

VLR-10/18/95 NRHP-4/26/96

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classifications, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

I. Name of Property

historic name Brandon Plantation
other names/site number VDHR File No. 41-157

2. Location

street & number SR 697 500' W of jct. w/SR 696 not for publication N/A
city or town Alton vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Halifax code 083 zip code 24520

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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
X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally X statewide _____ Locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Julie Schmick 12-19-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Virginia Department 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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 Keeper Date
of Action

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance ca. 1800-1850

Significant Dates ca. 1850

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Day, Thomas (attrib.)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreege of Property 141 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	667460	4049640	2	17	668200 4050210
3	17	668650	4049960	4	17	668260 4048950

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian
organization Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources date August 1995
street & number 221 Governor Street telephone 804-786-3143
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Brandon Plantation, Ltd., John R. Brandon, Agent
street & number 1212 North Fairwater Drive telephone 804-489-2000
city or town Norfolk state VA zip code 23508

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Brandon Plantation is a southern Virginia farmstead containing two contributing buildings: a two-part vernacular farmhouse built ca. 1800 and ca. 1842, and a ca. 1800 kitchen/slave house. On the property are seven non-contributing, mid-twentieth-century farm buildings. The house is currently being studied for restoration. The restoration of the outbuilding is essentially complete.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Brandon Plantation is situated in the gently rolling hills of southwest Halifax County, in the area between the Dan River and the North Carolina Border. Originally a much larger tract, the present plantation consists of 141 acres just south of U.S. Route 58 and west of county road 696. Brandon Creek is on the western edge of the tract. The property is a mixture of open pasture, orchard, and wooded areas.

The principal historic resources of the property are a two-part, frame vernacular farmhouse and a frame kitchen/slave quarter outbuilding. The farmhouse underwent an extensive remodeling and modernization in the early 1960s but preserves a significant degree of architectural integrity. The earliest section of the farmhouse (Phase I) is a single-pile, three-bay, gable-roof dwelling erected ca. 1800. Attached to the east end is a two-bay, ca. 1842 section (Phase II). Phase I began with a three-bay facade and exterior-end chimneys. The east chimney of Phase I is encased between the side walls of Phase I and Phase II. The west chimney is built of rubble stone up to the first story and then irregular four-course American bond to the stack which is stuccoed. The similarity of the chimney brickwork and its stuccoed stack to the brickwork of the chimney on the east end of Phase II suggests that upper portion of the Phase I chimney is a rebuilding or heightening, carried out near the time Phase II was constructed. Phase I may have begun as a one-and-a-half-story structure but the roof framing has not been examined in sufficient detail to confirm this speculation.

Phase II is slightly deeper than Phase I and has a higher roofline. It has a side-passage plan with the stair rising in the southeast corner of the passage. The passage itself is relatively wide and thus probably was used as a living space as well as for circulation. Original first-floor 9/9 window sashes and 6/9 second-floor window sashes, set in plain original frames, are intact on Phase II.

The most significant architectural features of Phase II, and indeed of the whole house, are the interior details attributed to Thomas Day, a well-known black cabinetmaker from Milton, North Carolina, a town about six miles to the south. These include two yellow pine marbled mantels, one in the parlor and one in the chamber above. Each of the mantels is distinguished by a wide serpentine frieze below the mantel shelf, a signature of Day's work. The frieze itself is supported on pilaster strips, each ornamented with a pair of channels. The marbleizing--gray with blue veining--likely was executed by Samuel Shelton, also from Milton, who advertised his talents for "Fancy and House-Painting" in the *Milton Gazette and Roanoke Advertiser* in 1830.

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

Shelton may also have marbled the parlor baseboards which are similarly treated. The passage baseboards and the stair steps are also marbled but have been painted over.

Another feature likely executed by Day is the stair stringer which has simple scrolled brackets similar to ones found in documented Day houses in the vicinity. Two other mantels probably executed by Day are in the Phase I section, one in the east second-floor chamber and one on the fireplace immediately below. Except that they have plain rather than serpentine friezes, the mantels are nearly identical to the Phase II mantels. Three of the four mantels were removed and stored during a 1960s remodeling but have been returned to their former locations by the present owner. The Phase II parlor mantel has remained in its original location.

