

VLR-8/21/90
NRHP-12/28/90

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 MOUNT FAIR
other names/site number DHR File No. 02-97

2. Location

street & number Jct. of SR 673 and SR 810 N/A not for publication
city, town Browns Cove vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Albemarle code 003 zip code 22932

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>7</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

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.

John C. Miller 19 Nov 1990
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, VA Dept of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

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
Secondary structure
 FUNERARY: Cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling
Secondary structure
 FUNERARY: Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/BRICK (vener)
 walls WOOD: Weatherboard
 roof Asphalt
 other Brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Mount Fair is located in rural Albemarle County, about twenty miles northwest of the city of Charlottesville. Construction of the main house, a two-and-one-half-story frame structure on a raised basement, began around 1848 on the foundation of a previous dwelling. Largely unaltered until the 1950s when a kitchen was added on the north elevation, the main house at Mount Fair retains most of its original interior and exterior detailing. The nominated site covers approximately seventy-eight acres including the woods and open fields surrounding the house. The core of the tract is the three acres on which the main dwelling, the contributing detached kitchen, and two contributing structures, an icehouse and a springhouse, are located. The tract also has three contributing sites: the ruins of slave quarters, a slave cemetery, and a family cemetery. There are also two noncontributing buildings: a garage and a modern horse barn, as well as two noncontributing structures: a corncrib and a shed. The noncontributing resources are all twentieth-century structures in deteriorated and altered condition.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Mount Fair is located approximately one-quarter mile off of state Route 810 on Route 673 in rural Albemarle County. The main house faces east on an elevated site. As many as fifty different species of trees and shrubs surround the house and outbuildings. Examples include white pine, hemlock, poplar, coffee and paradise trees, as well as various types of shrubs and boxwood.¹ The driveway is located to the south of the 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

1848-1876

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.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Mount Fair complex is one of the largest and best preserved antebellum farms in Albemarle County. The main house at Mount Fair is an imposing Greek Revival structure that has sustained only minor alterations. The two-and-one-half-story dwelling is distinguished by an unusual balustraded belvedere lighting a passage in the attic. The house originally served as the focal point of an approximately four thousand acre farm owned by William T. Brown. The period of significance dates from the construction of the present house and extends to the date of William Brown's death in order to encompass improvements he made to the property during his lifetime. The house continues to reflect the taste of Brown, who had this elegant dwelling constructed in keeping with his status as a prosperous farmer. Mount Fair has retained its rural setting and continues to be surrounded by wooded hills and green acreage. Today the property encompasses approximately seventy-eight acres and includes the main house, a nineteenth-century icehouse and detached kitchen, a spring and springhouse, the sites of three slave quarters, and two cemeteries--one for the Brown family and the other for slaves.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mount Fair has always been one of the grand houses in the small valley of Brown's Cove, in northern Albemarle County, Virginia. The nominated seventy-five acre site is a portion of the original six thousand acres that were located along both sides of Doyle's River, a tract Benjamin Brown assembled with a series of land patents between 1747 and 1760.¹ At his death in 1762, Benjamin Brown willed approximately four thousand acres of his property to his son Bezaleel Brown.² Bezaleel Brown served as a captain in the

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The original L-shaped Greek Revival dwelling is a two-and one-half-story, five-bay structure with a raised basement built on a foundation of rubble stone and irregular American bond brick. The entire structure is covered with unbeaded weatherboards. There are cornerboards as well as a boxed cornice with dentils. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and encompasses three large exterior chimneys. The chimneys are laid in five-course American-bond and once served nine fireplaces, only seven of which are still functional.

The hipped roof features an unusual belvedere referred to locally as a widow's walk. The belvedere has eight-pane casement windows facing both east and west, and a balustrade composed of classical vase-shaped balusters.

All of the windows have six-over-six double-hung sash with thin muntins, with the exception of those in the attic space on the west elevation. These are four-pane casement windows. The windows on the first floor are slightly larger than those on the second, but all have plain wooden sills and lintels. The windows are flanked with wooden louvered blinds. The windows in the raised basement have three lights and are protected by horizontal bars.

