

VLR-4/21/93 NRHP-6/10/93

58-131

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 an 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 N/A

other names/site number RED FOX FARM (preferred); VDHR File No. 58-131

2. Location

street 3 number E side SR 688, .7 mi. S of jct. with SR 695  not for publication N/A

city or town Skipwith  vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Mecklenburg code 117 zip code 23968

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Henry C. Miller 5 May 1993  
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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Red Fox Farm  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg, VA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10		buildings
		sites
2	2	structures
		objects
	14	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC : single dwelling, secondary structures

COMMERCE/TRADE : general store

AGRICULTURE : processing, storage

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD: log, weatherboard

roof METAL

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

Red Fox Farm  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg, VA  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

Mark  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.
- 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  in all the boxes that apply:

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See continuation sheets

### 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
- Other

Name of repository:

Va. Dept. of Historic Resources

#### Areas of Significance

Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

c. 1880 to 1940

#### Significant Dates

N/A

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

#### Cultural Affiliation

undefined

#### Architect/Builder

unknown

Red Fox Farm  
Name of Property

Mecklenburg Co., VA  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 130

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 7 2 5 0 6 0 4 0 6 6 7 0 0  
Zone Easting Northing

2 17 7 2 5 0 8 0 4 0 6 6 2 4 0

3 17 7 2 4 6 1 0 4 0 6 5 4 6 0  
Zone Easting Northing

4 17 7 2 3 6 3 0 4 0 6 5 7 6 0

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 Jeff O'Dell, Architectural Historian; John Salmon, Historian

organization Va. Dept. of Historic Resources date March 1993

street & number 221 Governor St. 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name John A. and Marinelle Pattison

street & number Rt. 1, Box 99 telephone (804) 372-2519

city or town Skipwith state VA zip code 23968

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Red Fox Farm is an excellent example of a typical tobacco farm of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Southside Virginia. Its five log tobacco barns, pack house, and strip house, represent the physical plant necessary to produce bright-leaf tobacco using flue-curing techniques. Robert Jeffreys of Red Fox Farm introduced the flue-curing method of curing tobacco to Mecklenburg County, where it replaced older varieties on many farms. Contributing buildings and structures at Red Fox Farm include the main house, five log tobacco barns, a frame pack house, a log strip house, a log cabin, a smokehouse, a corncrib, and a commissary.

### ARCHITECTURAL\PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Red Fox Farm is a 230-acre property located along Rt. 688 in northwest Mecklenburg County. The area near the house, which contains all the farm buildings, slopes slightly toward the middle, and is shaded by medium-sized pines. The whole lot is cleared, with a grass groundcover. The main house sits on a slight rise at the north edge of the property, overlooking the various tobacco buildings.

The main house, probably built in the late nineteenth century during Robert Jeffreys's tenure, it was no doubt designed for a farm manager or tenant. According to family tradition, Jeffreys himself may have lived across the road to the west in a much larger, two-story house.

The dwelling is a one-story, two-room-plan frame structure with gable roof. It was a typical house of the period for middle-class farmers, but it retains greater integrity than most houses of its type. An early but heavily remodeled kitchen wing on east end, and modern additions to the rear, detract from the historic ambience of the house, but the main section does retain most of its original exterior and interior detailing.

The main unit of the house consists of two rooms of identical size, divided by a single brick chimney in the middle. The attic was never used, and there is no access to it.

On the exterior, detailing includes decorative vertical siding in the gable, and a front porch with original columns and other details. (The porch was recently rebuilt following the original form and using the original materials.) The architrave trim at doors and windows feature flattened Greek moldings, and a beaded inner casing.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

The interior of the house is completely sheathed with original horizontal, butted boards about three or four inches wide. The mantel in the east room exhibits a vaguely Greek Revival form, but with later style moldings. The mantel in the west room is a little fancier, with applied "panels" on the pilasters, and a curvilinear frieze soffit.

### Tobacco Barns

The five log tobacco curing barns (also known as tobacco houses) at Red Fox Farm are typical of tobacco barns in Southside Virginia. While their dates of construction are uncertain, we know that tobacco barns stood on the property in the late nineteenth century. The general form of the earlier fire- and air-curing barns in the region was similar to the post-1900 fire-curing barns, and no doubt many older barns were converted to fire-curing. Yellow or bright-leaf tobacco, which requires flue curing, was introduced to this area by Red Fox Farm's owner, Robert Jeffreys, in the late nineteenth century. In areas where the soil was well suited to it, it soon surpassed the older, "dark-cured" tobacco in production.

