

Claiming Rocky Ground

*Documentation of Stone Walls in the
Proposed Gooney Manor Loop Road
Rural Historic District, Route 631
Widening Project, Warren County, Virginia*



PREPARED FOR:
Virginia Department of
Transportation

PREPARED BY:
William and Mary Center for
Archaeological Research

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PROLOGUE

Hillsides covered in sun-bleached hayfields, bright green pastures, dark forest, warm air thick with the scent of tall meadow grass and bathed in the sounds of nature—these are some of the simple rewards of a mid-summer drive along Gooney Manor Loop Road. Every now and then the whoosh of car or truck tires can be heard passing along the roadbed; otherwise only chirping birds and crickets interrupt the quiet of these upland valleys. Scattered across this rolling landscape of southeastern Warren County, trim frame farmhouses bear witness to the last three centuries of human habitation. In an age of dizzying development, such a tranquil, rural landscape with a large collection of well-preserved historic structures singles out the locale as rather unique. Indeed, a recent cultural resource study for a road widening project recommended the area as a “rural historic district,” potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Beyond the overall historic value, however, the Loop offers another, more unique historic element. As the woods south of Cool Springs Church give way to open pasture, massive stone walls appear alongside the road, and then farther on two great drylaid stone walls stretch westward across the meadows toward hilly slopes. Measuring upward of 6 ft. high and 8 ft. across, similar walls can be found in three other major groups along the southern end of the Loop. The squat,



Figure 1. Typical landscape within the Gooney Manor Loop Road Rural Historic District.

rounded walls stretch across the hillside farms, yet without totally enclosing any fields. Made from undressed fieldstone, these rough, weathered, sturdy walls have apparently stood there for generations.

Outside this tiny rural neighborhood, however, drylaid stone walls are somewhat uncommon in Virginia. Unlike New England where stone walls of abandoned farmsteads are a hallmark of the local landscape, Virginia lacks a strong tradition of fencing with stone. While Northeastern soils are littered with stone carried along by continental glaciers of the last ice age, Virginia's early colonial settlement began in the coastal plain, which is relatively stone-free. Here as the early settlers cleared land to plant tobacco and later grain, forests provided abundant timber for a cheap, easy-to-build fence: split rails piled in a zigzag pattern. As settlement moved westward, the "Virginia" worm fence and the post-and-rail fence followed and remained popular late into the nineteenth century. In 1871, wood made up 85 percent of the enclosures in the Commonwealth, while stone was used for only a portion of the remaining 15 percent (Commissioner of Agriculture 1872:507). Even though stone was readily available from the Piedmont westward, most Virginians continued their long tradition of fencing with wood.

Rare as they are in this state (only a handful of stone walls have been recorded in the architectural inventory files at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources [VDHR]), the walls along the Gooney Manor Loop Road bear some investigation. Besides documenting the unique collection of stone walls along the Loop through words and pictures, this study is intended to shed some light on the origins and purpose of these prominent landscape features. Since the stone walls of the Loop counter the regional trend, a host of questions emerges. At the most basic level, the walls need to be set into a historical context. When were the walls built? And are they all contemporary? What are the advantages to building with stone? Prior to industrial production of fencing materials like barbed wire, was stone the fence of preference when available or were other materials more cost-effective? Do stone walls serve primarily as enclosure in other regions where they are common? Attempting to answer these questions requires some creative research methods. Located in a somewhat isolated rural neighborhood with marginal agricultural lands, it is unlikely that much direct written documentation of these landscape features exists. However, through a combination of oral history, census research, understanding of local historical context, and comparisons with stone wall traditions in other regions, this report begins to answer these questions.

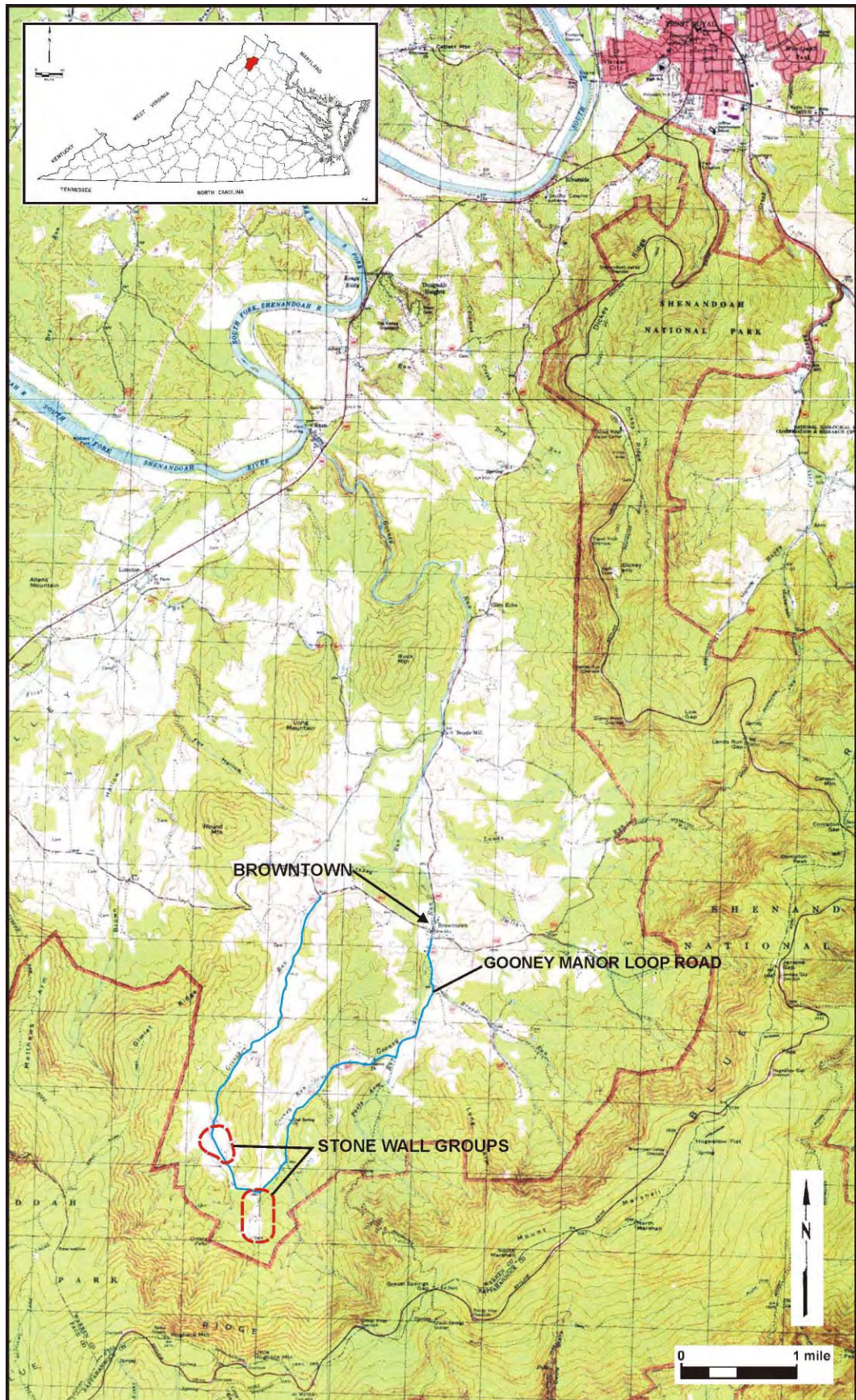
INTRODUCTION

This report was written as part of the environmental clearance for the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Route 631 (Gooney Manor Loop Road) widening corridor in southern Warren County. Beginning directly south of Cool Springs Church, the 50-ft.-wide corridor extends 1.6 miles southward along the eastern side of Route 631. State funding of this project entails consideration of Virginia environmental laws. Section 10.1-1188B of the Code of Virginia directs the Secretaries of Transportation and Natural Resources to establish procedures to assess the environmental impacts of state-funded highway projects on natural and historic resources. The resulting procedures (1) provide for review and comment by VDHR on environmental impacts to historic properties resulting from highway projects; (2) require VDOT to consider alternatives to avoid historic properties; and, (3) if historic properties cannot be avoided, require VDOT to propose measures to minimize impact. For state environmental review, historic properties are defined as those that are listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register.

During the first phase of historic resources studies for this project, consultants working for VDOT recommended the entire landscape along Gooney Manor Loop Road as a potential rural historic district (Barber et al. 2002) (Figures 2 and 3). The 6.2-mile-long gravel and asphalt road extends southwest from Browntown up the Gooney Run valley, and down Greasy Run northward back to Route 613. According to the National Register of Historic Places definition, rural historic districts contain a "significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, road and waterways, and natural features" (McClelland n.d.:1). The Loop Road area contains an abundant sample of such resources. Along with 40 historic structures that include houses, farm buildings, a mill, two churches, and family cemeteries, there are landscape features such as stone walls, fences, and open fields—all combining to make up "one of the best and last unspoiled historic landscapes in Warren County" (Neville 2002:9).

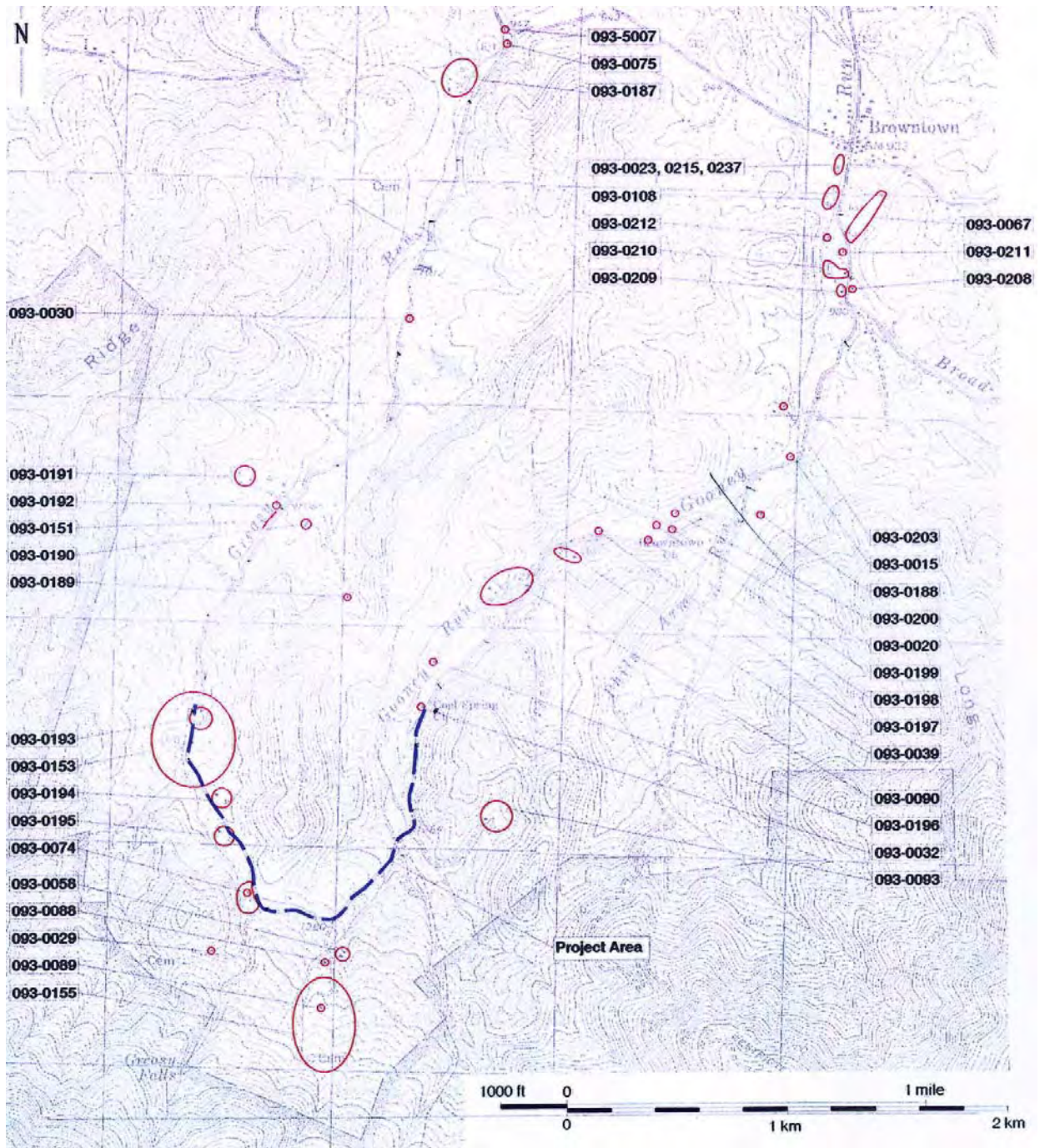
Even though all contributing structures of the potential historic district had been recorded previously (Kalbian 1991), the records for two contributing groups of stone walls were missing from the VDHR archives prior to the 2002 survey. After viewing the stone wall groups, VDOT cultural resources staff determined that these unique resources warranted some level of documentation. A memorandum of agreement between VDOT and VDHR specified that suitable documentation would consist of mapping, photogra-

Figure 2. Study area and environs (USGS 1972, 1987).



phy, profile drawings, historical research, and publication of the findings in a popular format for distribution to local historical societies and libraries. William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (WMCAR) conducted the documentation under contract with VDOT and the following report details that research.

Figure 3. Contributing structures of the Gooney Manor Loop Road Rural Historic District.



GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Examining the setting of the stone wall networks of Gooney Manor Loop Road is an important first step toward understanding the context in which they were constructed. Together local topography, soils, rocks, underlying rock, and climate made up the conditions that faced early settlers. Along with cultural and economic factors, geography influenced whether they built stone walls on their properties and how they would build them.

The walls are located at the upper ends of the Gooney Run and Greasy Run stream valleys in southeastern Warren County (USGS 1972, 1987) (Figure 4; see Figure 2). The most extensive network of walls lies on the open slopes of the Perna (093-0089) property above the south end of the loop road. Farther west (clockwise along the loop), more walls line the east side of the road and the base of the slopes south of the Giles Partlow (093-0194) homeplace. On the steeper slopes above that farm are less formal, linear rock piles and “check dams” most likely meant to slow runoff after heavy rains. Finally, a quarter mile farther north, a line of stone walls with shorter, intersecting walls climbs the slopes across from the Ralph Partlow house (093-0193). While not formally part of this study, three less extensive groups of stone walls also occur along the loop: in the fields just northeast of the Perna network, at Running Brook farm (093-0090) (also known as Mountain View) about a half mile above Cool Springs Church, and at Thornhill (093-0205) on Fetchett Road (Route 632).

The study area lies within the northern Blue Ridge physiographic subprovince, which geologists characterize as “rugged . . . with steep slopes, narrow ridges, broad mountains, and high relief” (Roberts and Bailey 1997–2003). A topographic map of the Loop Road area bears out this general description. Land along Route 631, which follows the stream valleys, has an elevation of roughly 1,000 ft. at the northern ends, rising to about 1,400 ft. near the intersection with Top of the Loop Lane, the entrance to the Perna property. Although ridges 200–300 ft. higher than the road corridor separate the Gooney Run and Greasy Run stream valleys, the entire loop area is confined by the higher

Figure 4. Gooney Run flowing through Running Brook Farm (94-90) on the east side of the Loop.





