

VLR-3/17/04 NRHP-5/19/04

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 classification, 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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Contentment

other names/site number DHR File No. 082-0062

2. Location

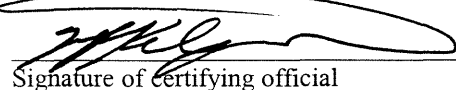
street & number 253 Contentment Lane not for publication

city or town Mt. Crawford vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Rockingham code 165 Zip 22841

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official

3/30/04  
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  
 Date removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_





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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
 MILITARY

**Period of Significance**  1823-1864

**Significant Dates**  1823  
 1864

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
 N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**  N/A

**Architect/Builder**  UNKNOWN

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(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**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University- James Madison University, City of Harrisonburg  
 Other

Name of repository:  Rockingham County Historical Society

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property**  3.25 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing  
1  17/680300/4245560    2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_    4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 See continuation sheet.

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**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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Dr. Sarah W. Foster, Prof. of Anthropology and Sociology; Dr. John T. Foster, Prof. of Anthropology

Organization: Florida A & M University date Aug. 21, 2003  
street & number: P. O. Box 414 telephone (850) 385-9094

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32302

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**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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name Mrs. Louise Cash Whitmer

street & number 253 Contentment Lane telephone (540) 433-1705

city or town Mt. Crawford state VA zip code 22841

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet**

**Contentment  
Rockingham County, VA**

**Section number 7 Page 1**

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Contentment is a large symmetrical two-story, Federal-style house situated on a small knoll one mile southeast of Mt. Crawford in Rockingham County, Virginia, in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. The dwelling is in fine condition and has undergone few changes since its construction in 1823. Bricks for Contentment were fired on site and laid in a Flemish-bond pattern on all four elevations. The five-bay house has a brick foundation and a pair of slightly-projecting interior-end chimneys placed at each end of the standing-seam metal gable roof with a brick parapet between each pair. The interior has a central-hall plan and boasts thirteen-foot ceilings and much original woodwork, including nine mantels, each in a different style. Most doors, moldings, double-hung wood-sash windows, and wainscoting have been preserved along with door trim with bull's-eye corner blocks. Contentment is one of the finest examples of the Federal style in Rockingham County.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**Exterior**

Contentment retains much of its nineteenth-century appearance—an appearance shaped by bricks, chimneys, cornices, and windows. The walls are three bricks thick laid in a Flemish-bond pattern on all four elevations. The brick foundation is eight bricks in height and is approximately twenty-four inches in depth. Four slightly-projecting interior-end chimneys, two at each gable end, stand over fifty feet in height, serve nine fireplaces, and tower above the house. A corbelled brick cornice extends along the east and west elevations. The five-bay house is symmetrical with two windows flanking a central door with a four-light transom, and the second-story openings align with the first. The nine-over-nine double-hung wood-sash windows feature wood surrounds and lintels flanked by bull's eye blocks. Most windows contain their original glass and wood sills.

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The house is rectangular measuring thirty-four feet by forty-eight feet. The extraordinary size of the house is matched by its height. With thirteen-foot ceilings on two floors and a high foundation, Contentment is larger than some nineteenth century public buildings in the Valley.

Diamond-shaped attic vents with wood frame molding surrounded by bricks placed in a circular pattern are found between the chimneys on both gable ends of the house. Those in place are not original as indicated by an area that was obviously bricked in sometime after the house was built. The original woodwork survives in a corner of the attic and suggests that rotting led to its removal. Two hip-roofed porches are found on the east and west elevations and were likely added during the late 1800s. The porch on the west elevation has a central cross-gable supported by six slender Doric columns, while the one on the east elevation is supported by four slender square columns.