The barns at Red Fox Farm all measure roughly eighteen feet square and have a single opening on the longitudinal facade. All but one have open sheds, most of which are replacements. The barns are built of unskinned logs about eight inches in diameter, joined at the corners by crude diamond notches. The gaps between the logs are filled with sticks and clay. Considering the relatively good condition of the chinking, these barns must have been patched regularly.

The interiors are a single space, open to the roof. The floor is dirt. The hanging poles, on which the sticks of tobacco were placed when they came in from the field, begin about six feet above the ground and extend upward to the roof. There are four tiers below the eaves, and three above. The interiors of most tobacco barns were divided into four "rooms" by the hanging poles.

Originally, the leaf was dried by building fires in fireboxes. These fires were constantly attended and fed with new wood. The fires were kept burning for about a week. Later, gas- or oil-fired heaters were used, which is still the modern method. Apparently, all the barns at Red Fox were converted some time ago, as the fire boxes no longer exist. By the 1970s metal bulk barns with thermostatically controlled heat replaced the old log barns on many tobacco farms.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

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### Pack House and Strip House

The pack house was used to store the cured tobacco as it was awaiting processing. The strip house, next to it, was used to strip the tobacco leaves from the sticks. As the stripping proceeded, the leaves were separated into several piles, based on the quality of the tobacco.

The pack house at Red Fox Farm is a one-and-a-half story frame building with a gable roof and semi-enclosed shed on one side. Double-leaf doors provide access on three sides, and at the south gable end a door (now closed) leads to the loft. There is no interior access between the main floor and the loft.

Although the building is now sheathed with horizontal weatherboards, earlier, vertical siding can be seen on the east side where it has been protected by the shed. The interior is perfectly plain and without sheathing. Modified balloon construction is used with such local techniques as corner braces and clamps.

An interesting feature in the pack house shed is the log beam that extends across the shed. An iron hook is suspended from the beam. Its function is not known.

The strip house stands about twelve feet west of the pack house. It is a small, one-room log structure with later, board sheathing. A later frame shed extends at the rear. The interior has no sheathing, but the logs are roughly hewn flat and whitewashed. This low room (six feet from floor to bottom of log joists) was probably once surrounded by benches, where workers stripped the tobacco leaves from the sticks. If the leaves were too dry, they were taken into the dirt pit below, where the natural moisture of the earth made them more pliable and less subject to breakage. The pit (which is partly filled in due to erosion) was reached from upstairs via a hatch in one corner of the room; the hatch may have been opened to allow the moisture in the pit to raise the level of humidity in the barn, rather than carrying the leaves to the pit.

### Log Cabin and other buildings

The log cabin stands south of and about fifty yards from the pack house. Local tradition says that "Miss Patty," a black woman, raised five boys here around 1930 and before. It was probably built by or for a laborer on Red Fox Farm.

The cabin is small, one-room structure with later frame sheds at the rear and north end. An

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

**Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia**

exterior-end chimney of rubblestone with brick upper stack heats the house. A former owner in the 1980s made considerable changes in an aborted renovation. At least the cabin is now stabilized, and most structural fabric remains.

The interior has exposed log walls. Like the logs on the exterior, they are hewn flat and chinked with sticks and clay. Early (at least, very worn) whitewash remains on all surfaces. The ladder stair is probably original, and leads to a low, unfinished loft. Here, sawn lumber is used for the rafters and other timbers.

The two frame additions, probably built in the early 1900s, have remodeled surfaces. The rear shed was probably built as extra sleeping space, and the end wing was used as a kitchen, having a brick stove flue suspended from the ceiling on metal brackets.

The frame smokehouse, located north of the pack house, has a steep gable roof and a front door in the gable end. Built in this century, it is typical of others in Virginia. The present owners have built a floor, and use it as a storage building.

The corncrib, situated east of the smokehouse, is a twentieth-century frame building. In shape, it is long and narrow in order to provide maximum ventilation to the corn, which was stored there on the cob until it could be ground. There is a single door in the front gable end, and its gable roof has overhanging eaves, a measure that reduced the amount of rain reaching the corn.

The last building to be discussed, the commissary or store, is one of the most interesting at Red Fox Farm. While such buildings were once quite common, most have disappeared. The commissary's excellent state of preservation, and its intact form and detailing, make it a rarity worthy of study.

This frame, one-story building stands within a circle at the end of the dirt drive leading to the house. It is the closest of all the buildings to the main house; no doubt the location was chosen to ensure better surveillance.