Figure 5. Three-dimensional rendering of the topography of the Gooney Manor Loop Road area. Elevation has been exaggerated to illustrate how the Loop Road area is confined within a “cove” formed by the surrounding ridges.

peaks of the Blue Ridge to the east and south and Gimlet Ridge to the west (Figure 5). Hogback Mountain rises dramatically to nearly 3,500 ft. beyond the southern end of the loop above the Perna property. To the east the steep, wooded slopes of the Blue Ridge reach elevations of 2,700 to 3,300 ft. The tallest peak on Gimlet Ridge is over 2,100 ft. Surrounded by high landforms on three sides, the Loop forms a cove tucked into the Blue Ridge Mountains—a rural community on the very margins of Warren County’s usable land.

On the northeast, the Loop Road ends at Browntown, historically the commercial and social hub of these rural uplands. Sometime after 1812 Abraham Brown established mills along Gooney Run at the site of the village that would bear his name (Poe n.d.:1). During the nineteenth century, Browntown was a thriving industrial

village with a woolen factory, a tannery, and other industries. Slow decline following the upheavals of the Civil War continued into the twentieth century. Today only a general store, two churches, and a cluster of houses remain.

North and west of Browntown gentler topography leads down to the meandering floodplain of the South Fork (main branch) of the Shenandoah River. Before reaching Front Royal, this branch of the river is confined to a narrow valley between the Blue Ridge on the east and Massanutten Mountain on the west. Apart from the steep slopes of Massanutten, the Shenandoah River valley consists of gently rolling terrain. This rich agricultural region stretches in a 20- to 25-mile-wide swath from the river’s headwaters at Lexington northeastward to the Potomac River valley at the Maryland border. Before major road improvements in the twentieth century, the Shenandoah River served as an important transportation link to the outside world. By trekking over Gimlet Ridge, residents of the Loop also had access to Overall Run, which they could follow downstream to the port of Overall along the Shenandoah (Pomeroy 2004). Before construction of Route 613 in the late nineteenth century, land transport flowed northward from Gravel Springs Gap, past Browntown, and on to the county seat at Front Royal.

The geology of the Loop Road area is typical of the Blue Ridge physiographic province. Beneath the stony soil, the igneous and metamorphic parent rock dates back to Precambrian times more than a billion years ago. According to the county geological map, most of the soils near the stone walls consist of mixed valley fill deposits, derived from these ancient formations. Loose stone in these soils ranges in size from pebbles to boulders and include a mixture of quartzite, sandstone, metabasalt, and metagranitic material (Rader and Conley 1995). Two samples of rock similar to the wall material and recovered within a few yards of the walls fall within these categories. A sample from the vicinity of the Perna complex is probably gneiss. White feldspar inclusions have weathered from the surface of the rock indicating long exposure to the elements. Near Ralph Partlow's place, typical wall rock is either poorly metamorphosed quartzite or sandstone (Blanton 2004).

In general, the rugged topography and soil characteristics of the Loop limit farming to hay meadows and pasture for herds of beef cattle. At the southern end of the loop especially, soil scientists categorize the sloping, stony deposits as marginal for any type of agriculture and only suitable for timber. The general soil map for the county shows the Myersville-Montalto-Lew soil series covering the entire area of the southern stone wall groups. This series mainly occurs along the western slopes of the Blue Ridge, covering about one-quarter of Warren County. Although deep and well-drained, soils in this group are "very poorly suited" to cultivation due to their slope (Holmes et al. 1984:7, General Soil Map). Indeed, none of the more specific soil types in the study area have slopes of less than 7 percent. Hawksbill very cobbly loam, which covers most of the Perna property, has moderately favorable chemical characteristics but the high stone content greatly hampers plowing. The landowner confirms this fact from his difficult experience building a guesthouse foundation. In addition to ubiquitous cobbles, gigantic boulders "as big as Volkswagens" hindered excavation (Col. Anthony Perna, personal communication). Much of the Perna property is used for grazing, though even pastures must receive careful attention on these soils (Holmes et al. 1984:7).

Soils on Ralph Partlow's hillside are even steeper than at the Perna place, with slopes of 15–25 percent. Although Partlow rents the steep pasture to a beef herder, most of the county's Rigley-Weikert-Berks very stony complex are wooded. Earlier in the twentieth century, corn was cultivated on this hilly farm. Cultivation and pasturage were made possible only through the efforts of Partlow and his father who gradually heaped more fieldstone onto the great walls built by an unknown previous landowner (Partlow 2004).

Since frost has an impact on both the stability of stone walls and movement of cobbles in the soil, a brief description of local climate is in order.

Unfortunately, the weather trends from the county soil survey derive from data collected at Berryville in Clarke County, Warren's neighbor to the north. The town's elevation of 575 ft. in the base of the Shenandoah Valley is about 645–925 ft. lower than the stone walls. Therefore, we can assume somewhat lower temperatures along the Loop. The average yearly temperature for Berryville is 53.2 degrees Fahrenheit, while averages of 34.3, 30.8, 33.7, and 42.3 degrees are reported for the winter months from December through March. Areas blocked from the low winter sun can have dramatically lower average temperatures. According to Colonel Perna (2004), shadows cast by the tall stone walls along Top of the Loop Lane keep the roadway cool enough to preserve a layer of snow and ice throughout the winter. Compared with New England, though, where stone walls are notorious for the susceptibility to frost damage (with stones shifting from freeze and thaw), the local climate is fairly mild. Yearly average temperatures in Blue Hill, Massachusetts, for example, are 4.6 degrees lower. Even though this difference seems slight, the winter temperatures show that only the January average is below 32 degrees in Berryville, while Blue Hill endures three months of sub-freezing weather.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING

Human activity in this part of Virginia dates back 11,500 years to the end of the last ice age during the Pleistocene era. Environmental conditions were vastly different, as a mile-thick continental glacier covered eastern North America as far south as Pennsylvania. With long winters and short, cool summers, local vegetation consisted of pine and spruce rather than the present mix of hardwoods (Egloff and Woodward 1994:9). Under these harsh conditions, small bands of people known as Paleoindians roamed the area in search of edible plants and game. One of the hallmarks of their culture was the fluted spearpoint, an exquisitely crafted blade of chipped stone with a “flute” or long, thin flake removed from each side to help fit the blade to the spear shaft. Such spears were likely used for hunting now-extinct “mega” fauna such as mammoth, camel, horse, and bison that flourished in the colder climate (Gardner 1974:39). Although archaeological evidence of these earliest peoples is generally scarce, one of the best-preserved groups of Paleoindian sites east of the Mississippi lies just 6 miles north of the study area along the Shenandoah River. Occupants of the Flint Run site complex probably found the area attractive for the fine jasper stone from which they made their tools (Gardner 1974). While most of their activity focused on hunting and gathering at the warmer elevations near the river, they also may have ventured into the snowy uplands of the Loop area in pursuit of game.

About 10,000 years ago, the climate began a gradual warming trend that continues to this day. As the local environment changed with the climate during the Archaic stage of prehistory, local inhabitants adapted their technology and modes of subsistence. By about 6500 B.C., the warmer climate allowed mixed broadleaf forests to flourish, and nuts and acorns became an important part of the prehistoric diet. Artifacts such as grinding slabs, mortars, and pestles found on nearby sites mark the adaptation to these changing food sources. Other technological changes include the development of the spear thrower and use of a broader range of materials like quartz and quartzite for cutting tools and spear points (Snyder and Fehr 1984). Enjoying an abundance and variety of food resources, groups also tended to roam less widely during this stage.

Manufacture of ceramic pottery marks the transition to the Woodland stage of prehistory around 1000 B.C. The presence of pottery on nearby archaeological sites indicates a more sedentary lifestyle. Cumbersome to trans-

port, the vessels would have been used on longer-term sites where whole families gathered to collect and process food. Short-term camps, used when hunting game or collecting stone for toolmaking, would contain the same types of stone artifacts found during the Archaic, but identifiable styles of knives and spearpoints distinguish these artifacts through time. By the Late Woodland period, Native Americans had developed the bow and arrow, and more significantly grew domesticated plants in small gardens cleared from the forest. By this time, native groups occupied villages and homesteads much longer than any sites from the earlier periods, only shifting to make new garden plots on fresh soils. During this period, archaeologists have noted signs of hostility between competing groups (Walker and Miller 1992:180). Palisaded villages such as Site 44WR3 about 9 miles north of the study area indicate an increasing need for defense from neighboring groups (Snyder and Fehr 1984).

Although there is abundant evidence of occupation during all periods of prehistory just north of the study area, limited archaeological exploration in the Loop area has identified only one prehistoric site. The small collection of artifacts includes the debris from stone tool manufacture or maintenance and the heat-altered rock indicative of a hearth (Barber et al. 2002:11–13). These generic items do not bear the distinctive stylistic markers of a particular period. They only confirm a human presence sometime before the arrival of European settlers in the eighteenth century. As the small archaeological survey that led to the discovery of this site was limited to a narrow corridor along Route 631, it is quite possible that other prehistoric sites lie within the Loop area.

According to local tradition, the vantage point of the first European to see the Shenandoah Valley may have been within only 10 miles of the study area. In 1670 Virginia's governor William Berkeley sent John Lederer to establish a fur trade with the Indians of the "Far West" and search for a passage to the Pacific Ocean (Cunz 1942:175). Based on the description of the historic sighting in Lederer's diary, historians believe that he climbed the Blue Ridge either at Manassas Gap or farther south at Chester's Gap, both of which straddle the present Warren County line. Although Lederer turned back without descending into the Great Valley, he was followed by Cadwallader Jones in 1682 and then Louis Michelle of Switzerland in 1706. Both men explored the country around Front Royal (Hale 1943:10–11).

Formal claims to lands beyond the Blue Ridge began in 1728, when Colonel Robert Carter surveyed 52,212 acres in present Rockingham County (Dickinson 1959:6). Carter was the land agent for Lord Fairfax, an English nobleman who held the Northern Neck Proprietary with other family members. In 1664, Fairfax's ancestor, Thomas Lord Culpeper, had received the

immense tract encompassing the entire peninsula between the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers as a personal gift from Charles II in return for his political loyalty (O'Dell 1995:viii). Though Virginia's colonial government contended that the Proprietary extended only as far west as the first falls of the Potomac River, Fairfax claimed land across the Shenandoah Valley up to the Potomac headwaters in present West Virginia (Fischer and Kelly 2000:85). Carter's survey asserted the Fairfax claims just as the colonial government began issuing its own grants beyond the Blue Ridge. Only an exploration of the sources of the rivers that bounded the Proprietary would resolve the dispute. In 1745, a proclamation of the surveyors' results by the King in Council confirmed the Proprietary's claim to a total of 5 million acres that included the contested lower Shenandoah Valley (Dickinson 1959:8–10) (Figure 6).

Even though the Fairfax family had ownership of the Proprietary's lands, residents still were under the legal authority of Virginia. As settlement began west of the Blue Ridge, the colonial government established counties with local governments and courts. From 1734 to 1743, the vast territory of Orange County extended west beyond the Blue Ridge to encompass the entire Valley. Just as had occurred to the east in Tidewater Virginia, smaller counties were formed as settlement intensified in frontier areas. A large enough population situated beyond a day's horseback ride from the courthouse could usually convince the government in Williamsburg to carve out a new county to serve their needs. Accordingly, in the 1740s, the Valley was divided into

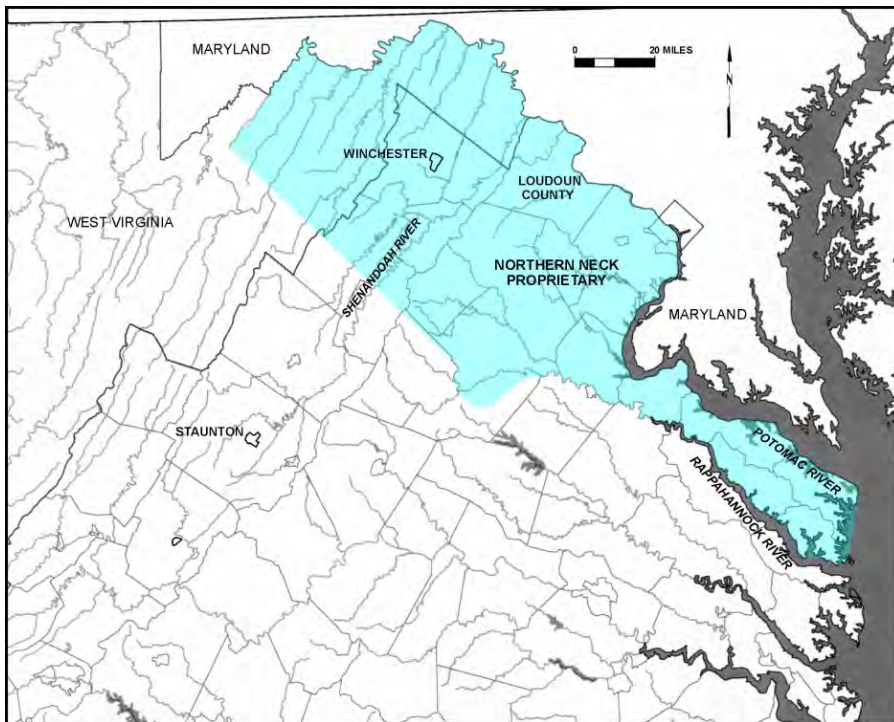


Figure 6. Northern Neck Proprietary. In 1664, King Charles II granted the land between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers. In 1745 it consisted of more than 5 million acres controlled by a single person, Thomas Lord Fairfax. Before Virginia's colonial government began granting lands west of the Blue Ridge mountains, settlers in the lower Valley were already receiving patents from Fairfax's private land granting agency.

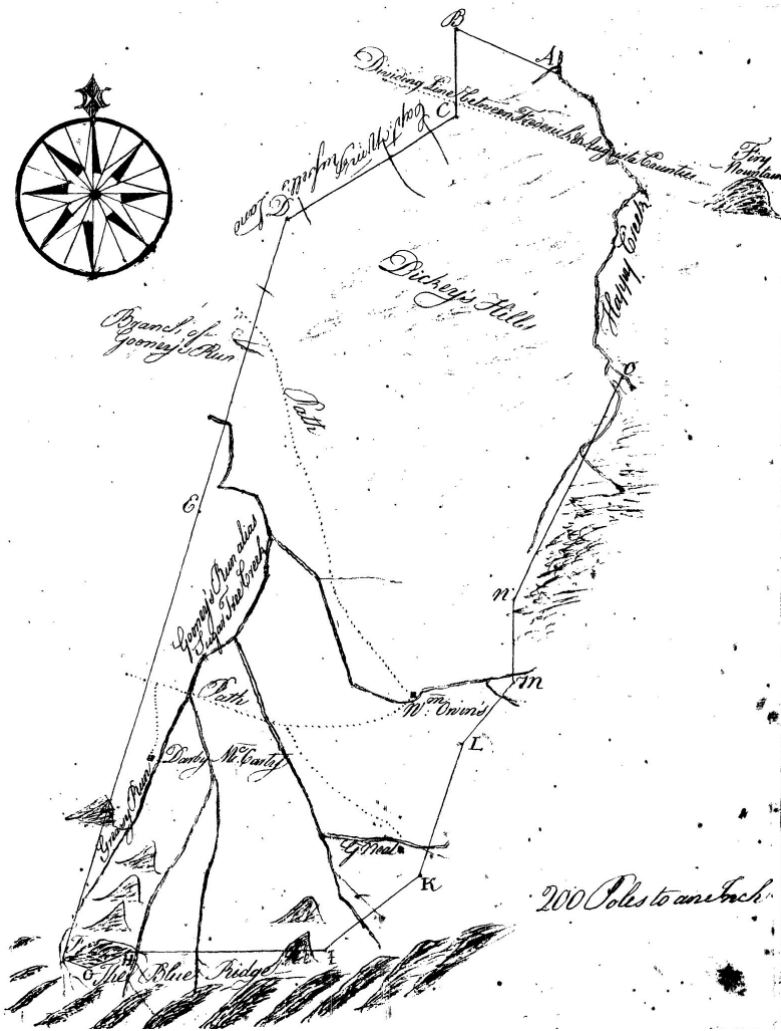


Figure 7. Survey of Gooney Run Manor by Col. William Green (1748). Already, before the issue of formal leases within the manor, several individuals had settled in the area to the north of the study area.