On the east, front elevation there is a central doorway on both stories. The door of the first story is an unusual eight-paneled recessed door with a distinctive Greek Revival surround. The door is flanked by a pair of fifteen-pane sidelights featuring a geometric pattern above a solid wood panel. The portion of the transom directly over the door is identical to the sidelights, and is bordered by a panel with a diamond motif. On the second story is a six-paneled double door opening onto the porch deck. Surround treatment is identical to that of the first story, but there is no transom. Additional entrances are located on both the north and south elevations but do not have the surround treatments found on the east elevation. The entrance on the south elevation is part of the 1950s addition.

A one-bay, one-story porch is located on the east elevation. The porch stands on a stone foundation and has a flat roof supported by paired Doric columns. There is a plain cornice and frieze. On top of the porch roof is a balustrade identical to that of the belvedere, except here, the corner posts are capped with ball finials. On the north elevation a one-bay porch shelters a side

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entrance. This is probably not original to the dwelling, but it is believed that a porch has always sheltered this entrance.

Currently the porch has a stone foundation and a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. The roof is supported by two early wooden posts. A wooden railing stands along the sides of the porch.

Another porch two stories in height was originally located on the rear of the ell on the south elevation. This structure was removed in 1952 and replaced with what is now known as the kitchen and a bathroom. The door that provides access to the bathroom from the room south of the entrance hall was once a window that overlooked the two-story porch. This is evidenced by the framing around the door which is identical to that of the windows. Also the ghost of the window can be seen. The removal of this porch and change of the window to a door constitute the only major alterations to the main house.

William Brown built his house on the foundation of the dwelling inherited from his father in 1829 and which burned around 1845. Soon afterwards Brown began building the present dwelling on the foundation of his first house, which is said to have stood on the foundation of an even earlier dwelling. Today the basement has the same plan as the upper two stories. There are two rooms under the main block of the house separated by a central passage. These rooms are believed to be portions of the earliest foundation. They are each plastered and contain large fireplaces. The fireplace in the south room has been filled in and the mantel moved temporarily to the other side of the room where it stands awaiting replacement. Before it was moved, the outline of the mantel was traced onto the wall so that it could be returned to its original position.

The remaining portion of the basement consists of the west room of the ell added by Brown in 1848 and a room dug out in 1952 when the kitchen addition was added. Here, the original exterior brick is painted red with white penciling applied over the mortar joints. Heavy molded trim with brown or black paint is located throughout the basement. There was no interior access to the basement until the 1950s when the present rear basement stair was added.

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Upon entering the first floor of Mount Fair from the principal entrance on the east elevation, one stands in the finely embellished entrance hall. There is an open-string, open-well staircase that rises two flights to a narrow passage in the belvedere. The poplar newel post has an unusual vase shape and is noted as being uncommon in Albemarle County.² The rectangular balusters are finely molded and placed three per tread. The round handrail is ramped and eased. The stair treads are embellished with a scroll motif and the stair spandrel is paneled. The newel posts of the landing are expressed in the ceiling by turned drops. A molded plaster modillion forming concentric circles surrounds the chandelier at the front of the passage.

There is an additional set of stairs located in the rear ell in what is today the dining room. This is an open-string stair that rises one flight to the second story. The plain rectangular balusters support a round handrail. The newel post is smaller than the one in the entrance hall and does not have a vase shape, it is simply rounded. At the top of the landing and to the right is a six-paneled door that provides access to stairs leading to the attic.

Flanking the entrance hall are two large rooms. These rooms as well as the passage contain a pedestal chair rail and heavy molded baseboards. There are also symmetrical moldings with bull's-eye corner blocks at door surrounds. Throughout the house four-and-one-half to six-inch tongue-and-groove pine flooring can be found.

The three original rooms of the first floor have fireplaces with distinctive Greek Revival mantels. The front two rooms each have a mantel with a plain frieze and a molded shelf supported by engaged fluted Doric columns surmounted by entablature blocks with applied quadrant-cornered panels. The similar mantel in the room directly behind the north room, the dining room, has plain Doric columns. The end block of this entablature has been treated as a stylized triglyph. On the second floor the mantels are embellished with reeded pilasters and paneled end blocks with applied diamond motif. The marble facing within the wooden frames of all the mantels in the house was added in the 1950s.³

The attic was never finished space, and is used for storage. The large rafters are lapped and held in place with wooden pegs. The

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Roman numerals on the rafters were inscribed to show how the timbers were to be fitted together.

