

# **GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY  
NOVEMBER 1998**



**PLANNING TEAM:**

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# GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE

## I. *INTRODUCTION*

### A. **Purpose and Description of the Plan**

The purpose of this General Management Plan (GMP) is to serve as a guide for all future planning and programming. This document should be referred to before future planning and design projects are started.

This GMP describes the existing natural and cultural resources of the park, as well as other existing conditions. Management zones have been established, with accompanying lists of potential uses for each zone. The uses are described in general terms, so that as visitor needs change, the uses provided can change.

General Management Plans are meant to be flexible, to change with the changing needs of park visitors. Every GMP should be updated periodically, to reflect changes that have occurred both on and off-site.

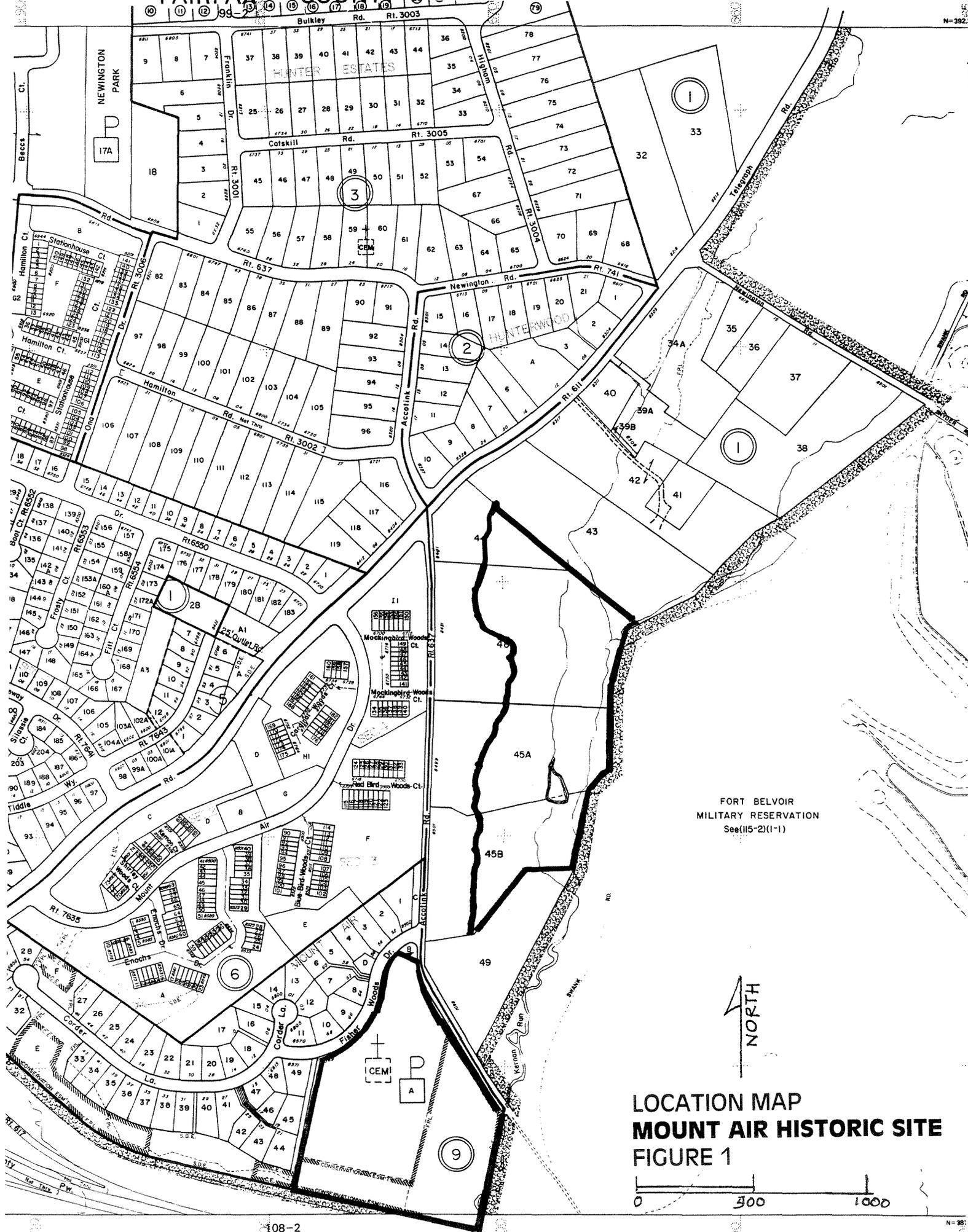
### B. **Park Description**

Mount Air Historic Site is a 15.57 acre historic site. It is located at 8600 Accotink Road in the Mount Air Historic District and in the Mount Vernon Supervisory District. The principal feature of this site is the core area of the plantation called Mount Air, consisting of the ruins of the main house, the remnants of formal gardens, and assorted out-buildings. A native-grass meadow lies to the north of the house, and much of the remaining property is wooded. An additional 17.64 acres of wooded hillside and stream valley on the east side of Accotink Road is also included in the planning for this park (see Figure 1).

### C. **Administrative History**

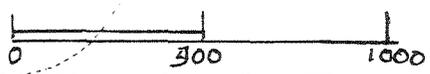
Mount Air Historic Site is located on a 15.5721 acre tract of land which was dedicated to the Park Authority in conjunction with the development of the adjacent Mount Air Subdivision. The original parcel of land was approximately 43.4 acres and through the development review process the Park Authority was able to secure the land area encompassing historic buildings and a wood frame house. As a part of the dedication, the property is encumbered with a conservation easement and flood plain and storm drainage easement which is dedicated to the Board of Supervisors, a 10' wide sight distance easement at the subdivision entrance and a Virginia Power easement which provides electricity to the wood frame house.

Through an agreement reached with the developer (Van Metre, Inc.) additional site improvements were also constructed. The existing electric lines will be



FORT BELVOIR  
 MILITARY RESERVATION  
 See(115-2)(1-1)

**LOCATION MAP**  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
**FIGURE 1**



removed and new underground service will be provided from an ingress/egress easement located off Corder Lane. The agreement also provided for the developer to construct waterline and sanitary sewer stubouts in this same location with his construction costs reimbursed by the Park Authority. The sanitary sewer, waterline and widening of our concrete site driveway apron were submitted as site plans revisions since the original subdivision plans were previously recorded. Deeds for these two easements will be recorded as separate documents from the land dedication deed.

An additional 17.6 acres of wooded hillside and stream valley on the east side of Accotink Road was acquired in February 1998 as part of the development conditions of the Twinbrook at Mount Air development.

**D. Restrictive Conditions**

The proffers for Mount Air contain the following restrictions on the use of the property by the Park Authority: “The deed to the Park Authority shall...provide that the Park Authority shall use the parcel only for passive recreational uses, respecting the nature of the historic site and its previous functioning home....Recreation uses of the Parcel A consistent with these restrictions will be permitted.”

**E. Historic Background**

The plantation that came to be called Mount Air was on a 522 acre tract patented by Dennis McCarty in 1727. This tract lay north of Accotink Creek and adjacent to two large tracts bequeathed to Dennis by his father, whose home was in Westmoreland County. It is not known precisely when McCarty built the first dwelling at Mount Air, but it was likely within a few years of obtaining the patent and certainly before 1742 when McCarty died. A bill of lading signed by Dennis McCarty and dating to 1732 recording a shipment of lilac, hawthorn, and gooseberry plants from England suggests that improvements to Mount Air had begun by that time.

During the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the McCartys were a prosperous and influential family in Virginia. Dennis, like his father in Westmoreland County, took an active role in public life in what was first Stafford, then Prince William, and finally Fairfax County. Between 1728 and the year of his death he served variously as sheriff and justice of the peace, he represented Prince William County in the House of Burgesses, and he served as vestryman for Truro Parish. Furthermore, he was married to Sarah Ball, a well-connected woman whose second cousin was George Washington. When he died, he owned over 3000 acres of land, 51 slaves, and personal property valued at 1,441 pounds.

Sarah Ball McCarty remarried between 1745 and 1749. She and her husband, Abraham Barnes, who had been one of McCarty's tenants, took up residence in his tenement on the estate that would later be called Cedar Grove in what is now Fort Belvoir. Sarah's eldest son, Daniel and his wife, Sinah, presumably took over Mount Air at this time. In 1758 Sarah deeded Mount Air and her other dower property to Daniel, who resided at Mount Air until his death in 1792. Also active in public life, Daniel served as county justice, vestryman for Truro Parish, trustee for the town of Colchester, tobacco inspector, and trustee for the Patowmack Company, which endeavored to improve navigation on the Potomac and initiated the construction of a canal at Great Falls. Because Daniel and Sinah's only son had settled his family at Cedar Grove, Daniel bequeathed Mount Air to his grandson, Daniel the younger. The young Daniel and his wife evidently did not settle at Mount Air, as the property was advertised to rent in 1806 and was put up for sale in 1810. Daniel died in 1811 before he was able to sell Mount Air. Because he had no children, his wife inherited the estate. Several years later Daniel's aunt, Sarah McCarty Chichester, purchased the dower interest in Mount Air, returning ownership of the property to descendants of Dennis McCarty, where it would remain until 1860.

