

VLR-2/16/88 NRHP-5/5/89

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 \_\_\_\_\_ DHL File No. 88-66
other names/site number Stirling Plantation

2. Location

street & number Interstate 95 and County Route 607 N/A not for publication
city, town Massaponax vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Spotsylvania code 177 zip code 22401

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked), public-local, public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (3), Noncontributing (5 buildings, 0 sites, 2 structures, 0 objects), Total (7)
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: [Signature] Date: March 24, 1989
Director, VA Division of Historic Landmarks
State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structures  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuildings

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structures  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility  
WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal  
Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
walls brick  
roof slate  
other wooden porches

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary

Stirling is a farm in rural Spotsylvania County, Virginia. The surviving mid-nineteenth, historic buildings consist of the brick, rectangular, 56' x 36', two-and-a-half-story, five bay, hipped roof Federal and Greek Revival dwelling house, the log, rectangular, 20'-5" x 16'-4" one-story, two bay, gabled roof kitchen dependency, and the frame, rectangular, 14'-6" x 13'-7", one story, one bay, pyramidal roof smoke house. The grounds include a family graveyard with known burials dating to 1864, and the undisturbed archeological sites of the weaving house and three slave cabins. Large trees and shrubs remain from an early garden and plantation landscape. Built between 1858 and 1860 by John Holladay (1799-1880), this imposing house and its outbuildings represents the end of a era of neo-classical plantation house construction in Spotsylvania County, brought to a close by the Civil War and the battles near Fredericksburg which ravaged this area and destroyed the rural economy. Stirling is of special interest because the house has remained in the same family since it was built and has been little changed. It retains almost all of its original interior architectural decoration and paint finishes. Of particular value is the survival of the plantation account books from 1849 to 1861, which include, among other things detailed information about the provenance of the materials and the construction of the dwelling house.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance  
1856-1865  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
April 20, 1858  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

John Holladay (owner/builder)  
Tavener W. Holladay (chief carpenter)  
Frank Combs (mason)  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Summary

The principal building at Stirling is an imposing brick plantation house in the Federal and Greek Revival styles constructed just prior to the Civil War in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. Completed in 1860 by John Holladay, a wealthy landowner and farmer, the house and its dependencies represent a full and final expression of the long tradition of Tidewater Virginia plantation architecture rooted in an agricultural economy, based on slavery, that was to be swept away forever the year after Stirling was completed. Stirling is significant not only for the stern conservatism of its design and the arrangement of its dependencies, two of which remain standing, but also for two other reasons. Firstly, the house has remained in ownership of the builder's family to the present day and retains its interior decoration virtually unchanged from the time of its completion. Secondly, the plantation account books for Stirling from 1849 to 1861 also survive. They include, among much other important information about plantation life, detailed entries for the construction of the dwelling house, the provenance and cost of the building materials, and the identity and wages of the people who built it. This combination of little changed buildings and detailed primary source documentation is a rare and wonderful combination and represents a valuable resource for the study of Virginia's material culture just prior to the Civil War.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Holladay, John. Stirling Plantation Account Books, 1849-1861. Unpublished manuscript volumes. Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Hayden, Stirling, Route 3, Box 1145, Fredericksburg, Va., 22401.

Johnson, Clifton. Battleground Adventures. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915. Chapter XV, "The Little Rebel". (An interview with the daughter of Capt. James S. Turner C.S.A. of Fredericksburg, Va., containing information about her flight from Fredericksburg to Stirling in December, 1862.)

Mansfield, James Luther. A History of Early Spotsylvania. Orange, Virginia, Green Publishers, Inc., 1977.

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 # HABSI (1957)
- 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:

Stirling, Hayden family archives.

and VA Division of Historic Landmarks

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 13.7645 acres

UTM References

A 18 280380 4228850  
 Zone Easting Northing

C 18 280380 4228460

B 18 280700 4228850  
 Zone Easting Northing

D 18 280700 4228460

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the 13.7645 acres is the boundary formed by Parcel A (5 acres) and Parcel B (8.7645 acres) shown on the accompanying plats entitled Plat of Survey, Parcel A, Stirling Plantation, Feb. 2, 1984 and Plat of Suvey, Parcel B, Stirling Plantation, February 2, 1984.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The 13.7645 acre boundary for Stirling is contiguous with the Interstate 95 right of way on the east, County Route 607 on the south and includes all the existing historic buildings, and structures known archeological sites for the weaving house and three slave cabins, the graveyard, and the garden and fields adjacent to the house.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

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date January 11, 1988

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Architectural Analysis

From 1941 to 1984 Stirling comprised 182.88 acres. In 1984, two parcels comprising 13.7645 acres and including the surviving historic buildings were deeded to the present owner. This nomination refers to this 13.7645 acre property, although an additional 84.12 acres were also deeded to the owner in 1987.