**Interior Description**

In the basement the summer beam, eleven-by-eleven inches square, runs the length of the house. The posts are hand hewn and floor joists are milled and mortised into the summer beam with twenty-four-inch centers. The sills rest securely on the foundation ledge. The joists are generally found to be running parallel to the sills; however, the joists run the opposite way under the hallway so that the floorboards can run perpendicular to the rooms to the left and right. The basement was at one time a finished space, partitioned into rooms. The ceiling exhibits evidence of lath work, and the walls were plastered over the brick. The basement floor, which is now graveled, was once covered with wood flooring. A small firebox with a hearth suggests that it served as a warming hearth. The cooking was probably done in an outbuilding on the property.

On the first floor, a wide central hall extends the depth of the house, with two rooms on each side. About seven feet above the hall floor a railing flush with the wall contains large metal

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hooks. The hooks were probably used to hang chairs when the hall was used for social occasions. Interior partitions are framed and plastered, while outside walls are plastered over brick. The pine floors are original to the house. The house has nine mantels, each with a different design. The woodwork in the parlor, the first-floor southwest room, is unusual for a valley home. It has wide baseboards, wide crown molding, and fluted door and window trim with bulls-eye corner blocks. The parlor is the only room in the house that does not have wainscoting.

A door at the end of the hall leads to a boxed staircase that is not visible from the hallway. The staircase to the upper floors contains three sets of stairs and two landings. It is apparent that these stairs were arranged to suit the family's need for social gatherings. This unusual design of the stairway is another distinctive feature of Contentment.

On the second floor are four bedrooms divided by a central hall and a small staircase leading to the attic. A fifth bedroom was renovated in the 1960s to create space for two bathrooms. Three closets were also added to the second-floor bedrooms. The door that leads to the attic has six raised panels like most of the doors throughout the house. The summerbeam runs the length of the attic with the floor joists mortised into the beam. A standing-seam metal roof replaced Contentment's original wood-shingle roof.

In the early nineteenth century, a small room was added to the north exterior side of the house. It is believed to have served as an office either for the mill or the farm. Hand-hewn beams can be observed on the interior. The windows have been replaced and the exterior is clad in aluminum siding.

In the twentieth century, renovations to the rest of the house have been more superficial than structural. While rooms were modified to create bathrooms and a kitchen, care has been



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taken to preserve original flooring, wainscoting, and mantels. Green paint on the floors was removed in 1969, permitting the restoration of the original pine floor boards in seven rooms.

Two of the four outbuildings are located north of the house. One is a frame garage with a standing-seam metal pyramidal-hipped roof dating from the late 1940s or early 1950s, and the other is a wooden shed with an asphalt-shingle gable roof built in the early 1900s. The remaining two buildings, a kennel and a stable, were built in the 1980s.

**Landscape**

Contentment continues to be a part of a rural landscape nestled between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains in the Shenandoah Valley. The North River, a major tributary of the South Fork, is only a short distance away.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Contentment, a two-story brick Federal-style house in southern Rockingham County, Virginia, is nestled between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. One of the finest examples of a Federal-style house in Rockingham County, it was built in 1823 by Robert Grattan, Sr. as a showcase for one of the most prominent Scots-Irish families in the Shenandoah Valley.<sup>1</sup>

Contentment is also significant for its military history during the Civil War. On June 2-3, 1864 the house served as the headquarters of Confederate General John D. Imboden. Confederate forces were organized on the front lawn before the Battle of Piedmont on June 4. The South's defeat at Piedmont cost it over 1,500 casualties.<sup>2</sup> Again in October, 1864 Contentment was the staging place for another military conflict. As General Philip Sheridan destroyed thousands of the Valley's farms, Confederate troops under the command of General Jubal Early shadowed the withdrawing Federal forces. Early initiated a series of skirmishes that eventually culminated in a Confederate defeat at Cedar Creek, near Winchester. One of the major skirmishes began at Contentment on October 4. According to a military map, Southern units formed a line along the banks of the North River extending from the house across the hill less than a half mile away.<sup>3</sup> (See Attachment A.) From these positions, Confederate troops crossed the stream at the valley pike while other units forded the river near the house. General Wesley Merritt, a leading member of Sheridan's staff, reported from Mt. Crawford: "The enemy advanced and skirmishing took place along my entire line, lasting all day."<sup>4</sup>