The Chichester tenure at Mount Air was characterized by family disputes and fiscal difficulties. Sarah bequeathed the estate to her son, Pitt, who had previously attempted to coerce his mother into deeding the property to him long before her death. Not long after, however, Pitt put Mount Air in trust for his wife Francis, possibly to protect the estate from an expensive pending law suit. Pitt died in 1833, and Francis, who survived her husband by 30 years, remained in residence at Mount Air until some time in the 1850s when the house was seriously damaged by fire caused by lightning. The house had been rebuilt and was ready for Francis's return when, in 1860, she suddenly decided to sell the estate to cover the gambling debts of her grandson-in-law (see Figure 2).

The new owner of Mount Air, Aristides Landstreet, his wife Mary, and his family moved into Mount Air less than a year before the beginning of the Civil War. Aristides enlisted with the Confederate army and was posted in Richmond for most of the war. For a time his family remained at Mount Air and struggled through the difficulties of living near the shifting lines of Confederate and Union troops. Finally, the estate was occupied by Union troops, and the family relocated for the duration of the war. When they returned, they found that both the house and the lands had suffered greatly in their absence. The subsequent decades at Mount Air reflect, in part, the Landstreets' attempts to recover from the destruction of the war and the difficulties of running a large plantation without slave labor. The value of the property depreciated steadily, and the size of the estate decreased as portions were sold or bequeathed to Aristides' sons. Aristides died in 1910 and left Mount Air to his daughters. They, in turn, were obliged to



mortgage the farm in 1911 and to sell it in 1914.

Twice widowed and with two young children, George (sic) Shirley Kernan left France where she had been living at the beginning of World War I, returned to Virginia where she had lived earlier in her life, and purchased what was then the 117 acre estate of Mount Air. Thus began the final period of private ownership of Mount Air, a time during which Mrs. Kernan and her daughter, Elisabeth Enochs, would make the most recent alterations to the buildings and grounds. For several months in 1918, for example, Mrs. Kernan made the grounds of Mount Air available as quarters for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 304<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Army Engineers, who were constructing a railroad link to Camp Humphreys (now Fort Belvoir). Abandoned lumber from the tent platforms and buildings of this encampment were used to panel one of the rooms in the main house and to construct a garage that was later converted into a tenant house.

Mrs. Kernan also saw to the construction of a brick terrace overlooking the rolling meadows and woods west of the house. She decorated this terrace with Corinthian capitals that reportedly were rescued from the old Botanical Gardens in Washington as it was being dismantled. Mrs. Kernan died in 1962, leaving the estate to her daughter. Although Elisabeth traveled extensively in her work for the Children's Bureau and as a journalist, her home remained at Mount Air. Some time in the late 1960s, Elisabeth began exploring means of preserving Mount Air. In 1969 the main house was registered with the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites, and in the following year a history of Mount Air written by Edith Sprouse was published by the Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning (OCP) in cooperation with the History Commission. In 1984 Mount Air was designated an Historic District by OCP. Elisabeth resided at Mount Air until 1992 when she died. In May of 1992, just several weeks after Elisabeth's death, the main house at Mount Air was completely destroyed by fire.

### **Mount Air Chronology**

1727	Dennis McCarty patents 522 acre tract on Accotink Creek
1732	Bill of lading for plants from England probably for Mount Air
1742	Dennis McCarty dies
1758	Mount Air deeded to Daniel McCarty
1792	Daniel McCarty dies; property passes to his wife Sinah
1798	Sinah McCarty dies; property bequeathed to Daniel McCarty the younger
c. 1814	Sarah McCarty Chichester buys dower rights to Mount Air
1826	Sarah dies; property bequeathed to Pitt Chichester
1828	Pitt Chichester deeds Mount Air to wife, Francis Chichester
185?	House seriously damaged by fire

1860	Francis sells Mount Air to Aristides Landstreet
1862?	Mount Air occupied by Union troops; Landstreets relocate
1910	Aristides dies; bequeaths Mount Air to daughters
1914	Mount Air sold to Mrs. George Shirley Kernan
1918	304 <sup>th</sup> Regiment camp at Mount Air
1962	Mrs. Kernan dies; Mount Air bequeathed to daughter Elisabeth Enochs
1984	Mount Air Historic District designated by Office of Comprehensive Planning
1992	Elisabeth Enochs dies; main house destroyed by fire
1997	Mount Air Historic Site conveyed to FCPA

## II. ***PARK PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE***

### A. **Park Purpose: What is the purpose of the park?**

Park Purpose statements are intended to provide an umbrella for planning and decision making. If a proposed use conflicts with any one of the purposes listed, it will be considered an incompatible use. By establishing park purposes, future plans can remain flexible, as legislative requirements and visitor preferences change.

*The purpose of Mount Air Historic Site is to:*

- ▶ preserve, protect, and restore cultural resources
- ▶ preserve, protect, and enhance existing natural resources for the benefit of future residents of Fairfax County. These natural resources include forest, field, and stream valleys, all of which create and contain habitat quickly vanishing from the county
- ▶ provide short term recreation opportunities, such as walking and picnicking for the surrounding communities

### B. **Significance Statement: Why is this park important?**

*General Historic Significance*

Because it was occupied continuously for such a long period of time, the Mount Air Historic Site promises to yield material remains related to a variety of historical periods of interest to residents of Fairfax County. These historical periods correspond to the historical contexts for interpretation as defined by the *Fairfax County Heritage Resource Management Plan*. The contexts, or study units, for the interpretation of Mount Air are as follows:

*Tobacco Plantation Society* (Study Unit H-3)

*Early Diversified Agriculture 1750-1840* (Study Unit H-5)

*Agrarian Fairfax 1840-1940* (Study Unit H-6)

*Civil War and Reconstruction 1860-1870* (Study Unit H-8)

*Suburbanization and Urban Dominance 1890-present* (Study Unit H-10).

The likelihood of finding archaeological traces of these various historical periods offers us a rare opportunity to pose a myriad of questions regarding the built environment, the material culture, the economic pursuits and the everyday life of the residents of Mount Air.

The historic records, oral history, and the brick cellar all suggest that Mount Air Historic Site is the site of the 18<sup>th</sup> century home of Dennis McCarty and his descendants. The primary significance of the site, therefore, is related to its age and its association with an important Fairfax County family. During this early period of occupation of Mount Air, the house and surrounding grounds served as the center of a large tobacco plantation, run by several generations of McCarty's and worked by numerous slaves. In addition to the possible remains of an early house, there is a high probability of the presence of 18<sup>th</sup> century archaeological deposits over the entire core area of the site. This is especially true for the area in close proximity to the house ruin. If the cellar and kitchen do indeed date to the earliest construction at the site, it is likely that subsequent additions to the house effectively capped and protected early intact archaeological deposits. The house foundations and the immediate surrounding ground should therefore be considered particularly sensitive and afforded extra protection against disturbance.

Mount Air also offers the possibility of contributing to our understanding of particular economic and social trends in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The early part of the century was marked by a transition from tobacco mono-culture to diversified agriculture, first mixed crops and later crops and dairy operations. Although undated, the addition of the dairy room to the east end of the barn is one example of this transition. Other modifications to the barn may also reflect these economic changes. In addition, the house foundation and potential archaeological deposits may reflect the changes in fortune and status experienced by the owners as they adjusted to these economic changes. Evidence of the effects of the Civil War and reconstruction on Mount Air and its owners may also be found in the standing structures, the architectural ruins, and the potential archaeological remains.

Mount Air has significance also as an example of a 20<sup>th</sup> century country estate. This period of occupation traces the transition from a productive agricultural enterprise to a large rural residence. The later years of private ownership of Mount Air witnessed the growth of surrounding suburbs, leaving the property one of the last large estates in that part of the county. This change left its pronounced mark on the visible cultural remains at the site. The construction of new buildings, such as the tenant house, and the renovation and reconstruction of older buildings, such as the north cabin, reflect this change in function. A new concern with aesthetics and appearance is evident in innovations such as the garden terrace, the front porch, the porte cochere, and other modifications to the house. While it is not

known when the formal garden was started, it is clear that it was vigorously revived, well maintained and quite likely much elaborated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In keeping with the spirit of Colonial Revival style, the garden, thus, may reflect the owner's interest in restoring the real or supposed elegance of earlier times. The garden, like the more elegant features of the house, may also reflect Mrs. Kernan's and Mrs. Enoch's concern with using the house as a setting for entertaining, which evidently occurred with some frequency.