Farm commissaries, whose roots went back to the plantation "store houses" of antebellum Virginia, were used to stock basic items (mostly food) that might be needed by tenants. It was not meant to substitute for the country store, which stocked a much wider variety of items. For the most part, the commissary was opened only periodically, and as the need arose.

The Red Fox commissary is a plain one-story frame building with a low-pitched roof and a



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

**Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia**

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gable-end front. The only openings are on the front, and both windows have original wooden security shutters. The interior, consisting of a single open room, is completely sheathed with unpainted pine matchboard. The door, which is reinforced by a diagonal board, retains its original iron hardware, including two locks. On some walls, there are short strips of wood that may have supported shelving. The building was heated by a stove near the center of the room. A brick stove flue still rests on an iron bracket hanging from the ceiling. (Saving bricks for economic reasons became widespread in Virginia after the Civil War. With the increasing use of and availability of manufactured iron stoves, chimneys were not needed. Many houses up to the 1930s had narrow brick stove flues supported on homemade wooden brackets.)

None of the buildings at Red Fox Farm is a particularly fine or unusual example of vernacular architecture. However, considered as a whole, they form a remarkably complete collection of farm structures illustrating the environment of the middle-class tobacco farmer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Jeff M. O'Dell

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg Co., VA

Section number 7 Page 6

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INVENTORY OF STRUCTURES, RED FOX FARM

1. Main house. CB
2. Tobacco barn (#5 southeast barn) CB
3. Tobacco barn (#3; closest to dwelling) CB
4. Tobacco barn (# 4; southwest area of yard) CB
5. Tobacco barn (#3; north side of yard) CB
6. Tobacco barn (#1; beside Rt. 688) CB
7. Pack house CB
8. Strip house CB
9. Log cabin CB
10. Smokehouse CS
11. Corncrib CS
12. Commissary CB
13. Well NO
14. Water trough NO

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Red Fox Farm is located on Route 688 in western Mecklenburg County, near the community of Skipwith. Constructed between about 1886-1887 and the 1920s by Thomas Easley, Robert M. Jeffreys, and R. L. Thomasson, the farm complex contains a representative collection of buildings relating to the flue-cured, bright-leaf tobacco process introduced by Jeffreys after he purchased the farm in 1888. Jeffreys's influence upon the culture of tobacco in Mecklenburg County was immediate and lasting: within a few years flue-cured, bright-leaf tobacco had surpassed the dark (fire-cured) variety as the cash crop--a condition that continues to the present day. The number of surviving structures make Red Fox Farm a remarkable representative of the tobacco economy of Mecklenburg County and Southside Virginia.

### JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Red Fox Farm is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because of its association with the agricultural history of Mecklenburg County. After the introduction of a profitable method of producing flue-cured, bright-leaf tobacco by Robert M. Jeffreys in the late 1880s, the county's farmers quickly adopted his methods, thereby changing permanently the economic base of the local agriculture. Red Fox Farm therefore represents a period of historic innovation in the agriculture of Mecklenburg County. It is also eligible under Criterion C, as the farm buildings form a remarkably complete collection of structures illustrating the environment of the middle-class tobacco farmer of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Red Fox Farm is located in western Mecklenburg County on the eastern side of Route 688. It is situated about two miles north of the community of Skipwith.

Mecklenburg County is located on the Virginia/North Carolina state line in the Piedmont region of Virginia. During the nineteenth century this region became the foremost tobacco-growing area of the state, as the tobacco economy moved westward from the worn-out

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

Tidewater plantations established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Virginia tobacco consisted primarily of the dark variety used primarily for chewing. This tobacco was coarse, strongly flavored, and high in nicotine content.

Another tobacco, the so-called "bright leaf," was produced but little in Virginia during the antebellum period. This tobacco, which is golden or bright yellow after curing, is finer, more delicately flavored, and lower in nicotine content than the dark leaf. The bright leaf was used primarily as wrappers for plugs of chewing tobacco, as well as for cigarettes, which grew in popularity after the Civil War. The bright leaf brought higher prices at market than the dark, but was much more complicated to produce.

