

VLR 3/19/3  
NRHP 5/31/7

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property:

historic name Public Quarry at Government Island  
other names/site number Government Island (common); Brent's Island; Wiggington's Island.  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources File #089-0103, and Site # 44ST0110

2. Location:

street & number 1 mile East of U.S. Route 3 along Aquia Creek; at the confluence of Austin Run & Aquia Creek  
city or town Stafford Courthouse not for publication  ~~N/A~~ vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Stafford code 179 zip code 22554

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally     statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 4/29/07  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property     meets d o e s not meet the National Register criteria. (    See cont'nuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
    entered in the National Register  
    See continuation sheet.  
    determined eligible for the National Register Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
    See continuation sheet.  
    determined not eligible for the National Register  
    removed from the National Register Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
    other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register** 0

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION Sub: Extractive facility  
DOMESTIC Single Dwelling  
DOMESTIC Camp

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
WORK IN PROGRESS Public Park / Hiking Trail

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE / Sandstone  
roof N/A  
walls N/A  
other STONE/Sandstone

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

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

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

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

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

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

Industry  
Archaeology:Prehistoric  
Archaeology:Historic:Aboriginal  
Archaeology:Historic:Non-Aboriginal

**Period of Significance** 1791-1825  
1200 B.C.-A.D.1600 A.D. (Woodland Period)  
8000-1200 B.C. (Archaic Period)  
Prior to 8000 B.C. (Paleoindian Period)

**Significant Dates** 1791

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

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** N/A

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

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

Name of repository: Stafford County Planning Office; Virginia Department of Historic Resources;

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 17.4 acres

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

Zone Easting Northing 1 18 292194 4258361 2 18 292244 4258584 3 18 292391 4258462 4 18 292428 4258184

See continuation sheet.

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Megan Orient, Consultant
organization MAO Consulting date 4/5/07
street & number 136 Trailwood Drive telephone (910) 325-6767
city or town Hubert state NC zip code 28539

--AND--

name/title Wendy Wheatcraft, Historic Preservation Planner
organization Stafford County, Department of Planning & Community Development date 4/5/07
street & number 1300 Courthouse Road telephone (540) 658-4628
city or town Stafford County state VA zip code 22554

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name The Board of Supervisors of the County of Stafford, Virginia, c/o Steve Crosby, County Administrator
street & number 1300 Courthouse Road telephone (540) 658-4541
city or town Stafford state VA zip code 22554

AND

name Boy Scouts of America, National Capital Area Council, Aquia District, c/o G.L. Gordon (1-acre parcel)
street & number P.O. Box 1513 telephone (540) 720-8327, Mark Crooks, Aquia District Chairman
city or town Stafford state VA zip code 22555-1513

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions,

gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET  
Island**

**Name of Property: Public Quarry at Govt.**

**County and State: Stafford County, Virginia**

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

Public Quarry at Government Island is located in Stafford County, Virginia, approximately forty miles southeast of Washington, D.C. at the confluence of Austin Run and Aquia Creek—tributaries of the Potomac River. Between 1791 and 1825, Aquia sandstone was extracted from Public Quarry for use in the construction of the nation's new capital. Since quarry operations ceased in the 1830s, this seventeen-acre property has remained virtually undisturbed. Although it is commonly referred to as an island, Public Quarry is surrounded by water on only three sides, making it a peninsula. The fourth side is under water during different seasons due to rising levels in the adjacent tidal creeks and marshes. Public Quarry at Government Island is identified as a multi-component archaeological site consisting of a stone building foundation, wharf area, stone-lined pit, historic roadbed, trench, stone boundary marker dating to 1786, and most significantly, four sandstone quarries. Archaeological evidence suggests that a prehistoric camp was also located along the southeastern tip of the peninsula. Bound by wetlands, the isolated location has helped to preserve the site's historic integrity in location, setting, design, feeling, and association.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**Natural Features / Site Location**

Public Quarry at Government Island, composed largely of a sandstone rock formation, rises noticeably above the surrounding wetlands and marshes at an elevation of 25 feet above sea level. Its perimeter shoreline is periodically submerged with the rise and fall of the tides. The peninsula is home to a variety of mature hardwood tree growth, including oak, poplar, and beech trees, as well as intermediate evergreen growth. However, the areas immediately surrounding the quarry pits are devoid of mature vegetation, likely a result of clear cutting in association with the quarry operations (CRI, 51).

The dominating features on the site are the four quarries—discernible large outcroppings of light-colored sandstone with cliffs rising over ten feet. The quality of the stone is best described in an 1805 federal report concerning the construction of public buildings in Washington D.C., as written by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, surveyor of public buildings.