The construction of the main house at Stirling can be followed from the entries in John Holladay's plantation account books. The volume covering the period March 15, 1854 to December 31, 1858 indicates that in 1856 he began assembling material for constructing the main house at Stirling. On July 20, under the heading "Plank purchase at Willis & Co. Mill", he entered, "To 2 lodes 2,000 feet \$20.00." On August 20 he purchased one load of 1000 feet from Willis for \$10.00. He continued to purchase lumber from Willis and Co. and from Hazard and Co. throughout 1857 and 1858. Also in 1856 he noted, "Stop work in brickyard 4 August and on November 8, , "Settled with Frank Combs for making brick... paid in full." John Holladay employed his young nephew, Tavener Holladay, as chief carpenter for the project. An entry for 1857 for Tavener Holladay states, "Commence work 16th March making sash." On April 20, 1858, The entry appears, "Commence work on building," on September 30, "cash paid for slate \$233.88", on October 3, "To making slating hammer \$ .75." This entry is one of many that refers to the thriving blacksmithing business that John Holladay organized to serve the needs of his own plantation and also his neighbors. By October 23, 1857 the house was sufficiently under roof to commence work on the interior, for on that date flooring was purchased from a certain Mr. Coleman for \$169.13. Previously that month paint, varnish, plasters and mantles had been bought. By 1860 an entry states, "Cash paid for building house to this date...\$2,714.79.

The house that John Holladay constructed, a massive brick residence 56 feet long and 36 feet deep, has changed little since he finished it. In plan and elevation Stirling is strongly rooted in the late-Georgian and Federal tradition of Tidewater Virginia. It is a five bay, two story, brick house over a high raised basement. It has a hip roof and four interior end chimneys. The interior plan has a wide central hall with two rooms on each side. The architectural detail of the house, however, is largely Greek Revival in style. The extreme conservatism of its design makes Stirling appear, at first glance, to be at least a generation earlier than its actual date. One possible explanation for this can be found in the fact that it was built by a man born in 1799, who was 59 when he commenced the house and whose wife, born in 1790, was 70 when the house was completed.

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The house is laid up in common bond with slightly oversized red bricks measuring 8 1/2 " x 4 1/8" x 3 1/4". The sand and lime mortar joints vary from 1/4" to 1/2". There is a slight change in brick color above the first floor. The house carries no water table or belt course.

The window bays have sandstone sills. The window bays of the raised basement have lintels of a single row of headers set vertically with no splay. Those of the first and second floor have all stretcher lintels set horizontally. The basement windows have three over three double hung sash set in narrow wooden frames. The first and second floor windows have six over six pane double hung sash.

A wooden entablature in the Tuscan order supports the shallow hip roof covered in slate. There are two pairs of interior end chimneys, one pair at the east end and one pair at the west end of the house.

The present entrance porches on both principal (north and south) elevations were constructed ca. 1912, replacing earlier porches. The present porches have brick piers supporting a one story wood porch with slender paired columns in the Tuscan order. The porches are the width of the central hall. A smaller wooden porch on the west elevation leads to the northwest chamber on the first floor. One remaining chamfered porch post suggests that this side porch may be an original porch. Beneath this west porch is the entrance to the raised basement.

The main entrance door to the house is on the south elevation. In the Greek Revival style, the six panel entrance door is surmounted by an eight pane rectangular glazed transom and flanked by six pane side lights with a solid wooden panel in the lower portion. The north entrance door to the central hall has no transom or sidelights.