Frederick and Augusta counties. Further division of Valley counties occurred in 1772 when the British Parliament relented on the Proclamation Line that had prohibited western migration into Indian territories. Frederick County lost the lands of Berkeley County on the north and Dunmore County on the south. In 1778, Dunmore County understandably was renamed Shenandoah as a reaction against the unpopular colonial governor (Doran 1987:20–23, 26–29). During the early years of the republic, the county boundaries in the Valley remained stable. In 1836, complaints by local citizens of long trips to the county seats in Shenandoah and Frederick prompted the formation of Warren County, named for a Revolutionary War patriot from Massachusetts. The southern portion of Warren County containing the study area was formed from Shenandoah County (Hale 1943:18).

Earliest settlement history of the study area can be gleaned from records related to Lord Fairfax’s Gooney Run Manor, one of three manor tracts at least partially within the present bounds of Warren

County. The origin of the name Gooney is uncertain, with local lore attributing it either to one of Lord Fairfax’s hunting dogs or a local African-American man who drowned in the creek (Dickinson 1959:29; Jennings 1897). Surveyed by Col. William Green in 1748, Gooney Run Manor consisted of 13,920 acres extending from Cool Springs Church to the southern limits of Front Royal (Merchant 1998) (Figures 7 and 8). By the time of Green’s survey, at least three homesteads already existed in the southern part of the tract near Browntown (see Figure 8). At least two of the “squatter” parcels, William Owins’ and Darby McCarty’s, had been purchased from earlier pioneers. Green also noted two abandoned hunters’ cabins within the manor boundaries (Dickinson 1959:28–29; Northern Neck Grants 1748, E:525). Clearly, then, settlers had been venturing into the Gooney Run valley at least since the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

As settlers bought land within the Proprietary, Lord Fairfax also set aside for himself manor tracts of thousands of acres that he would subdivide and

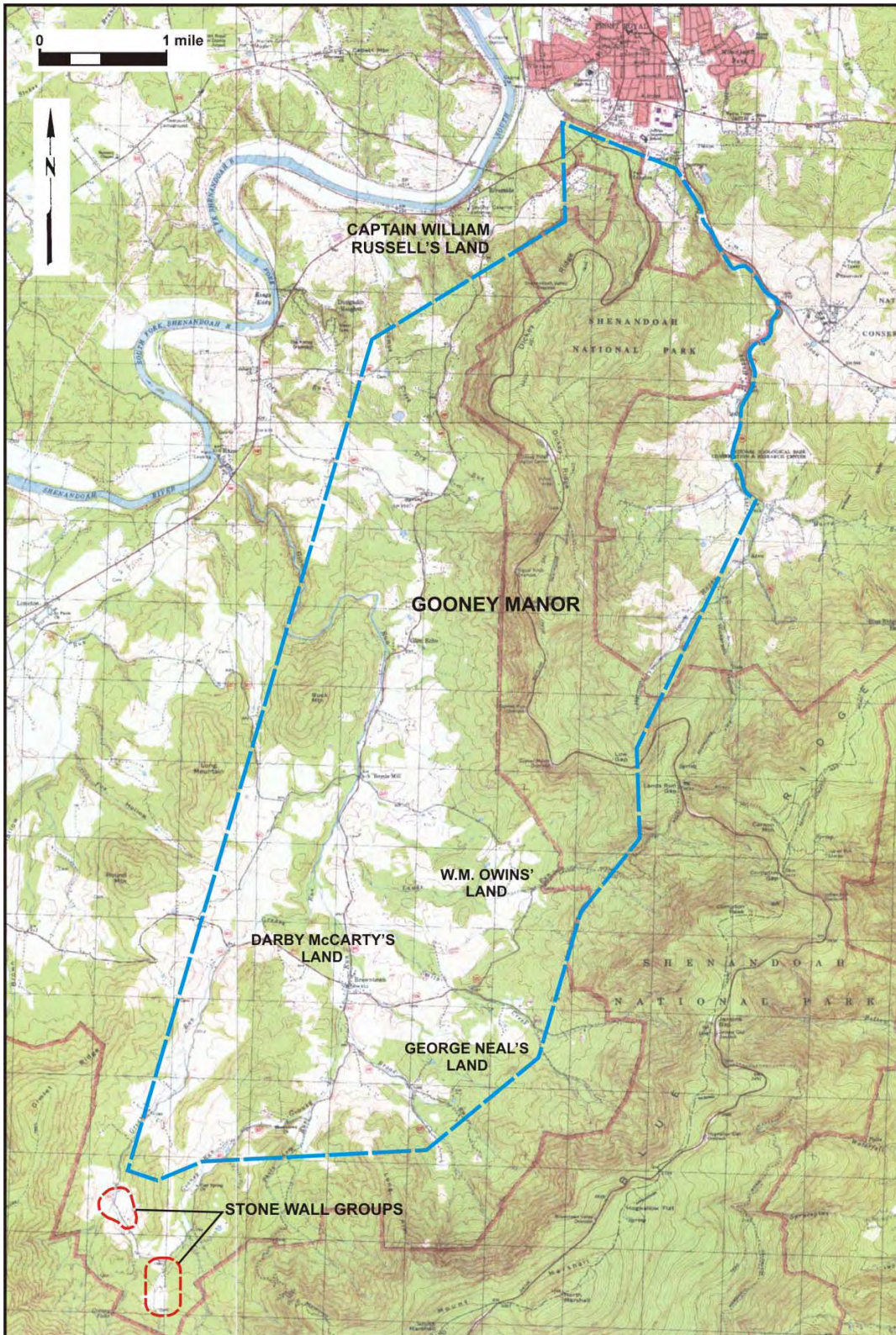


Figure 8. Two hundred and fifty years after Col. William Green surveyed Gooney Manor, local surveyor Darryl Merchant (1998) retraced the manor's boundaries from Green's notes and plotted the tract on a modern topographic map.

lease to small holders. Like the landed nobility in England, he and his heirs could enjoy a sizable, continuous income from renting the land. Families could hold a lease for up to “three lives” (i.e., during the lifetime of husband, wife, and child) but not purchase or hold title to land (Bentley 1983). They also were required to build a cabin with a stone chimney and plant 100 fruit trees (Poe n.d.:1). According to Josiah Look Dickinson’s (1959) county records research, the first leases at the southern end of the Loop road occurred from the 1770s through 1790s. However, leaseholds that he places as far south as the slopes east of the Perna property would have been farther north near Cool Springs Church according to the modern resurvey of the metes and bounds (Merchant 1998) (see Figure 7). Along the fringe of the manor’s southern boundary, settlement probably was more scattered. Living on the more difficult sloping terrain, the earliest inhabitants may have been hunters with a few acres of subsistence crops and some livestock.

In 1806, Gooney Manor was sold to James and John Marshall. Unlike the Fairfaxes, the first United States chief justice and his brother allowed leaseholders to purchase land (Dickinson 1959:21). Six years after the manor’s change in ownership and land policy, Abraham Brown bought a tract at present Browntown and built several mills. The village that grew around Brown’s property was known first as Hambaugh’s and then Brown’s Mills. In the early nineteenth century, the village boasted a nearby post office and provided goods and services to the surrounding countryside. In a letter to the *Warren Sentinel* in 1897, Loyd Jennings recalled the forerunner of Browntown as it was in the early nineteenth century. As an 84-year-old remembering as far back as the 1820s, Jennings was most impressed by the large reunions of Revolutionary War veterans who gathered in the village for Independence Day (Good 1976). The veterans would “talk over their trials... and shed tears of joy for the great victories they achieved and bequeathed for all coming generations; and make an exhibition of the wounds they received during the clash of steel” (Jennings 1897). In those days before the last survivors of the Revolutionary War had passed away, however, many other American communities also may have held more rousing, poignant celebrations than ever since. Whether extraordinary for the period or not, Jennings’ recollection of the Browntown area holiday reflects the community’s vitality in the early nineteenth century.

During the following decades, the community continued to thrive with an economy based on mixed farming and small industry. In his 1835 *Gazetteer*, Joseph Martin described both the present resources and the future potential of the “Valley of the Gooney.” While industry consisted of a woolen factory and several grain distilleries, the stream had a “situation for water works and mills and sawmills.” Farmers grew corn, wheat, rye, clover, and timothy, which were said to “thrive very well” (Martin 1835:445–446).

Sheep likely made up a large portion of livestock given the factory's steady demand for wool. With the Shenandoah River only 6 miles to the east, Gooney Manor was accessible to markets in Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore (Kalbian 1991:40). The population was large enough to support two churches and one school. Growth may have been spurred by increasing individual ownership of land. In 1837, the Marshalls sold their remaining 8,000 acres of Gooney Manor to William Marshall who gradually sold off all but his home tract to individual owners (Poe n.d.:2).

Census records for the antebellum years reveal the presence of slaves in the Loop area. Although William and Elizabeth Woodward owned between 15 and 24 slaves in the 1850s and 1860s, slave labor usually played a less significant role on local farms. A sample of slave-owning landowners for 1860 includes Israel Updike with one male slave, William Overall with three slave children, and Mary Jones with one slave (Neville 2002:8).

In the bitter struggle to control the Shenandoah Valley region's rich agricultural resources during the Civil War, officers of the opposing armies produced maps and reports that supply details about local settlement. A Confederate map of the lower Shenandoah Valley emphasizes the isolation of the study area (Gilmer 1864) (Figure 9). The cartographer showed the predecessor of Browntown Road leading south from Front Royal and briefly following the path of present Route 631. Instead of looping around the upper reaches of Gooney and Greasy runs, however, the road turned southeast and followed the exact path of the restricted road that now connects to the Blue Ridge Parkway at Gravel Springs Gap (see Figures 2 and 9). According to Hal Meredith (2004), a farmstead surrounded by drylaid stone walls stood along this road up the mountain until the early twentieth century. Tragically, most of the Clatterbuck family died during the influenza epidemic of 1918 and the farm was abandoned. Two mills are also shown just north of the study area, the Updike mill at Browntown and another just below Phil's Arm Run. Based on the Confederate map as well as a report filed by a Union officer, we also know that the community of Brown's Mill became known as Browntown sometime around mid-century (U.S. War Department [USWD] 1885, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 1:554).

Although no fighting occurred at Browntown during the Civil War, in May 1862 a party of 100 Pennsylvania infantry and 30 Michigan cavalry passed through the community as they investigated reports of Confederate troops operating nearby. The cavalry contingent surrounded a house somewhere within 3 miles of Browntown and captured a soldier from the Eighth Louisiana Volunteers. According to the prisoner, his regiment had been impressing local Union sympathizers and slaves, and commandeering horses and food (USWD 1885, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 1:554–555). A Confederate report either that same month or a year later described movements of Mary-



Figure 9. Map of Gooney Run Valley during the Civil War (Gilmer 1864). Rather than making a loop back to the north along Greasy run, at this time the predecessor of Route 631 headed southwest toward Gravel Springs Gap.



Figure 10. Running Brook Farm (94-90), originally known as Mountain View. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was the home of Amon Updike.

land and Louisiana troops along Gooney Manor (Browntown) Road during one of the many battles for Front Royal (USWD 1885, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 1:702). More troop movements along Gooney Run were reported by a Union officer in August 1864 (USWD 1893, ser. 1, vol. 43, pt. 1:428).

Despite frequent military activity, the Gooney Valley (like much of the Shenandoah Valley) soon recovered from the war. By 1870, when James Boyd subdivided some of his land into town lots, Browntown was approaching its heyday. The waters of the Gooney were fulfilling the promise Joseph Martin (1835) had foreseen, with five other families operating mills in the valley. In 1874, industry expanded with the establishment of a tannery. Use of oak bark in the tanning process also boosted employment in the local timbering industry. Distilling continued, now complemented by a barrel stave factory and cooper shop. A hardwood handle factory added to the small town's industrial base. During this period, taverns, stores, schools, and churches of several denominations served Browntown and the agricultural hinterland (Poe n.d.:2).

At the turn of the twentieth century, social life along the Loop centered around Amon Updike's farm and mill (093-0090) north of the study area (Figures 10 and 11; see Figure 3). Amon Updike was legendary for lavish entertainment, the subject of several articles in the *Warren Sentinel*. At a reunion of the Brown and Updike families in 1891, 200 to 300 guests were reported in attendance. Dinner was served outdoors, buffet-style on a fifty-foot-long table which "groaned under the weight of good things" (Craig



Figure 11. Stone pillar in front of Running Brook farmhouse incised with Amon Updike's initials.



Figure 12. View of the village of Browntown. After thriving as a small industrial center in the nineteenth century, the quiet village is now largely a bedroom community for residents who work in Front Royal and beyond.

1985:936). A report of Amon and Louise Updike’s golden wedding anniversary celebration in 1909 captures the exuberance of social occasions in the Gooney Manor countryside:

Imagine a man over seventy cutting the “pigeon wing” with as much lubricity of joint and muscle as a rubber ball on a solid floor, and you will have a picture of “uncle Amon” at his golden wedding.

...“Uncle Amon” was as busy as a bee in red clover, seeing that everyone had a good time, got enough to eat, and shared in the general festivities (Craig 1985:937).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the supply of bark dwindled and Browntown’s tannery closed (Pomeroy 2004). Gradually, all of Browntown’s factories were shut down and much of the commerce and social activity that had been supported by industrial workers disappeared. By the late twentieth century, Browntown became a bedroom community for Front Royal and even Washington, D.C. (Poe n.d.:3; Updike 2004). Besides local churches and fraternal organizations, the main focal point of the village is O. J. Rudacille General Merchandise, the only store still in operation (Figures 12 and 13). While the Loop remains agricultural, residential development has begun along the Route 613 approach to Browntown in the last decade (Updike 2004). Local residents have a strong sense of place, take pride in their history, and maintain an active community association that publishes a quarterly newsletter. Well-publicized Independence Day celebrations and a Gooney Manor Loop 10K foot race attract regional visitors.

Figure 13. O. J. Rudacille’s general store in Browntown.



Title History of the Perna Property

Limited court records research only yielded chain of title information for the Perna property. An attempt to trace the title of Ralph Partlow's property was unsuccessful. Although his name was absent from will book and deed book indexes, the history could become apparent by tracing the title backward from the Grove family who sold the farm to Partlow's father. Due to limited research time, no attempt was made to trace the title of the Giles Partlow property.