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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Robert Grattan, Sr.'s father, John Grattan (circa 1720-1792), purchased the land in 1761. Originally from Northern Ireland, John was a miller by trade. Within a few years, he had built a store, a log cabin, and one of the first functioning flourmills in the Shenandoah Valley. As an ardent patriot, Grattan donated flour from his mill as part of the relief efforts for Boston's citizens during the British blockade of 1775. When Rockingham County was formed from Augusta County in 1777, John Grattan served as both judge and representative of the county in the Virginia House of Delegates.<sup>5</sup>

To oversee his business interests, John Grattan turned to his eldest daughter Catharine (1751-1830). By learning German from neighbors, she took an active role in selling merchandise to the Mennonite community. Her daughters, Agnes S. B. Gamble and Elizabeth W. Gamble, married Virginia Governor William H. Cabell and Attorney General of the United States William Wirt. Catharine's nephew and grandson recorded her accounts of growing up at Contentment.<sup>6</sup>

Major Robert Grattan, Sr. inherited the farm in 1792. Too young to serve in the American Revolution, Robert commanded a cavalry militia unit in the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. By serving on the staff of General "Light Horse" Harry Lee, he would leave a record of President Washington's actions during the Whiskey Rebellion.<sup>7</sup>

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In the next generation, the family was very politically active. In 1840, many prominent Democrats abandoned Martin Van Buren's candidacy for reelection. During the summer of that year, a former governor of Georgia, George R. Gilmer, met family members at Contentment to plan a strategy. Gilmer would later cast all of Georgia's electoral votes for William Henry Harrison. Here is Robert Grattan, Jr.'s account: "In the summer of 1840 George Gilmer and Franklin Minor and their wives met here, and we had many discussions as to the proper choice of President, between Gen. Harrison and Mr. Van Buren. The administration of Mr. Van Buren, had been so corrupt that many honest men, among the democrats" were unwilling to support him.<sup>8</sup>

Robert Grattan, Jr.'s sons resumed a tradition of military service. Charles and George R. Grattan served as officers in the Civil War. As the head of J.E.B. Stuart's artillery, Charles left several descriptions of the general's bravery in combat. His brother George served as a staff officer for Alfred H. Colquitt and left a published account of his unit's actions on the eve of the Battle of Antietam.<sup>9</sup>

In September 1864, General Philip Sheridan's orders to burn houses and barns in the Shenandoah Valley excluded the farms owned by widows. Robert Grattan's son had died in 1855, leaving the property to his wife. While this prevented the destruction of the house and outbuildings, it did not protect the home's contents from looting or the gristmill, which was burned. Some months earlier Confederate General John D. Imboden brought his Valley Brigade, the 18th and 23rd Cavalry, to Contentment. On the night of June 3, 1864, Imboden planned the organization of a small army. When Generals William E. Jones and John C. Vaughn joined him the following morning, they implemented the organization scheme in the fields in front of the dwelling.<sup>10</sup> Here is Imboden's account :

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“[On June 2, 1864], I was pressed so hard that I had to ...[retreat] to the south bank of the North river, at Mount Crawford, seventeen miles from Staunton, losing a few men killed and wounded during the afternoon. Hunter [U.S. general David] camped at Harrisonburg. I made a rather ostentatious display of a purpose to dispute seriously the passage of the river the next day, by ...[placing] some works on the hill tops [just west of Contentment] over looking the bridge and felling trees in the fords for several miles above and below.<sup>11</sup> “During the night about two thousand men, sent forward by General Jones, joined me. To my dismay I found they were not generally organized in bodies larger than battalions, and in companies and fragments of companies hastily collected from Southwestern Virginia, between Lynchburg and Tennessee, and in large part indifferently armed. Indeed, many of the men were convalescents taken from the hospitals, and furloughed dismounted cavalrymen who had gone home for a remount, and were taken possession of by General Jones wherever he could find them, and hurried by rail through Lynchburg and Staunton to the front. I spent the entire night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> in obtaining a list of all these small bodies of men, out of which by daybreak on the 4<sup>th</sup> I had composed, on paper, two brigades and assigned officers to their command. General Jones arrived at my headquarters [at Contentment] a little after sunrise, and on reviewing my operations on paper, he adopted them, and at an early hour in the morning, the various detachments were aggregated in their respective temporary brigades. During the day, General Vaughan, of Tennessee, with from six hundred to eight hundred of his greatly reduced brigade, also joined us. We now had a force of something over four thousand men, including one regular and excellent six gun battery, and one...artillery company of reserves, from Staunton, with five guns.<sup>12</sup>