The freestone of Acquia [sic] used in the public buildings is a calcareous sandstone of very excellent quality, and the quarries are in appearance inexhaustible. It is however subject to clayholes, to nodules of iron ore (pyrites) and to masses of flint, and the hardness and durability of the rock is often very various, in the same stratum. It also suffers expansion and contraction from moisture and dryness to as greater degree than any stone with which I am acquainted. Even after a block is taken out of the quarry, and delivered in the City, and in some cases after it has been wrought, it is liable to fly to pieces, if rapidly dried by violent heat or wind. But if it once becomes dry, and remains sound, it has never been known afterwards to fail. (Carter, et al, 272)

**Site Description / Physical Characteristics**

Public Quarry at Government Island is currently accessible via its western, land-locked side. The seventeen-acre site is approximately 600 feet wide and 1,200 feet long. A natural footpath, which is approximately ½ mile in length, follows the site perimeter. Though little infrastructure remains from the quarry operations, ten landscape features and dozens of artifacts offer supporting evidence of the site's once prosperous quarry operations and its earlier Native American occupation (CRI, 53-56).

Traversing the site from north to south, visitors will first encounter Quarry #1, which is located in the north-central

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portion of the peninsula. It is about six feet high, horseshoe-shaped, and approximately 250 feet in length. Like the other quarry sites, it faces west. The chisel marks and squared corners along Quarry #1 reveal the type of extraction process that was used here over 200 years ago.

The next resource one encounters to the south is Quarry #2, which is a short outcropping of stone, measuring approximately four feet high and nearly 100 feet long. To the west of Quarry #2, parallel to the western shoreline, lies what is believed to be the old canal bed, which facilitated the transportation of the stone. In 1793, James Hoben, the architect for the President's House, wrote a letter to the Commissioners of Public Buildings that proposed the construction of a canal at Public Quarry "cut about 18 feet wide to let scows into the quarry on the Island" (Conner, 41). Although the exact location of the canal is undocumented, it is again described in 1806 by Latrobe:

Between the great mass of rock on the island of Acquia and the deep water of the creek is a soft marsh. Through this marsh a canal has been formerly cut, now much choaked [sic] up which is barely sufficient to convey stone by means of a scow to the vessels which bring it up to the city. From the Quarry to the canal the stone must be carted (Van Horne, Vol. 2, 299-300).

The next resource to the south is Quarry #3, which is more U-shaped in nature. It is approximately 450 feet in length, and its walls are about fifteen feet high. Quarry #3 offers the best example of markings that tell us more about eighteenth and nineteenth century stone extraction methods. Diagonal slash marks are clearly visible, as are the trenches and drill holes used to shear off large blocks of sandstone. Land is visibly excavated around the stone outcroppings, which allowed stonecutters direct access to the stone. Twenty inch wide trenches separate sections of the stone faces, where workers once maneuvered.

Approximately 20 feet west of Quarry #3 is a five foot deep pit lined with cut stone. It is approximately 50 feet wide and 150 feet long. Its purpose is unknown, but it was undoubtedly utilized during quarry operations. Directly southwest of the pit is a very large stone clearly carved with the initials "R.S." This is one of the four and last remaining original boundary markers that delineated the property of Robert Steuart, a stone mason and cutter who purchased a one-acre parcel from Giles Brent in 1786. The boundary marker represents the last division and sale of the property before the period of significance. From the boundary marker is a visible trench line, which runs 100 feet southeast. This trench was likely created when transporting the cut stone from the quarry to the shore.

Along the northeastern embankment of the peninsula, the remnants of a stone wharf are clearly visible. This landing site is partially submerged and can be best seen from an aerial perspective off shore. This wharf lies at the end of a historic roadbed that first runs slightly southwest, parallel to the shore, and then crosses the middle of the peninsula from east to west. The roadbed is believed to have been created when heavy skids loaded with cut stone were dragged by oxen or horses to the wharf. After the stone was moved from the quarries to the wharf, it was transported by flat-bottom vessels, called scows, downstream to larger sailing vessels on the Potomac River and then shipped to Washington, D.C. (Conner, 60-61).

Approximately 20 feet north of the landing is the ruins of a stone building. It measures about 20 feet by 33 feet. It was most likely the site of the quarry overseer's quarters. In the vicinity of the foundation are a few significant

components—several surface depressions six-foot in diameter, a small water-filled pit six by twelve feet in size, and a small rubble pile roughly five feet in diameter.