According to the information provided by the Colonel Perna during a 1991 architectural survey, the Perna House (093-0089) was built by James Morgan in 1803. As this predates the formation of Warren County, the information would need to be verified in Shenandoah County's court records, a task that was beyond the scope of this project. The name Morgan does appear in Dickinson's (1959) index of tenants in Gooney Run, Greenway Court, and Leeds manors.

The earliest mention of the property in Warren County's court records is in July 1849 when Jacob and Malinda Rudaciller sold just over 102 acres of land that included the present Perna property (Warren County Records, Deed Book [DB] E:12). John Rudaciller (possibly their son) paid \$150 and less than a year later sold the property to Israel Updike for \$400 (DB G:187, recorded April 30, 1853).

Born in neighboring Rappahannock County across the Blue Ridge, Israel Updike moved to the Gooney Valley and married Eleanor Brown sometime before the birth of their first child in 1825. Eleanor may have been the daughter of the prosperous mill owner Abraham Brown, the namesake of Browntown. According to an Updike family genealogy, Israel lived at Mountain View. The farm lies roughly half way between the Perna farm and Browntown and is best known as the home of his son Amon, the famous host of local social gatherings already mentioned (Craig 1985:861, 874).

Shortly before Israel's death in 1869, he and Eleanor sold the 102-acre property for \$400 to their second-born son John Jackson Updike (Figure 14). The property was described as "lying between Gooney and Greasy Run" (DB H:373). At the time, John was 43 years old and married since 1851 to Elizabeth Rudacille. When the couple acquired the farm, Elizabeth had already borne 9 or 10 of their 11 children. Unlike the previous generation of Updikes, John and Elizabeth made the 102-acre property their home, possibly building or modifying the present structure (Craig 1985:875).

When John J. Updike was 80 years old, it was time to pass most of the burdens of the farm to the next generation. On May 25, 1906, John and Elizabeth sold the 102-acre property to their only surviving son, J. Randolph Updike (Figure 15). The purchase price of \$800 included two other contiguous parcels the Updikes had acquired in the 1870s (DB I:438, L:216).



Figure 14. John Jackson Updike (1826–1920), who owned the Perna farm from 1869 to 1906 (Craig 1985:874).

During their lifetime, John and Elizabeth would retain half of the dwelling, garden, and outbuildings, and rights to pasture for a horse and a cow (DB 9:225).

On December 23, 1939, Joseph Randolph Updike died without a will. The property he had inherited from his father was reduced to 117 acres when the Park Service acquired 40 acres for the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. Further fragmentation of the Updike property occurred during the estate settlement. In 1940, two deeds involving the heirs-at-law (John Updike's widow Carrie, their daughters Ada and Grace, and the daughters' husbands) transferred title for the 45-acre southeastern portion to Ada F. Updike and the 57-acre northwestern portion containing the dwelling to Grace Grove (DB 48:152).

On August 2, 1958, Grace E. Grove also died without a will. In 1961 her 57-acre property was sold out of the family by her seven heirs-at-law to Nina G. Hicks (DB 120:327). A 1966 deed records the transfer of the old Updike place from Nina G. Hicks and her husband William to Hugh and Beatrice Lowery (DB 150:231). In 1971, the Lowerys sold the property, then 51.5 acres, to Col. Anthony Perna and his wife Mary Perna (DB 186:333).



Figure 15. Joseph Randolph Updike (1873–1939) is pictured at left with siblings, possibly on the porch of the current Perna farmhouse (Craig 1985:874).

STONE WALLS DOCUMENTATION

Documentation Methods

Field documentation of stone wall groups along Gooney Manor Loop Road took place July 6–9, 2004. Most of this field effort focused on the stone walls at the southern end of Gooney Manor Loop Road on properties associated with structures 093-0089, 093-0193, and 093-0194, although limited photography and in some cases rudimentary mapping also was done for wall networks farther north along the eastern portion of the Loop Road.

At the main complexes, wall locations were mapped with the aid of high resolution infrared aerial photographs taken in 1997 (U.S. Geological Survey [USGS] 1997) (Figure 16). As the aerial photographs were taken in winter (with minimal foliage obstructing the view of landscape features), most walls only needed field checking before they were traced onto transparencies covering the photographs. Wall locations were then transferred to a topographic quadrangle map (USGS 1972) (Figure 17). Occasionally, the walls were obscured by evergreen trees on the aerial photos and measurements and compass sightings were necessary for accurate mapping. On the larger Perna (093-0089) and Ralph Partlow (093-0193) properties, field checking involved a careful walkover of cleared areas and examination of bordering wooded areas. At the Giles Partlow property (093-0194), a walkover was used to map the walls near the yard, while the visibility of walls, piles, and check dams on steep hillsides to the east allowed field checking from the road. Examination of aerial photographs taken by the Department of Agriculture in October 1937 expanded the inventory of walls that may not have been observed in the field.

In addition to detailed mapping, scale profile drawings were made of representative sections of walls across the study area. Complementing these cross sections are photographs taken from multiple viewpoints. Both detail photographs and general landscape views were keyed to a photographic log that notes subject, location, and directions of views.

Perna Property

The most impressive, varied network of stone walls within the study area is on the hillsides of the Perna farm (94-89) (see Figures 3 and 17). Beginning along Route 631, walls follow alongside the farm road called Top of the Loop Lane up toward the Perna farmhouse. The yard area contains several short walls and a drylaid stone spring enclosure. West of the house a broken

line of walls extends southward up the hillside with two major branches on the west and one on the east.

Although a few yards of wall at the western end of the Route 631 frontage have collapsed or have been robbed, the rest of the length is in good condition (Figure 18). Height generally increases eastward to a maximum of 5 to 6 ft. near the entrance to Top of the Loop Lane. As is the case for most of the walls on the Perna farm, building material consists mainly of

irregularly shaped cobbles with rounded, weathered surfaces. Roughly ranging from 4 to 12 inches long, the stones are only loosely arranged by size with the very largest ones tending to be at the bottom and the smallest toward the top. Most of the height consists of a random mix of sizes. Careful placement has resulted in solid, durable construction, but apparently no attempt has been made to shape the stone or to “chink” with small pebbles to achieve a smooth regular face.

At the very corner of Top of the Loop Lane and Route 631, the walls are only about 3 ft. high (Figures 19 and 20). Directly behind them, however, an amorphous pile where the road name signpost is planted attests to the prodigious amount of rock that has been removed from the fields over the years. On the east side of the lane, low, irregular, and intermittent walls continue southward for about 250 ft. from the entrance. On the west side are some of the most massive walls of the entire study area. These walls rise up to 6.5 ft. above the roadway, high enough to block the sun from the lane’s surface once it rises behind the hills to the southwest on winter afternoons (Perna 2004) (Figures 21 and 22). The wall continues southward along the west side of Top of the Loop Lane until the rough roadway bears sharply west and ends in the yard of the Perna farmhouse. Beyond the first 250 ft. the laneside walls are less massive and about a foot shorter than at the lower end. The only interruptions are gateways leading into the pastures and into

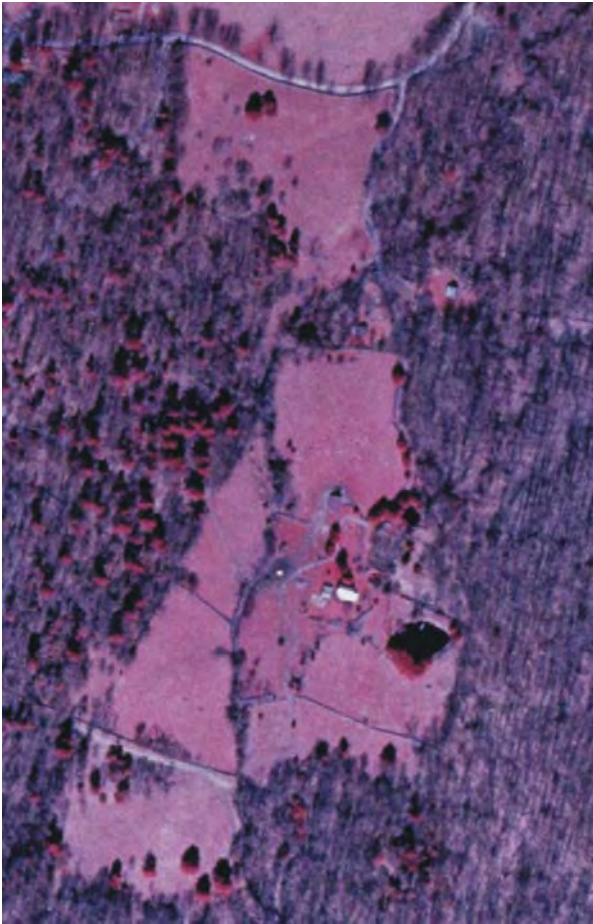


Figure 16. Example of infrared aerial photograph used as a mapping aid in the field (USGS 1997). This portion shows the Perna farm.

a house halfway up the lane.

From afar, the most noticeable stone walls on the Perna property extend across the hillside pastures. A series of north-south walls that follow alongside the upper reaches of Gooney Run roughly divide the property into two halves (see Figure 17). On the west, the pastures are further subdivided into three sections by two walls extending westward to the edge of the woods. A profile made of the lower wall shows a substantial difference in height above ground surface between the northern (upper) side and southern (lower) side (Figure 23). Judging from the fairly level ground surface near the base of

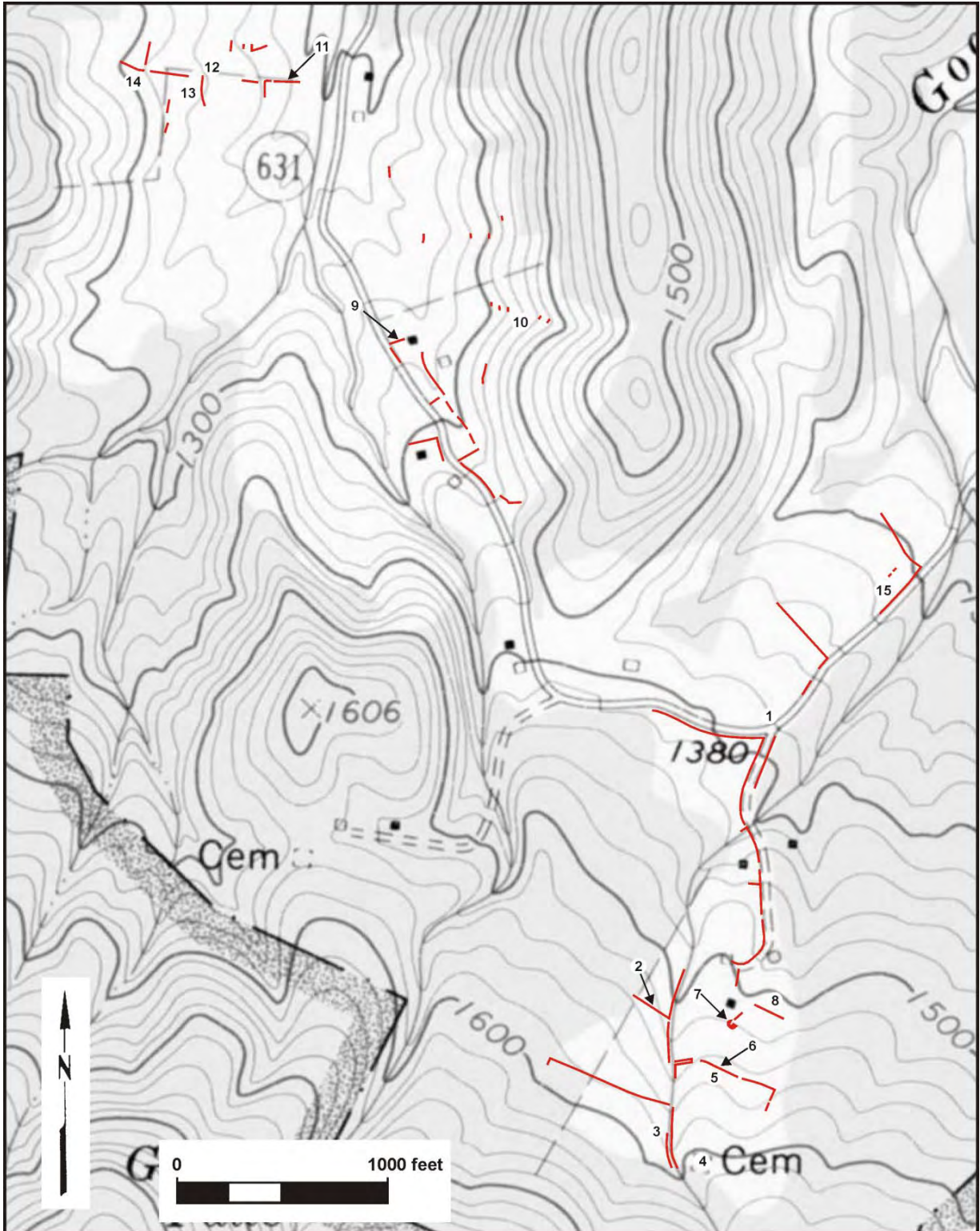


Figure 17. Map of walls with photograph and drawing references (USGS 1972).



Figure 18. Road frontage walls at western edge of Perna property. Apart from the section in the foreground much of the wall is in good condition.

each side, the builders probably prepared the ground to some degree before placing the bottom layers of stones. The profile also suggests the wall on its own would be unsuitable for enclosing certain livestock, with the uphill side rising less than 2 ft. above the ground and sloped at a shallow angle. Compare the profile, for example, with the shape of a template currently used for building British enclosure walls or the steepness of a typical sheep enclosure wall on the Yorkshire dales in England (Figures 24 and 25). According to one expert on the English drylaid wall tradition, stone walls had to be at least 5 ft. high to effectively enclose animals adapted to rugged terrain

(Garner 1997:4). A nineteenth-century farmer in New England also recommended a “batten” or lean (horizontal distance between the base and the top) of no more than 1.5 ft. (Thorson 2002:155). Otherwise, surefooted animals like sheep or goats would be tempted to simply walk over the top. According to Virginia’s definition of a lawful fence, stone walls had to be at least 4 ft. high (Commissioner of Agriculture 1872:502). Another squat profile was observed about 400 ft. to the south. Unlike its neighbor, this wall could be traced far into the woods to the west and was nearly twice as long.

Although no walls were evident when scouting the woods along the northern edge of the pasture, a 1937 aerial photograph appears to show an addi-



Figure 19. Walls and large rock pile at the corner of Route 631 and Top of the Loop Lane.



Figure 20. View of entrance to the Perna farm, with walls lining both sides of Top of the Loop Lane.



Figure 21. Elevation view of high west wall at the lower end of lane. (Measuring stick is 6.6 ft.)



Figure 22. View along the face of the west wall at the lower end of lane, looking north. (Measuring stick is 6.6 ft.)

Figure 23. West profile sketch of field wall at Area 2.