In William T. Brown's correspondence located at Alderman Library at the University of Virginia there are notations about building materials used at Mount Fair. There is a listing for an order of lead paint, including Prussian blue, Vermilion red, umber, sienna, verdigris and chrome green. There is also a bill for hardware bought from W. S. & J. Donnan, 19 Pearl St., Richmond, Virginia dated October 8, 1848. The bill included four kegs of nails, one-and-one-half dozen window springs, two brass-bound closet locks, one dozen pair of three-inch butts, one-and-one-half dozen pair of four-inch Clarkes patent butts, one-and-one-half dozen sets of blind fastenings, nine six-inch cabinet locks with two-inch bolts and various other sizes of locks.⁴

In addition to the main house, Mount Fair has a detached kitchen as a contributing building, two contributing structures and three contributing sites. The 1850s detached kitchen located in the northwest corner of the yard is a one-bay gable-roofed structure of heavy timber construction on a fieldstone foundation. The entire building is covered with weatherboards. The entrance is located in the east elevation and is covered by a door made with vertical boards. At some point the kitchen was moved approximately twelve feet south and two feet east of its original location. Portions of the stone foundation exist in the original location.

The icehouse located in the northeast corner of the yard is a contributing structure. This building measures 20'2" X 20'1" and has a heavy-timber frame on a fieldstone foundation. The foundation appears to have originally been faced with brick like that of the house, as evidenced by the east elevation, where a few bricks remain. Because it is undergoing renovation, the framing members are currently exposed on the exterior on all but the north elevation, which is covered with weatherboards. A cinder-block stove flue is located on the south elevation. The opposite wall has a six-over-six double hung sash window not original to the structure. The rectangular cistern of the icehouse, said to have been sixty feet deep, has been filled. The icehouse is currently being renovated to be used as a guest house.

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The springhouse, located to the north of the main dwelling in a wooded area, is a second contributing structure and is of wood frame construction on a stone foundation. The structure is covered with weatherboards. Approximately fifteen feet south of the springhouse is the spring, which continues to flow.

Below the house to the north is the site of the remains of what is said to be three slave quarters. The site consists of piles of stone rubble and timber and a portion of a chimney. The site is heavily overgrown, but potentially could yield archaeological information about slave communities. Also contributing is the site of a large slave cemetery located below the house on a small ridge. The graves are indicated by small upright, unmarked fieldstones.

On a hill above the house is the Brown family cemetery. The cemetery consists of eight graves with marble stones that are inscribed with the names and years of birth and death. Several other graves are indicated with plain fieldstones. The earliest legible marker is that of William Brown himself (1799 to 1876), although descendants of Brown recall that up until a few years ago a marker for B. G. Brown, who died in 1865, son of Wm. T. Brown, was visible. His wife Mary Ann and descendants of the Brown family are also buried there. The cemetery was last used in 1925 when Lucy Brown was interred. The cemetery is slightly overgrown, but the stones themselves are in fairly good condition.

The nominated site also includes four noncontributing resources: a corncrib, a shed, a garage, and a modern horse barn. The circa 1910 to 1930s balloon-frame corncrib is sheathed with vertical slats and has a gable roof with a wide front overhang; the roof is covered with original wood shingles. Attached to the rear of the structure is a flat-roofed addition. It is considered noncontributing because of its highly deteriorated state.

The shed is a twentieth-century weatherboarded structure with vertical siding. It is believed to have originally functioned as a garage, but today is used for storage. It has a gable roof covered with wood shingles. Its poor condition and heavy alterations, including being moved from its original location, make this a noncontributing structure.

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One of the two noncontributing buildings is a circa 1930s two-bay garage located southeast of the main house. This weatherboarded structure has a cement foundation and a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. A small oval window is located in the south elevation. The garage is currently used mainly for storage.

Located to the southwest of the house is a noncontributing seven-bay horse barn/machine shed. It is made of wood and has a gable roof covered with standing-seam sheet metal.