Other early features of the Phase II interior include five of the original seven paneled doors, and original pine flooring on the second floor. The oak flooring on the first floor of Phase II dates from the 1960s remodeling and covers original pine flooring. Original cast-iron butt hinges and lock and keeper remain on the parlor and chamber doors. A closet in the first-floor passage retains its original cast-iron hinges and lock. In the attic is common rafter roof framing with collar beams and early sheathing boards. The attic is reached by an enclosed winder stair ascending from the south end of the second-floor passage, now used for a bathroom. Except for the mantels, the interior of Phase II is very plain as would be expected in a mid-19th-century vernacular house. There are no chair rails or cornices. The panel doors are quite simple as are the architrave door frames and window frames. A small bit of refinement is the use of panels below the parlor windows.

The extensive remodeling and modernization of the 1960s included the sheathing of the exterior in aluminum siding and the addition of an anemic four-post portico to the facade of Phase II. The center door in the north front of Phase I was sided over. The remodeling of the first-floor interior of Phase I resulted in the removal of the partition wall and stair, creating a large kitchen/family room. Modern ceiling joists were installed and the fireplaces rebuilt. The result is an essentially modern space within the historic shell, although, as noted earlier, one of the Day mantels has been reinstalled on the east fireplace. Another later change, of uncertain date, is the addition of a one-story enclosed porch on the rear.

At the time of this writing, the house is undergoing extensive architectural examination in preparation for a scholarly restoration. These plans call for the removal of the 1960s portico and the reconstruction in its place of a small mid-19th-century porch based on local precedents. The original center door of Phase I will be reopened. The aluminum siding will be removed and new weatherboarding will be installed matching surviving sections of original weatherboarding. The 1960s dry wall and acoustical tile will be removed from the interior and replaced with real plaster. Original plaster will be retained where possible. The modern sash on Phase I will be removed and replaced with reproductions of the original, fragments of which are in storage on the property. Later paint on the Phase II passage will be removed from the woodwork and original marbling is to be restored or reproduced.

The kitchen/slave house stands immediately to the west of the dwelling house and is probably contemporary with Phase I. The one-story building is set on fieldstone piers and has a gable

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

roof. It is divided into two rooms and has an enclosed stair in the northeast corner leading to the loft which has a partition dividing it into two sections. The quarter-sawn yellow pine flooring throughout is original. A central stone chimney with brick stack serves the two lower rooms. The north fireplace retains its original mantel shelf and is sheathed with horizontal yellow-pine planking. A stone-lined root cellar, accessible by a hatch, is below the north room floor. The south fireplace, originally the cooking fireplace, retains its original wrought-iron crane. The south room was never sheathed in planking; the exposed studs and backs of the old weatherboarding retain traces of whitewash. Black, sooty residue from the cooking clings to the ceiling, the studs, and the backside of the siding. Of the seven doors in the building (three interior and four exterior) six are original and retain their wrought-iron straps and H-L hinges. The strap hinges have the stamped name "PERKS." On the south wall are preserved two rare board-and-batten sliding hatches, probably added in the 1840s. These hatches are used instead of sash windows.

A distinctive feature of the building is the unusually deep soffit on the east elevation cornice which creates a shelter for the openings. The soffit is not encased, the joists are exposed. The deep soffit contrasts with the ordinary box cornice on the south elevation and gives the building an asymmetrical profile.

The kitchen/slave house formerly stood in deteriorated condition but has undergone a careful restoration in the past year. The roof has been covered with traditional round-butt singles matching an original found in the building. The walls have been patched with new weatherboarding matching the early weatherboarding. Every effort has been made to retain significant early fabric where possible in order to preserve the antiquarian flavor of the building. The interior is not to be modernized in any way but rather is being left in its antique state to serve as an important artifact of early rural life in the region.

Immediately to the north of the kitchen/slave house is an early stone-lined well, a contributing structure. To the west of the kitchen/slave house are three twentieth-century non-contributing farm buildings: a very long farm machinery shed, a masonry block workshop, and a metal-clad multi-purpose building. To the north of the dwelling house are four non-contributing twentieth-century tobacco barns. Brandon Plantation, like most plantations of the first half of the nineteenth century, even medium-size ones, probably had a full complement of outbuildings, including smokehouse, dairy, sheds, and slave quarters. The archaeological sites of these buildings likely remain undisturbed although to date no archaeological survey of the property has been undertaken to verify their existence. On the northern edge of the property, on a wooded knoll overlooking Brandon Creek is located the Brandon family cemetery which is enclosed by an early stone wall. The cemetery is a contributing site.