Hunter, with eleven thousand superbly appointed troops of all arms, was only eight miles distant in our front, and [U.S. generals] Crook and Averill, with seven thousand more, only two day's march in our rear; the two bodies rapidly approaching each other, and we between them in the condition I have just described, and with no hope of further assistance. Obviously, our policy was to fight Hunter at the earliest moment and possibly defeat him, and then turn upon Crook and Averill and do the best we could.”<sup>13</sup>

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It is easy to hypothesize the appearance of General William E. Jones at Contentment since he was known for his prickly candor and disdain for fancy dress. A historian of the period described Jones as “a small, thin, black-eyed whiskered man; he dressed very plainly, bordering on shabbiness; never shaved, never in uniform, no insignia of office. He had a fine . . . voice; was misanthropic, despising parade and every man that indulged in it; never courting any man’s favor; speaking freely, if not curtly, to and of everybody.” The same source goes on to add, “He was cool in a fight, and the bravest of the brave.”<sup>14</sup>

To Imboden and Jones’s dismay, Hunter did not attack their small army but swung around it to the east. The Confederate forces organized at Contentment rushed to engage Union troops near Piedmont, just north of Waynesboro, on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1864. After the southerners beat back two assaults on their left, Union troops poured through a gap on one side of the Confederate army. Imboden describes what happened next: They “pierced the line at this point, and striking the right flank of our left wing, doubled the line back on itself, resulting in the wildest confusion and great loss to us. The brave and gallant Jones was instantly killed.” The defeat cost the Confederacy over 1,500 soldiers killed, wounded, and captured.<sup>15</sup>

In September 1864, Federal troops led by General Philip H. Sheridan defeated General Jubal Early’s army. Having chased the remnants of Early’s force into Augusta County, Sheridan implemented Grant’s orders to destroy the Shenandoah Valley’s ability to supply agricultural commodities to Lee’s army. “The Burning” as it is known began below Contentment and ran across the breadth of the Valley. As Sheridan systematically destroyed over 2,000 barns, his forces were harassed by Southern cavalry units. One of Sheridan’s chief aids, General Welsey Merritt, reported from Mt. Crawford, “The enemy advanced and skirmishing took place along my entire line, lasting all day.”<sup>16</sup> Maps of the period place Confederate regiments on the banks of the North River, running from the hill west of Contentment, along the fields for almost a half a mile, ending at the Grattan house.<sup>17</sup> From these positions, they launched a two pronged attack on Merritt’s units.

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Contentment is not only architecturally significant, being one of the finest examples of the Federal style in Rockingham County, but it also has the distinction of having more than one connection to the Civil War. A Confederate army was organized for combat there in June 1864, and then in October, it was the place where a skirmish began.