Other interesting landscape features include a mill stone in the southeast corner of the yard near the garage and a poured-concrete mounting block located in the southwest corner.

ENDNOTES

1. According to Mr. Phil Sheridan, the current owner of Mount Fair, who has counted the many types of trees and shrubs.
2. Jeffrey M. O'Dell. Architectural Historian, Department of Historic Resources.
3. The marble facing was added by the Sheridan family in the 1950s.
4. F. H. Boyd Coons, "Benjamin Brown Sr. of Brown's Cove Albemarle Co., VA. A Brief Survey of Some of His Descendants and their Buildings, 1984," Architectural Survey File 02-97, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Va. (DHR).

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Ninth Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line during the revolutionary war. He fought at Yorktown and is believed to have been present at the surrender of Cornwallis. After the war he returned to Albemarle County and became active in local affairs. He served as a magistrate beginning in 1791 and was appointed sheriff in 1805.³ In 1829 his son William T. Brown inherited his estate. From 1829 until his death in 1876, William Brown made his residence and farmed the land at Mount Fair.⁴

In 1845 the dwelling that William T. Brown inherited from his father burned. Brown soon began to construct on the old foundations a two-story Greek Revival structure. The land tax books for 1850 show an increase in the value of buildings on the tract from \$650 to \$2,150.⁵ This substantial increase suggests that the house built by William Brown was larger and more elaborate than the one his father occupied. The quality of workmanship in his house can still be seen today in the well-preserved Greek Revival details. In December 1851 William Brown insured his new house with the Schoharie County Mutual Insurance Company of New York for \$2,000 for an annual premium of two dollars.⁶

Brown, his wife, their five children, and the thirty or so slaves he owned farmed the land and raised a variety of livestock.⁷ By 1850 Brown's land included 800 acres, with 650 of those acres in production. The total value of the farm was \$10,300, including farm implements. The value of his livestock was \$1,850 and consisted of eleven horses, eighteen milk cows, four oxen, thirty-two cattle, eighty-five sheep, and sixty swine. A wide variety of crops were grown including wheat, Indian corn, oats, hay, wool, flax, flaxseed, and tobacco. Vegetables such as beans, peas, and sweet potatoes also were raised. One thousand pounds of butter and seventy-five pounds of beeswax and honey were produced.⁸

By 1860 the value of the farm had increased to \$35,400 and consisted of eight hundred improved and six hundred unimproved acres. The number of livestock remained the same with the exception of the sheep, which decreased from eighty-five to forty-eight in number. Indian corn and tobacco production increased, but the quantity of flax and flax seed decreased from three hundred to one hundred pounds, and eighteen to three bushels respectively. The production of beeswax and honey also dropped dramatically, from seventy-five pounds to five pounds of beeswax and ten pounds of honey.⁹

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The Mount Fair farm was located on the route of the Brown's Gap Turnpike, which was constructed in 1805-1806 and later improved as part of Virginia's internal improvement program during the antebellum period. On 1 March 1853 an act passed by the Virginia General Assembly incorporated the Brown's Gap Turnpike Company, with an appropriation of \$10,800 to help finance the turnpike. The act directed the company to build a "turnpike road from some point on the Rockingham turnpike in the county of Rockingham by way of Port Republic, and through Brown's Gap to some point on the Central R.R. in the county of Albemarle."¹⁰ The turnpike was built, but at a cost of \$23,000. It began at Mechum's River Post Office in Albemarle County, passed through Brown's Gap, then through Port Republic to Harrisonburg.¹¹ William Brown was interested in the project because the turnpike passed by Mount Fair. He became one of the original shareholders on 3 May 1853, when he purchased two shares of stock at a cost of \$25 each. He soon became one of many disappointed stockholders when in 1860 the turnpike was sold for \$1,800, probably because it failed to make a profit.¹² Today a portion of State Route 810 is part of the original turnpike.