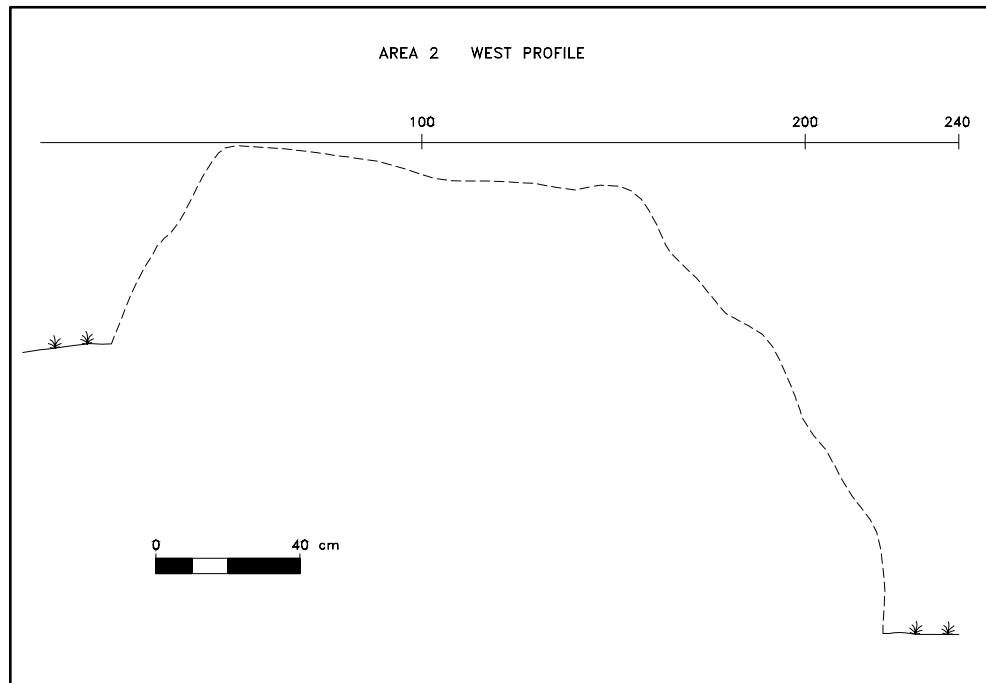


Figure 24. The wooden template at left shows the steep sides and height of wall necessary for enclosing sheep. Note the dressed stone used in such a finished enclosure wall (Garner 1997:13).



Figure 25. Typical steep-sided Yorkshire wall suitable for enclosing the sheep shown on the left side of the picture (Lund et al. 1992:17).

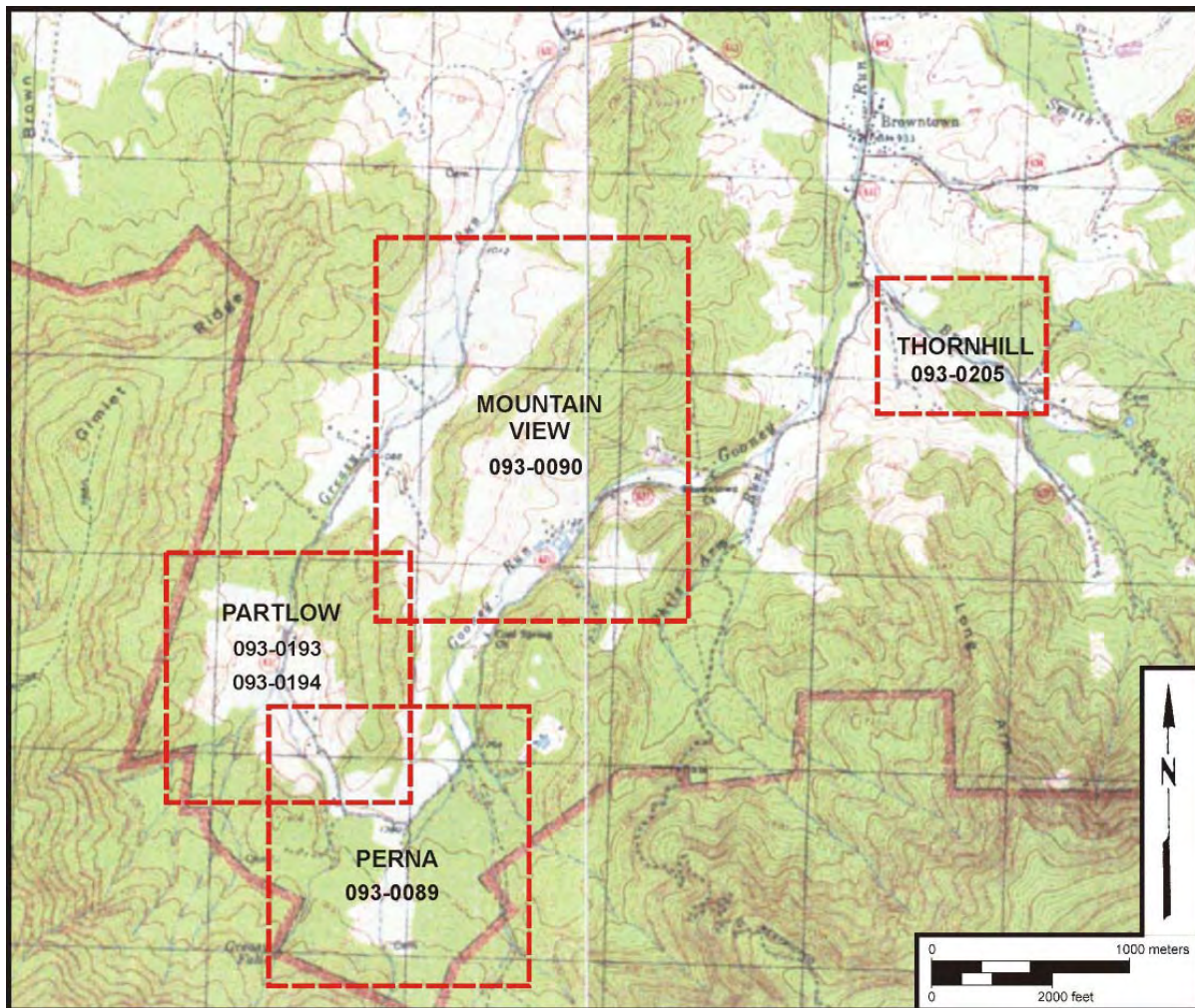


tional east-west wall extended across the western half of the property (Figures 26–28). At the time, the farm was more open than today so that the location of this southernmost wall lay more than 200 ft. south of the field’s boundary with the woods. In this more open landscape, the overall network of walls also appears to have been more extensive. Several of the distinctive, shadowy lines in the photograph seem to match the current locations of stone walls, but extend farther than the remnant walls today. Also two additional walls appear along the edges of the now wooded portion of the lower (northern) field. The 1937 photograph also shows two large cultivated areas (white), whereas the entire farm now consists of woods or pasture.

Figure 26. Aerial photograph showing stone walls on the Perna property (taken October 1937).

The most massive section of wall in the entire study area was encountered at the southeastern edge of the western fields, along the upper reaches of Gooney Run (see Area 3 in Figure 17). Under the cover of tall hardwood trees on the edge of the woods to the east, these walls were not evident on either the 1997 or 1937 aerial photographs, despite their large size. The most massive section of wall begins on the east side of the stream across from the east end of the long east-west wall just described above (Figure 29). It continues southward about 100 ft., diminishes in breadth, then parallels a twin wall running southward along the west side of the stream (Figure 30). Both walls end just short of the southern edge of the adjacent field. Rising up to 5 ft. above the ground surface and 9.2 ft. across, the northern section of wall appears to be among the oldest on the property. Over the years vines and other vegetation have overgrown the stones and falling leaves have accumulated humus such that the top of the wall resembles an earthwork fortification or a dike, though obviously the history of the property precludes a defensive function. To give some sense of scale and substance,

Figure 27. Key to coverage of 1937 aerial photographs.



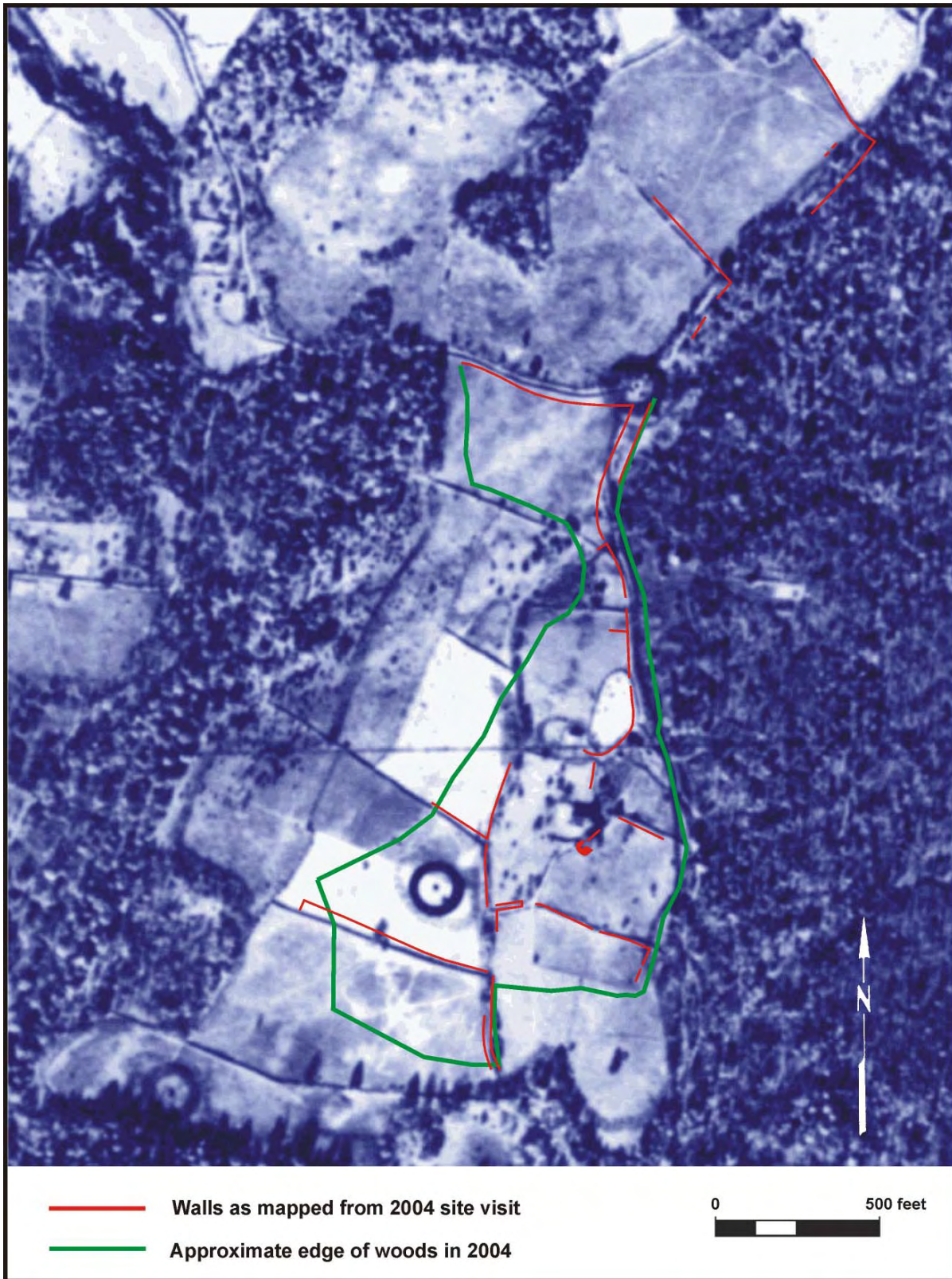


Figure 28. Map of walls (red) plotted on topographic map laid over 1937 aerial photograph (blue tint). As evident from the green outline of the present forest edge, a much larger portion of the property consisted of open fields. Additional or more extensive walls are visible to the south and west of the current open area of the farm.



Figure 29. Top of massive wall that parallels upper portion of Gooney Run, looking north.

Figure 30. Twin walls alongside upper portion of Gooney Run, looking south.



the compacted earth, stone, and vegetation provide solid footing for a 180 lb. man walking on the wall's crest (see Figure 29).

To the north of this segment of wall there is a gap of some hundred feet before the walls marking the spine of the pasture layout resume along the east side of Gooney Run just north of a farm track that leads through a gate into the eastern fields (see Figure 17). Beyond the gateway, these walls extend northward alongside the stream, forming a boundary between the yard of the Perna house and the pastures to the west. Currently, this stretch of wall ends where a line of boulders (perhaps a wall remnant) runs east-west toward Top of the Loop Lane and forms a northern boundary of the house yard.

Two major sections of wall extend southeastward to bound the open pastures southeast of the house. Of these the southernmost wall is the most substantial and steepest in cross section, though it varies in height along its length. If the entire wall once resembled the profile in Figure 31, it may have been suitable for enclosing livestock on its north side. Although the shortest face (on the south) rises only

about 3.5 ft. above the surface, on the north side the top of the wall is up to 4.6 ft. higher in elevation than the ground surface (Figures 32 and 33). Perhaps because it is close to the house or was possibly used as an enclosure, this section of wall appears to have been specially crafted and/or well maintained. To the southeast of the profiled area, there are lower sections that may have been robbed to create some of the wall features found within the yard. Despite uneven quality, the wall continues southeast toward the edge of the field, where it turns at a right angle and extends about 100 ft. southwestward into the woods.

Immediately north and east of the Perna farmhouse are several lengths of stone wall that have been blended into the shrubbery of the yard, suggesting more recent, ornamental origins than the walls extending across the pastures (Figures 34 and 35). Aside from these minor features, the yard also contains an elaborate spring enclosure. Viewed at a distance from the south, the enclosure resembles a gigantic, overgrown rock pile. On the north side, though, the structure of the feature becomes apparent (Figures

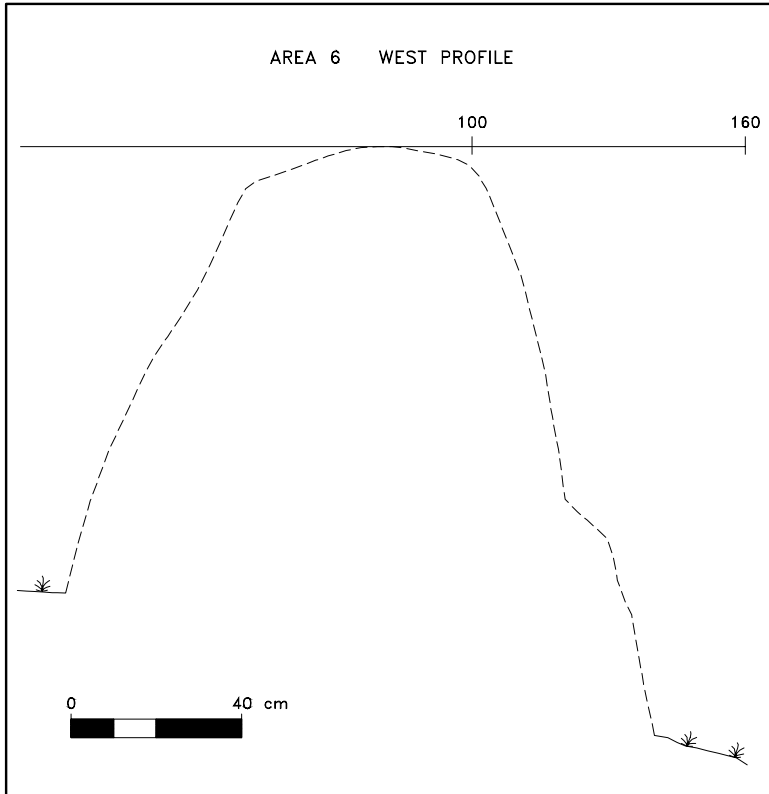


Figure 31. West profile sketch of field wall at Area 6.