The raised basement has a central hall with 13 1/2" brick partitions separating the hall from the present kitchen and pantry on the west and an unfinished storage room on the east. A bathroom has been installed in room at the south end of the hall. The Federal style mantle in the present kitchen, formerly used as a dining room, dates from the early 19th century and, according to tradition, may have been brought from an earlier Holladay family house. On the east side of the hall, a simple open string stair, with a door at the top, leads up to the first floor.

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The first floor of Stirling has a wide central hall with two rooms on each side. There is a double parlor on the east side of the hall, and on the west side, a library in the southwest corner, and a bedroom in the northwest corner. The Greek Revival woodwork throughout the first floor is bold and plain. The hall and other rooms carry a baseboard and chair rail, but no cornice. The window and door trim is 7" wide. The doors are six panel, except for the sliding double doors between the double parlors. These sliding doors have nine panels each. All of the interior woodwork on the first floor has been painted to resemble graining of different woods. For example, the graining in the central hall imitates a dark hardwood, whereas the graining in the double parlor and the library imitates a lighter curly maple. The graining dates from the construction of the house and has been unchanged. It survives in excellent condition and gives the interior strong integrity. The main stair has a turned wooden newel and oval hand rail. There are two balusters for each tread and the balusters are round in section and taper from bottom to top. There are simple scrolls at the open string of each step and the stair is enclosed beneath the string with six vertical wooden panels. The mantels in the ground floor rooms are slate painted to imitate black marble. There are cast plaster medallions in the ceiling of the central hall and the double parlors. The walls throughout the house are painted plaster.

The second floor plan mirrors the plan of the first floor except that there are no doors interconnecting the rooms on either side of the central hall. There are four large bedrooms. A bathroom has been added in the south end of the central hall. The decoration of the the second floor is similar to the first floor except that there is no chair rail. There is no stair to the attic space under the hip roof, instead there is a hatch in the ceiling of the central hall.

Immediately west of the main house is located the old kitchen. The smoke house is west and slightly north of the main house. The kitchen is 20'-5" long and 16"-4" deep. It is of log construction, covered with vertical board and batten. There is a large brick exterior end chimney 10'-0" wide and 3'-6" deep on the north end. The kitchen is one story with a gable roof. There is one room on the first floor. A narrow stair on the south wall leads to an attic room. There is one door and one window on the east elevation and one door on the west elevation. A shed has been added to the south gable end of the building. The old kitchen is presently unused and in a state of deterioration, however, it retains most of its original features and is an important vernacular structure. It is not clear from the plantation diaries if the kitchen was built at the same time as the main house or if it preceded the main house.

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The rectangular smoke house is very nearly square. It measures 14'-6" x 13'-7" and has a pyramidal roof. It is constructed of wood frame with wood siding. The siding is presently covered with hexagonal asphalt shingles. Like the kitchen, the date of the smoke house is not certain but constitutes a valuable and little changed vernacular structure.

West of the old kitchen and on axis with it are the archeological sites of the old weaving house and three of four slave cabins. Three of the slave cabins were for two families with a central chimney, and one was for a single family. Photographs exist of the weaving house and one of the slave cabin chimneys. These sites are little disturbed. To the north of the main house and immediately adjacent to the right of way of Interstate 95 is the family graveyard surrounded by a stone wall. The builders of Stirling and other members of the Holladay family are buried here.

Several very large oak trees and specimens of ornamental shrubbery remain from the 19th century landscape around the house and outbuildings.

The present owners have constructed a horse ring southwest of the main house and a large horse barn west of the ring, both of which are considered non-contributing. Additional non-contributing resources include the frame show judging stand near the ring, two frame storage buildings and two cinderblock storage buildings. All of these are less than fifty years old. The two contributing structures are the covered well and the hog scalding kettle.



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Historical Background

The rich supply of historic documents that survive relating to Stirling make it an especially useful resource for understanding the social and economic context of its time and place. Stirling was built by John Holladay (b. 1799-d. 1880) and his wife, Elizabeth Lewis Holladay (b. 1790-d. 1864). John Holladay was a farmer and large landowner in Spotsylvania County. The Holladay family first settled in the county in early 18th century. Before building Stirling, John Holladay resided at a farm known as Vauxhall located immediately south of Stirling on the north bank of the Ni River. In the Fredericksburg newspaper, the Virginia Herald of February 15, 1834, John Holladay, then 35 years old, advertised Vauxhall for sale, stating in the ad, "The Subscriber, being desirous of moving to the west, offers for sale that valuable tract of land called VAUXHALL." John Holladay's brother, James R. Holladay, wrote the following year to their sister who had removed to Missouri, "The news papers are filled with Land for Sale, we have had two bad crop years in succession and if we have two more I don't know what the poor people will do, in the old domain."