At his death in 1876 William T. Brown willed the 380 acres that he called "Mt. Fair" to his wife Mary Ann Brown for her use. At her death the property was to descend to his daughter Lucy C. Brown and her children. Lucy Brown died in 1925 without heirs, however, so N. B. Early, W. B. Bibb and J. W. Early--the heirs of Sarah T. Early and Mary S. Bibb, sisters of Lucy C. Brown--inherited the property. N. B. Early and W. B. Bibb conveyed their two-thirds of the property to the third heir, J. W. Early, who left it to his wife Willie M. Early at his death. She sold Mount Fair to Edmund S. Campbell in 1930. Twenty years later Catherine Campbell, the widow of Edmund Campbell, sold the 342-acre farm to James S. Carpenter, who in turn sold it to John E. Sheridan in 1952. It remains in the Sheridan family and is now occupied by Philip and Mary Sheridan.¹³

Although the tract has been reduced to seventy-eight acres and is no longer farmed, the house and outbuildings have retained many original details. Mount Fair's integrity is also enhanced by the rural, unspoiled setting that continues to surround the complex.

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1. Pierre Crosby, survey of Mount Fair, 1982. File No. 02-97, Archives, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Va. (DHR); Mary Rawlings, Ante-Bellum Albemarle (Charlottesville, Va: The People's National Bank of Charlottesville, Virginia, 1935), 47.
2. F. H. Boyd Coons, "Benjamin Brown Sr. of Brown's Cove Albemarle Co., Virginia. A Brief Survey of Some of His Descendants and Their Buildings, 1984," Architectural Survey File 02-97, DHR.
3. Edgar Woods, History of Albemarle County, Virginia (Harrisonburg, Va: C. J. Carrier Company, 1978), 153, 367.
4. Coons, 73.
5. Auditor of Public Accounts. Land Tax Books. Albemarle County. 1845-1860. Virginia State Library and Archives. Richmond, Va. (VSL&A).
6. William T. Brown, Correspondence. Brown MSS, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.
7. Ibid. The papers include a receipt dated 1843 paid to the Sheriff of Albemarle Co. for revenue on "17 Blks, ... C and P Levy on 1 Wht. & 16 Blacks."
8. United States Census. Virginia. Agriculture Schedules. Albemarle County. 1850;1860. VSL&A.
9. Ibid., 1860, VSL&A.
10. Board of Public Works, Turnpike Company Records, Brown's Gap Turnpike Company, Correspondence, 1853-1858, 1860, VSL&A; Board of Public Works, Annual Report of the Board of Public Works to the General Assembly of Virginia, 1857-1859. Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1857-1859, VSL&A.

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11. Newton Bond Jones, "Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, 1819-1860 (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1959), 180.

12. Ibid.; Brown's Gap Turnpike Company, Correspondence, VSL&A.

13. Coons, 73.

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Board of Public Works. Turnpike Company Records. Brown's Gap Turnpike Company correspondence. 1853-1858, 1860. VSL&A.

Coons, F. H. Boyd. "Benjamin Brown Sr. of Brown's Cove Albemarle Co., Virginia. A Brief Survey of some of his Descendants and Their Outbuildings, 1984." Architectural Survey File 02-97. DHR.

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Jones, Newton Bond. "Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, 1819-1860." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1950.

Rawlings, Mary. Ante-bellum Albemarle. Charlottesville, Va.: The People's National Bank of Charlottesville, Virginia, 1935.

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United States Census. Virginia. Agriculture Schedules. Albemarle County. 1850;1860. VSL&A.

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Harrisonburg, Va.: C. J. Carrier Company, 1978.

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UTM REFERENCES

- A. 17/703680/4226790
- B. 17/703720/4226500
- C. 17/703380/4226170
- D. 17/703240/4226350
- E. 17/703280/4226420
- F. 17/703020/4226860
- G. 17/703570/4226890
- H. 17/703580/4226790