South of and parallel to the east/west roadbed is Quarry #4, which measures nearly 200 feet in length. The north side of the quarry is steep, approximately seven feet high. Chisel marks are clearly visible along this rock face. Little to no

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evidence of quarry activity is found south of this quarry. However, it should be noted that large blocks of cut, squared stone are scattered throughout the island, outside of the quarry sites. These cut pieces were probably left behind because they were deemed as low quality stone or otherwise unusable.

Prehistoric artifacts were recovered across the entire island, but the greatest concentration of prehistoric material was discovered at the southeastern tip of the peninsula where the landform tails into Aquia Creek. This area, which has been identified as a prehistoric camp, is located about 400 feet south of the historic roadbed. It is distant from all evidence of quarrying operation. Artifacts discovered here indicate that this site has been occupied from the PaleoIndian Period and through the Archaic & Woodland Periods. The camp is roughly 25 feet wide and 50 feet long, with the length running parallel to the eastern shoreline. The artifacts suggest that this was a temporary or seasonal camp used mostly for tool making.

**Supporting Artifacts**

During January and February 2006, Cultural Resources Inc. conducted a Phase I archaeological survey on the property. The entire peninsula was designated a multi-component archaeological site. Survey methods used included an intensive walkover examination and standard test pits at 25 to 50 foot intervals throughout the site in areas where stone and marsh did not impede subsurface testing. The Phase I report offers the most recent and comprehensive documentation of the site's resources. It confirms the presence of eighteenth and nineteenth century quarrying activity and Native American occupation.

During the Phase I investigation, 59 historic artifacts supporting historic occupation were recovered. Architectural artifacts found near the stone building foundation included brick fragments, mortar, five cut nails, one unidentified manufactured nail, two unidentified manufactured spikes, and one piece of window glass. Kitchen-related artifacts included shards of creamware, pearlware, whiteware, refined earthenware, astbury-type earthenware, German stoneware, and redware. Wine bottle glass and two cast iron kettle fragments were also identified. One bolt and one wrought/forged hinge were also found, as well as two unidentified iron objects (CRI, 53).

398 artifacts supporting Native American occupation were recovered. Artifacts include fragments of sand tempered ceramic, a large quantity of quartz and quartzite lithic debitage, lesser amounts of chert and rhyolite flakes, and several tools. Diagnostic material includes Townsend ceramics and Madison and Levanna projectile points, as well as a Clovis projectile point. One shovel test indicated a possible subsurface fire pit approximately 25 feet east of the stone building foundation, suggesting subsurface integrity and the possibility of subsurface features. Aside from the fire pit, the prehistoric component is largely concentrated along the southeastern tip of the peninsula (CRI, 53-54).

**SUMMARY**

Public Quarry at Government Island contains reminders of a once prosperous industrial site that provided Aquia sandstone for the construction of the nation's capital and other prominent eighteenth and nineteenth century



buildings constructed along the eastern seaboard. The adjacent wetlands and tidal creeks and the remote location within Stafford County have helped to preserve and protect this site. Public Quarry at Government Island maintains its historic integrity through the undisturbed context, easily discernable quarry sites and associated manmade features, and archaeological evidence. The meticulous workmanship of some of our nation's first craftsmen is forever etched in the rock faces at this site. By opening the site to the public as a park and hiking trail, Stafford County will attempt to interpret the rich history and significant story of this place. A feeling of connection to the past will be shared by visitors for generations to come as they walk through the site, imagining the sound of the workmen's hammers and chisels against the stone and the hum of activity that once occurred here.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Public Quarry at Government Island is an excellent example of an early American industrial site. The site's most notable contributions are the extensive quantities of sandstone extracted for the construction of prominent buildings in Washington, D.C. between the years 1791 and 1825. This site exhibits local historic significance and is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and D. Public Quarry was first purchased by Pierre L'Enfant for the federal government in 1791 with the purpose of supplying sandstone for the U.S. Capitol and the President's House, the first public buildings constructed in the capital city. After the War of 1812, this site contributed material for the reconstruction of the District of Columbia. The quarry's fine-grained stone, known as Aquia sandstone or freestone, was a desirable building material because it could be easily carved without splitting. The use of Public Quarry by the federal government established quarrying as a dominant industry in Stafford County during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There were several stone quarries located in the region, but Public Quarry was the largest freestone quarry (Criterion A). Archaeological study has produced hundreds of historic and prehistoric artifacts that yield valuable information pertaining to the life of quarry workers, their quarrying methods, and the habitation patterns of Native Americans (Criterion D).