The production of a good crop of tobacco, like that of any other plant, depends on seed variety, rainfall, temperature, soil, and cultivation. In the case of tobacco, the two most important factors are the type of soil and the curing process that follows the harvest. Rich, high-nutrient soil will produce only dark tobacco, not bright-leaf; sandy, "poor" soil is necessary to grow the latter variety. Likewise, the traditional fire-curing method, employing open fires in the tobacco barn over a period of several months, ruins the delicate flavor of bright-leaf. Flue-curing, or heating the barn with the fire lighted in stoves or fireboxes and the fumes captured in a brick or metal flue, protects the flavor of the leaf and produces the bright yellow color. The flue-curing method requires a more precise control of the temperature inside the barn than does the fire-curing process. It is also more labor-intensive, because as the leaves ripened weekly in the field beginning in mid-summer, they were pulled and cured (curing took about a week).

During the antebellum period the culture of bright-leaf tobacco became profitable in North Carolina and in three bordering Virginia counties where the soil conditions were right: Henry, Pittsylvania, and Halifax. (The latter county shares its eastern boundary with Mecklenburg County, which has the same soil type as the other counties.) These counties in the two states were known in the nineteenth century as the Old Bright Belt. Among the North Carolina counties, Granville County was thought to produce the finest grades of bright-leaf tobacco.<sup>1</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

The complex and supremely labor-intensive procedure for growing tobacco is well known. From the beginning to the end of the process, the tobacco farmer danced attendance on his crop for thirteen months out of the year, as the saying goes. He prepared the seed bed and the field; moved the young plants from the former to the latter; cultivated and weeded around the plants almost continuously; topped each plant (broke off its terminal bud at a certain height); primed the plants (removed the lower leaves to give strength to the others); suckered them half a dozen times (pinched off the shoots that sprouted after topping and priming); and removed the repellent hornworms and crushed them. All of these operations, beginning with transplantation from seed bed to field, were performed by hand. Assuming that the soil, rain, cultivation, and pest control efforts had produced in an adequate crop, in the late summer the farmer prepared to harvest, cure, and market his tobacco.<sup>2</sup>

Harvesting was done by hand. The leaves of the dark tobacco plant ripened all at one time; the plant was cut, slit open near the bottom of the stalk, and hung on sticks to cure. By contrast, bright-leaf tobacco leaves ripen in sequence from the bottom to the top of the plant. At about one-week intervals two or three ripe leaves are "pulled" from each plant, brought to the barn, tied with string to sticks, and hung. Then the delicate process of curing was carried out. The farmer lit fires in the fireboxes and carefully regulated the temperature of the heat in the barn. A flue captured the fumes of the burning charcoal and prevented the tobacco leaves from absorbing unwanted flavors. The tobacco, hanging from sticks, took between two and a half and five days to cure.<sup>3</sup>

After curing, the tobacco was carried to a pack house (packing barn) and stored in stacks until it was time to strip the leaves from the sticks. It might then be taken to a separate stripping house to be removed from the sticks and graded. Around the turn of the century many farmers built ordering houses as an intermediate step between the curing barn and the pack or stripping house; this structure contained a damp pit in which the sticks were hung to introduce moisture to the leaves more quickly. Another method was to open the cover to the pit and allow the leaves to absorb moisture from the humid air. Other farmers continued with an earlier technique: the cured tobacco was carried to the pack house, where was it either sprinkled with water or hung up over damp straw to reabsorb moisture. Then it was brought to the stripping house

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 10

**Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia**

to be removed from the sticks and sorted. The stripping house at Red Fox Farm also served as an ordering house, as it contains a pit.<sup>4</sup>

Farmers in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, had experimented with bright-leaf tobacco, as had others elsewhere in the state. Apparently experimentation peaked in 1879; when a Mecklenburg farmer sold a small amount of bright-leaf tobacco at the Henderson market in North Carolina in 1887, it was an occasion for considerable comment. Mecklenburg farmers had to wait another few years until the efforts of Robert M. Jeffreys enabled them to produce the bright leaf profitably.<sup>5</sup>

Robert M. Jeffreys was born in Granville County, North Carolina, on 28 January 1851. He raised bright-leaf tobacco there, in the eastern part of the North Carolina Old Bright Belt just south of Mecklenburg County, Virginia. During the late nineteenth century Granville County was regarded as producing the finest bright tobacco in the belt. Despite this, according to family tradition, Jeffreys suffered financial difficulties and in the late 1880s looked for opportunities elsewhere. On 20 February 1888, at the age of thirty-seven, he purchased a 420-acre tract of land in Mecklenburg County from Thomas Easley. The tract, which is located near the community of Five Forks (present-day Skipwith), had no buildings on it until Easley--or perhaps Jeffreys--erected structures that were valued at \$300 in 1887.<sup>6</sup>