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This southern Piedmont plantation was originally the homestead of the Brandon family who settled in the area in the mid-eighteenth century. The principal resource is a two-part vernacular farmhouse built in 1800 and enlarged ca. 1842. The enlargement includes noteworthy interior woodwork: plain but forthright 1840s mantels and stair attributed to Thomas Day, the well-known black cabinetmaker of nearby Milton, North Carolina. Day has achieved national attention as a symbol of successful black entrepreneurship in a time and region where the majority of his fellow African-Americans were legally enclaved. An equally important feature of the property is the rare, carefully preserved ca. 1800 kitchen/slave house with an unusual extended cornice. This outbuilding is an example of the fast-disappearing service buildings that once were a prevalent feature of the Southern agrarian landscape. It and the earliest portion of the dwelling house were built during the ownership of William Brandon. The section with the Thomas Day woodwork likely was constructed after 1841 when the property was inherited by Brandon's son, William Byrd Brandon.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Brandon family traces its origins in the region to 1746 when Francis Brandon purchased land in the Halifax County portion of what was then Lunenburg County from the Byrd family of Westover, Charles City County.¹ In 1750 a William Brandon purchased land in the area from William Byrd III.² In 1758 David Brandon and William Brandon were appointed "processioners" by the vestry of Antrim Parish, the Anglican Parish that formerly incorporated all of Halifax County.³ Although kinsmen, the precise relationship of these various Brandons is uncertain.

In his will filed July 16, 1778, David Brandon left the "land and plantation whereon I now live, containing three hundred and thirty acres," to his eldest son William.⁴ It was this William Brandon who most probably built the oldest part of the present dwelling house on Brandon Plantation as well as the existing kitchen/slave house. The general construction date of the house and outbuilding, ca. 1800, has been determined by stylistic evidence rather than documentation and could vary at least a decade.

William Brandon, known as William Brandon, Sr., died in 1841 leaving his property, to his son William Byrd Brandon.⁵ Because stylistic characteristics of the east section of the dwelling house suggest a date of 1840 or later, it is reasonable to assume that this portion was added by William Byrd Brandon soon after he received title to the place.

The Brandon family typifies the middling gentry who occupied Halifax County in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were slave owners and lived in reasonable prosperity, yet they were not on the level of such leading families as the Bruces of Halifax County who lived in architectural splendor and owned thousands of acres worked by scores of slaves. The Brandons' dwelling illustrates the type of housing inhabited by people of their rank: a commodious vernacular building of little pretension. Although twentieth-century alterations

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

have compromised the integrity of the interior of the ca. 1800 section, the ca. 1842 section retains its most significant features.

The mantels and stair of the ca. 1842 section set the house apart from other examples of rural antebellum architecture by being attributed to the shop of a noted black cabinetmaker and carpenter, Thomas Day. While the attribution is based primarily on stylistic evidence, Day is known to have worked for the Brandon family. In an 1844 estate accounting of the estate of Francis Brandon, the two executors, William and Jessee (sic) Brandon, notes a payment of \$14.00 to Thomas Day.⁶

Day was a free black who operated a cabinetmaking shop in Milton, Caswell County, North Carolina, a hamlet just a few miles away from Brandon Plantation. He became an established craftsman in the second decade of the nineteenth century. By the time of his death in 1861 he and his assistants had produced woodwork for houses throughout the Milton region, in both North Carolina and Virginia. His shop also produced quantities of strongly built furniture. Day's work, although provincial interpretations of sophisticated Greek Revival and Empire designs, is bold and self-assured, and has a personality that sets it apart from other work of the period. He made extensive use of strong S curves in both furniture and woodwork. The serpentine friezes of the Brandon Plantation mantels are example of his penchant for curves. The mantels are also interesting for preserving their original marbleized finish, probably executed by Samuel Shelton, a painter also from Milton.

The ca. 1800 kitchen/slave house on the property is one of the better preserved domestic outbuildings of its period in the region. A rare feature is the overhanging eaves on its east side, a treatment not observed in any other outbuildings in that area of Virginia. Also of interest are the rare batten hatches used in place of windows on the south end. The building is currently undergoing a scholarly restoration. A similar restoration is planned for the main house following completion of research and examination under the sponsorship of the current owner, a descendant of the original owners.