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**History of the Property**

The first known occupation of the site dates to the Paleoindian Period (prior to 8000 B.C.). Although little is known about this culture, it is believed that Paleoindians established seasonal base camps located either at places of diverse environmental or climactic conditions or near high-quality lithic quarries (CRI, 12). They also established seasonal procurement camps, which were smaller, temporary stations located some distance from the base camp. Here, Paleoindians collected available lithic material and flora and hunted game. The most likely locations of Paleoindian sites in and around Stafford County seem to be situated along game-attracting marshes (Barber et al., 42-43).

Archaeological evidence also indicates that Archaic (8000-1200 B.C) and Woodland (1200 B.C -A.D.1600) people inhabited the site. It is believed that Archaic people lived in band-level social groups that moved from camp to camp, depending on the season and availability of resources (CRI, 14). The type and variety of material cultural found at Archaic sites suggest the development of larger, more localized populations and changes in food procurement and processing methods. The Woodland Period is characterized by improved ceramic technology, more dependence on horticulture and agriculture, and increased sedentism (CRI, 16). Settlements during this period include villages, small hamlets, and large base camps, which were typically located on bluffs, terraces, or high floodplains adjacent to rivers or major tributaries. Smaller, seasonal camps supported nearby villages and were usually located along streams. The location of Public Quarry at Government Island, positioned between two major creeks, makes this area a likely site for Archaic and Woodland occupation.

At the end of the Late Woodland Period, European explorers traveling by ship easily discovered this fertile region. Since it was located at the confluence of Austin Run and Aquia Creek—both tributaries of the Potomac River and thus the Chesapeake Bay—the site was a natural find for early explorers traveling up from Jamestown. Written documentation began with these explorers. When Captain John Smith voyaged up the Potomac River in 1608, he

mapped the locations of numerous Native American villages, including several in the vicinity of Public Quarry. His journal entries describe this area and its inhabitants, including people of the Patawomeck, Doeg, Mayaones,

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Piscataway and Anacostin tribes. The villages and periphery hamlets noted by Smith were depicted along major waterways near the mouths of creeks and rivers.

The first European settler, Giles Brent, moved to the area in 1647 and established a tobacco plantation. Other settlers continued to move into the area until the population growth warranted the creation of a new county. In 1664, the boundaries of Stafford County were officially established, within which Public Quarry remains today. The property to become Public Quarry was first specifically identified in a recorded land patent dated November 28, 1678. It was described as "twelve Acres of Land lyeing [sic] in Stafford County with a small point of Marsh joyininge [sic] to it lying in Acquia Creek..." A 1694 deed stated that George Brent, Giles Brent's nephew, "hast purchased a small tongue of neck or Island of Land with small point of marsh..." At that point, the site derived its name of Brent's Island from its first documented owner.

The deed that conveyed the land to George Brent also contained a handwritten note that named the property as Wigginton's Island. It is believed that this note was added at a later date. This is the earliest reference to the quarry site as such. Since no Wiggintons show title of ownership, the origination of this name and reference is unclear. The reference does show up on subsequent documents but is believed to be connected to a local resident by the name of William Wigginton (Conner, 12).

It was during the ownership of the Brent family that the island was believed to have been first utilized as a stone quarry. During this time, Aquia stone was used to create structural and decorative architectural elements. Aquia Episcopal Church (1751-1757), which is located approximately two miles northwest of Public Quarry, is trimmed with Aquia stone quoins, keystones, and lintels. Other prominent buildings constructed with Aquia sandstone include Gunston Hall (1755-1760), Mount Vernon (1774), Old Cape Henry Lighthouse off Chesapeake Bay (1792), and Monumental Church in Richmond, Virginia (1812). Aquia sandstone was also commonly utilized for gravestones, millstones, and stepping stones. The Brents owned the island for almost one hundred years until it was purchased by the federal government specifically for supplying building material for the nation's new capital.

**Period of Significance**

During Public Quarry's one-hundred year ownership by the Brent family, the American victory over the British in the Revolutionary War paved the way for the United States to fully establish itself as an independent nation. Approved on July 1, 1790, the Residence Bill stated that a new city would be established as the capital of the United States. From December 1791 until December 1800, the government convened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania while the new capital was founded in an unsettled area near Georgetown on the Potomac River. Three individuals were appointed to the Commission of Public Buildings to aide President George Washington, a Stafford County native, in the purchase of land and in overseeing the development of this city.

The new capital city site was located in a remote, rural area, far from a large, established urban center. The Commissioners were responsible for first creating an adequate infrastructure of roads and wharfs. It was more cost effective and practical to obtain building materials, like stone, timber, brick, and lime from sources in close proximity

to the new city, rather than obtaining materials from European markets or distant urban centers, such as Philadelphia or New York.