#### *Significance of the Known Cultural Resources*

Lack of archaeological investigations precludes any determination of significance of the two possible structural remains east of the garden. Enough can be seen of the cellar hole, on the other hand, to support a construction date earlier than the 1859 reconstruction of the house and possibly dating as early as the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The cellar hole and the surrounding area require further archaeological investigation before a more substantive assessment can be made.

Some of the standing structures were clearly built during the Kernan-Enochs ownership of Mount Air. These 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings include the tenant house, the pump house, the chicken coop, and the corn crib (with older salvaged material). In isolation these buildings are neither architecturally nor historically significant. They do, however, form part of a whole complex of buildings that defines this core area of Mount Air. In that way, they, together with the other structures, configure the landscape of the site and reflect how the space around the main house was organized. The remaining buildings are probably older, but their construction dates are uncertain. Moreover, although the cabins and greenhouse were reportedly standing in 1914, it is possible that one or more of these buildings was totally reconstructed after that time. The construction date of the earliest portion of the barn is not known, but additions and modifications clearly date to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The present uncertainty regarding the ages of the barn and the small out-buildings makes it difficult to understand their intended functions and their relationships to the larger functioning farm or plantation. Structural conditions will most probably require demolition of several of the buildings; structural analysis will be required to determine the structural integrity of others. Following such evaluations, historical significance as well as potential public use should guide programming decisions regarding the remaining standing structures.

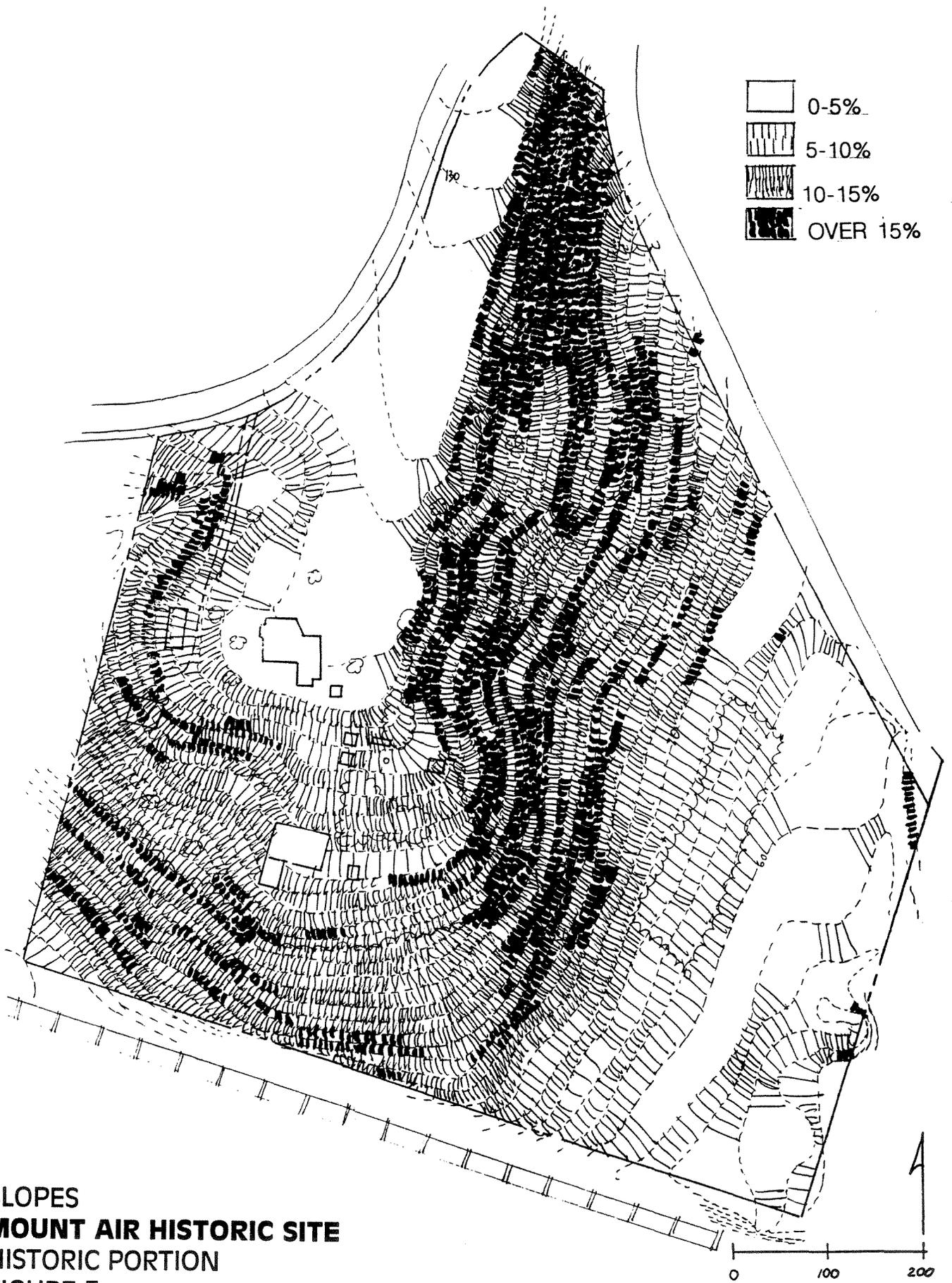
#### *Significance of Landscape Features and Natural Resources*

Mount Air provides an excellent example of a native meadow. This meadow, fronting the property along Fisher Woods Drive, has apparently been lightly maintained for many years and as a result has developed a type of habitat and plant community which is rare in Northern Virginia. Also part of this property is a relatively healthy stream and associated riparian forests. The floodplain forest on the Twinbrook parcel is mature and valuable as an example of a wetland forest.

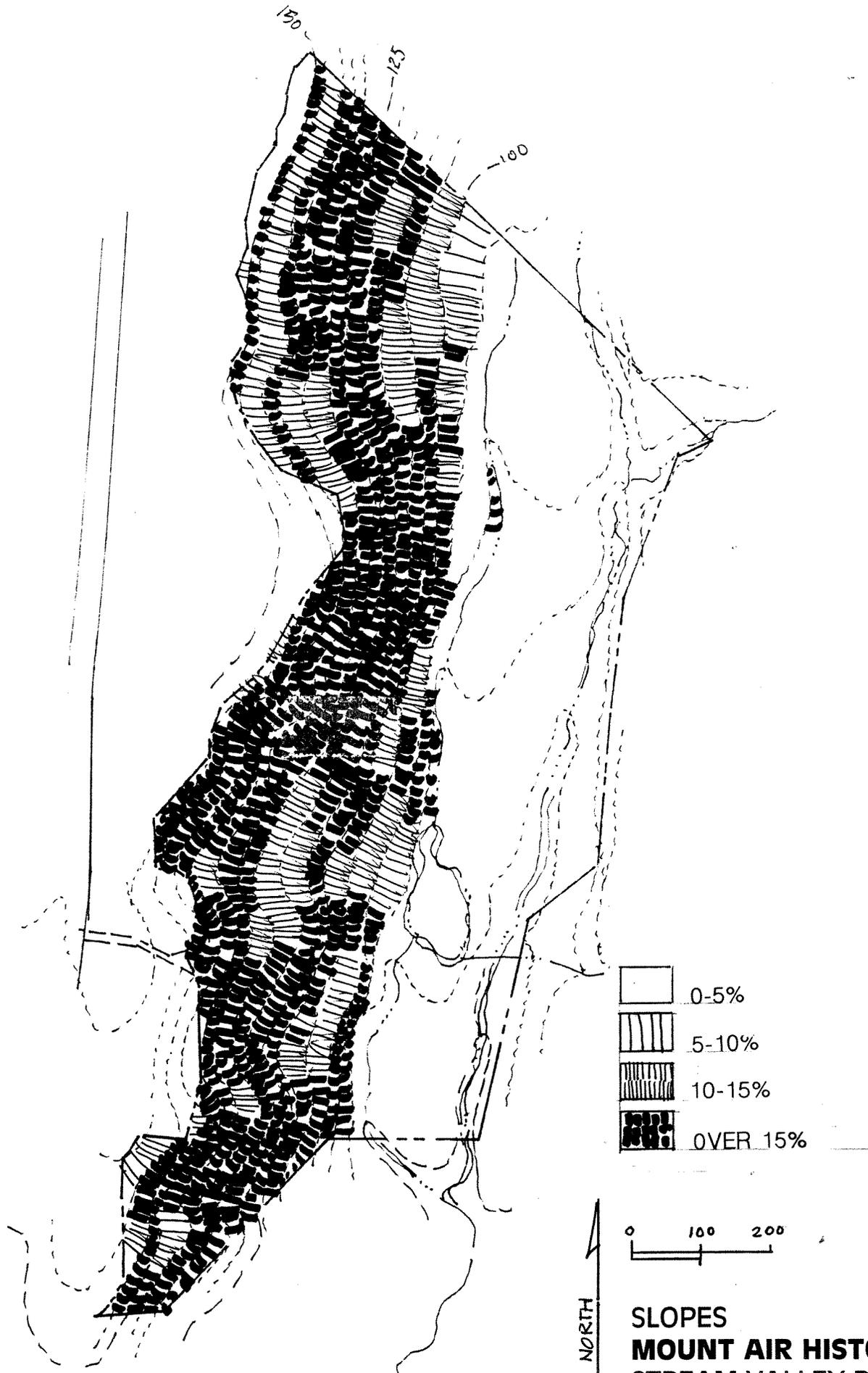
- C. **Visitor Experiences: What will the visitor experience at this park?**
- ▶ Visitors will be able to enjoy the natural beauty and cultural resources and be provided the opportunity for solitude and relaxation
  - ▶ Visitors will learn of the history of the site and surrounding areas...
  - ▶ Visitors will be able to participate in activities such as walking and picnicking

