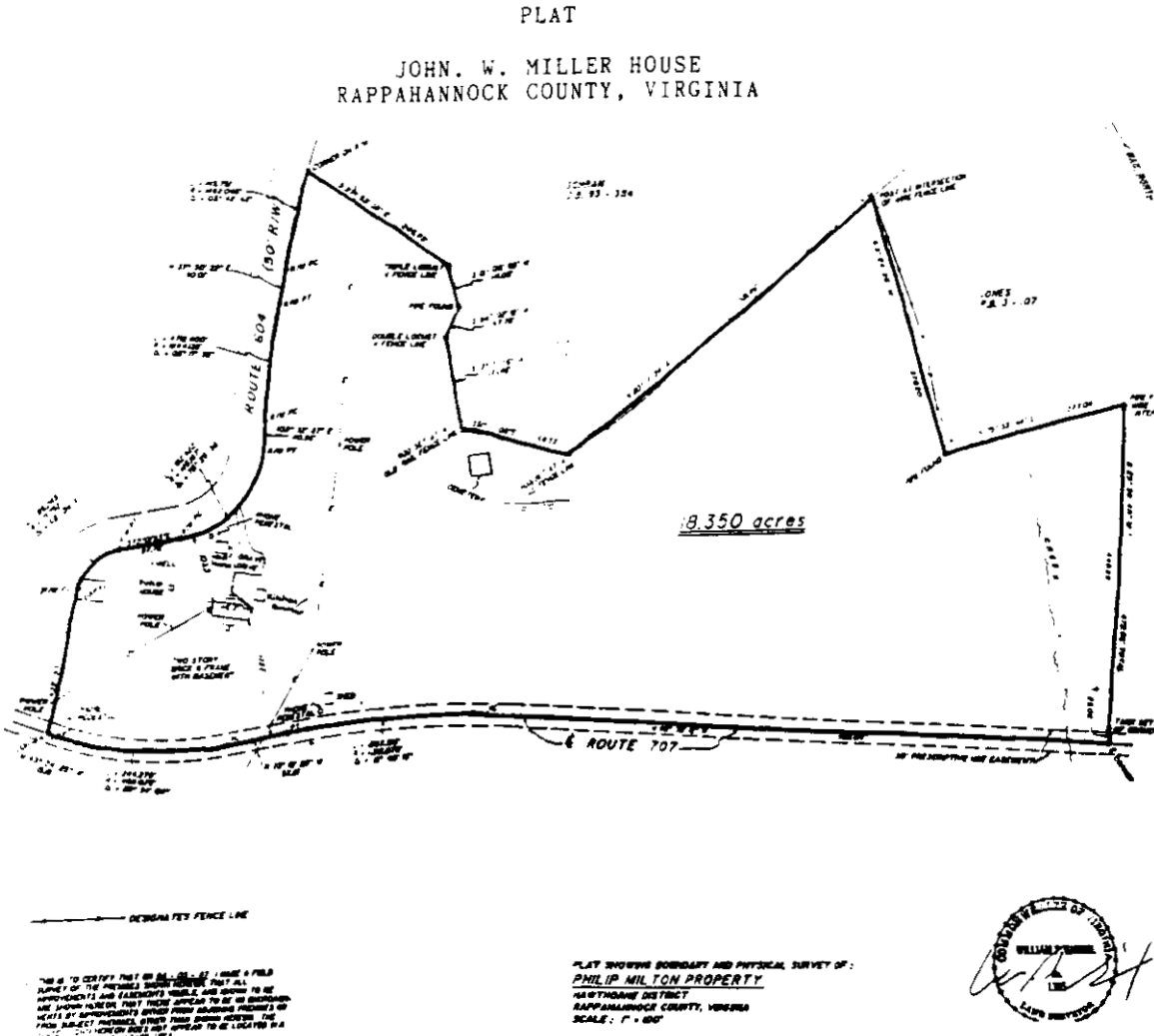
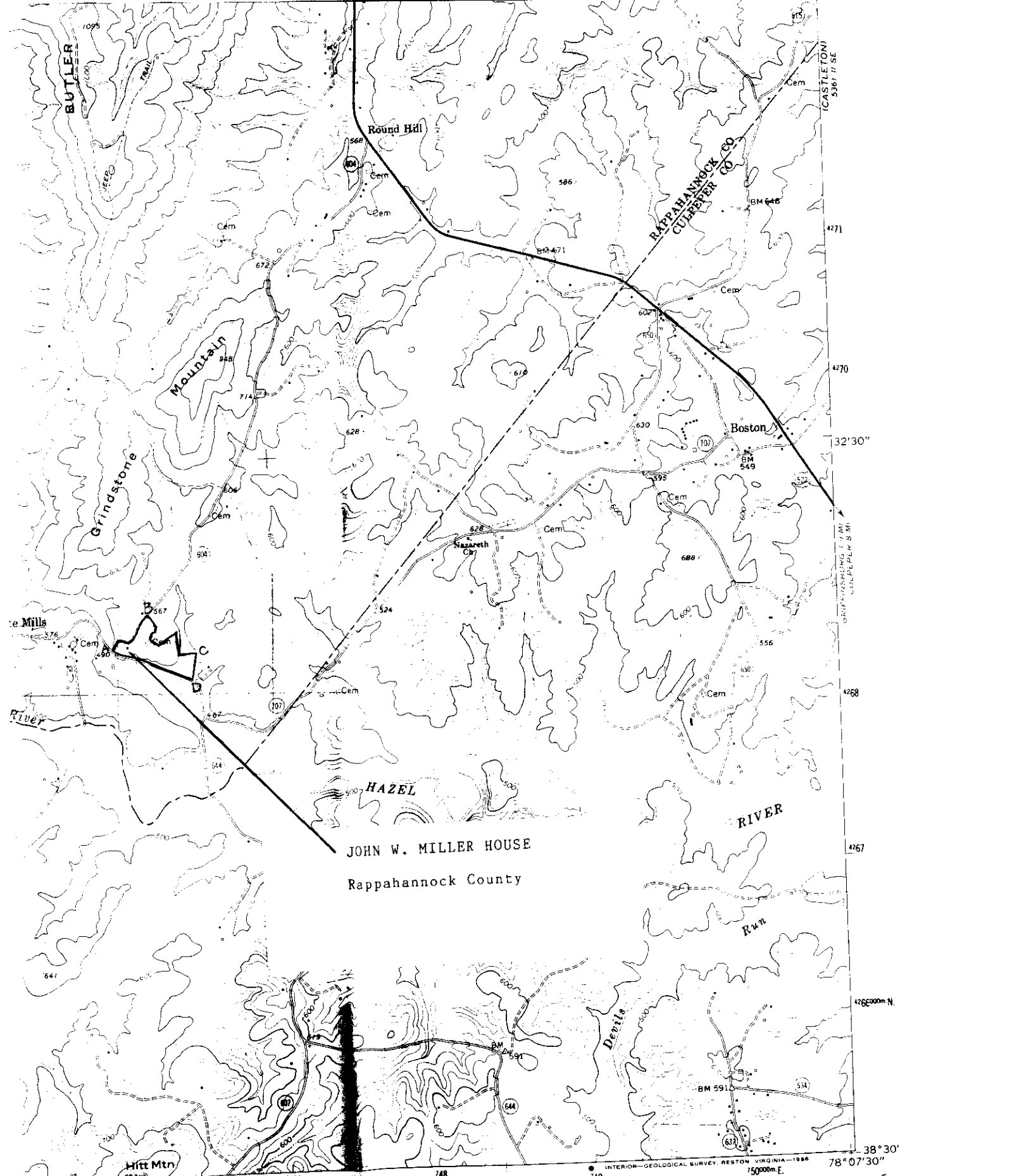
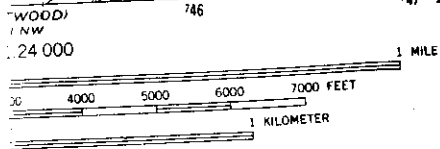


FIGURE 2



JOHN W. MILLER HOUSE  
Rappahannock County



SCALE 20 FEET  
SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
NAD 83 DATUM OF 1929

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
○ Interstate Route	□ U. S. Route
	○ State Route



WOODVILLE VA