From the beginning of the federal city construction project, there was a general understanding that the public buildings would be made of stone. There was no shortage of stone sources in the vicinity of the new federal city. However, the stone taken from nearby existing sources was to be utilized for building foundations. For example, records indicate that the Commissioners operated a quarry in Hamburg, a small settlement near Washington, during

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1795, but this quarry only supplied building foundation stone (Kapsch, 112). White freestone was to be used to face the brick structural elements of the Capitol and the President's House, giving a similar appearance to some of the great buildings of Europe. It was this white stone that the Commissioners had difficulty finding near the new capital. In 1791, George Washington hired Pierre Charles L'Enfant to survey the area and design a plan for the federal city, officially named the District of Columbia. L'Enfant was sent to explore the lands along the Potomac River for freestone. The material was preferred by masons for its fine-grained quality, durability, and ease in carving. Located only 46 miles south of the District of Columbia and accessible via the Potomac River and its tributaries, Public Quarry was an ideal source.

On December 2, 1791, a deed was issued from George Brent (the fourth) to Pierre "Peter" Charles L'Enfant for the purchase of the property, less one square acre. The one-acre parcel had been sold previously in 1786 to Robert Steuart, a stone mason and cutter from Baltimore, Maryland. This parcel was marked at the four corners by stones with the owner's initials, "R.S." – one of which still remains in situ today. The sale to Mr. Steuart would mark the last known division or sale of the property prior to its notable quarrying period.

At the end of 1791, L'Enfant wrote to his assistant stating, "I have to recommend to your particular care the following... To repair immediately to Acquia Creek to see the qurries [sic] there belonging to the public – to have barracks erected upon thereon for twenty men on each of these quarries, on the island purchased from Mr. George Brent..." It was from this document that the reference to the historical name of Public Quarry was derived (Conner, 11-13, 25-26). Between 1791 and 1825, Public Quarry was actively used as a source of stone for the construction of Washington, D.C.

The Commissioners of Public Buildings first directly employed laborers and stone cutters to work Public Quarry. This required necessary supervisory personnel. The Commissioners hired William Wright of Alexandria on April 10, 1792 as quarry superintendent (Kapsch, 116). His duties were to:

...act as manager and Superintendent of the stone quarry on Hissington [Wiggington] Island on Aquia from this Day to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of November next, and under the direction of Mr. Williams employ a number of good hands, not exceeding twenty, and oversee and work them diligently in clearing the Stone quarries and...loading on board vessels such stone as may be from time to time directed. He is also to make gauges, measure and assist in roughing the stone. He is to be paid a dollar and a quarter of a dollar for every working day of his services. The wages of the men, as well as his own, are to be paid on a pay role [sic] to be made out by him monthly and the men are to be found provisions by the Commissioners, that is, one pound of good pork, or one pound and a half of Beef and one pound of flour per day all days included (Official Records, April 10, 1792).

The Commissioners later employed contractors to work the quarries. In January 1794, they initiated a contract with Collen Williamson but this contract did not last long due to labor problems. Later that same year, they hired Daniel C. Brent and John Cooke as contractors and site managers at Public Quarry. The work force at Public Quarry consisted of free whites who worked as stone cutters and slaves who primarily worked as laborers. Brent was first directed by the Commissioners to hire "40 negroes at 12 £ Virginia Currency per annum (\$32 plus provisions)" and was later authorized to hire "twenty five able bodied negroe men slaves, at the price not exceeding fifteen pounds Virginia Currency a year (\$40) finding and clothing the said negroes" (Kapsch, 159). Brent and Cooke agreed to supply 3,500 tons of stone by the end of 1795, 4,500 tons in 1796, and up to an estimated 10,000 tons over the next five years

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(Official Records, December 17, 1791). Fredericksburg court records indicate Brent and Cooke were actively keeping the books through 1807 (Fredericksburg Court Proceedings, Box 51).

In 1812, President James Madison signed a declaration of war against the British. This led to the eventual march on Washington, D.C. by British troops and the burning of the new capital in August 1814. After the fire, Mrs. Samuel Harrison, a D.C. resident, described the Capitol Building as, "nothing but...blacken'd walls" (Smith, 109). George Hadfield, who was directed by the Senate to inspect damaged buildings and estimate costs for restoration, stated that the Presidents House "has suffered immensely, particularly in the superstructure of the external walls; there is, however, a great portion of them that remains uninjured as also the greater part of the Basement Story, and the interior party walls" (Official Records, October 13, 1814). Hadfield estimated that the total cost for restoring the public buildings would be \$692,000 (Kapsch, 322).