### III. ***EXISTING CONDITIONS***

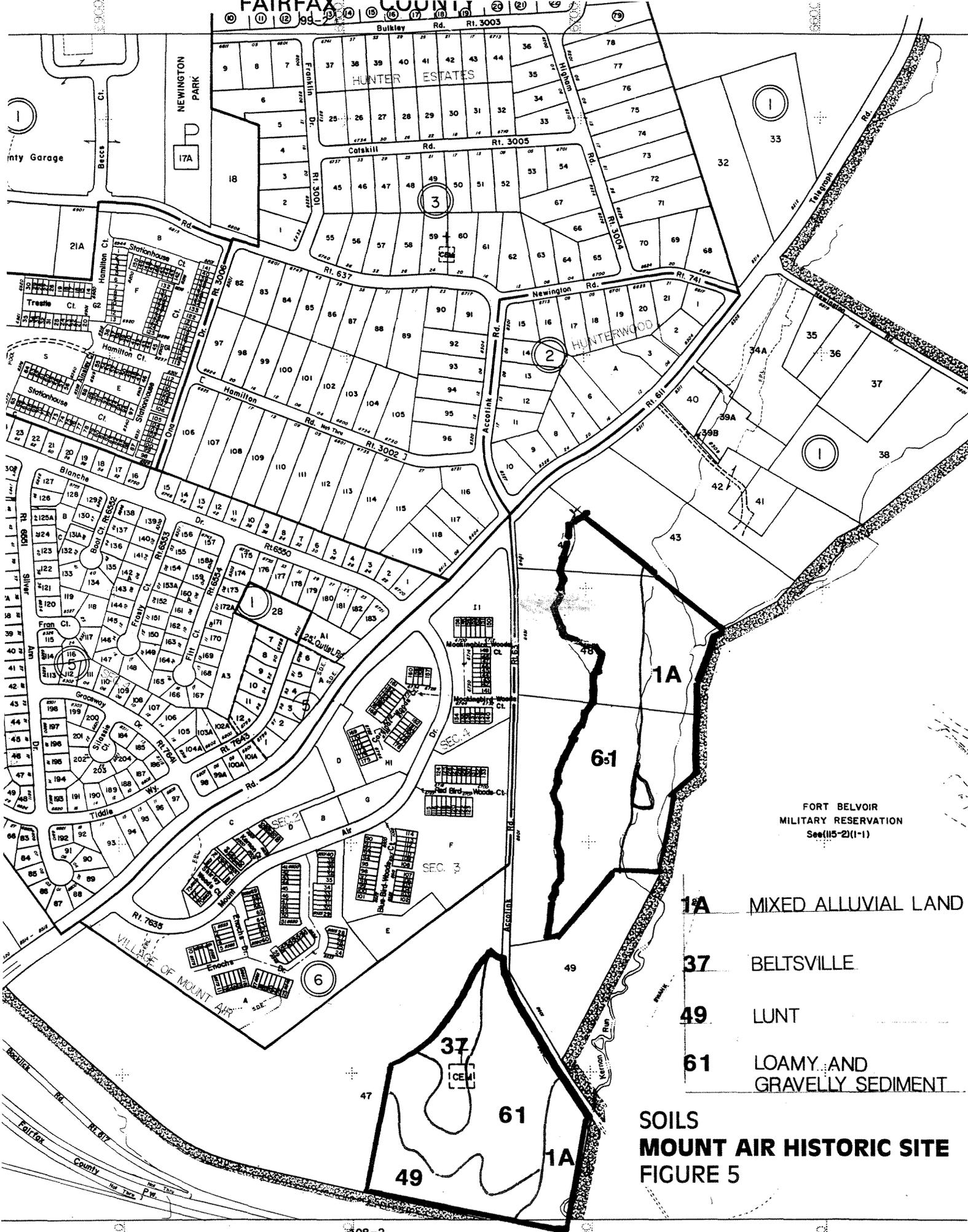
- A. **Slopes** - Half of the stream valley section has steep slopes, mostly more than 15%. The other half is the flood plain of Kernan Run and is basically flat. The historic portion of the site is slightly more varied, with a middle section of greater than 15% slope and the majority of the site between 5 and 15%. The flood plain on this portion of the site is flat, too, as is the top of the hill where the house is located (see Figures 3 and 4).
- B. **Soils** - Four soil types are found on the site. On both parcels, the area adjacent to Kernan Run is Mixed Alluvial Land. This soil consists of recently washed up and deposited materials along the stream bottoms. It is a mix of somewhat poorly and poorly drained soils with sandy areas and gravelly bars. It is subject to frequent flooding. Two soil types are found next to the stream soils. Lunt Fine Sandy Loam is a well-drained soil derived from sand, silt, and clay materials that is easily workable and only moderately erodible. This soil is found along the railroad track at the southern end of the historic site. The most extensive soil on the site is Loamy and Gravelly Sediments, a highly variable soil that is very erodible and unstable. The house and buildings are located on the fourth soil, Beltsville Silt Loam, a moderately well-drained soil with fair to poor workability and moderate potential for erosion (see Figure 5).
- C. **Cultural Resources** - As the core area of a domestic site that was occupied for approximately two and one half centuries, Mount Air Historic Site contains a large number and variety of cultural resources (see Figure 6). Among the more prominent features at the site are the standing structures, all of which were associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century ownership and use of Mount Air. Some of these buildings that were used during this century, however, may have had earlier construction dates. Other above ground resources include the terrace patio, the garden and other remnants of the cultivated landscape, and at least one road trace. In addition to these above ground features, the site also contains several confirmed archaeological resources, the most obvious of which is the ruin of the main house. The locations of a modern septic and well system, an old brick-lined well, and the ruins of what may have been a privy and an ice house are also known. Oral history also attests to the existence of a family cemetery and a slave cemetery. These resources will be discussed in greater detail below.