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**ENDNOTES**

1. The importance of the Grattan family is described in the works of John Wayland, C.E. May's *Life Under Four Flags in the North River Basin*, and the *Journals of the House of Delegates*.
2. John D. Imboden's article, "Fire, Sword, and the Halter," is reprinted in Gary W. Gallagher (ed.) *Annals of the Civil War*, 1994, 169-83.
3. *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 2 Plate Lxxxv, 31.
4. *War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. 43, 443.
5. *Journal of the House of Delegates, 1779*, 4, 36, 38, 74, and 59
6. The nephew was Robert Grattan, Jr. and the grandson was John Grattan Gamble. Robert's manuscript has already been cited. John Gamble's "Reminiscences of Major John Grattan" can be found in the archives of the Virginia Historical Society.
7. George R. Gilmer, *First Settlers of Upper Georgia* (Baltimore, Maryland: Clearfield Company, 1999), 31.
8. "Manuscript of Robert Grattan, Jr."
9. See George G. Grattan's "The Battle of Boonsboro Gap or South Mountain." A copy exists in the archives of James Madison University.
10. Imboden, 169-183.
11. *Ibid.*, 172.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Edward E. Pollard, *Southern History of the War*, 329.
15. Imboden, 173.
16. *War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. 43, 443.
17. *Ibid.* See Mt. Crawford in the map volume.



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**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES** (Continued):

U.S. War Department

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Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 1-128, U.S. Government Printing Office; Washington,  
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1937 *Historic Homes of Northern Virginia*. McClure Press, Staunton, VA.

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**Section 10 Page 14**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

This property at 253 Contentment Lane in Rockingham County, Virginia, is described on Rockingham County Parcel (Lot) 137 (A) L63 on page 450 in Deed Book 364. It also appears on Map #137 (A).

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated 3.25-acre parcel contains the house and outbuildings historically associated with the property since the early nineteenth century. The parcel was carved from the agricultural fields surrounding the house and curtilage and sold to Herbert B. and Louise Cash Whitmer in 1969.

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**CONTENTMENT**

**Rockingham County, Virginia  
VDHR File Number: 082-0062  
John T. Foster, photographer**

**Negatives Stored at the Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources Archives,  
Richmond, Va.**

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: West Elevation  
NEG. NO: 20908:7  
PHOTO: 1 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Mantel, Dining Room  
NEG. NO: 20908:2  
PHOTO: 7 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Southwest Elevation  
NEG. NO: 20908:16  
PHOTO: 2 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Interior, Hall Trim  
NEG. NO: 20908:23  
PHOTO: 8 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: South Elevation  
NEG. NO: 20908:15  
PHOTO: 3 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Interior, Bedroom  
NEG. NO.: 20908:26  
PHOTO: 9 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: East Elevation  
NEG. NO: 20908:12  
PHOTO: 4 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Interior, Steps  
NEG. NO.: 20908:25  
PHOTO: 10 of 15

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DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: North Elevation  
NEG. NO: 20908:20  
PHOTO: 5 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Mantel, Front Parlor  
NEG. NO: 20908:1  
PHOTO: 6 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Noncontributing Building #2  
NEG NO: 20908:17  
PHOTO: 13 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Noncontributing Building #3  
NEG NO: 20908:10  
PHOTO: 14 of 15