The public building restoration project was similar to the original construction. Many of the same building materials were utilized. Although the Commissioners called for bids from private sources to supply new building material for repair and restoration, Public Quarry was again tapped to provide stone. Public Quarry remained in operation through the early 1830s (Conner, 105, 114, 129).

**Post Period of Significance**

In 1849, after nearly two decades of inactivity, Public Quarry was again considered for possible use in the construction of the Smithsonian. The quality of the stone was found unacceptable at that time. The site was briefly mentioned during the 1850s when Thomas Towson, a neighboring property owner, complained to Congressman William Smith about squatters on the abandoned quarry property. The Secretary of the Interior authorized Towson's appointment of "agent" to take on the responsibility of supervising unauthorized activity on the island (Conner, 131). After that brief period of attention, the site once again went dormant for nearly two decades, through and beyond the Civil War. After the war, the State of Virginia unofficially took possession of the abandoned quarries. On April 1, 1879, the property was illegally transferred from the Governor of Virginia to Samuel B. Howell and C.A. Bryan. Over the next eighty years, the property changed hands repeatedly with no knowledge that the site still belonged to the United States. It wasn't until the 1960s that research attorneys discovered the true ownership of the property. In 1963, Government Island (the property's final alias) was purchased at public auction by Farrar A. Simons. Stafford County tax records indicate that he and his wife constructed a building on the island, but no physical evidence remains of the building. The Simonses are the last known occupants (Conner, 147-148).

On August 19, 1998, Stafford County purchased the property with the intent to preserve the peninsula and eventually open it to the public as a park and natural site. The one-acre tract previously owned by Robert Steuart was

subsequently purchased by the Stafford County Boy Scouts. Government Island was also designated a local historic overlay district to ensure the protection of this significant historic industrial site. From 1998 to the present, the site has remained under the care of Stafford County and the Boy Scouts. Since the peak of the quarrying operation, the isolated location and lack of inhabitants has helped to maintain the integrity of Public Quarry at Government Island.

### **Historic Context**

Prior to the development of the freestone quarrying industry, the progression of Stafford County was consistent with other colonial migration and settlement patterns in Virginia. During the late seventeenth century, settlement occurred along major waterways to take advantage of the fertile soils for farming and the easy means of transportation. This agrarian, river-dependent society naturally led to the development of small port towns and early roadways paralleling the waterways. Given the area's water resources, including the Rappahannock River, Potomac River, and their many collective tributaries, Stafford County was well-positioned for success.

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With flourishing crop growth and high European demand, tobacco became the primary crop that drove development in Stafford County and the Chesapeake area. From large plantation owners to small tenant farmers, tobacco was the crop of choice, and the main economic engine. Tobacco cultivation and distribution were largely dependent on proximity to waterways. Thus, in the early eighteenth century, colonial port towns began to develop and thrive along the rivers, supported by the advent of warehouses that acted as collection points for this major agricultural export. Eventually, early roads paralleled the waterways and began connecting farmers to their warehouses within these commercial centers. Two early eighteenth century port towns were located in Stafford County—Marlborough on the Potomac River (approximately five miles south of Public Quarry), and Falmouth on the Rappahannock River. Stafford's road system at that time included what would become the modern Route 1 (paralleling the Potomac west of its tributaries), and Route 17 (paralleling the Rappahannock). These early roadways would soon mark a shift in the primary mode of transportation.

As settlement continued in the region, the main economic base also began to shift and diversify. Reliance on tobacco decreased in the colonies as tobacco production depleted the soil and large plantations began to subdivide into smaller grain-based farms. Grist mills became part of Stafford County industry, providing services mostly for the local population. During the eighteenth century, Stafford County residents also began to take advantage of the county's raw materials. Small gold mines were established within the southern section of the county. Iron ore was mined and manufactured. Two large iron works were located in Stafford County. The Principio Iron Company owned and operated a charcoal-fired blast furnace along Accokeek Creek, which smelted the ore into iron. Rappahannock Forge or Hunter's Iron Works was an industrial complex located in Falmouth that manufactured iron products, such as pots, kettles, shovels, bayonets, and muskets for the Continental Army during the American Revolution (CRI, 24).

It was during this same time that the quarrying industry was established in Stafford County, adding to the diversity of the industry base. Among Stafford County's natural resources was a large vein of sandstone. This vein yielded what was known as Aquia freestone or Aquia stone – named principally for the ease with which it was cut and shaped and its location along Aquia Creek. This stone was strong and easy to carve, yet not brittle – ideal for the façade pieces and ornately carved columns that would become so symbolic of the nation's new capital.