**SLOPES**  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
 HISTORIC PORTION  
 FIGURE 3



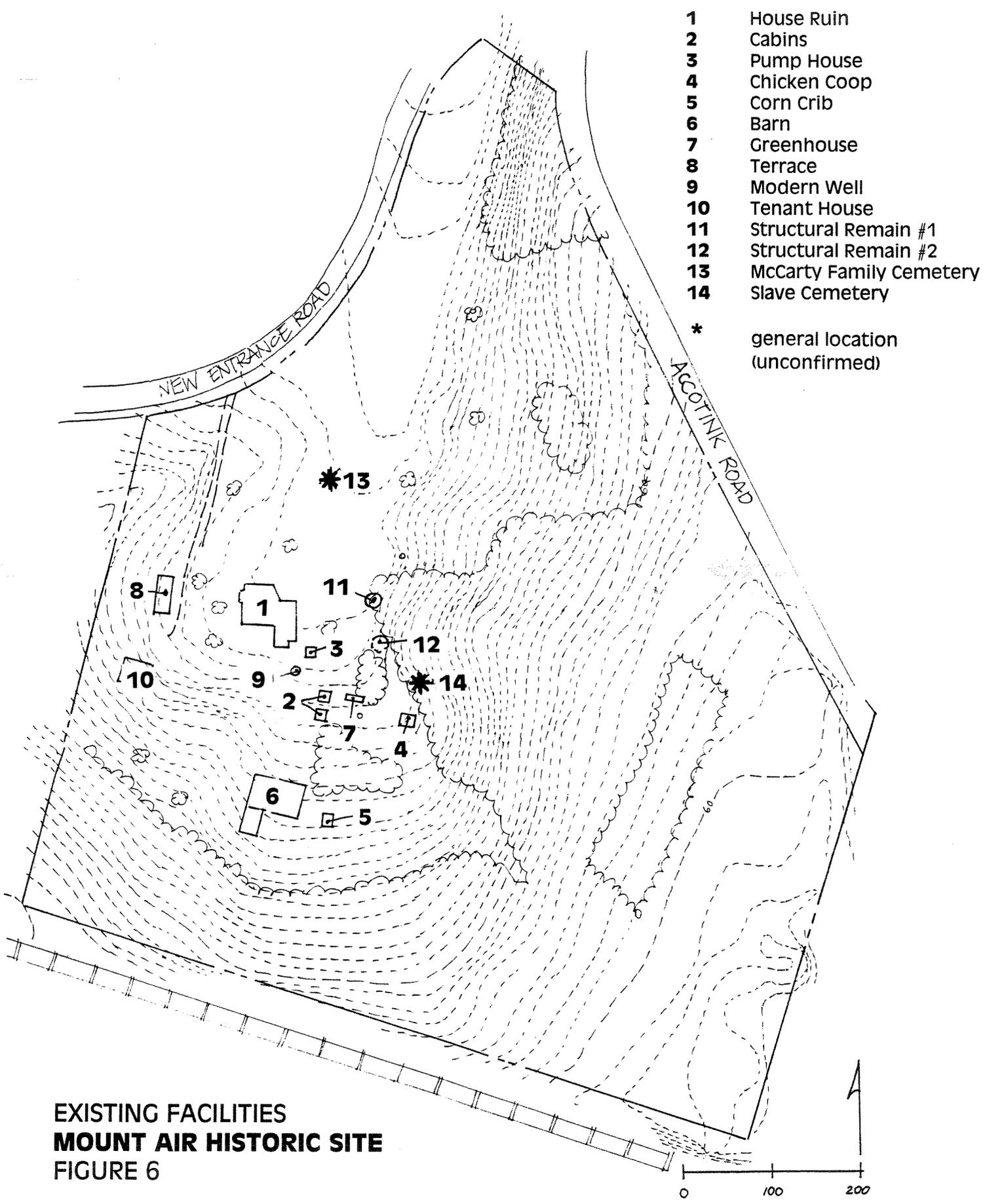
**SLOPES**  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
**STREAM VALLEY PORTION**  
**FIGURE 4**



FORT BELVOIR  
MILITARY RESERVATION  
See 115-2(1-1)

- 1A** MIXED ALLUVIAL LAND
- 37** BELTSVILLE
- 49** LUNT
- 61** LOAMY AND GRAVELLY SEDIMENT

**SOILS  
MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE  
FIGURE 5**



**EXISTING FACILITIES  
 MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE  
 FIGURE 6**

## **Standing Structures**

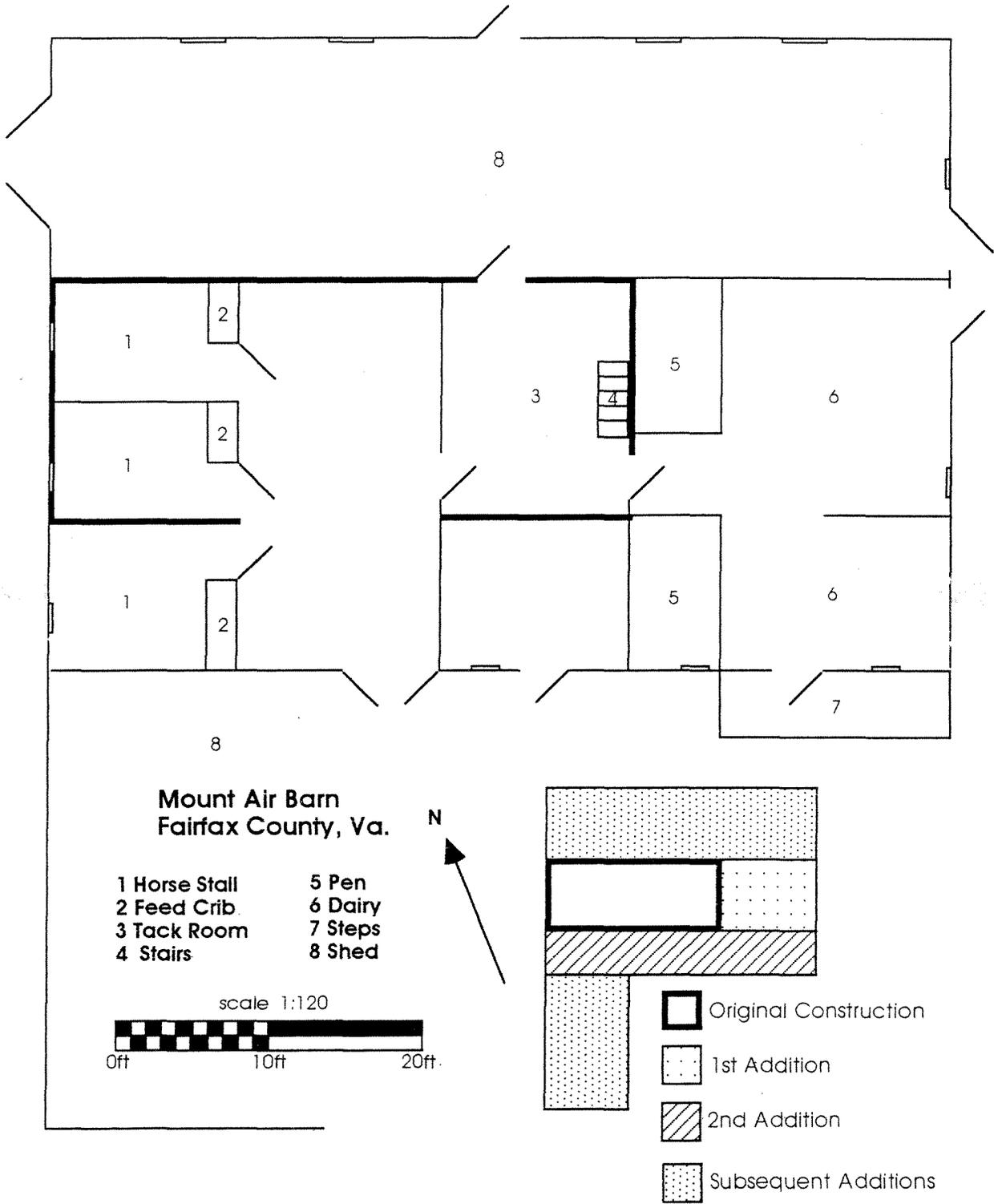
### *Barn*

The barn as it stands today appears to have been built in five episodes (see Figure 7). The most recent addition was the machine shed added to the rear of the main structure. This shed was reconstructed shortly after it was damaged by a falling limb in 1957. The superstructure is of standard sized lumber and log posts, and the foundation is home-made concrete with large pebbles and cobbles. The foundation along the south wall is severely compromised, making the entire shed structurally unsound. The other more recent addition was the shed along the north wall of the main structure. This is constructed entirely of standard sized lumber and may have been built at approximately the same time as the machine shed. The concrete foundation for the front shed is of the same composition as that of the machine shed. It is clear from remaining wall planks that this was added to what was once an exterior wall.

The older portion of the barn consists of a rear shed and the central core, which was also constructed in two episodes. The oldest portion of the barn is the western two thirds of this central core. This building was most likely constructed as a small, three-bay barn. It is framed with logs and rough hewn timber and joined with mortise and tenons. The rafters are stripped logs. The eastern portion of the central core was added, but likely not long after the original construction was built. It is also framed with logs and rough hewn timber. The rafters in this portion of the barn are possibly hewn, but more likely milled beams. Wood roof shingles are visible on both the western and eastern portions of the barn. The eastern portion of the barn has a concrete floor, while the western portion is dirt. The rear shed may have been added at the same time or not long after the eastern addition was made. The entire barn, including all sheds, is now roofed with metal.

Based on the surviving furniture and the floor plan, the barn was most recently used as follows. The front shed was likely built and used for storage. The rear shed, however, was incorporated into the main portion of the barn. Along the western side of the barn are three stalls, probably horse stalls. A central room with stair way to the second story apparently served as a tack room. The concrete floor and remaining stanchions in the eastern end of the barn indicate that this area was used as a dairy. The second story was used as a hay mow. Most recently, it appears that the entire barn was used as a storage area for a wide variety of household goods, construction materials, farm machines and tools, etc.

Determining the absolute age of the oldest part of the barn is problematic. According to Sprouse (personal communication), Mrs. Kernan claimed that the barn was standing when she purchased the property in 1914. The non-standard size lumber, hewn beams, and mortise and tenon joints of the interior core are consistent with a pre-1914 construction date. They are not, however, helpful for



**MOUNT AIR BARN**  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
**FIGURE 7**

pinpointing the date of construction, as basic barn construction techniques remained largely unchanged until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The construction of the barn is furthermore not recorded in historic documents related to Mount Air. A more precise estimate of the construction date is thus far beyond the expertise of the Cultural Resource Protection group. Should a structural analysis of the barn demonstrate its integrity, it is recommended that an architect-historic preservation consultant evaluate the barn for public significance.