From the standpoint of historic geography Brandon Plantation was situated directly in the path of several important historical patterns of development. The first included the opening and settlement of southside Virginia by Governor Spotswood in 1720, the General Assembly's Tax Exemption for southside settlers in 1738, and the implementation of one of the earliest successful colonial development schemes--that of William Byrd II. The land which constituted Brandon Plantation along with other adjacent Brandon land was purchased from the estate of William Byrd, land which he had procured after participating in the survey of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina. Moreover, Lunenburg court records note that in 1750, Thomas Brandon and others partitioned the court for the building of a road from the mouth of county line creek (Milton, N.C.) to Boyd's Ferry (South Boston).⁷ This road would probably have run through or alongside Brandon Plantation.

The second was the final phase of the southern campaign of the American Revolution in 1781. This phase included the "Retreat to the Dan" by General Nathaniel Greene with Lord Cornwallis in pursuit, followed shortly by Greene's return to Guilford Court House and the strategically

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successful battle there. This maneuver "led--indeed forced Cornwallis to Yorktown, where the power of Britain in the American states was shattered."⁸ Carrington in his History of Halifax county writes that "It appears that Greene and Cornwallis passed through Halifax County twice in the month of March 1781. The armies followed what is known as the 'River Road' from Milton to Blank's Ferry (Irwin's Ford), where Greene seems to have crossed and recrossed on the track of the southward-moving British army."⁹ The road to the Dan taken by General Greene and Cornwallis may very well have been the one petitioned for by Thomas Brandon and noted above. The proximity of Brandon Plantation to this Southern Campaign explains the levies on it and other plantations for forage, boats, rifles, horses, etc., and the fact that a least one of the Brandon men, Francis Brandon, Jr., joined the 2nd Virginia Regiment of Volunteers and went down to participate in the Battle of Guilford Court House.¹⁰ Later that same year, Brandon was detailed to guard the prisoners taken at Yorktown.¹¹

The third was the development of the agrarian slave economy leading up to the Civil War. Brandon Plantation was situated in the area where the regularized production of bright leaf tobacco was developed in the 1820s, an industry requiring slave labor. The Brandons had numerous slaves and most likely used them for tobacco growing, resulting the in the prosperity that enabled the construction of the ca. 1842 wing of the residence. The kitchen/slave house is also an artifact of the slave economy as is the walled cemetery with its labor-intensive construction.

It is ironic that the surviving physical parts of the property which contribute most to its historic significance are the kitchen/slave house, associated with the institution of slavery, and the artistic work of a free black, Thomas Day, noteworthy as an example of an early triumph of American free enterprise.

ENDNOTES

1. Lunenburg County Deed Book 1. 1746.
2. Lunenburg County Deed Book 2.
3. Vestry Book of Antrim Parish, November 1758.
4. It is not established whether David Brandon's son William is the same William Brandon who was appointed a "processioner" by the Antrim Parish Vestry.
5. Halifax County Will Book 21, p. 478.
6. Research notes by Marilyn S. Melchor, 1995. In Brandon Plantation file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources
7. Lunenburg County Order Book Number 2, pp. 350-3, April 1750.
8. Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 770 (New York, 1952).
9. Wirt Johnson Carrington, *History of Halifax County (Virginia)*, ((Richmond, 1924).

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

10. Janice L. Abercrombie and Richard Slatten, *Virginia Publick Claims--Halifax County*, (Athens, Ga., undated). Revolutionary War Pension Application File for Francis Brandon, Jr.; U.S. National Archives.

11. *Ibid.*

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**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Halifax County Deed Books for all deed transfers

Halifax County Will Books 19, 209, 21

Halifax County Marriage Bonds, Book 1

Lunenburg County Deed Books 1, 2

Milton Gazette and Roanoke Advertiser, 1830.

Vestry Book of Antrim Parish (Episcopal).

Lyons, Mary E., *Master of Mahogany: Tom Day, Free Black Cabinetmaker* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994).