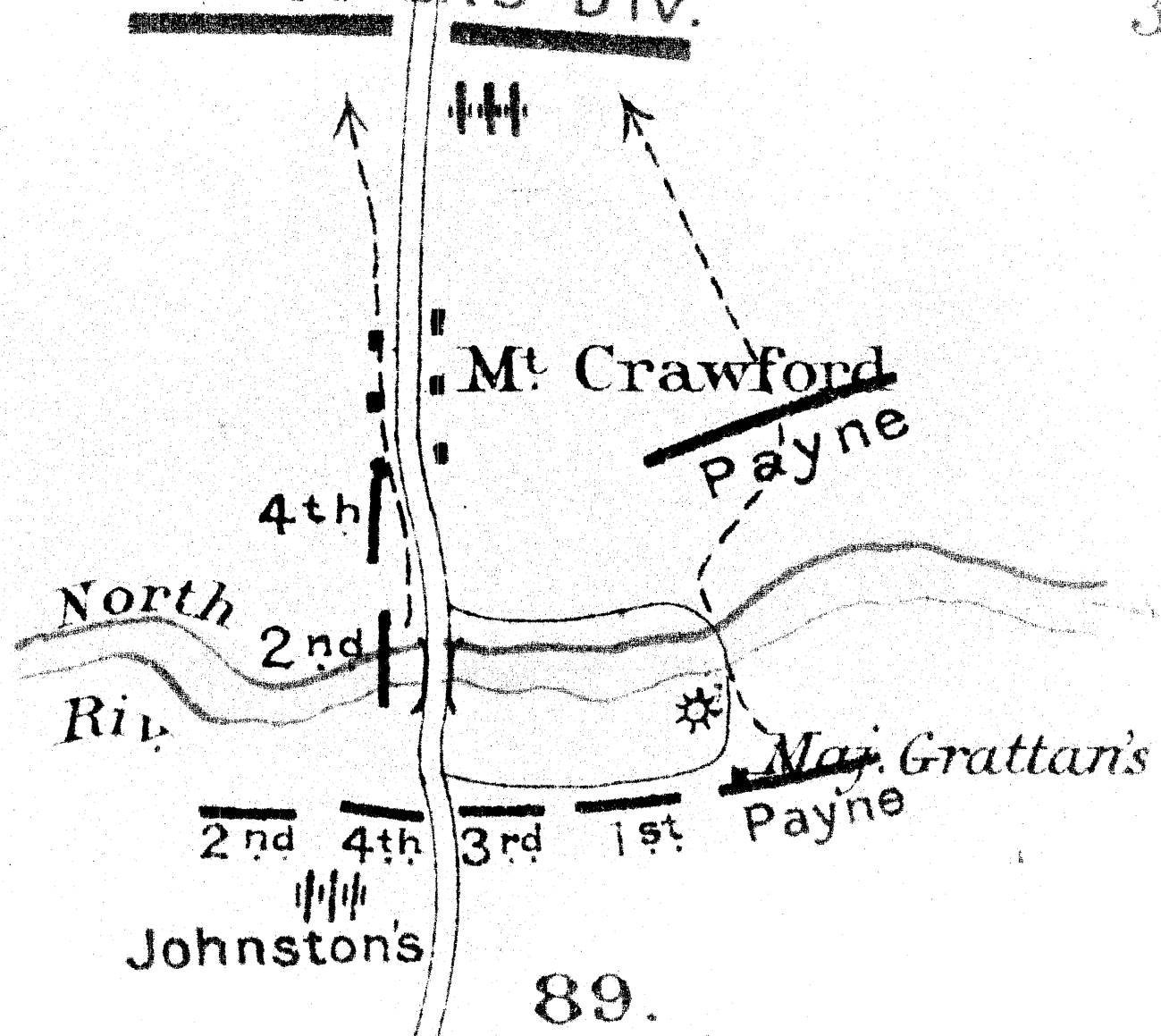
DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Interior, Central Hall  
NEG. NO.: 20908:4  
PHOTO: 11 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Noncontributing Building #1  
NEG. NO.: 20908:19  
PHOTO: 12 of 15

DATE: June 2003  
VIEW OF: Noncontributing Building #4  
NEG NO: 20908:11  
PHOTO: 15 of 15

CUSTER'S Div.

31.