#### *Tenant house*

This structure was built in 1923 as a two-car garage with a second floor apartment using lumber salvaged from buildings constructed by the 304<sup>th</sup> Engineers. The first floor was later converted to living space, and the building was used as the caretaker's residence. The deed conveying Mount Air to the Park Authority limits the use of the site to passive recreation. The initial staff evaluation of the house recommended demolition of this structure.

#### *Pump House*

This small frame structure was constructed after World War I to enclose the old 55-foot deep brick-lined well.

#### *Chicken Coop*

This is a mid-twentieth century construction of milled lumber and ply wood.

#### *Corn Crib*

This building is probably a mid-twentieth century construction using new and salvaged materials. The sills are hewn timbers with mortise and tenon joints, perhaps salvaged from an earlier crib. The remaining wood is standard size lumber. The roof is hipped and finished with pressed tin shingles. The structure is raised off the ground and supported by sections of terra cotta drain pipe.

#### *Cabins (north and south)*

Both cabins were likely constructed at the same time. A third cabin reportedly stood south of these two. According to oral history, these were slave cabins. Both cabins have board and batten exteriors. Both are supported on brick and concrete pilings. Old newspaper used as insulation between the new and old siding dates to the mid -1940s, suggesting the new siding was added at that time. The interior of the north cabin was refinished in the 1950s to serve as sleeping quarters. A fireplace was added and new wall board and ceiling were installed. The floor boards in both cabins are non-standard lumber, and the width of the planks suggests they may date to initial construction. The interior of the south cabin is unfinished and most of the visible structural elements are standard size lumber, and the rafters are rough-finished logs.

The age of these cabins is problematic. Contrary to oral history, the visible structural elements in the south cabin are consistent with a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century -- not a middle 19<sup>th</sup> century -- construction date. However, it is possible and not unlikely that such small buildings were so massively repaired and renovated over time that very little of the original building fabric remains. Or, the oral history may be totally fallacious. It is recommended that these buildings be examined by an architect-historic preservation consultant. Archaeological testing near these cabins may provide information related to their age and use.

#### *Greenhouse*

This very dilapidated building is wood frame with brick facade. The north half was an enclosed area used for storage. The south half had skylights and many windows and was used as a green house. Within this half of the building several steps lead down into a brick-lined pit built into the floor. This pit measures ca. 9' x 3.8' and is ca. 2' deep. The function of this feature is not known. The precise age of this structure is not known, but it was reportedly standing in 1914, and the construction fabric is consistent with a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century construction date.

### **Landscape Features**

#### *Gardens*

Although some of them were badly damaged in the 1992 fire, several very large old trees still stand adjacent to the main house ruin. Two of the most impressive of these trees are an ash and an Osage orange standing in front and slightly to the east of the cellar. The distinctive main trunks and branches of these trees are recognizable in early photographs of the house and provide a vivid visual link to the past. There is an additional ash tree by the walkway that was damaged by lightning. To the east of the house ruin are the remnants of a formal garden bordered with alleys and hedges of mature lilacs and American and English box woods. It is not known at present what additional plants from these gardens may yet survive. Finally, mature lilacs line the driveway to the west of the house.

#### *Garden Terrace*

This brick terrace faces west and is ornamented with stone Corinthian capitals reportedly salvaged from the now-demolished Old Botanical Gardens in Washington, D.C. The terrace was built under the direction of Mrs. Kernan.

#### *Road Trace*

Probably leading south from the barn to fields in what is now Fort Belvoir.

### **Known Archaeological/Sub-surface Features**

#### *Main House Ruin*

The ruin consists of a brick-lined cellar hole, four partially fallen chimneys, the

foundations of the back portion of the main part of the house and of the east additions, and all the debris resulting from the fire, much of which partially fills the cellar hole (see Figure 8). Hand hewn sills line the top of the cellar. The masonry in the cellar shows clear evidence of two episodes of construction. The lower courses are English bond, while the upper courses are Common or American bond. The brick and mortar in these two levels are also distinct. The foundation of a portion of the east wing appears to be of the same material and technique as the lower portion of the main cellar hole, strongly suggesting that this was a free-standing kitchen associated with the earliest house. A more detailed description of the surviving structural elements will not be possible until debris is removed from the cellar hole and the surrounding ground.

The visible house ruins together with oral history and the historic record suggest that the lower portion of the cellar may be the remains of an 18<sup>th</sup> century house. It may, in fact, be the remains of first house built at Mount Air by Dennis McCarty in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Modern Well and Septic System*

The new well was dug in 1969. A modern septic system is located north of the barn. There are several features visible on the ground surface in this area that are likely related to this system. A small brick-lined feature south of the kitchen is purportedly a grease trap.

#### *Old Brick-lined Well*

This well is located in pump house and was in use until 1969. It may be the original well on the property.

#### *Structural Remain #1*

Recorded oral history states that the privy was located on the middle terrace east of the lilac alley. A concentration of building stone at this location may be the remains of this structure.

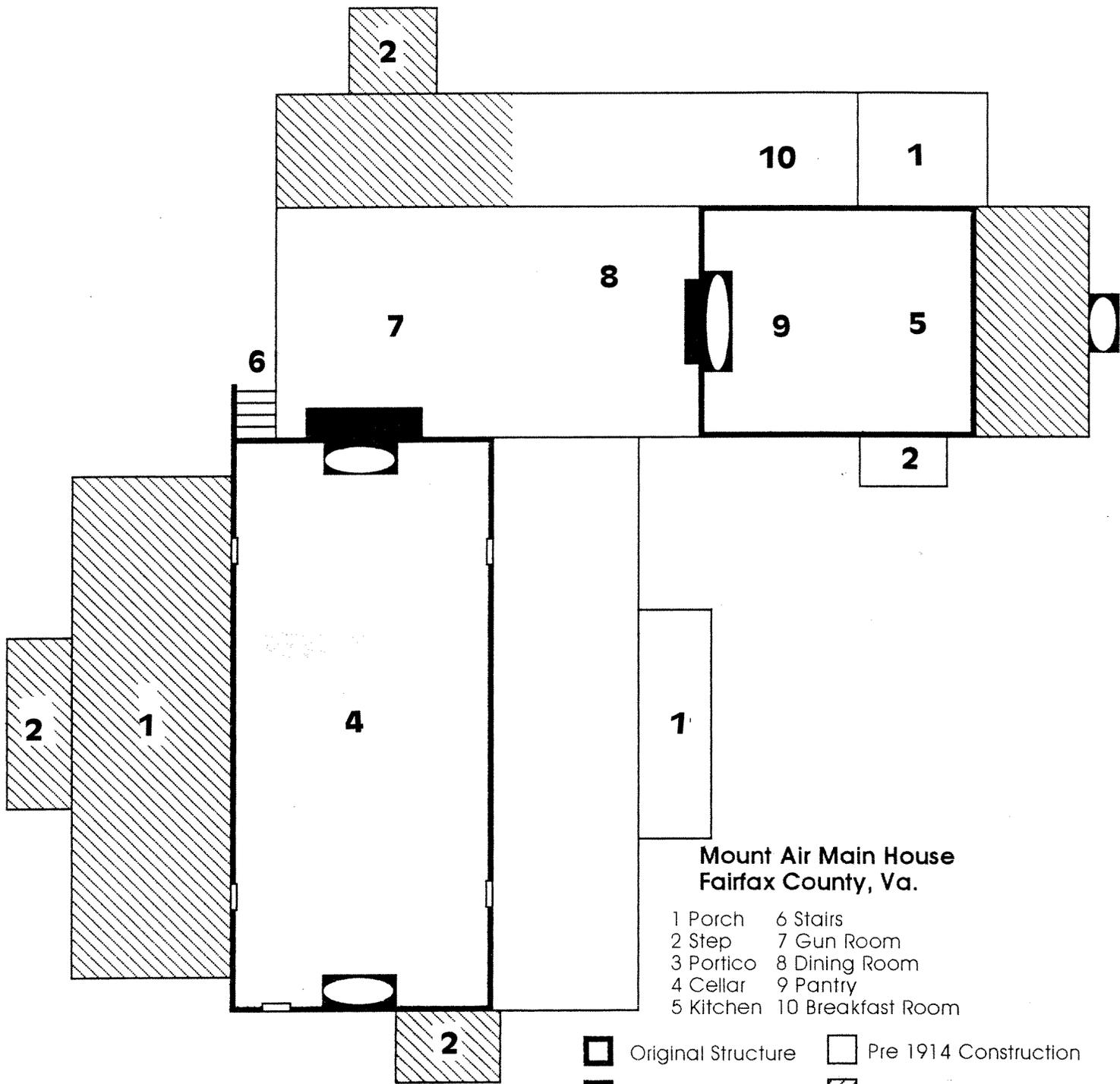
#### *Structural Remain #2*

What appears to be a large hole filled with modern construction debris (concrete) may be the remains of the ice house or ice pit, which, according to oral history, was located on the terrace below the garden.