In the end, John Holladay did not sell Vauxhall. He remained in Spotsylvania County, survived the economic difficulties of the late 1830's, prospered and in 1856 at age 57 embarked on an ambitious project to build an imposing new house for himself, his wife and their three daughters. The Stirling plantation account books, written in John Holladay's own hand, detail the assembling of material, the making of brick, the purchase of architectural features such as mantels, and the hiring and management of craftsmen. John Holladay hired, as his chief builder, his nephew, Tavener W. Holladay. Tavener Holladay is listed in the Federal census of 1860, the year he finished working at Stirling, as being a carpenter, 29 years old, married and with three small children. At that time he owned no real estate and had a personal estate valued at \$280. By contrast, John Holladay is listed in the same census as aged 61, a farmer, with real estate valued at \$20,000 and a personal estate of \$33,700. It is clear from the plantation account books that John Holladay ran a very profitable blacksmithing operation. The exact location of the forge is not presently known, although early deeds speak of a blacksmith's shop just at the east gate to the plantation. Tools made for the construction of Stirling, such as a slating tool for the roof are listed.

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One Frank Combs is listed as being paid for "making bricks" for the house on November 8, 1856. Construction began on April 20, 1858 and Combs is paid again on October 1, 1859. Therefore, he was most probably the mason as well as the brick maker. The last entry for Tavener Holladay appears in 1860.

The account books also list the purchase of paints and varnish and the cost of painting the house. The name of the painter is not listed. Therefore, it is not yet known who executed the fine painted wood gaining on the interior woodwork.

The year after the house was completed, war was declared and the economic and social system that Stirling represented was changed forever. As the battles of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse raged nearby, Stirling became a refuge for both civilians and wounded military. A moving account of Stirling during the Battle of Fredericksburg, in December, 1862, was published, in 1915, in a collection, Battleground Adventures, by Clifton Johnson. It relates the experience at Stirling of Miss Turner, the daughter of a Confederate captain from Fredericksburg, who fled there for safety.

Some pertinent excerpts include the following:

*" A friend of ours, Mr. Holliday (sic.), lived eight miles from town on that road. He had a big farm and was quite a wealthy man before the war. He must have owned hundreds of slaves. Their cabins were all around his house, almost like a village, and each family had a garden spot."*

*"A good many others had flocked to Mr. Holliday's, and when night came we had to sleep anywhere we could. I shared a room with twelve others. We arranged blankets and quilts on the floor so we could lie side by side, one right after the other."*

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*"We didn't have pillows that night, and we tipped chairs down so the backs would slant up for us to rest our heads on. But after the first night we arranged things so we were more comfortable. Mr. Holliday's house was heated only by fireplaces, and I shall never forget how cold it was there in those days of early winter. We had great fires, but you had to sit right on top of 'em to keep warm."*

*"On the night of the twelfth the ladies who were at the Holliday's scraped lint, and I haven't made any since. I got my share of making it then. We ceratinly did work hard. I scraped two tablecloths into lint with my penknife. Indeed, I scraped right down through my clothing to the flesh, and I said to the others, 'Its time I was dressing my own wounds."*

*"The next morning , about five o'clock, I reckon, I was waked by the report of a cannon. It shook the glassware in the china closet that stood in the room where we were sleeping. The gun was fired by the Confederates to announce that the Yankees were attempting to cross the river."*


*"All the day the ambulances were going past the house on their way to the nearest railroad station. You could hear the wounded men in them groanin' a quarter of a mile away, it hurt the poor things so to jolt over the road. A good many of the ambulances stopped in front of the house to have men's wounds dressed, and sometimes the men would be laid out on the grass. The rags on their wounds got so dry they chafed them, and we had to wash the wounds and put on clean cloths. I don't know how many sheets we tore up. 'O Lady! We do thank you so much,' they'd say when they were leaving. They were taken six miles further to the railroad and sent on to Richmon'. The sight of blood makes me faint."*