Figure 32. View to the east along top of wall at Area 6.



Figure 33. View of northern face of Area 6 wall.



Figure 34. Perna farmhouse and front yard, looking south.

Figure 35. Front yard of Perna farmhouse with stone walls and farm building in background, looking north.



Figure 36. Spring enclosure and mound, looking south.



Figure 37. Overhead view of entranceway to spring enclosure.



Figure 38. Detail elevation view of entranceway to spring enclosure, looking south.

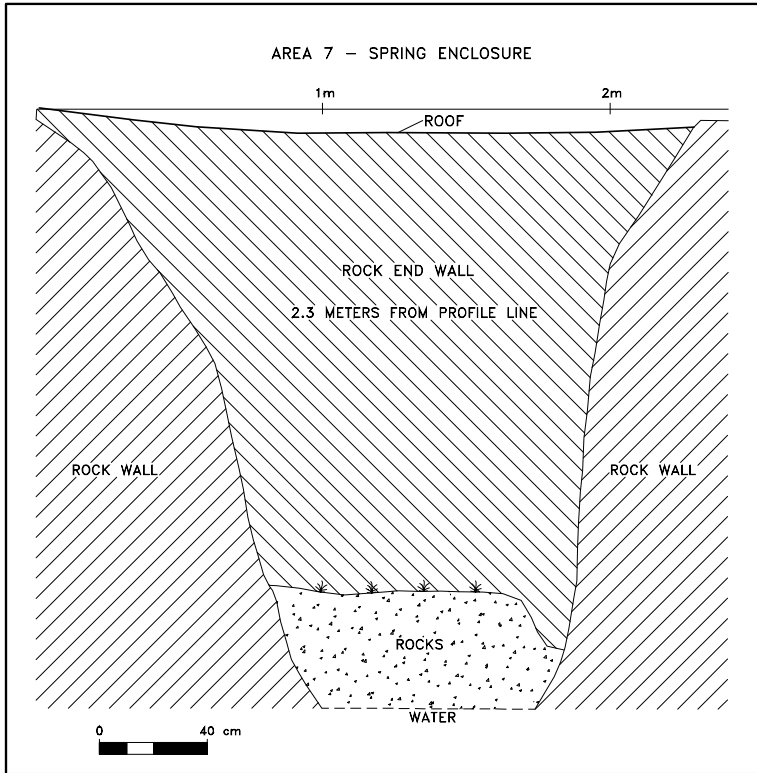


Figure 39. South profile of spring enclosure at southern edge of pool.

36–38). Two lines of rocks one or two courses high are gradually piled higher and are more tightly and carefully placed until they form walls on either side of a sloping path that leads into the pool of the spring. At the edge of the water, a 1-ft.-thick layer of rocks has been laid down to create a dry surface to stand on for those drawing water (Figure 39). Here the side walls rise nearly 7 ft. above the water’s surface and extend another 7.5 ft. forward before meeting the end wall of the enclosure (Figure 40). Beyond the rock platform, the enclosure is also covered with a makeshift roof of planks and corrugated metal, which are weighed down by rocks and overgrown with vegetation (Figure 41). This curious alternative to a springhouse seems to have been an expedient way to dispose of the abundant stone in the yard area, while also avoiding the costs involved in building a more traditional structure.

In addition to these stone wall features apparent from aerial photographs and preliminary site visits, the fieldwork also involved examination of a small cemetery in the woods at the southern edge of the property. Given the abundant use of drylaid stonework in the study area, it was reasonable to assume that stone might have been used to enclose the family grave plots. In fact, the Updike family cemetery was surrounded by a combination of split rail worm fence and wrought iron paling sections (Figures 42 and 43). According to a report of local family cemeteries in the *Gooney Manor Newsletter* (1978), the interments include four Updikes, three members of the Swartz family (also represented in the family graveyard on the Giles Partlow farm to the northwest), and an infant Rudacille girl. The earliest gravestone inscription dates to 1919 and the latest to 1957.



Figure 40. Detail of spring chamber.



Figure 41. Roof of spring chamber.



Figure 42. Wrought iron fence at Updike cemetery, looking north.



Figure 43. Gravestones and split rail fence at Updike cemetery, looking west.

Giles Partlow Property

A second major concentration of stone walls occurs in the fields and yard around the Giles Partlow house (093-0194), built ca. 1830 (Kalbian 1999). From the walls fronting the Perna property, the Loop Road runs west then northwest for a few hundred yards. Over this stretch, the road skirts the tip of the ridge of high land dividing upper Gooney Run from the Greasy Run drainage. Most of the stone walls lie along the northeast side of the road at the base of the ridge slope. Scattered higher up the hillside are several shorter, disconnected linear stone features (see Figure 17).

The westernmost stone feature is a low, linear rock pile in the shape of a wide open V, measuring approximately 100 ft. from end to end (Figures 44 and 45). Based on its isolation and amorphous cross section, the pile probably never served as a wall. Instead, the location in a shallow swale (not apparent from the elevation contour intervals on the topographic map) suggests an expedient method of clearing the adjacent fields (see Figure 45). With minimum expenditure of energy, rocks could have been tossed or rolled from the adjacent slopes. At the same time, the low pile would have served to fill in a periodically damp section of the property. The pile also appears on a 1937 aerial photograph (Figure 46; see Figure 27). Its location at the corner of a cultivated (white) field adds weight to these interpretations. In order to cultivate this corner of the property, more thorough stone removal would have resulted in the very large rock pile. Also, the bare soil would have been more susceptible to



Figure 44. Eastern extent of roadfront wall with V-shaped rock pile in background (Giles Partlow property [94-194]).

runoff, with water tending to pool in this low-lying part of the field more so than in the pasture present today.

Just west of the large rock pile, a low stone wall extends about 250 ft. along the road. Unlike the Perna property frontage, much of the wall is in poor condition (Figure 47). From here a series of walls extend toward the farmhouse both along the roadside and about 100 ft. back. These walls,

along with other fencing, roughly enclose two oblong areas on the flatter portions of the farm (see Figure 17). Patterns visible in the 1937 aerial photograph appear to closely match the current configuration. Just as the two southernmost stretches of wall running parallel and about 50 ft. back from the road are low and poorly formed, so does this section appear faint in the aerial photograph (see Figure 46).

The Giles Partlow property's most substantial stone walls stand on either side of the driveway/parking area before the front yard of the farmhouse (Figure 48). Along the road on the south side of the driveway, a broad stone wall presents a substantial, squat barrier similar to the

wall along the Perna frontage. The northern end, however, has tumbled into a formless jumble of rock (Figures 49 and 50). On the north side of the driveway/parking area is the property's best example of stone wall construction. A low, whitewashed stone wall, extends from the roadside about 50 ft. back, almost as far as the west side of the farmhouse (Figures 51 and 52). Planted into the top of the wall, a whitewashed post and plank fence raises the total height of the barrier high enough to effectively enclose livestock in the pasture to the west (Figure 53). The design and color of this top fence also match white wooden fencing on the north and east sides of the driveway/parking area, creating a forecourt for the front yard.

On the hillsides above and north of the farmhouse, linear stone features are so scattered that they never would have formed enclosures. Instead, these piles of rock seem to simply represent compact disposal areas for field clearing that doubled as drainage improvements. All are located perpendicular to the slope of the hillside, effectively forming barriers to runoff from heavy rains. One series of five short features steps down a shallow ravine (Figure 54). These check dams could blunt erosion on the portion on the property where topographic contours show runoff to be potentially most threatening. Most of these stone features date at least to the first half of the twentieth century as many are visible on the 1937 aerial photograph (see Figure 46).



Figure 45. V-shaped rock pile in swale.

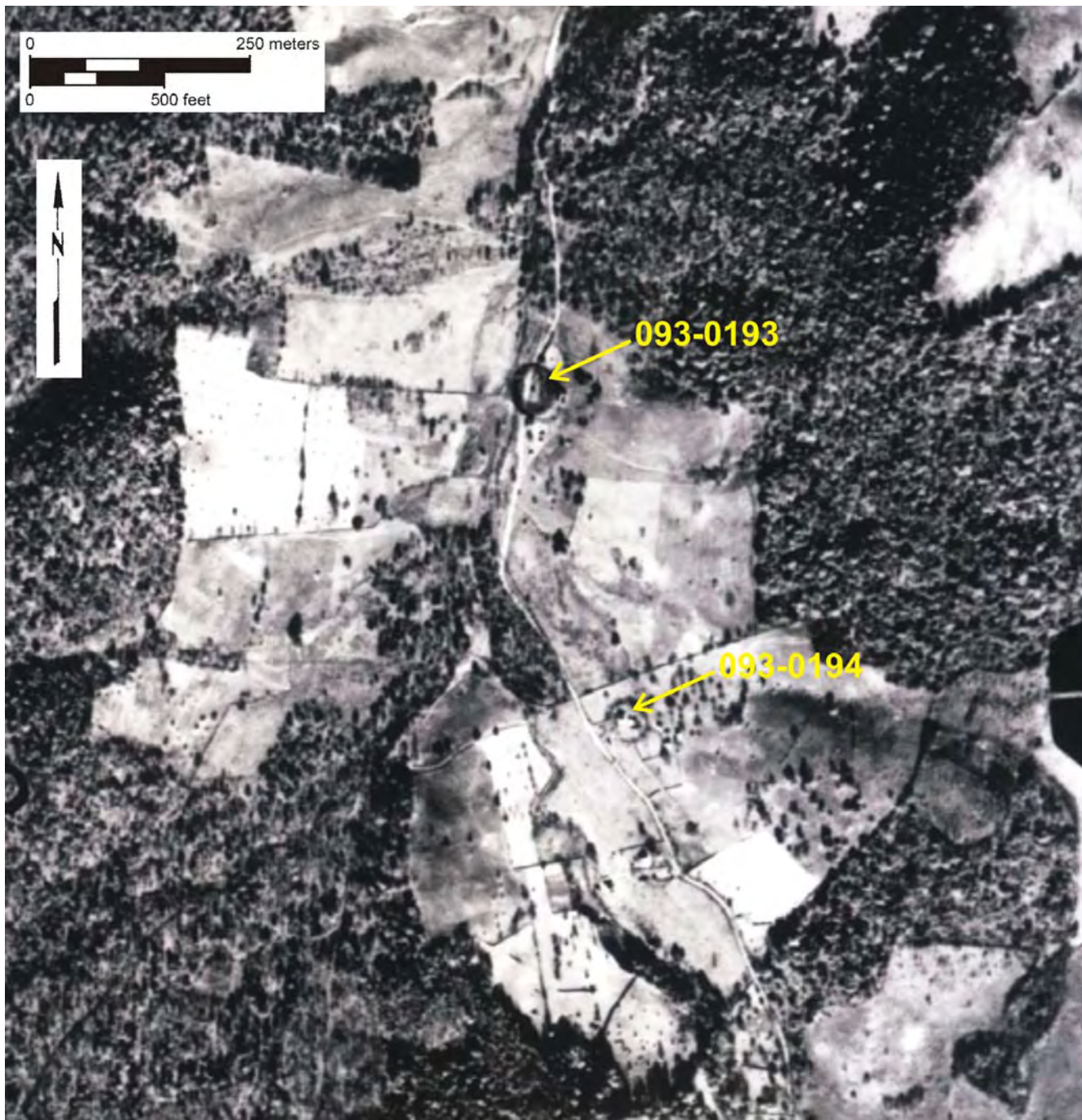


Figure 46. Aerial photograph showing stone walls on the Giles Partlow and Ralph Partlow properties (taken October 1937).



Figure 47. Roadside wall, looking west toward Giles Partlow farmhouse.

Figure 48. Giles Partlow farmhouse with fences and driveway/parking area in foreground., looking west



Figure 49. Roadside wall on south side of driveway, looking southeast.





Figure 50. Collapsed northern end of roadfront wall on south side of driveway, looking south.



Figure 51. Elevation of wall on north side of driveway, looking north.



Figure 52. Detail of wall on north side of driveway topped with wooden fence.

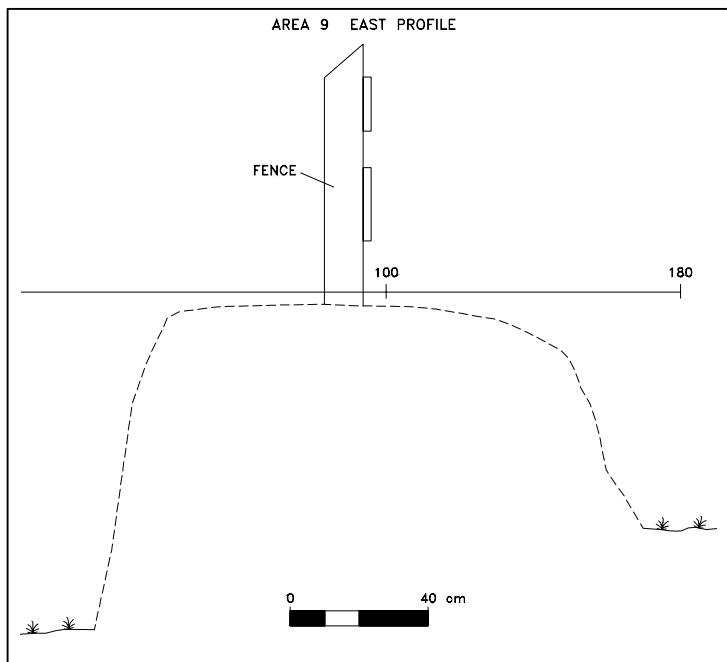


Figure 53. East profile of northern driveway wall.



Figure 54. Check dams in gully, looking southeast.

Ralph Partlow Property

Stone walls on the Partlow property consist of a single line of walls with short perpendicular spurs that extends east-west for about 900 ft. up the hillside facing the farmhouse (Figures 55 and 56). As mentioned above, Mr. Partlow and his father placed much of the stone on top of earlier walls as they continued to clear their fields in the first half of the twentieth century. Although the date of initial wall construction is unknown, the farmhouse (94-205) was built ca. 1880 (VDHR 1999). In most places, the initial, fairly careful construction has been obscured by the later activities. The profile and photographs show a rare portion of the feature where craftsmanship of the earlier wall is still evident (Figures 57–59). In most areas, however, the wall

has either collapsed or was never formally built (Figure 60 and 61). Several spurs are likewise only loosely piled in a few courses or completely collapsed into a scatter of cobbles (Figure 62).

Other Stone Wall Networks

The focus of this study was to document the networks at the south end of the Loop Road, for which previously recorded survey forms were missing from the VDHR archives. Interviews with local residents and observation of the countryside en route to the study area, however, brought to light other substantial walls of similar construction within or adjacent to the Gooney Manor Loop Road Rural Historic District. A brief description of these walls is presented here mainly because they add to the context of the other networks. Some also represent an important, yet so far undocumented component of the district.