Jeffreys quickly added to the number of structures at Red Fox Farm. The land tax books noted that in 1890 the value of buildings had risen to \$500 from \$300 the previous year, and to \$650 in 1891. Similarly, the value of the land per acre increased from \$3.50 in 1888 to \$4.00 in 1890, and then to \$6.50 in 1891. This increase no doubt reflected the conversion of land from its previous uses to bright-leaf tobacco cultivation. The increase in value per acre occurred despite the sale of two hundred acres of the Red Fox Farm tract to R. L. Thomasson in January 1890. Jeffreys sold the remainder of the farm to Thomasson in March 1901.<sup>7</sup>

The buildings at Red Fox Farm well represent the techniques employed to produce flue-cured, bright-leaf tobacco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Five tobacco curing barns, a pack barn, and a strip house still stand. The farm complex also includes a small late-nineteenth-century dwelling, an

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

early twentieth-century log cabin, a smokehouse, a corncrib, and a store.

During the dozen years that he owned Red Fox Farm, Jeffreys pioneered the profitable cultivation of bright-leaf, flue-cured tobacco in Mecklenburg County. Within a few years the influence of his techniques was evident in the county. A promotional brochure published in 1892 reported that the county's

staple crops are tobacco, wheat, corn, oats, and cotton. . . . The fine grades of yellow tobacco, equal to the best qualities of the golden belt of North Carolina, are made in many portions of the county, and the most remunerative prices are obtained for Mecklenburg brights. The dark and red kinds of tobacco are extensively used by manufacturers for their choicest brands, and the heavy dark for continental shipping. The county ranks as the third producing tobacco county in the State.<sup>8</sup>

In 1898 the *Chase City Progress* referred to Jeffreys as "the well-known bright tobacco grower."<sup>9</sup>

A local historian has written of the long-term effect of Jeffreys's innovation on the county and on nearby Chase City, a major tobacco market town:

Though grain, cattle, sheep and cotton were among the main products of the county [in the late nineteenth century], tobacco was still the region's bane and blessing. Prior to 1888 all the tobacco was of the dark cured variety, but in this year Robert M. Jeffreys of Granville County, North Carolina moved to Skipwith and introduced bright fired tobacco to the Southside. He was the pioneer of the "flue-cured, bright-leaf" tobacco planters in Mecklenburg. Not many men have the opportunity of making an unique contribution to their culture but Jeffreys did and is remembered for it. His introduction of this variety was a new and startling innovation and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 12

soon brought about a radical change in the planting and curing of "the weed." His own success was so apparent that his neighbors were soon imitating him. Today there is practically no other kind of tobacco grown in this section. The county's light sandy soil is especially adaptable to the bright-leaf. It grows the cigarette type of tobacco and today [1975] is the money crop--a vital part of Chase City's economy.<sup>10</sup>

Jeffreys used the profits from his tobacco business to buy other tracts of land. According to conflicting family traditions, he may have lived at Red Fox Farm only briefly (or even lived on an adjacent tract) and moved around from one farm to another. After he sold Red Fox Farm to Thomasson in 1901, Jeffreys moved to Chase City and constructed a large brick house that still stands at 579 Boyd Street. He purchased dozens of farms during the next two decades, in addition to expanding his other business activities:

His operations covered a large territory. He was largely responsible for the building up of this section as he brought not only the new tobacco but induced many farmers to come to Virginia from North Carolina and other states. He built (for its time) the largest and best warehouse in Chase City. He was a man of unusual business ability. In 1910, with his sons, he organized the Jeffreys-Spaulling [Box] Manufacturing Company.<sup>11</sup>

Another writer recalled that

after moving to Virginia, in addition to his most successful farming, being the pioneer tobacco raiser in that community [Mecklenburg County], [Jeffreys] was also engaged in real estate, and in the Leaf Tobacco business, owning the largest tobacco warehouse in the County, and being a most successful warehouse man.

Mr. Jeffreys was also engaged in the lumber business for a number of years before his death, and in 1910 organized the Jeffreys-



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 13

**Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia**

Spaulding Mfg. Company of Chase City, Va., and later The Jeffreys-Myers Mfg. Company of Oxford, N.C., and the Jeffreys-McElrath Mfg. Company of Macon, Ga., and was president of all three of these organizations at the time of his death.

