

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

VL R- 5/20/80 NRHP- 9/8/80

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Mountain Grove

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Route 717

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Esmont

VICINITY OF

Seventh (J. Kenneth Robinson)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Albemarle

CODE

03

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mrs. Melva W. Lawrence

STREET & NUMBER

Box 3253 University Station

CITY, TOWN

Charlottesville

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 22903

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Albemarle County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charlottesville

STATE

Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS** (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1967, 1968, 1969

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mountain Grove, Albemarle County, is an outstanding example of a Federal-style Palladian dwelling. Built 1803-1804 by Benjamin Harris, most of its original fabric has been preserved.

Mountain Grove exemplifies the classic Virginia Palladian house. Its tripartite form is composed of a two-story, three-bay center block flanked by single-bay, 1½-story wings. Underpinned by rubble stone, it sits on a high basement. The original pegged wooden frames retain their grills in most basement openings. The entire structure is laid in three-course American bond and is circled by a molded water table. Corners and window joints are defined by queen closers. The center block is treated as a classical temple motif and is capped by a pedimented gable roof. The tympanum is pierced by a bull's-eye window, and its gable has scrolled modillions. These modillions run the length of the center block's east and west elevations and the north and south elevations of the wings. These heavy wooden cornices reveal Jefferson's influence on local builders. The gable ends have rake boards. Interior end chimneys are located in the gable end of each wing; an exterior chimney on the north wall of the center block. All chimney caps are similarly corbeled. The fenestration pattern is 9/9 all around except for the half-story openings, and each jack arch has been stuccoed. The center pavilion's fine double doors have weathered to a warm patina. They are capped by a transom of which only half of the original transom bars remain. The present front stairs are a replacement. Although a portico was probably intended, there are no markings or hardware to indicate that a portico or stoop was ever constructed. A 20th-century addition containing a bath and sun porch is attached at the east elevation.

Mountain Grove is related by plan to several other Virginia Palladian houses, but it is the exceptional interior decoration that sets it apart from this group. The center block contains the entrance hall and parlor on the first floor and a large bedroom on the second floor; the west wing is used as a library and the east wing as a kitchen. A bedroom is located in the half story over each wing. Interior and exterior doors throughout the house have been painted and grained, many with pen-lined panel fields, to simulate mahogany. The quarter-turn-with-winders open-string stair is positioned in the entrance hall. The two balusters per tread are slender versions of the heavy newel post. The handrail is molded. The hall's recessed-panel wainscot has a molded pedestal cap and is painted and grained, a treatment also found in the library and parlor. Displaying the talents of an unknown folk artist, the spacious parlor's mantel and overmantel are the most significant features of Mountain Grove's notable interiors. The central portion of the overmantel has been stippled, and garlands have been painted at the top of the panel. Reeded triglyphs mark the frieze, and an H-fret fills the dentil band. The overmantel's recessed-panel pilasters and cornice are marbled. The mantel is similarly marbled. A punch-and-dentil motif fills the mantel's dentil band, and the tall frieze is built up of thin wooden strips in a Chinese lattice pattern. The picture rail and pen-lined wainscot which encircle the room complete the woodwork. Fine woodwork is found also in the smaller-dimensioned library where the fireplace wall is executed competently. The mantel and overmantel are similar in design; the overmantel field is undecorated. A pair of built-in cabinets both having glazed doors above the solid doors below flank the mantel and overmantel. Similarly appointed 18th-century rooms functioned as dining rooms, although there is no way to confirm this as the original use of this room.

A kitchen has been installed in the east wing, but little of the wing's original fabric has been disturbed. The handsome kitchen mantel has sustained more deterioration than any other mantel in the house. Part of one pilaster is missing as are portions of the punch-and-dentil motif. The reeded pilasters are capped by consoles which support the

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1803-1804      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mountain Grove, built 1803-1804 on Green Mountain, is a classic Virginia Palladian dwelling that is related geographically and stylistically to a number of other tripartite houses. These houses, such as River Bluff and Bon Aire in Nelson County and Oak Lawn in Charlottesville share an architectural tradition which was derived from 18th-century English pattern books, especially the influential Select Architecture, by Robert Morris, 1755. Strongly Jeffersonian in design, Mountain Grove is not unlike the earliest designs for Monticello. The high quality of its workmanship and the important interior decorations painted by an unknown artist demonstrate the availability of skilled designers and artisans in this area in the early 19th century. Mountain Grove reflects the sophistication of its builder, Benjamin Harris, who abandoned the more traditional Georgian plan in favor of the newer, three-part scheme.