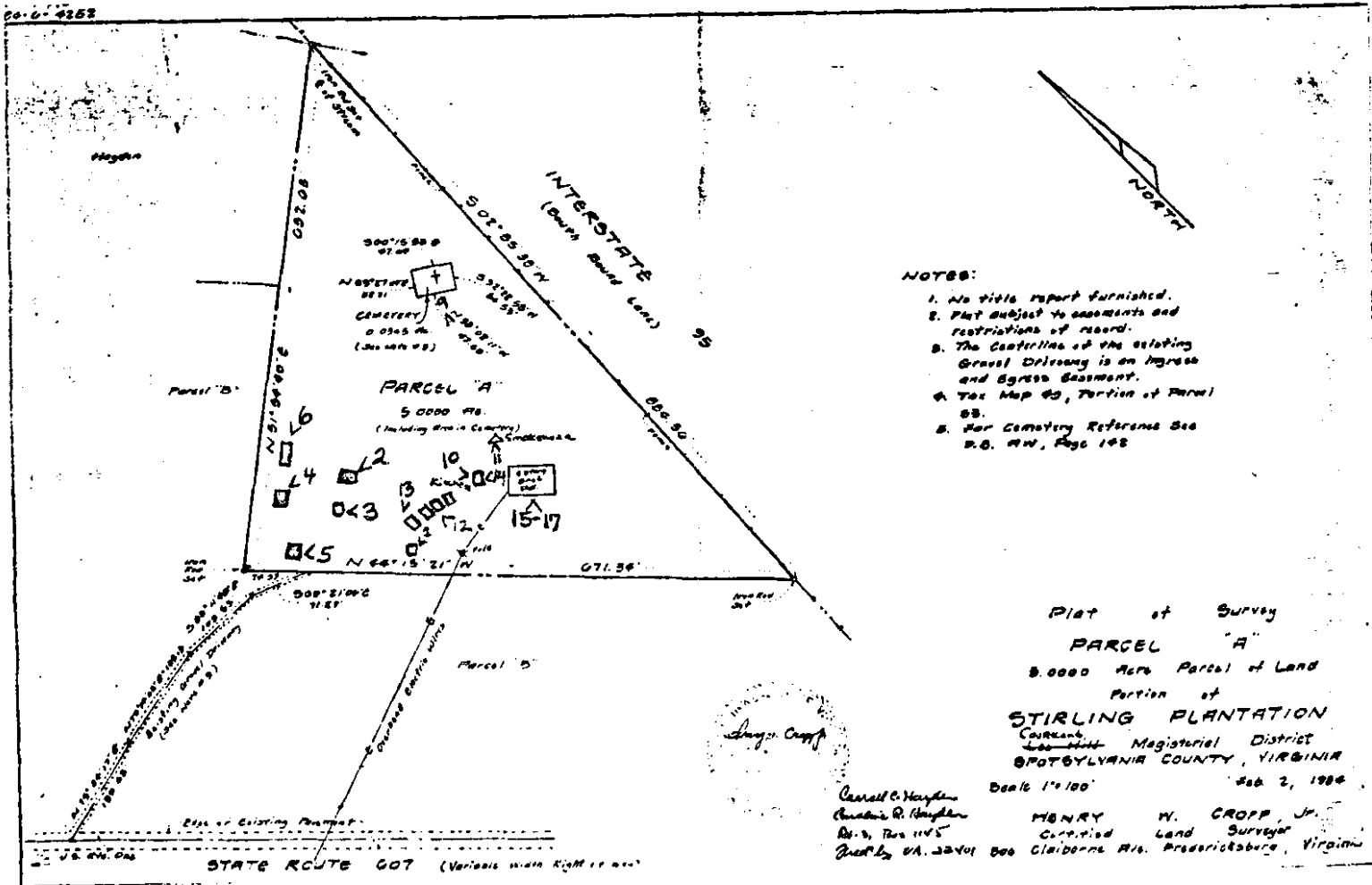
Today Stirling remains in the ownership of the fourth and fifth generation of the family of the builder. It is currently operated as a horse farm and equestrian center. One large new horse barn and a riding ring have been constructed but do not endanger the historic buildings or the archeological sites of the slave buildings and other dependencies which await further study.