### **Archaeological Features: Locations Unknown**

#### *McCarty Family cemetery*

This family burial ground is located somewhere in the meadow in front of the house. According to *Cemeteries of Fairfax County, Virginia: A Report to the Board of Supervisors*, Brian A. Conley, 1994 it is located ca. 300' north of the main house and 100' east of the drive (no longer extant). Oral history states that



**Mount Air Main House  
Fairfax County, Va.**

- 1 Porch
- 2 Step
- 3 Portico
- 4 Cellar
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Stairs
- 7 Gun Room
- 8 Dining Room
- 9 Pantry
- 10 Breakfast Room

-  Original Structure
-  Pre 1914 Construction
-  Chimney
-  Post 1914 Addition



**MOUNT AIR MAIN HOUSE  
MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE  
FIGURE 8**

the cemetery was "...in the front lawn, just to the right of a clump of trees as seen from the house." The gravestones were first moved from this ground probably before 1852 and relocated to Cedar Grove. From there they were finally moved to Pohick Episcopal Church. It is very likely, but unconfirmed, that the bodies were not relocated. The exact location of this cemetery has not been confirmed.

*Slave cemetery*

According to Conley (1994:149), this burial ground is located ca. 150' east of the house ruin on a slope east of the garden. This area is covered by periwinkle and day lilies, and no grave markers or depressions are visible. The location of this cemetery has not been confirmed.

- D. **Natural Resources** - The forested portion of the main Mount Air parcel is in second and third growth. The species mixes are generally appropriate for the land forms and microclimate. The majority of trees are common species including Tulip Poplar, Green Ash, and Virginia Pine. There is a significant amount of invasive plants present as well. Despite the invasives, the structure of the forest does seem to be progressing towards a relatively diverse and healthy hardwood forest. It is likely that if evolution is undisturbed the forest shall end up in fitting the following ERIC types. The final stands will probably be a Upland Hardwood Forest - Chestnut Oak on most of the Loamy and Gravelly Sediment soils, probably blending into a stand of Red Oak Yellow Poplar-White Oak- Northern Red Oak on the richer Lund series soils, and then the floodplain appears to be moving towards Sycamore-Sweetgum-American Elm stand. It will take many years for these forests to reach their final stages.

The relatively large almost contiguous forests growing on Fort Belvoir lands probably provide refuge for significant numbers of migratory bird species as well as other plants and animals that are having a difficult time surviving in Fairfax County. By comparison the park parcels may appear insignificant. However, if the Belvoir property is large enough to satisfy a FID (Forest Interior Dwelling Species) than the extra two hundred feet of buffer provide another two hundred feet of habitat. To provide that amount of habitat in an isolated circumstance would take a forest six hundred feet wide.

*Meadow* - The primary plants that make up the meadow are Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Little Bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*), Broom Sedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), and Purple Top (*Triodia flava*). The most dominant of these plants are the Indian Grass and Little Bluestem. These are native grasses that appear to be existing in a relatively stable plant community. Because it is relatively undisturbed, the plant community does not appear to be under the stress of the more aggressive and competitive alien invasive plants that frequently occur in Fairfax County, such as fescue grasses, microstegium, bush honeysuckle,

autumn olive, tree of heaven, etc. There is a small amount of Japanese Honeysuckle present, but it does not seem to be a big problem. Usually many of these invasive plants gain a foothold when an area is disturbed. That suggests this area is a relatively undisturbed native Fairfax County meadow. It has probably been maintained in this state for quite some time.

There are numerous wildflowers such as asters and goldenrods present. The edge surrounding the large meadows looks very healthy with very little deer browse evident. It is dense and lush, being composed of a variety of very young trees and some older ones as well. The trees in the edge consist of a variety of oak, pine, hickory, red cedar, black gum and sumac. One large blackgum, covered in fruit in October 1996, was covered with birds eating the berries, including cedar waxwings, American robins, and gray catbirds.

The cut slope along the entry road, adjacent to the meadow is being planted using a native wildflower mix. It should be maintained using the same practice as with the meadow.

*Ponds/impoundments* - There is one pond in the floodplain of the Twinbrook parcel which should harbor significant number and variety of herpetological species and should be protected as much as is possible.

*Streams*- Since the watershed is small and relatively undisturbed, the stream is in fairly good condition when compared to many streams in the county.

- E. **Access** - Pedestrian and vehicular access to the historic site will be from the rebuilt driveway off Accotink Road, from the main road in the Mount Air development. Pedestrian access to the stream valley portion will also be off Accotink Road.
- F. **Existing and Planned Land Use** -The park and the area surrounding it are zoned R-1. To the north and west of the historic portion of the park will be the single-family homes of Mount Air. Another single-family development, Twinbrook at Mount Air, is being constructed to the west of the stream valley portion of the park. Fort Belvoir, zoned R-C, is to the east and south.

*The Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, Virginia* for Area IV , Springfield Planning District states “The majority of the Springfield Planning District has been recommended as Suburban Neighborhoods by the Concept for Future Development. The predominant residential character of the area should be maintained by promoting compatible land uses and land use intensities.” The text for the Newington Community Planning Sector states "Mount Air, a Greek Revival house built about 1830 with an 1859 addition, is located in this sector.

The structure shows the evolution of a residence that has been altered to meet the need of its occupants over 100 years. The Mount Air Historic District protects the early nineteenth structures and its landscaped environs by stressing the importance of careful site planning for all new construction." Since this writing, of course, the house itself was destroyed in a fire in May 1992.

- H. **Countywide Trail** - No trails are required near the park by the County Comprehensive Plan.

#### IV. **MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The management framework integrates research, site analysis, and basic data presented in this document. Management zones have been defined to provide a framework for decision making. Existing uses, existing conditions, and recommendations from Park Authority staff were considered in the development of the management zones. The framework provides broad flexibility within a range of potential uses for each management zone (see Figure 9 and Figure 10).

The "Potential Uses" stated for the zone describe what uses are acceptable for each zone. If a use is not listed for a zone, by its omission it is considered an incompatible use for that zone. The potential uses are intentionally general to allow flexibility when making decisions.

- A. **Resource Protection Zone**

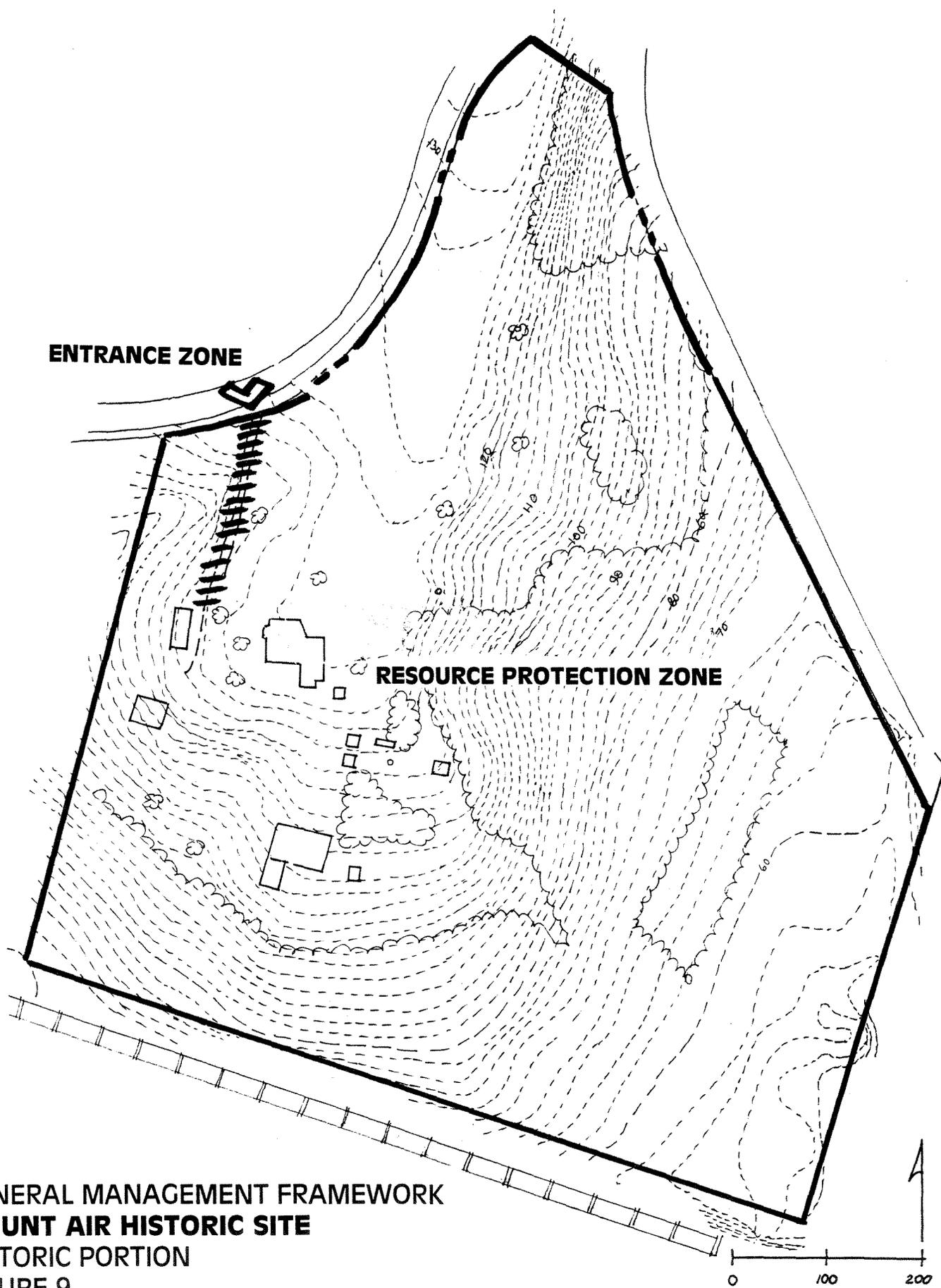
The entire study site with the exception of the Entrance Zone will be included as areas of valuable cultural and natural resources and be protected by a Resource Protection Zone (RPZ). Human impact in this zone will be kept to a minimum. Management of the cultural and natural resources will be allowed, but degradation of this zone shall be prohibited.