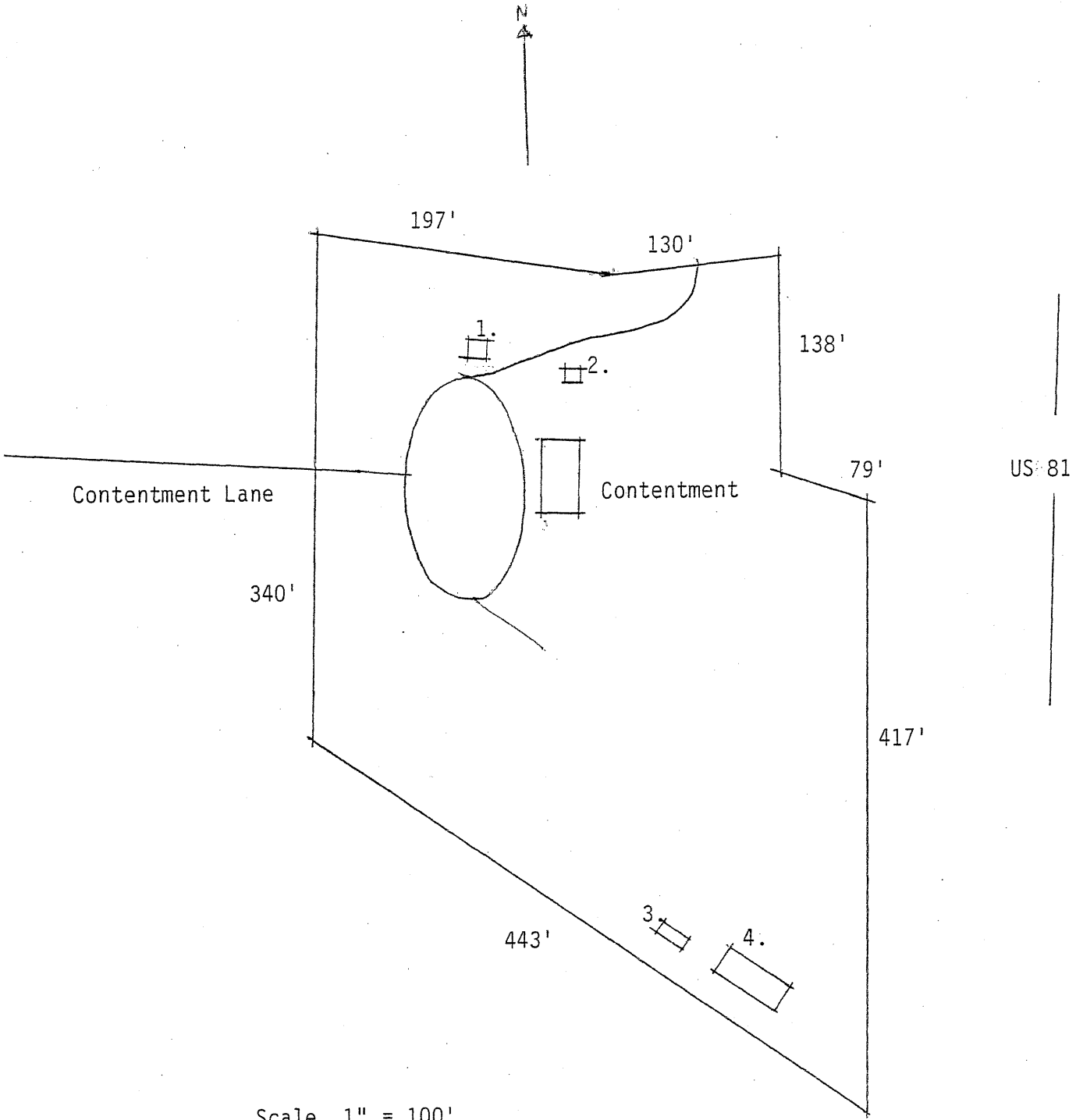


89.  
 Action of WICKHAM'S Cav. Brig.,  
 (MUNFORD, Comd'g.)  
 Oct. 4 and 5, 1864.

See  
 Title.

Attachment A. The forces north of Mt. Crawford were probably those of General Wesley Merritt. Custer, in the area.

Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Vol. 2, Plate LXXXV, 31.