. . . Mr. Jeffreys was a patron of education in its truest sense when he lived in this County [Mecklenburg], he maintained a private school, part of the time for the education of his children, and continued these educational activities until all of his children were educated.<sup>12</sup>

Jeffreys died on 1 August 1924 and was laid in the family crypt in Woodland Cemetery in Chase City. His wife had died on 15 May 1924. Two of their sons represented Mecklenburg County in the Virginia General Assembly: Robert L. Jeffreys as a member of the House of Delegates, 1922-1930; and William H. Jeffreys in the Senate of Virginia, 1916-1930.<sup>13</sup>

R. L. Thomasson owned Red Fox Farm until his death in 1930. His estate sold it to Lella T. Morgan in 1931.<sup>14</sup> Currently the farm is owned by John A. and Bobbi Pattison, who are maintaining the integrity of the many tobacco-related buildings there.

John S. Salmon

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetRed Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, VirginiaSection number 8 Page 14ENDNOTES

1. Nannie May Tilley, *The Bright-Tobacco Industry, 1860-1929* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 11-12, 123-137.
2. Ibid., 37-55.
3. Ibid., 56-82.
4. Ibid., 82-88.
5. Ibid., 151.
6. Douglas Summers Brown, *Chase City and Its Environs: The Southside Virginia Experience, 1765-1975* (Chase City, Va.: Douglas Summers Brown, 1975), 139; Mecklenburg County, General Index to Deeds, Grantee, 1765-1933, Reel 21, Archives Branch, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Va. (VSLA); Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Books, Mecklenburg County, 1886-1889, VSLA; Joyce Green, Butler Memorial Library, Mecklenburg Co., Va., telephone conversation with author, 4 March 1993. It is possible that Easley built some of the structures at Red Fox Farm in 1886-1887, then sold the place in 1888. Alternatively, Jeffreys may have moved to the farm in 1887 and constructed the buildings before the deed was signed and recorded early in 1888.
7. Auditor of Public Accounts, Land Tax Books, Mecklenburg County, 1888-1891, 1900-1902, VSLA; Mecklenburg County, General Index to Deeds, Grantor, 1765-1933, Reel 19, VSLA.
8. Thomas D. Jeffries, *Hand-Book of Mecklenburg County, Virginia* (Richmond: The Dispatch Steam Presses, 1892), 4.
9. *Chase City Progress*, 5 August 1898, p. 3.
10. Brown, *Chase City*, 139.
11. Ibid.; Joyce Green, Butler Memorial Library, Mecklenburg Co., Va., telephone conversation with author, 4 March 1993.
12. *Chase City Progress*, August 1924.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

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13. Ibid.; Cynthia M. Leonard, *The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: A Bicentennial Register of Members* (Richmond: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978), 611-645.

14. Mecklenburg County, General Index to Deeds, Grantee, 1765-1933, Reel 21, VSLA.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 16

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg County, Virginia

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*Chase City Progress*. 5 August 1898; August 1924.

Green, Joyce. Butler Memorial Library, Mecklenburg Co., Va. Telephone conversation with author, 4 March 1993.

Jeffries, Thomas D. *Hand-Book of Mecklenburg County, Virginia*. Richmond: The Dispatch Steam Presses, 1892.

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Mecklenburg County. General Index to Deeds. Grantor. 1765-1933. Reel 19. VSLA.

Tilley, Nannie May. *The Bright-Tobacco Industry, 1860-1929*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Red Fox Farm  
Mecklenburg Co., VA

Section number 10 Page 17

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### UTM References (continued from form)