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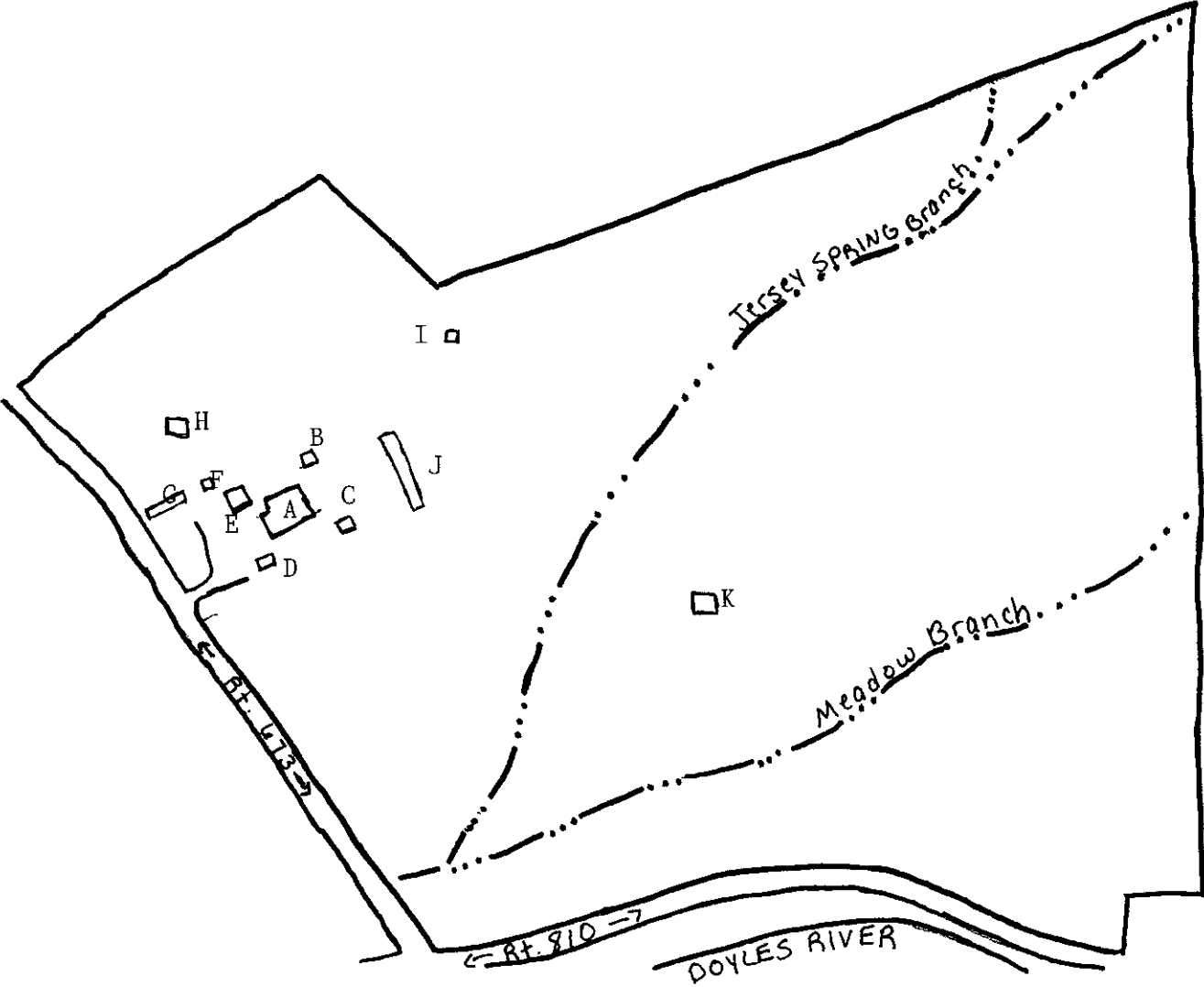
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