_____, *Thomas Day Cabinetmaker*, Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1975.

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Section 10 Page 9

**Brandon Plantation
Halifax County, Virginia**

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

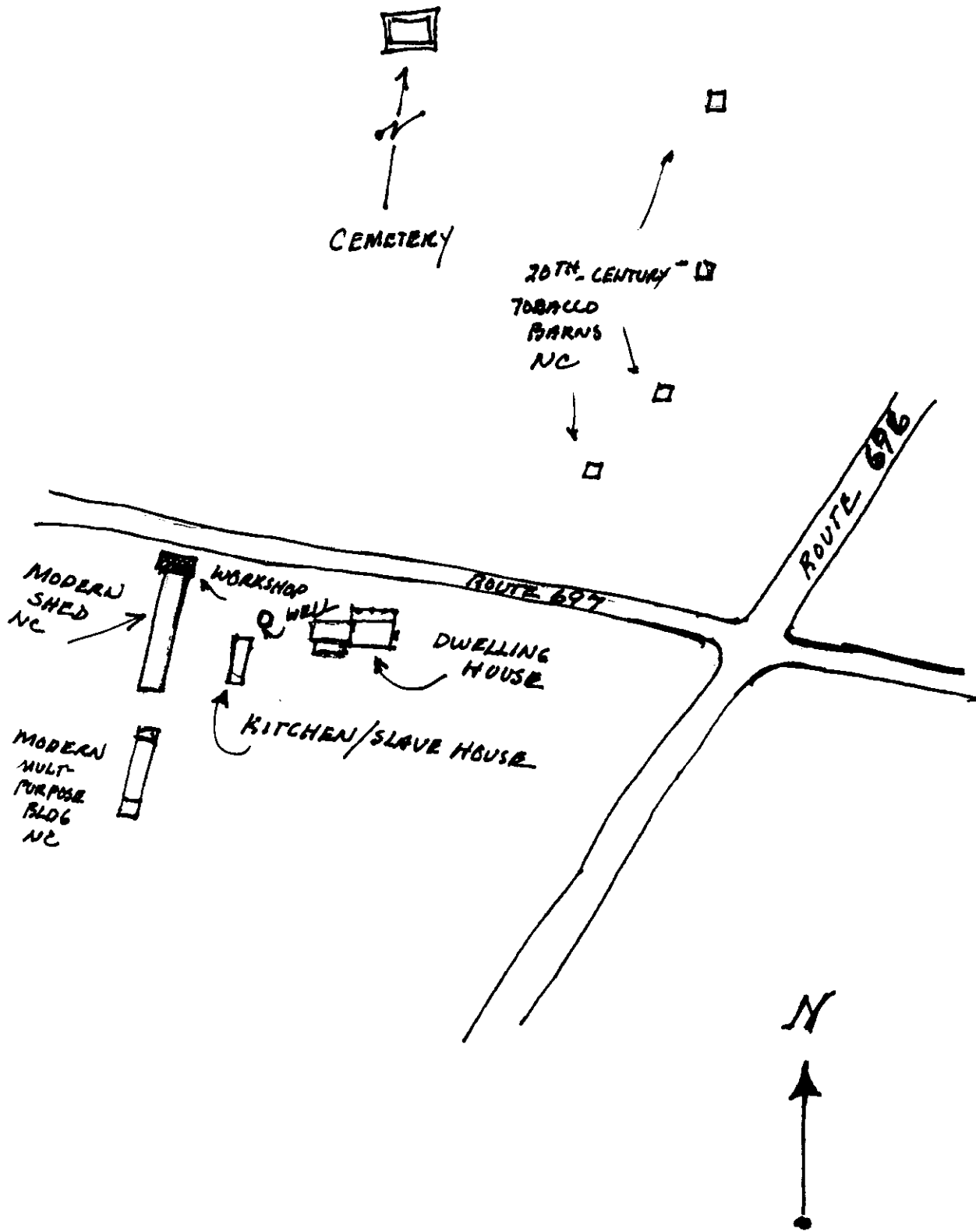
Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at Point A (UTM Reference point 17/667460/4049640) where SR 697 crosses Brandon Creek, proceed northeasterly along the southern and eastern banks of Brandon Creek to Point B (UTM Reference point 17/668360/4050100), thence eastsoutheasterly to Point C (UTM Reference point 17/668480/4050060), thence southeasterly to Point D (UTM Reference point 17/668520/4049970), thence easterly to Point E (UTM Reference point 17/668650/4049960), thence southwesterly to Point F (UTM Reference point 17/668260/4048950), thence northerly to Point G (UTM Reference point 17/668210/4049420), thence westerly and northwesterly along the northern right-of-way of SR 697 to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include all of that portion of Brandon Plantation within the ownership of Brandon Plantation, Ltd., John R. Brandon, agent. The 141 acres contain all of the contributing resources and maintain a rural context for this historic rural plantation.