E 17/723510/4066290

F 17/724000/4066290

G 17/724030/4066760

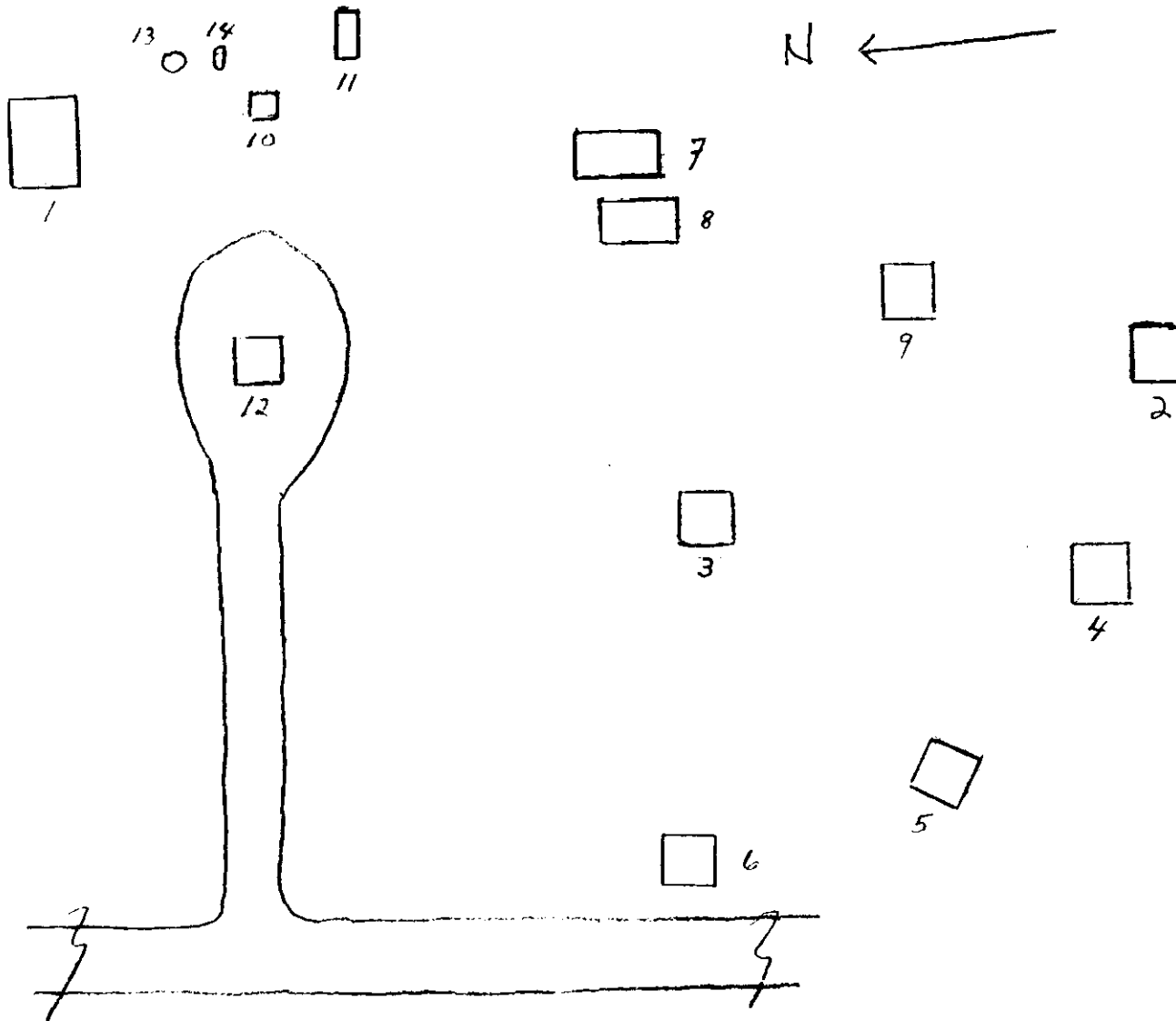
### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point delineated by UTM reference A 17/725060/4066700, then proceed south approximately 1400' to a point on the western right-of-way of county route 689 delineated by UTM reference B 17/725080/4066240, then proceed south along the said right-of-way approximately 3000' to a point delineated by UTM reference C 17/723630/4065760, then proceed northwest approximately 3400' to a point on the eastern right-of-way of county route 688 delineated by UTM reference D 17/723630/4065760, then proceed north along said right-of-way approximately 2800' to a point delineated by UTM reference E 17/723410/4066290, then proceed east approximately 1600' to a point delineated by UTM reference F 17/724000/4066290, then proceed north approximately 1600' to a point delineated by UTM reference G 17/724030/4066760, then proceed east approximately 3400' to the point of beginning.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property includes all the contiguous farmland owned by the Pattisons. This and other tracts were assembled in the 1880s and 1890s by Robert Jeffreys, who developed the property into a flue-cure tobacco farm. Jeffreys probably built some of the contributing buildings on the farm.

Aside from the area immediately around the house, the entire tract is agricultural fields and woods. Tobacco is still grown on some plots.