POTENTIAL USES:

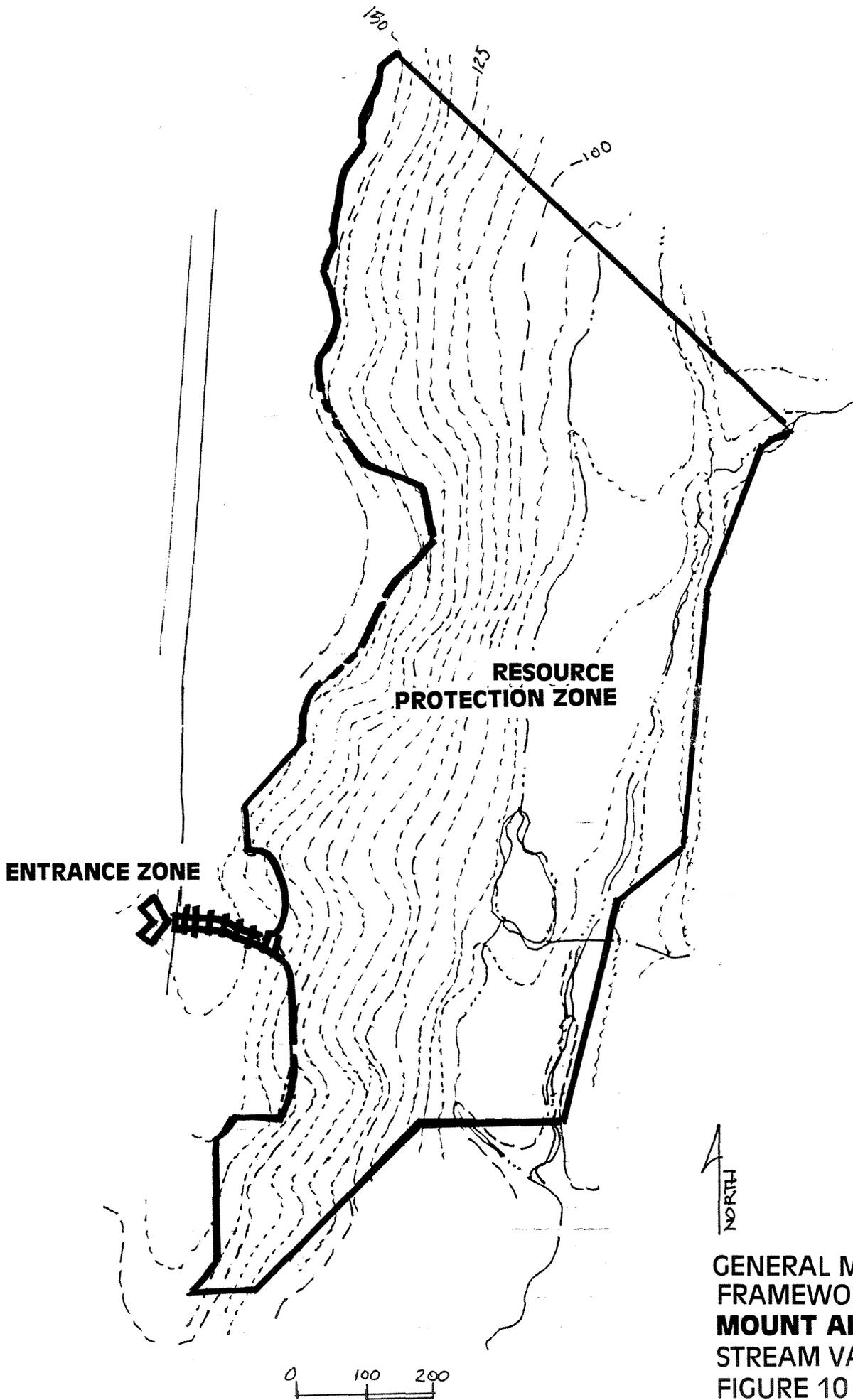
Trails and Trail Support Facilities  
Wildlife and Habitat Management  
Research, Interpretation, and Education  
Short Term Recreation

- B. **Entrance Zones**

An entrance has been identified for each portion of the site. The entrance for the historic portion will be off the main road in the vicinity of the old driveway. The entrance for the stream valley portion is an access easement between Lot 22 and Parcel A.



**GENERAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
HISTORIC PORTION  
FIGURE 9



GENERAL MANAGEMENT  
FRAMEWORK  
**MOUNT AIR HISTORIC SITE**  
STREAM VALLEY PORTION  
FIGURE 10

POTENTIAL USES:

Trails

Roads and Road Improvements

Utilities

V. ***SITE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS***

Until the creation of a Conceptual Development Plan or Resource Management Plan, the following recommendations will be used to provide guidance for the site management at Mount Air.

Before determining the ultimate fate of the buildings, the scarcity of remaining agricultural buildings in Fairfax County, especially buildings constructed before the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, should be considered. This form of vernacular architecture that once dominated the built environment has almost totally disappeared from the county landscape. Fairfax County Park Authority may not receive many more opportunities to preserve examples of such buildings. Suitability determination should be based on the degree of needed remedial improvements for asbestos and lead, as well as general improvement cost. Cost effectiveness should be the determining factor, along with the needs of the immediate community and the needs of the Park Authority at large.

The following actions should be taken to prevent further deterioration of the cultural resources at Mount Air:

- ▶ Vegetation (trees, vines, brambles) routinely cleared from the margins of the standing structures and the house foundation
- ▶ The area within and immediately surrounding the house remains should be cleaned of debris. Sizeable pieces of debris (burned beams, radiators, furnace, plumbing, etc.) should be disposed of. Smaller pieces of debris (charcoal, tile, hardware, etc.) should be consolidated, inspected, collected if warranted, and the remainder disposed of.
- ▶ All contents should be removed from the barn. These materials should be evaluated and reused, stored elsewhere, or disposed of.
- ▶ All standing structures should be secured so as to prevent entry.
- ▶ The roofs and exterior walls on all standing structures should be maintained (painted, repaired) so as to prevent further weather-related damage.

The native meadow should be preserved and maintained as such by finding out the previous mowing schedule for Mount Air if possible. This schedule has been conducive to preserving the integrity of the native plant community. Therefore, until there is more time to complete a comprehensive survey and research the best management techniques, the current mowing schedule should be continued. Controlled burns may also be used to manage the meadow.

A monitoring program should be set up to record plant and animal species present at the site and to establish a baseline from which the site's health can be checked to monitor changes that may need to be controlled in the future. A monitoring program is essential to being able to make future decisions about resource management questions. The open area should be managed as a native meadow, specifically as a grassland. The site has already shown that its soils, climate and topography naturally support such a plant community. This would also be the most cost effective in terms of money and manpower because grasslands tend to be fairly easy to maintain, usually only needing occasional mowing (once or twice yearly).