Benjamin Harris was a man of great wealth and prominence in Albemarle County. He was a captain in the State Militia during the Revolution, a magistrate in 1791, and sheriff in 1815. Harris's name appeared on "A Declaration of Independence" signed by citizens of Albemarle County in 1779. Many members of his family distinguished themselves politically, and several apparently built substantial houses near Green Creek and in nearby Nelson County. Mountain Grove was built on land Harris inherited from his father and with money borrowed from his neighbor, Wilson Cary Nicholas.

The dwelling passed by will to Benjamin's son, George W. Harris, in 1826. Through inheritance, Mountain Grove remained in the Harris family until 1931 when Melville C. Harris left the house to the Trustees of the Centenary Church, Methodist Episcopal South. Mr. Ollie Lawrence bought Mountain Grove in 1932. His wife, Mrs. Melva Lawrence, is the present owner.

VDS/MEH

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Albemarle County Deed Books 14, 72.  
 Land Books 1782-1850, 1865-1870, 1880.  
 Will Books 3, 11, 17.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

*See Continuation Sheet # 2 for Revised Data.*

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 22 acres  
 QUADRANGLE NAME Schuyler, Va. QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	70,78,0,0	4,19,01,6,0	B	1,7	70,77,8,0	4,18,99,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,7	70,76,6,0	4,18,98,2,0	D	1,7	70,72,4,0	4,18,98,8,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
E	1,7	70,73,1,0	4,19,00,0,0	F			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
G				H			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at a point 1350' E of State Route 717, 6000' NNE of intersection of said route and State Route 6, 1300' SSW of Ballinger Creek; thence extending 700' S to 600' contour line; thence following said contour approximately 600' SW; thence extending 1400' WNW to E side of said route 717; thence following said side of said route 450' NNE; thence extending 300' E; thence turning and extending 2400' NE to point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE May 1980

STREET & NUMBER 221 Governor Street TELEPHONE (804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN Richmond STATE Virginia 23219

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *[Signature]*

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE MAY 20 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE

ATTEST: CHIEF OF REGISTRATION DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Mountain Grove, Albemarle County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6,7

PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2). Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1980  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION

shallow cornice. The high frieze is fluted. A cabinet with two sets of solid doors has been built in to the fireplace wall to the left of the mantel. The mantel and cabinet are painted with lamp black. To the right of the mantel a door leads to the addition. Originally an exterior door, it has retained its entire transom. A picture rail runs the length of three walls. Of special note is the quarter-turn-with-winders stair which is located in the kitchen and provides the only access to the bedroom over this wing. This limited access could indicate the second-floor room was used as servants' quarters. Like the parlor below, the second-floor chamber is very large and well lighted, but its woodwork is executed more conservatively. A baseboard and chair rail with molded pedestal cap encircle the room. The large mantel is simply detailed.

Two 20th-century outbuildings, a shed and a barn, and the brick ruins of a 19th-century kitchen, are the only dependencies associated with Mountain Grove. All are located northeast of the house.

MEH

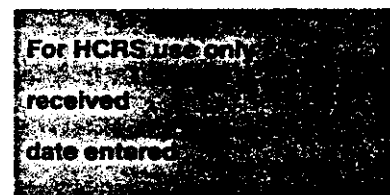
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The ~~2~~19 acres which are contained in the bounds of the Mountain Grove nomination include the house and associated outbuildings.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Mountain Grove, Albemarle County, Virginia