Although the most visible of these additional walls are less than 250 ft. northeast of the Perna property, VDHR historic property maps indicate they were not included in the survey form for the Perna walls. The principal features of this simple but substantial network are visible on both the 1937 and 1997 aerial photographs (see Figure 26). Two walls spaced 600 ft. apart extend at a right angle from Route 631 for about 350 ft. northwest into the fields on the interior of the Loop (Figure 63). Two shorter sections of wall are not evident from



Figure 55. Ralph Partlow house and outbuildings, looking southeast.



Figure 56. Stone walls and piles on hillside across from Ralph Partlow house, looking southwest.

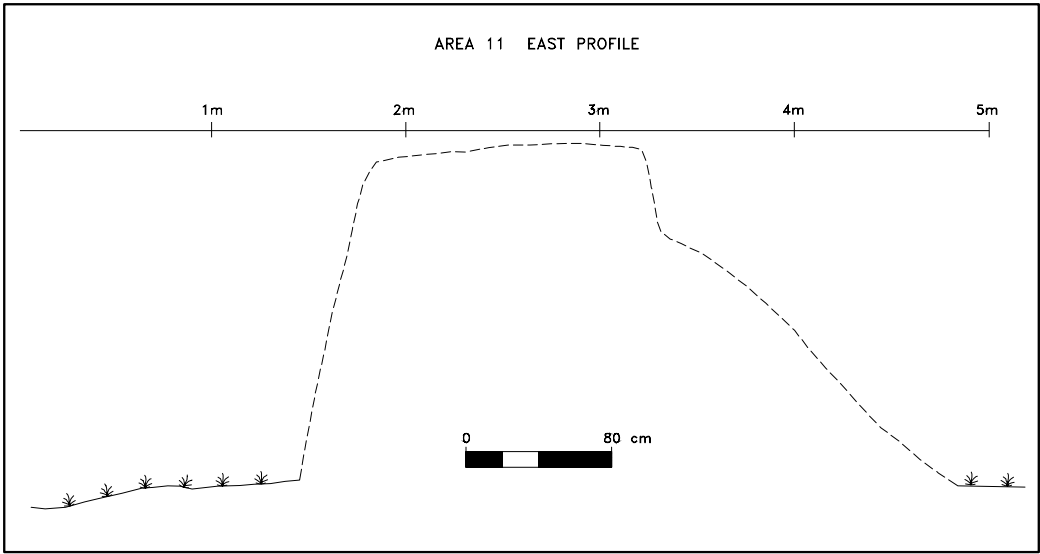


Figure 57. East profile of Area 11 on Ralph Partlow property.

Figure 58. View along top of wall at Area 11, looking east. Note the dumped stones along the right (south) side of the wall.

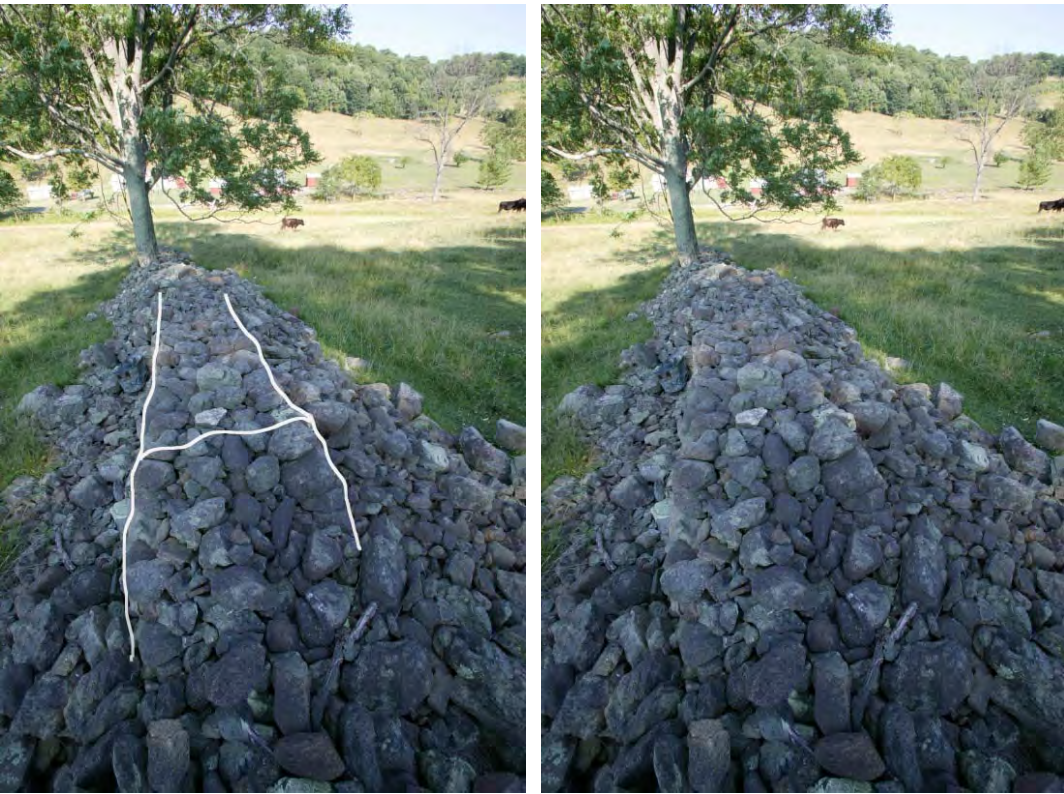




Figure 59. Elevation at Area 11, looking south.



Figure 60. View of collapsed main wall, looking west from Area 11.



Figure 61. Linear rock pile west of Area 12, looking southeast.



Figure 62. Area 13, collapsed spur of main wall, looking southeast.

Figure 63. Northernmost of two long field walls northeast of Perna property, looking northeast.



the aerial photographs. Obscured from overhead view by trees, these roadside walls extend from each field wall for about 200 ft. to the southwest (Figure 64).

Except for the Perna network, probably the most extensive stone walls within the historic district are found on Running Brook Farm (94-90) (historically also called Mountain View). Although best known as the large farm and mill of Amon Updike in the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, some components of this property date as early as 1770 (Kalbian 1999) (see Figure 10). Several drylaid stone walls in the yard are easily seen from the road. Conversations with Amon Updike's descendant Sam Updike suggested the presence of other walls farther back from the road as well. On a trip to



Figure 64. Roadside wall north-east of Perna property, looking southwest.

the main study area at the south end of the Loop Road, a brief walkover of the Running Brook farmyard was conducted to search for additional walls. Wall locations below the house appear to match those shown in an early twentieth-century photograph of the property (Figure 65). Although the walls in the yard are currently plain, the early photograph shows a white-wash treatment similar to the wall in the Giles Partlow farmyard.

In scouting the yard area, a substantial drylaid retaining wall was observed against the slope just south of the house; a portion has been reinforced with mortar (Figure 66). From the retaining wall, one extensive north-south oriented wall could be seen on the crest of the hill behind the farmyard (Figure 67). Since the brief visit did not allow further exploration of the property, a 1937 aerial photograph was examined for evidence of other walls (Figure 68; see Figure 27). At least five wall-like features extend roughly southeast to northwest in the open fields to the west and north of the farmhouse. Examination of a 1997 infrared aerial photograph revealed similar patterns. Of course, thorough field-checking would be necessary to confirm the current condition and extent of these walls.

For an additional example of local stone walls, local resident Sam Updike suggested a visit to Thornhill (94-205), a ca. 1870 farmhouse located just east of the historic district on Fetchett Road (Route 632) (Figure 69). Here one section of stone wall along the west side of the yard retains the same appearance as those at the southern end of the Loop—a low, rounded cross

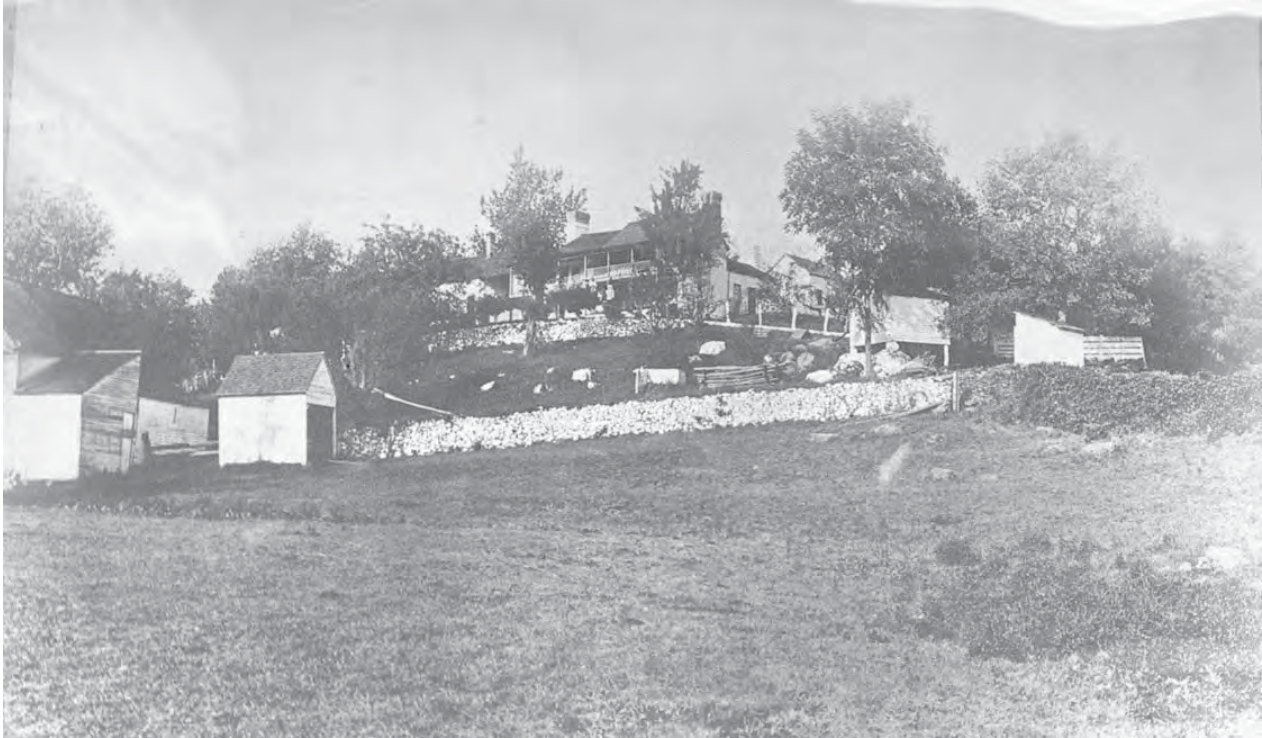


Figure 65. Early twentieth century photograph of Running Brook farm (94-90) (courtesy of Sam Updike).



Figure 66. Retaining wall just south of Running Brook farmhouse. Originally drylaid, a portion (right) has been reinforced with mortar.

section with cobbles placed in a fairly random but sturdy configuration (Figure 70). Along the south edge of the yard, however, the current owners have dismantled the traditional wall and used the material to build a fine, upright stone fence. At first glance, the reconstruction effort by the Clem brothers raises the question of whether the walls along the Loop Road also once looked like this. Closer examination, however, reveals details that point to a distinct type of construction (Figures 71 and 72). While the traditional walls consist of a mix of medium to large cobbles throughout their thickness, the Clems' new wall contains a large amount of small rubble. Careful selection of tightly fitting cobbles allows for steeply built sides, probably steadied by several long "tie" rocks that pass from one face to the other. With these sturdily built faces, the interior of the wall requires only filler rock. As the walls are confined to the perimeter of the yard, they are not evident in aerial photographs (see Figure 68).



Figure 67. Stone wall on crest of hill behind Running Brook farmhouse, looking west.

Figure 68. Aerial photograph showing Running Brook farm (94-90) and Thornhill (94-205) in 1937.





Figure 69. Thornhill (94-205), looking southwest.

Figure 70. Traditional wall (right) and finely crafted wall (left) rebuilt from old wall.

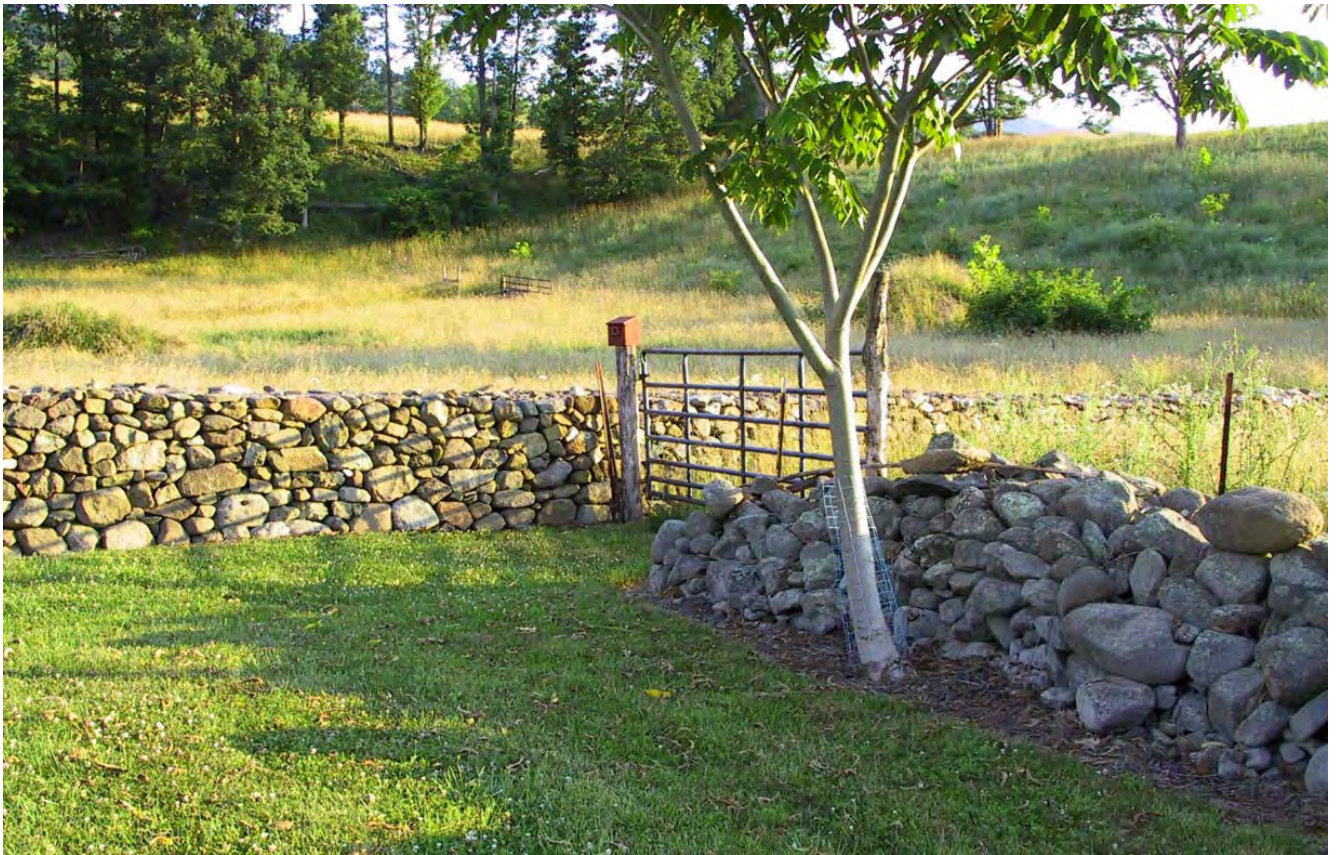




Figure 71. Top of wall rebuilt by Clem brothers showing rubble infill.