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 = Noncontributing  
Photos Keyed To Map

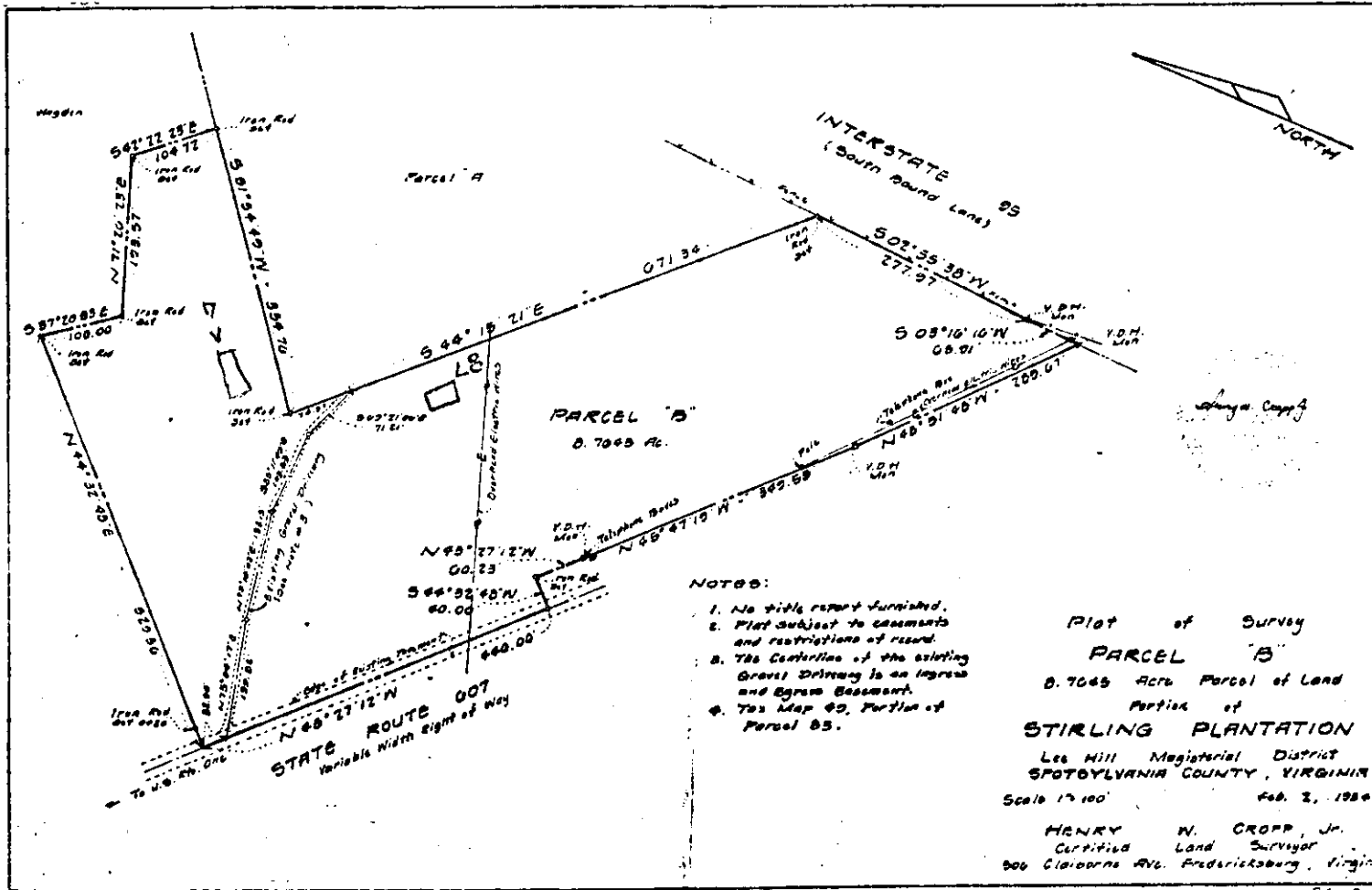


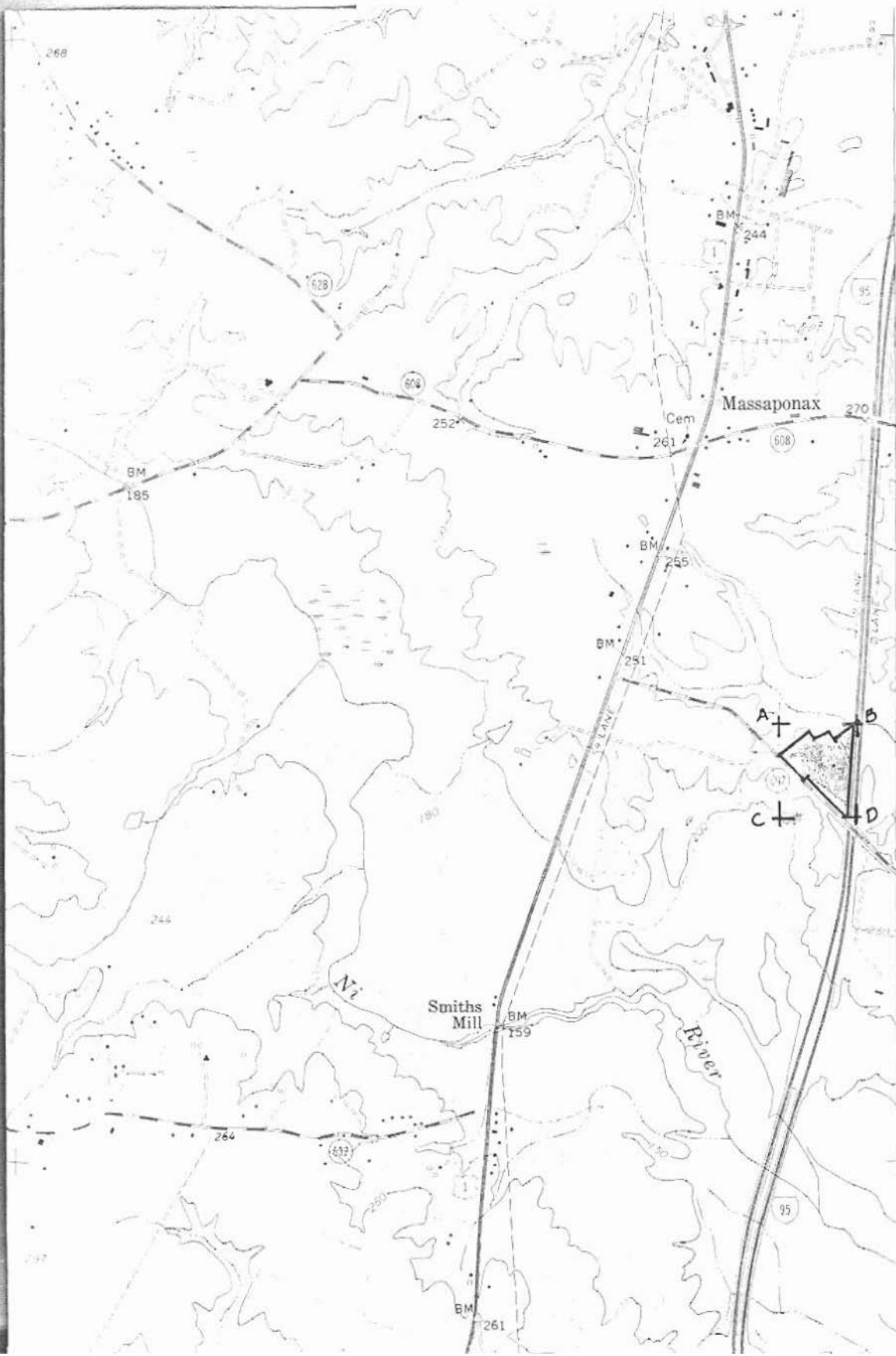
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☐ = Noncontributing  
Photos Keyed To Map





12'30"  
4231  
4230  
4229  
4228  
10'  
4227

Stirling  
Spotsylvania Co., VA  
UTMS:  
A-18/280380/4228850  
B-18/280900/4228850  
C-18/280380/4228460  
D-18/280700/4228460  
Spotsylvania, VA 91400