Though the total quantities and values of stone actually extracted from Public Quarry for the use in prominent federal buildings are unknown, the impact on the local workforce and economy is clear. Because of this demand, stone quarriers became major employers of the county, as demonstrated by the presence of various advertisements for laborers in local newspapers during 1796, as well as by early census data. The U.S. census from 1820, occurring just after the peak of the Public Quarry activity, is the first available data that specifies the breakdown of occupations for heads of households in Virginia. In it, manufacturing was listed as the second largest occupation in Stafford County. Out of 1310 heads of households in 1820, manufacturing employed 14% behind agriculture (81.6%) and ahead of commerce (3.5%). The term manufacturer included masters, journeymen, apprentices, and servants and likely includes the large number of enslaved workers who also labored there. Of 193 heads of households listed as manufacturers, 90 of those were "stone quarriers" (46.6%), followed by 17 blacksmiths (8.8%) and millers and wheel rights, equally staffed with 15 people or 7.7% of the manufacturers in Stafford County (1820 Census of the United States).

Quarrying involved many skilled workers, primarily three groups of tradesmen. Quarriers removed the stone from the quarry cliffs. They were given specific instructions on the desired types of stone to be quarried, including rubble, scabble, ashlar and bill. Stone cutters rough-dressed the stone into desired sizes, and blacksmiths sharpened the

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tools, particularly the drills, of the aforementioned workers. Laborers were also hired to cut the vegetation back from the stone cliffs and fill and man the skids or "stoneboats," scows (flat-bottom boats), and finally, the schooners. Three schooners—the Columbia, the Sincerity, and the Ark—were utilized to transport the stone from Aquia Creek to the District of Columbia (Kapsch, 155). The quarrying industry produced a considerable amount of employment in Stafford County.

As promised in official letters by the Congressional Commissioners, Public Quarry workers were provided with necessary tools. On March 30, 1792, the Commissioners entered into a contract with John Mounty for the manufacture of "ten sledge hammers,...five hundred wedges of different sizes, twenty pecks and ten trimming hammers all of the best iron and to be well steeled...and ten mattock and six axes of the best quality" (Kapsch, 123). In a contract with site managers Brent and Cooke, the Commissioners promised "...to deliver to them all Blacksmith tools & utensils for raising and transporting stone." Provisions for the workers, including housing, clothes, shoes, medical assistance, and food were provided by the Commissioners.

Quarrying the stone was hard, intensive labor. It first required the removal of all vegetation, including tree roots, to expose the good quality stone. Once the good stone was exposed, the large stone faces were chiseled and cut to create a manageable working space in the form of trenches or channels, which were usually twenty feet apart. In Lee Nelson's book *White House Stone Carving*, he describes this process.

First, they chiseled (actually picked) a vertical face on an outcropping of the stone which would serve as a working plane from which they could measure and begin to plan the removal of blocks of stone. Using hand picks, they then cut out trenches four to six feet deep into the stone and roughly ten to twenty feet apart. To minimize waste, these trenches were only about twenty inches wide, providing barely enough room for a man to work with a pick and cut a relatively smooth surface on each side of the trench. Then a rear trench was cut behind and parallel to the initial stone face, and it connected the two side trenches. This last trench effectively created a very large rectangular mass of stone that could be split into manageable sizes.

The quarries then chiseled shallow horizontal and vertical grooves one to two inches wide between the trenches in the face of the stone. These grooves provided a plane from which stone blocks could be wedged away from the main mass of stone. The location of these grooves or cutting planes depended upon the presence of veins or other flaws within the stone itself, as well as the specific size of stone needed. The operation required considerable judgment and experience. To split the stone away, a number of iron wedges were placed into the grooves about one foot apart and systematically and uniformly driven into the grooves, splitting the large block into the desired size. It was a very slow process, involving a tremendous amount of hard physical labor (Nelson, 4).

The first major labor dispute during the first federal construction project occurred at Public Quarry. It revolved around wages for the stone cutters who demanded a pay raise from one crown to ten shillings per day (approximately \$1.33). Because the stone cutters' work was vital to the operation of the construction project and there was a scarcity of tradesmen who had the experience needed to perform this type of work, the stone cutters prevailed in their demands. The wage increase for the stone cutters persuaded Public Quarry laborers to make a similar petition for a



pay increase from \$6 to \$7 per month (Kapsch, 161). The Commissioners acquiesced to their requests, but subsequent labor demands were met with great reluctance.