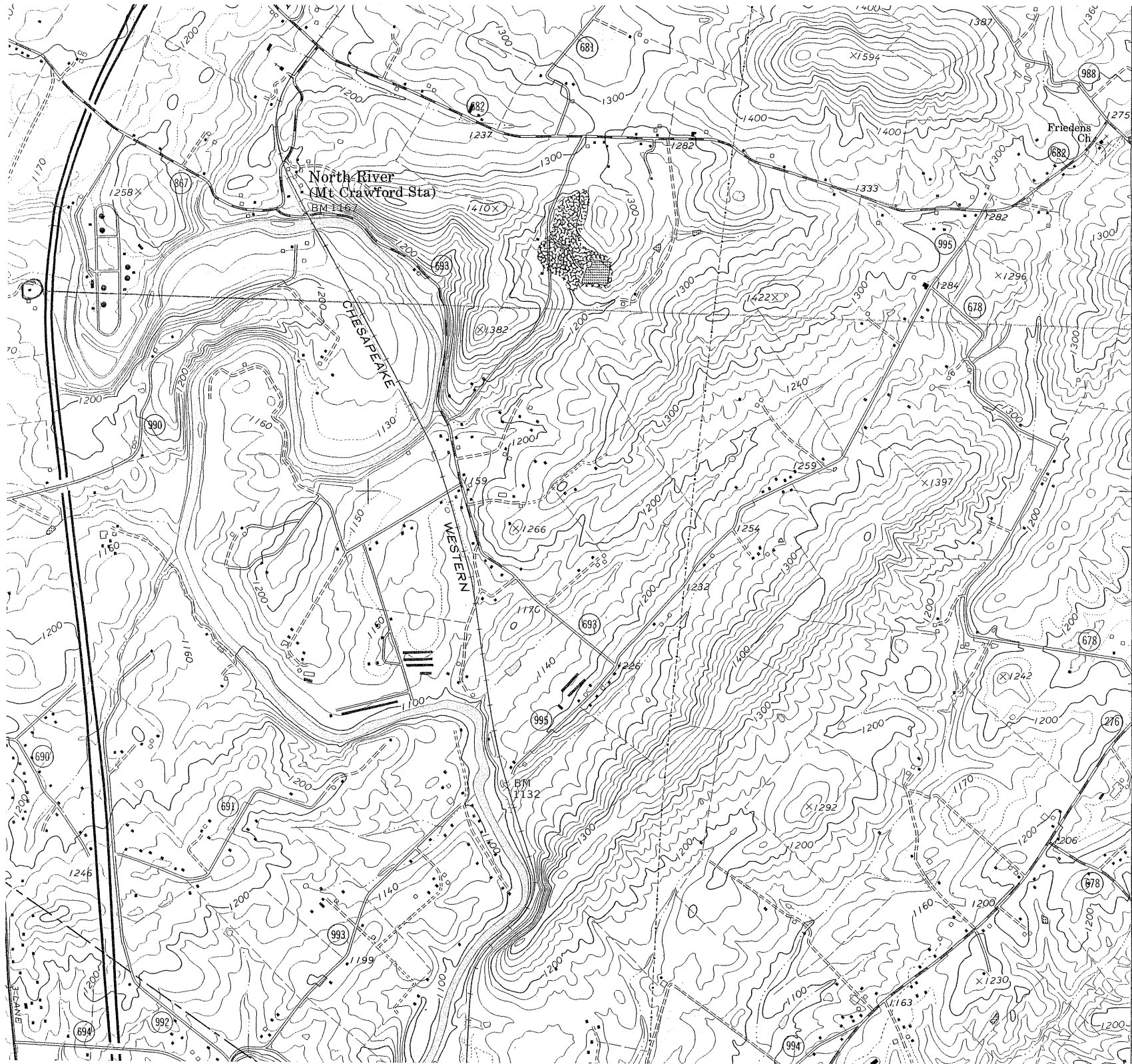


Scale 1" = 100'

Contentment  
 Rockingham County, VA  
 Parcel #137 (A) L63

Non-Contributing Structures:

- 1. Garage
- 2. Woodshed
- 3. Kennel
- 4. Stable



250 000  
FEET

4246

4245

20'

6 Mi. TO U.S. 33

4243

(GROTTOES)  
5260 IV SE

CONTENTMENT

ROCKINGHAM CO., VA

UTM

17/680300/4245560

MOUNT SIDNEY  
ROAD

# 82-62