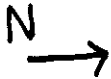
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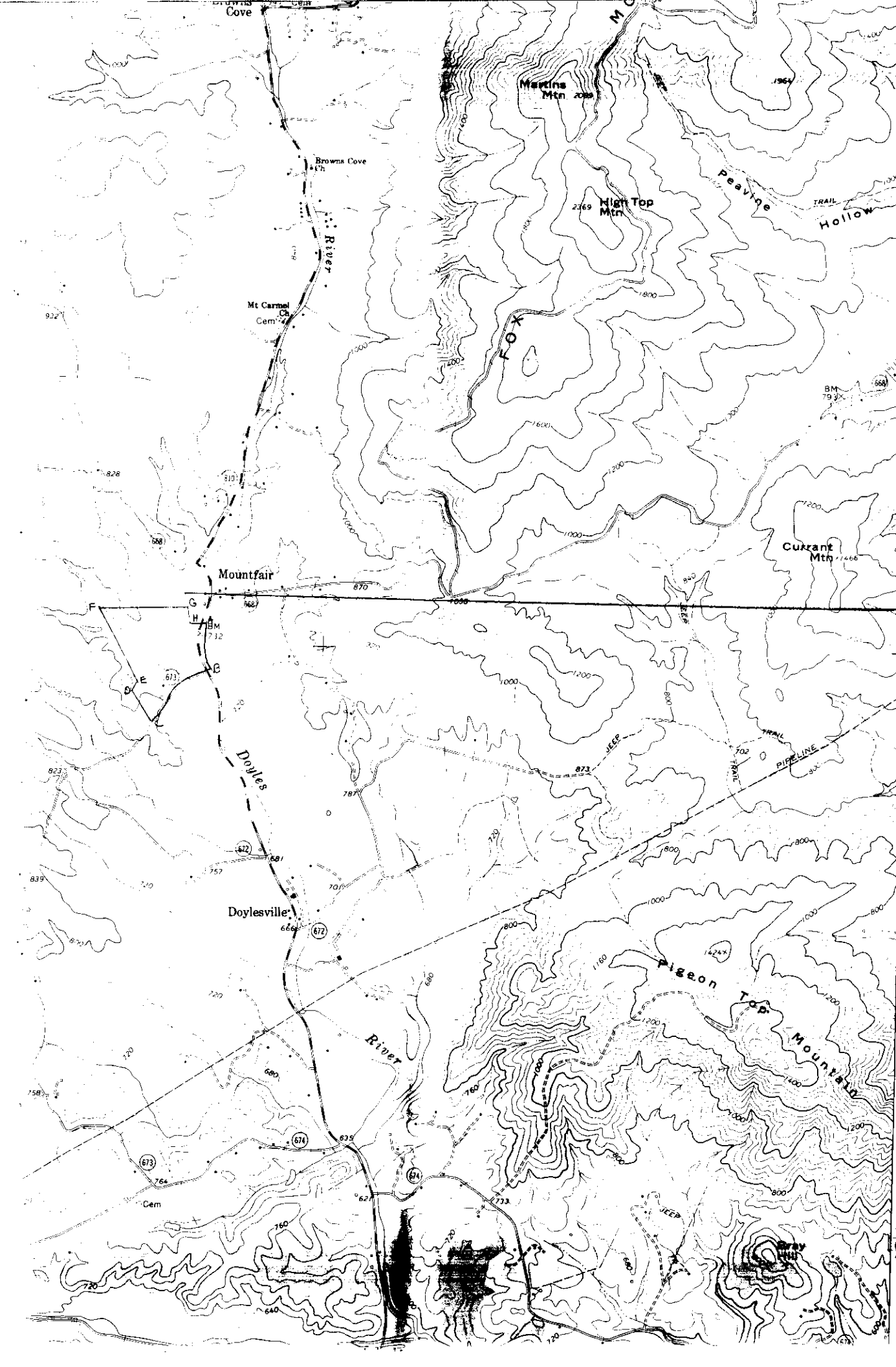
MOUNT FAIR
Albemarle County

- A. Main House
- B. Detached Kitchen
- C. Icehouse
- D. Garage N/C
- E. Shed N/C
- F. Corncrib N/C
- G. Horse barn N/C
- H. Brown Family Cemetery
- I. Springhouse and Site of Spring
- J. Site of Slave Quarters
- K. Slave Cemetery



NOT TO SCALE





4230
4228
4227
4226
4225
4224

(FREE UNION)
5280 ft NE

- Mount Fair
02-97
- 10 A. 17 | 703680 | 4
 - B. 17 | 703720 | 4
 - C. 17 | 703380 | 4
 - D. 17 | 703240 | 4
 - E. 17 | 703280 | 4
 - F. 17 | 703020 | 4
 - G. 17 | 703570 | 4
 - H. 17 | 703580 | 4

170 000 FEET
(NORTH)
4223000 M.