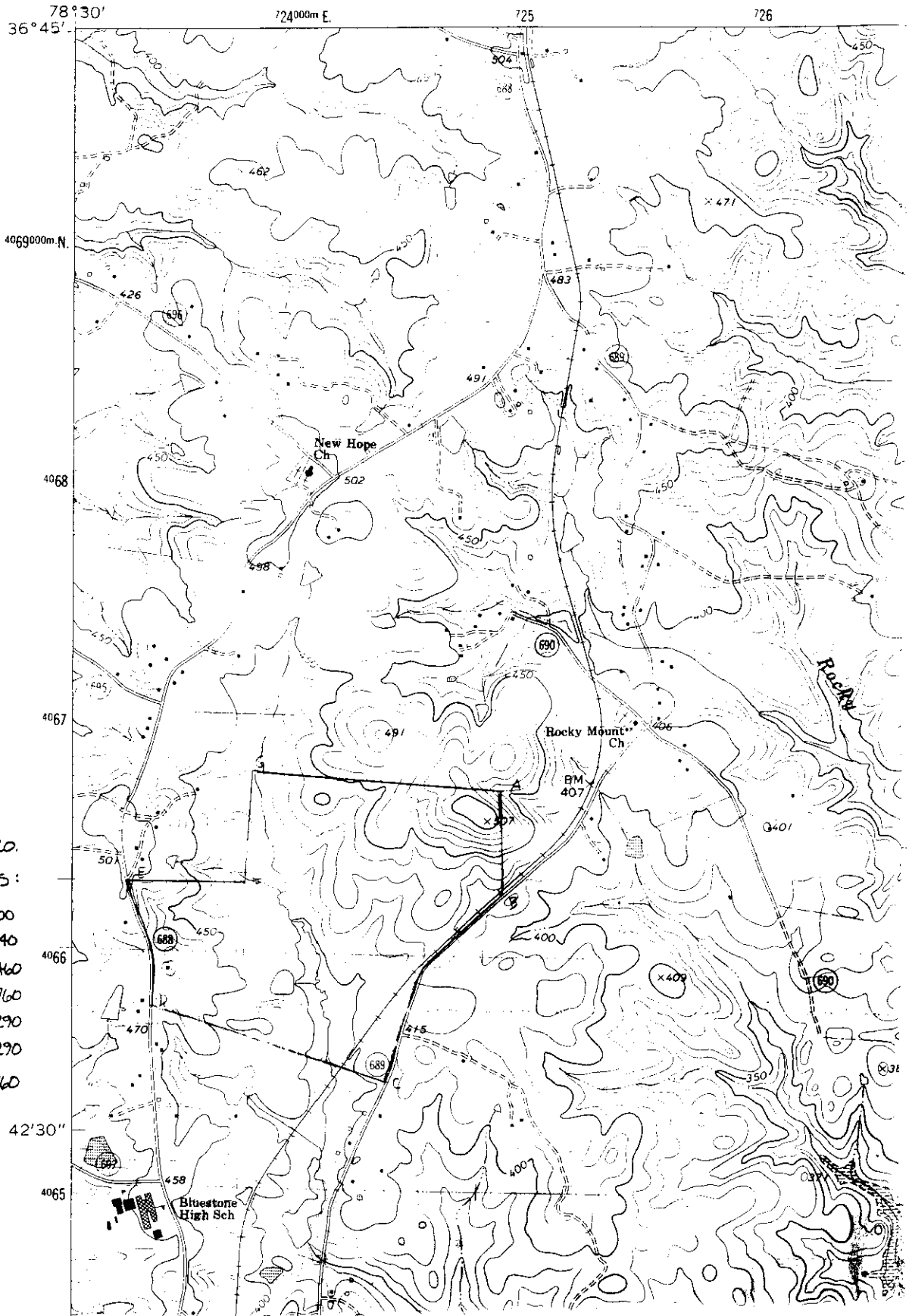
1. Main house
2. Tobacco barn #5
3. Tobacco barn #3
4. Tobacco barn # 4
5. Tobacco barn #3
6. Tobacco barn #1
7. Pack house CB
8. Strip house CB
9. Log cabin CB
10. Smokehouse CS
11. Corncrib CS
12. Commissary CB
13. Well NO
14. Water trough NO

### Red Fox Farm, Mecklenburg County, Virginia

Site plan showing all buildings and structures.  
 Not to scale. Drawn in March 1993 by Jeff O'Dell,  
 based on a drawing by Bobbi Pattison.

5357 1 SE  
(WYLLIESBURG)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



RED FOX FARM  
MECKLENBURG CO.  
UTM REFERENCES:

A:	17	725 060	4066 700
B:	17	725 080	4066 240
C:	17	724 610	4065 460
D:	17	723 630	4065 760
E:	17	723 510	4066 290
F:	17	724 000	4066 290
G:	17	724 030	4066 760