Figure 72. Face of wall rebuilt by Clem brothers showing tightly fitting face stones.



WHY STONE WALLS?

Descriptions of these walls emphasize their contribution to the character of the local landscape. To appreciate more than their visual impact, however, we need to inquire into their origins. By asking who built them, when, for what purpose, whether they represent a cultural tradition or an adaptation to local conditions, and other questions, their heritage value is enhanced. We can begin to understand how they fit into the historical patterns of the Gooney Manor Loop Road Rural Historic District.

As suspected from the beginning of this research, traditional documentary sources did not yield specific answers to these questions. Court records, though well preserved in this particular county, were of little use. While estate inventories and wills often create a picture of living conditions in centuries past, they are rarely helpful in documenting landscape features like stone walls, limited as they are to moveable possessions such as slaves, livestock, vehicles, personal items, foodstuffs, and furniture. Records of land transactions such as deeds and surveys might seem more promising, but historically real estate descriptions have focused foremost on the boundaries and then the major buildings on the property. Although land plats offered the best hope for pinpointing stone walls in time and space, none of those examined during court records research provided such specific information. Besides court records, personal papers such as diaries or letters and financial accounts are usually an important source for historical research. However, these materials tend to be handed down from wealthier, more educated classes than the early farmers who settled the rugged, marginal lands south of Browntown. Indeed, local archives such as the Warren Heritage Society did not contain any such records that were relevant to the property owners in the study area.

Oral History

An increasingly valued method of research is known as oral history. By interviewing local residents, especially the more elderly, we hoped to find out about the history of the walls at least as far back as the early twentieth century. Personal memories provide a very direct, vivid link to the past. When adding stories elderly citizens have heard from those who have since passed away, we can extend the period of inquiry into the nineteenth century. In addition to initial interviews with current landowners at the south end of the Loop Road, a wider web of contacts was referred through local residents' circles of friends and acquaintances. As a native of Warren County, Charles

Pomeroy of the Warren Heritage Society knew of several elderly residents familiar with the Browntown area. Also, Tom LaCombe referred many additional contacts he has made as the owner of Browntown's only general store and as an active community member.

The fact most clearly established through these interviews was the minimum age for the walls. All contacts in their seventies or eighties maintained that the walls at the southern end of the Loop had been there "as long as they could remember," so no later than the 1920s or 1930s (Meredith 2004; Partlow 2004; Presley 2004). But this date was pushed back further with memories of conversations with Giles Partlow (Partlow 2004; Powell 2004). According to these interviewees, the walls would have already been in existence by the end of the nineteenth century. Other stories tell of laborers building walls for 25 cents per day in the nineteenth century and walls predating 1850, but the original sources for this information were unspecified (Perna 2004).

Oral history also provided compelling evidence of the walls' origins. Consistent with observations made during the fieldwork, the wall construction was most likely driven by attempts to clear fields for cultivation and pasture rather than a preference for stone as a fence material. George Baggerly (2004) asserted that stone fences provided convenient disposal areas when clearing the rocky land along the Loop Road. More specific stories about field clearing came from Sam Updike (2004), whose grandfather Amon Updike had owned Running Brook Farm (94-90) beginning in the late nineteenth century. Sam's father (born ca. 1905) had told him of activities on the Updike farm called "rock-haulin' frolics." Just as neighbors would team together for large, labor-intensive tasks like corn-husking or barn-raising, the community made a convivial celebration (accompanied by "corn liquor") out of the arduous task of clearing stone from the fields. Teams of horses hitched to low sleds hauled the rocks to the edges of the fields where they were heaped into the linear features we see today. Similar community efforts are reported in the rocky upland regions of New England, where the get-togethers are called "stone bees" (Allport 1990:65). Of course, this kind of intensive, community activity may not have applied to all the networks of walls we see at the top of the Loop Road. As mentioned above, Ralph Partlow (2004) remembers a more gradual process of clearing fields with his father as rocks were plowed up over the years. However, in that case they were only adding to more formal walls that already existed.

Census Research

Even though oral history suggests the walls were casually constructed by local farmers, could skilled masons have been responsible for some of the more finished walls (for example, the tallest field wall behind the Perna

farmhouse)? A recent study of stone walls in the Bluegrass region of Kentucky suggested census records as a potentially useful source for delving into this question (Murray and Raitz 1992). From 1850 onward, census officials began recording the occupation of each family member. A review of Warren County census records could identify all of the stone masons, who might then be associated through other sources to the construction of walls along the Loop Road. The U.S. Census records for Warren County were searched for the years 1850 through 1920. Although this rural county's small population allowed for a quick, complete survey of census records, the intricacies of connecting any of the 39 masons or stonemasons of this period to the construction of the walls in the historic district quickly grew beyond the scope of this study. It is interesting to note that in the census of 1860 (but not in any other) three individuals were described specifically as "stonefencers." Brief research of their names at the Warren Heritage Society, however, suggests they are not associated with the study area. Instead, they appear to have been skilled workers who built more refined walls than the massive, rounded specimens on Gooney Loop. One of these workers was a black servant of R. H. Timberlake, a very wealthy landowner in the northern part of the county.

If it seems unlikely that skilled masons built the walls, what do we know of the cultural origins of the landowners who may have been responsible for their construction? The most complete property history, for the Perna farm (94-89), includes a long span of ownership by one family during a likely period of construction. From 1853 until 1958, the property was in the hands of three generations of the Updike family. As this connection of family to farm was the best documented of the study area, an attempt was made to trace their origins. According to a thorough genealogy of the Updikes, the family came to Virginia from New Jersey in the mid-eighteenth century. Their ancestors originally had immigrated sometime before 1653 from the Netherlands where the family name was Op den Dijk (Craig 1985:1, 22). If the Updikes are indeed responsible for the walls on the Perna farm, the lack of stone wall building traditions in both the Netherlands and the New Jersey area is consistent with the interpretation of the walls as expedient and improvised.

Insights from Stone Walls in Other Regions

With the relative scarceness of stone walls or fences in Virginia, no regional studies of the subject apply directly to southeastern Warren County. Several works have been produced for other regions of the United States, most notably Kentucky (Wooley and Raitz 1992) and New England and New York (Allport 1990; Thorson 2002). Besides these American books, several publications document the distinctive stone walling traditions of the British Isles (Bodman 1984; Garner 1997; Lund et al. 1992). This scholarship sets

the Gooney Manor walls in a broader context, suggesting how we may further interpret their origins and purpose, even if these other traditions do not provide direct cultural precedents.

Compared to the United States, the British Isles contain an astonishing number of stone walls, varying greatly in appearance according to

local geology and tradition. Generally, they serve as fences for enclosing livestock. Despite their abundance, most were only built within the last few centuries. Prior to the eighteenth century, crops were cultivated by village tenants on vast open lands divided into narrow strips. Costly fencing would have been considered both a waste of time and precious fertile land on these tiny plots. When subsistence livestock were grazed on common pastureland, farmers could count on cowherds and shepherds to keep the animals away from crops. All of this began to change over the course of the eighteenth century with the introduction of more intensive farming methods. Landowners abandoned tenants in favor of large-scale



Figure 73. Enclosure walls in Yorkshire. Beginning in the sixteenth century, British landowners turned from medieval agriculture in shared open fields to individually leased or owned pasture. As large tracts of common land were subdivided into fields and pasture, farmers fenced the landscape with the most readily available materials. During the Enclosure Movement of the eighteenth century, farmers in stony areas built vast networks of stone walls, like these near Kettlewell in Yorkshire (Lund et al. 1992:11).

cattle and grain production to meet the growing demand of industrial towns (Garner 1997:6). The need to separate crops from livestock led to an “enclosure movement” requiring thousands of miles of fencing (Figure 73). Given Britain’s shortage of timber, the preferred fencing material was a dense hedgerow of hawthorn. It is only in areas where soils were unsuitable for this low-cost “living” fence that stone walls were built.

So British walls, intended for fencing, generally consist of carefully selected, dressed stones and are assembled by skilled craftsmen (see Figures 24 and 25). Not all British stone fences present such a neat appearance. In the Lake District, for example, some informal walls are said to represent “dumping grounds” for clearing rocky fields (Lund et al. 1992:9). In Wales the principal purpose of “consumption” walls is also to get rid of cleared field stone. Some of these expedient Welsh walls are even more massive than ones on the lower portion of Top of the Loop Lane. Sometimes measuring up to 8 ft. high and 4 ft. across, consumption walls are not put together with great skill, but they endure nonetheless with their squat, heavy construction (Garner 1997:18) (Figure 74). Even though no direct cultural connection to walling traditions has been established between the Loop Road farmers and British stone walling traditions,

these examples demonstrate precedents for similar expedient, irregularly shaped walls that can be sturdy and effective.

Just as in early modern Great Britain, the first groups of settlers in New England farmed land in common and minimized their use of labor-intensive fencing (Allport 1992:32). As settlement intensified and individual ownership of land increased in the late seventeenth century, enclosure of fields was necessary to separate livestock, crops, and delineate property boundaries. Since the harsh New England climate was ill-suited to growing the hedges familiar to these English immigrants, settlers turned to abundant timber as the least expensive source of fencing material (Thorson 2002:98). Like Virginia, then, New England in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a land of rail fences.

The rapid shift to a landscape crisscrossed by thousands of miles of stone walls is due to profound manmade changes to the local environment during the eighteenth century (Allport 1990:18). Before large-scale clearing of upland forests, New England's soil was not especially rocky or difficult to work. Large amounts of rock transported by glaciers during the last Ice Age lay beneath a layer of loamy soil that had accumulated over the centuries from leaf mold and decayed forest undergrowth.



After only a few decades of clearing and plowing, however, underlying glacial rock appeared on the surface through a combination of erosion and "frost heave." No longer insulated by the forest humus, the underlying soil would settle in freezing weather, exposing more stones after each winter (Thorson 2002:5). When clearing their fields, eighteenth-century farmers built the first New England stone walls, which some have called "linear landfills" (Thorson 2002:154). Built hastily with rounded, glacier-smoothed rock, many of these "tossed walls" were susceptible to collapse from frost, tree root action, and even bumping by animals (Gardner 2001:117; Wooley and Raitz 1992:100) (Figure 75).

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, however, stone walls acquired a new purpose, for enclosing livestock, and they were built with greater care. Just as denser settlement was making fence timber more scarce, sheep rearing became an important sector of the agricultural economy. Abundant stone became a viable alternative to wood. Yet the stone available was a far cry

Figure 74. Although more straight-sided than the walls at Gooney Manor, this Welsh "consumption" wall represents similar purpose and informal construction. Garner (1997:8) notes the wall's bulk compensates for its haphazard arrangement of stone, preventing the wall from collapsing.



Figure 75. Partially collapsed New England walls made of smoothed glacial rock (Wooley and Raitz 1992:100).

from the easily dressed English limestones and slates. Often the hard, rounded, igneous rock could not be piled high enough to form an effective enclosure. The solution was to increase the height with wood and eventually wire fencing (Thorson 2002:8). As shown in illustrations of wood supplements in Pennsylvania and the Loop Road area, if stone was already in place the savings in wood were considerable (Figure 76).

In New England, stone walls also marked property boundaries, an increasingly important function with growing settlement (Thorson 2002:87). Along the Loop, however, the walls tend to divide fields within a property rather than marking its boundaries with a neighbor. Stone walls may straggle toward the edges of a farm, but treelines or woods generally mark the separation between neighbors. Perhaps now-decayed rail fences once provided a barrier or, in many cases, landowners whose families had lived in these valleys for generations only required mutually agreed landmarks to avoid encroaching on the neighboring property. Only the walls along the road frontage at the Perna and Giles Partlow farms could be defined as boundary markers. As one New England landscape scholar has noted, such walls

constitute “beautiful No Trespassing signs written in stone” (Thorson 2002:89). Although by no means unscalable, they represent a more obvious, tangible obstacle to strangers than a cardboard sign tacked to a tree, or even a barbed wire fence which humans can easily straddle or duck through. By climbing over a stone wall, trespassers must be bold enough to rise 4 or 5 ft. above the ground and make themselves conspicuous.

An area renowned for stone walls, but much closer to Virginia and first populated by settlers from the Shenandoah Valley, is the Kentucky Bluegrass region around Lexington. Unlike New England or Warren County, the walls there were purposely built as enclosures with ideal material. In fact, the local bedded limestone is so sought after that most of the material has been quarried rather than cleared from fields. A brief overview of the circumstances of their construction provides a contrast to the crude, seemingly opportunistic wall building along the Loop Road.

As in Virginia and New England, Bluegrass farmers also built rail fences during the early phases of settlement. By the 1840s, however, timber supplies had decreased and agricultural journals promoted stone as a sensible choice (Figure 77). Whereas well-built stone fences only needed maintenance, wood rail had to be replaced about six times per century and required about one-third of the farm to be kept in timber for a self-sufficient supply



Figure 76. Stone walls in front of Giles Partlow farmhouse (above) and on the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (left, Horan 1955:Plate 138), both supplemented by wood fencing. With these adaptations, a low wall becomes an effective enclosure while considerably reducing expenditure on timber. Also, posts supported by cobbles (above) would resist rot much longer than when planted in the moist ground.



Figure 77. Typical limestone fence in the Kentucky Bluegrass region (Wooley and Raitz 1992:13).

(Wooley and Raitz 1992:77). Descended in large part from Ulster immigrants, Bluegrass farmers who built stone walls were also familiar with the wall building traditions of Northern Ireland. Indeed, eighteenth-century immigrants to the Shenandoah Valley followed the practice of their homeland, building fine enclosure walls on their farms along Opequon Creek near Winchester (Hofstra 2004). Bluegrass farmers also tended to have the resources necessary for initial investment in labor required to build large numbers of stone enclosures. They could afford to hire recently immigrated skilled Irish stonemasons who were assisted by slaves. With the growing importance of livestock breeding, sturdy stone walls were considered essential for separating pedigree cattle and horses (Wooley and Raitz 1992:82, 86, 94). As the Bluegrass continued to prosper, the stone wall became associated with social status, “admired for its permanence and its picturesque qualities,” and symbolizing “taste, refinement, and a concern for the aesthetic over the mundane” (Wooley and Raitz 1992:82).

With the inclusion of stonefencers in the 1860 census for Warren County, it seems a similar, status-conscious approach to stone wall building may have occurred locally. Wealthy landowners such as R. H. Timberlake might hire a laborer to build a handsome wall near his dwelling or perhaps more extensive fencing across his property. Based on reports of fine fences in prosperous farming areas that were settled early on, it would be interesting to conduct a survey of stone walls within the county to determine the extent of this possible trend (Pomeroy 2004). The very localized concentration of Southern stone walls in the Bluegrass of Kentucky suggests that widespread popularity of stone walls as enclosures depended most heavily on the abundance of ideally suited material that was not readily available in Warren County. In contrast, marginal farming conditions, very different rounded stone, and availability of timber along the Loop Road indicate that field clearing rather than fencing was the primary purpose of the walls here.

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