BRANDON PLANTATION, HALIFAX COUNTY (41-147)⁵

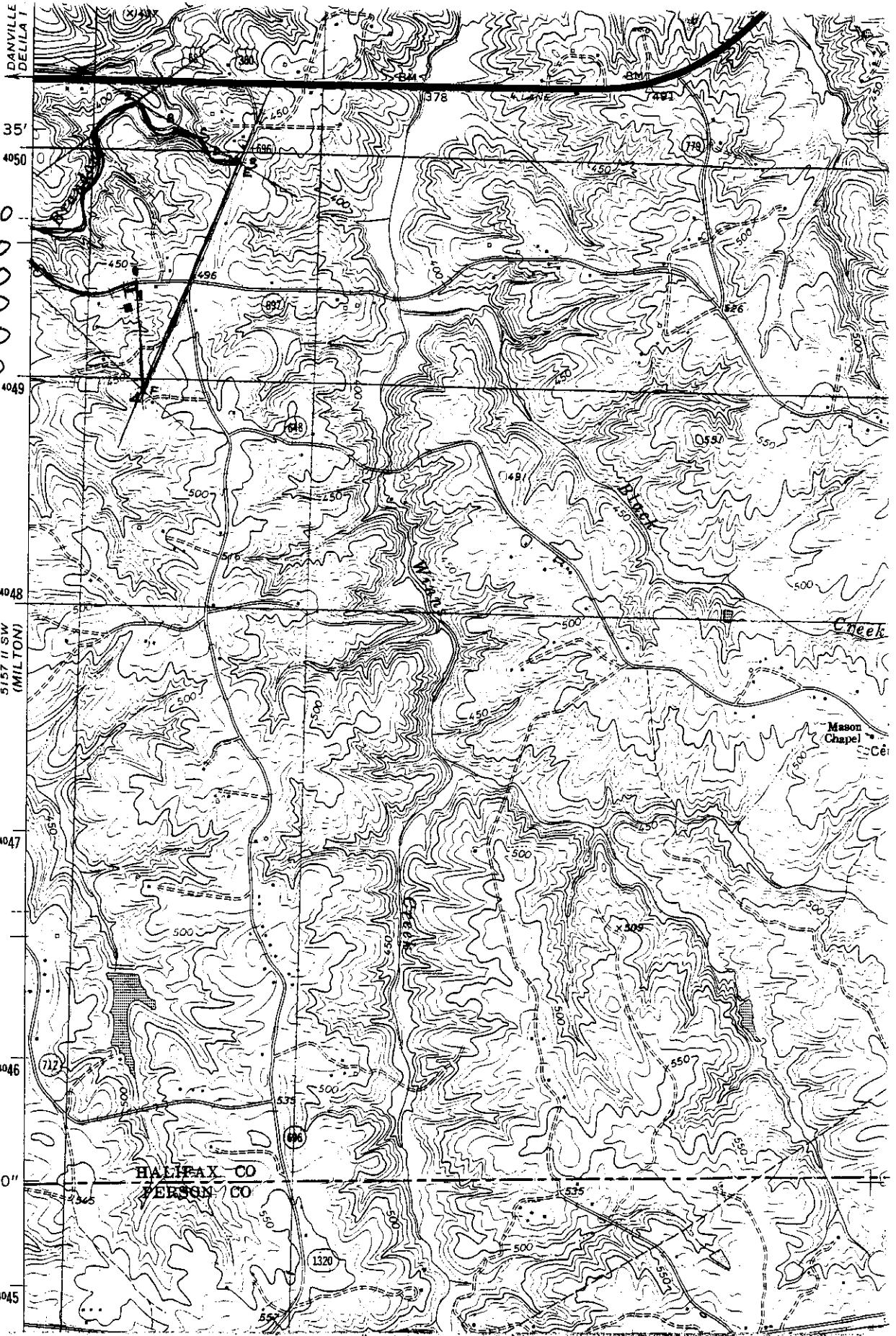


BRANDON PLANTATION
Halifax County VA

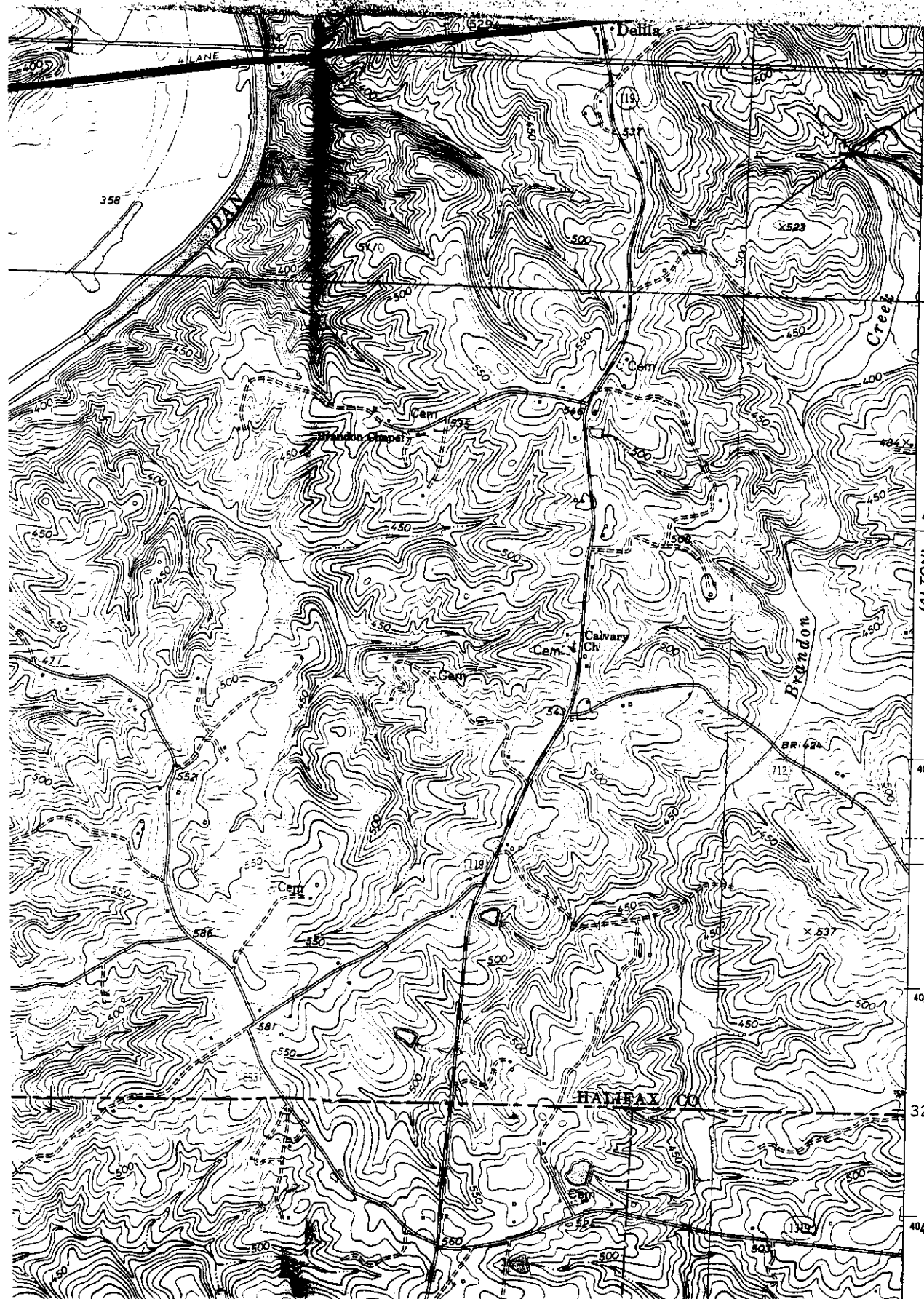
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- B-17/668360/4050100
- C-17/668480/4050060
- D-17/668520/4049970
- E-17/668650/4049960
- F-17/668260/4048950
- G-17/668210/4049420

041-0157



ALTON QUAD



BRANDON PLANTATION
Halifax County VA

UTM REFERENCE
POINT A :
17/667460/404964

4049
4048
4047
4046
4045
(ALTON)
5157 II SE

MILTON, VA - NC
QUAD