Continuation sheet #2

Item number 10

Page 1

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Nominated Property 19 acres

UTM References

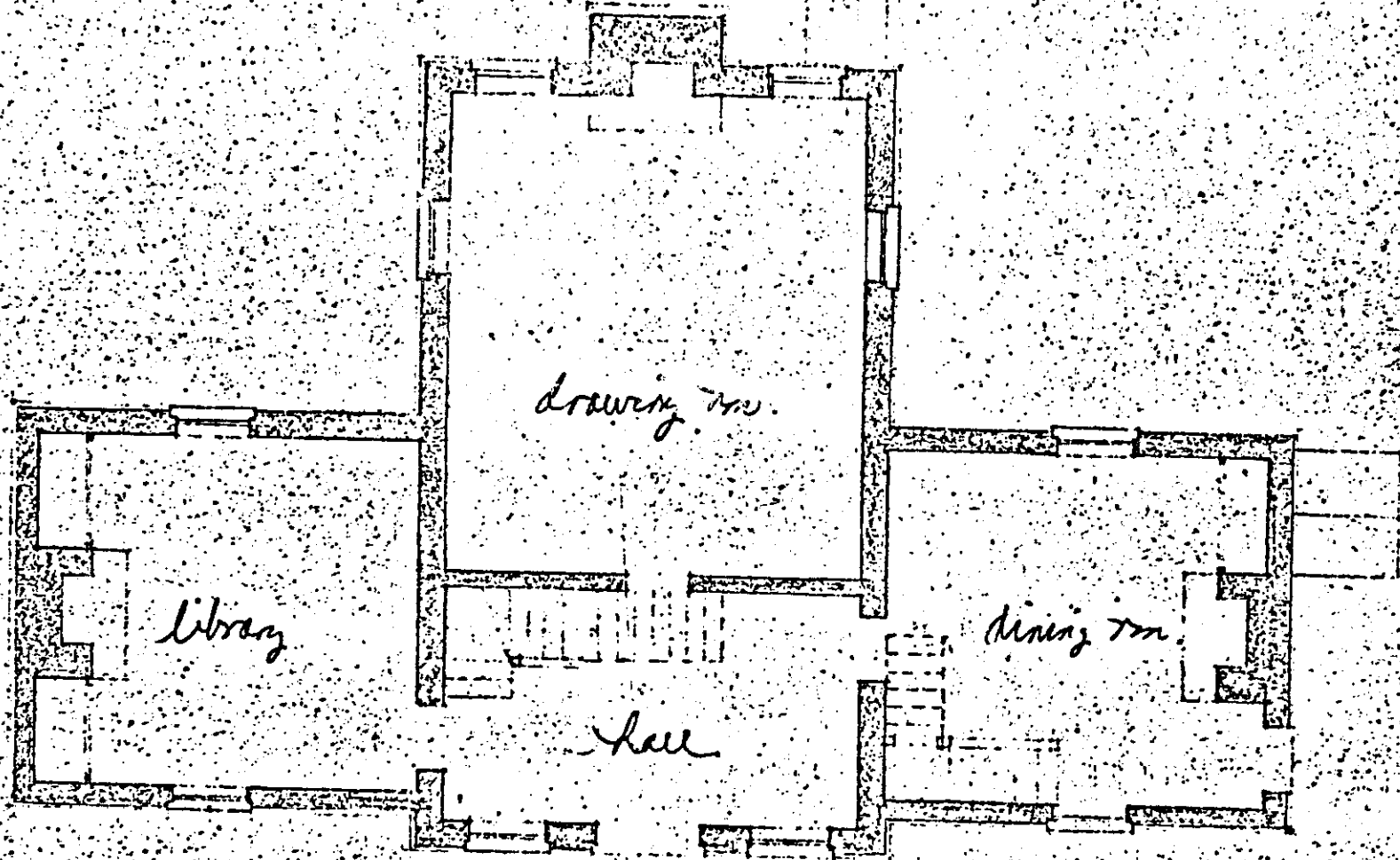
A 17/707700/4190070

B 17/707700/4189890

C 17/707260/4189880

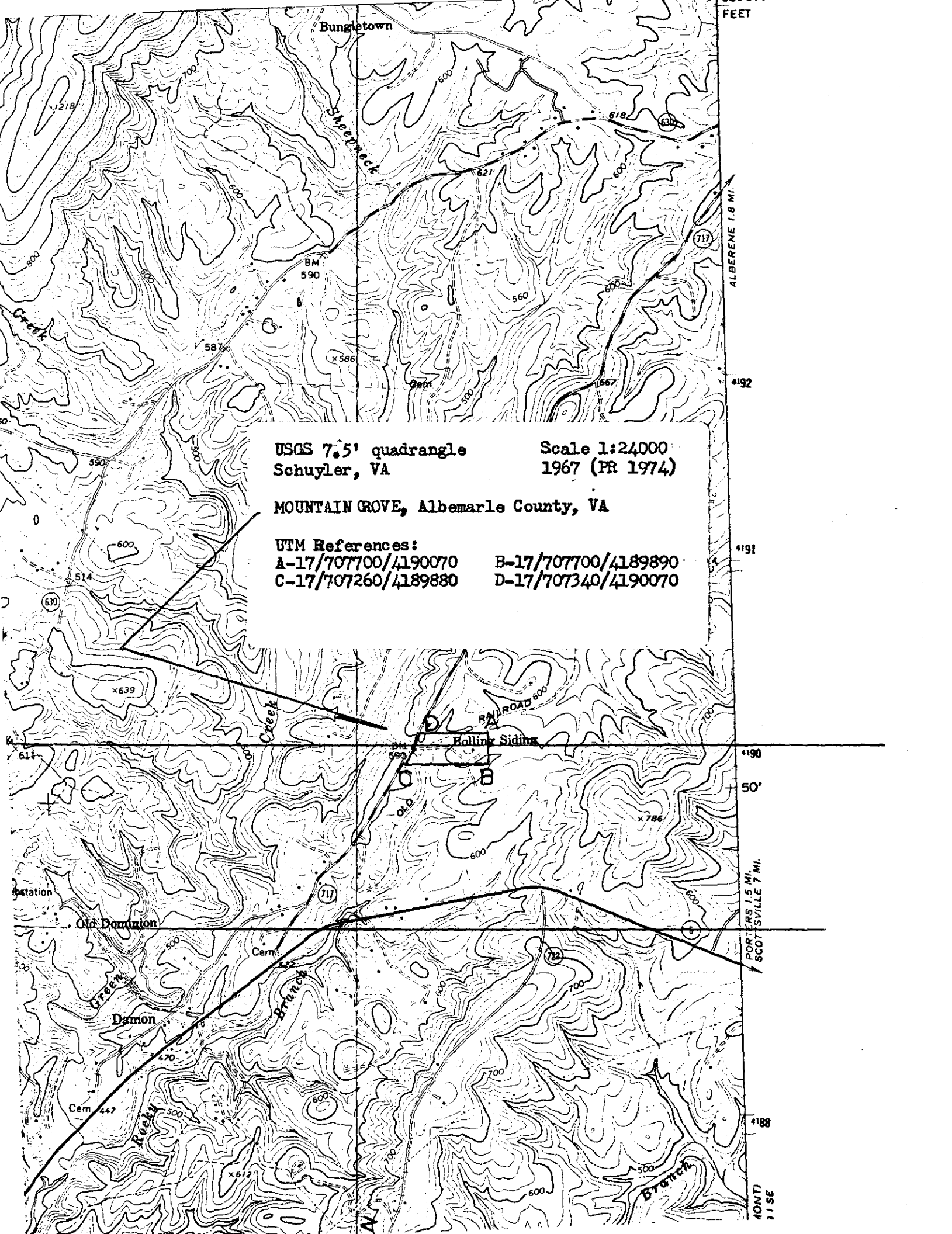
D 17/707340/4190070

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point 1200' E of State Route 717, approximately 1 mi. NE of intersection of said route and State Route 722, and 175' S of railroad tracks; thence extending 550' S; thence extending 1500' W to E side of said route 717; thence extending 600' NE following said side of said route; thence extending 1200' due E across said railroad tracks to point of origin.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"

MOUNTAIN GROVE  
NEAR ESMONT • ALBEMARLE CO.  
VIRGINIA 8-24-68 R.D.A.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Schuyler, VA

Scale 1:24,000  
1967 (PR 1974)

MOUNTAIN GROVE, Albemarle County, VA

UTM References:

A-17/707700/4190070

B-17/707700/4189890

C-17/707260/4189880

D-17/707340/4190070