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Because of slow production at Public Quarry, the Commissioners were forced to contract with other freestone quarries in the area, including the quarries owned by William Robertson, John Dunbar, Steuart Edrington, John Watson, and John Moncure. The freestone quarry owned by John Gibson, which was located on land adjacent to Public Quarry, was rented by the Commissioners. The growth and development of Stafford's stone-quarrying industry is directly connected to and largely a result of the construction of Washington D.C.

By the 1850s, the quality and quantity of roadways improved, thus, increasing the reliance on roads as a primary means of transportation. Additionally, the rise of the railway system decreased the dependence on the use of waterways. With the increased variety of transportation, builders no longer had to rely on local markets for their needs, as they could just as easily access other desirable building materials from distant inland sources. Consequently, the need for Aquia sandstone decreased, causing the fall of the quarrying industry in Stafford County (CRI, 24, 26, 37).

**Archaeological Evidence**

Public Quarry has yielded information important to history and prehistory. Dozens of historic artifacts and over 300 prehistoric artifacts have been recovered. As determined by Cultural Resources, Inc., this site has the potential to provide more information pertaining to the lives of quarry workers and methods of quarrying, cutting, and transporting stone during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as teach us more about the lives of prehistoric Native Americans from the Paleoindian Period through the Archaic and Woodland Periods.

A Clovis projectile point, a rare discovery in Virginia, was recovered from Public Quarry's southeastern shore. This Paleoindian tool marks the site's earliest-known occupation. Although little is known about the Paleoindians, it is believed that they operated out of base camps located near high-quality lithic quarries and rich environmental areas, where they carved their projectile points and other tools, as well as hunted and collected food. The majority of Paleoindian material found in Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic Region is represented similarly by isolated projectile point finds. The presence of this lithic material is consistent with other Virginia and eastern United States findings and supports the Paleoindian habitation pattern theories. These factors, combined with the artifact, substantiate the belief that Public Quarry was a Paleoindian site (CRI, 11-13).

Townsend ceramics and Madison and Levanna projectile points indicate a Late Woodland Period occupation. The artifacts suggest a transition from a subsistence economy to a more agricultural and horticultural focused lifestyle, thus indicating a change in their settlement patterns. They established camps and villages predominantly on arable land of fertile river floodplains and on adjacent terraces and ridges, which were ideal for agricultural activities. This site supports these cultural patterns and is consistent with area maps drawn by early European explorers, such as John Smith, which show Native American settlements along the Potomac River and its tributaries (CRI, 12, 17-18).

Historic landscape features on the site consist of four quarry sites, a building foundation, wharf area, stone-lined pit, historic roadbed, trench, canal, and a stone boundary marker dating to 1786. The details of these components and the physical relationship between the features help to further the understanding of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century quarrying operations. The wharf and canal signify the early reliance on waterways and the

importance of the quarry's proximity to the construction site (Washington D.C.). The stone building foundation and other architectural artifacts, such as brick and mortar fragments, cut nails, and window glass, indicate the types of materials utilized. They paint a better picture of the living conditions there. Shards of plates, bottles, and kettle fragments help further understanding of the daily lives of quarry workers, and much can be learned about eighteenth

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century quarrying methods by studying the hand-carved chisel marks, squared corners, narrow trenches, and drill cavities left in the stone by the quarry workers.

**Closing Summary**

Public Quarry at Government Island exhibits local historic significance and is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and D. This site played a significant role in the development of Stafford County's economy, which was directly connected to the demand for Aquia freestone needed to construct many prominent late eighteenth and early nineteenth buildings throughout Virginia and Washington, D.C. – including the President's House and U.S. Capitol. The extraction period of 1791-1825 reflects an important shift in Stafford County from a tobacco-based economy to a more diversified economy that relied on stone quarrying and other industries. This shift ended with a change from the dependence on water transportation to land transportation (road and rail), which diminished the reliance on local stone suppliers. This site has retained its historic integrity. It has the potential to yield valuable information pertaining to the life of eighteenth century and early nineteenth century quarry workers and their quarrying methods and the history of prehistoric people from the PaleoIndian Period through the Archaic and Woodland Periods. Thus, this site exhibits local historic significance and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

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**BOUNDARY VERBAL DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying map, and are defined as Stafford County tax parcels 21B-2803 and 30-180.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The proposed National Register boundary, which surrounds the 17.4 acre Public Quarry site, encompasses the entire area of historic significance. The boundary line encircles the main body of dry land, closely following the shoreline perimeter, with the exception of the submerged marshlands on the southern and western parts of the peninsula. All the quarry sites and other noted associated archaeological components are included within the National Register boundary. The site is owned by Stafford County – less a one-acre parcel owned by the Boy Scouts of America (Aquia District) of the National Capital Area Council.

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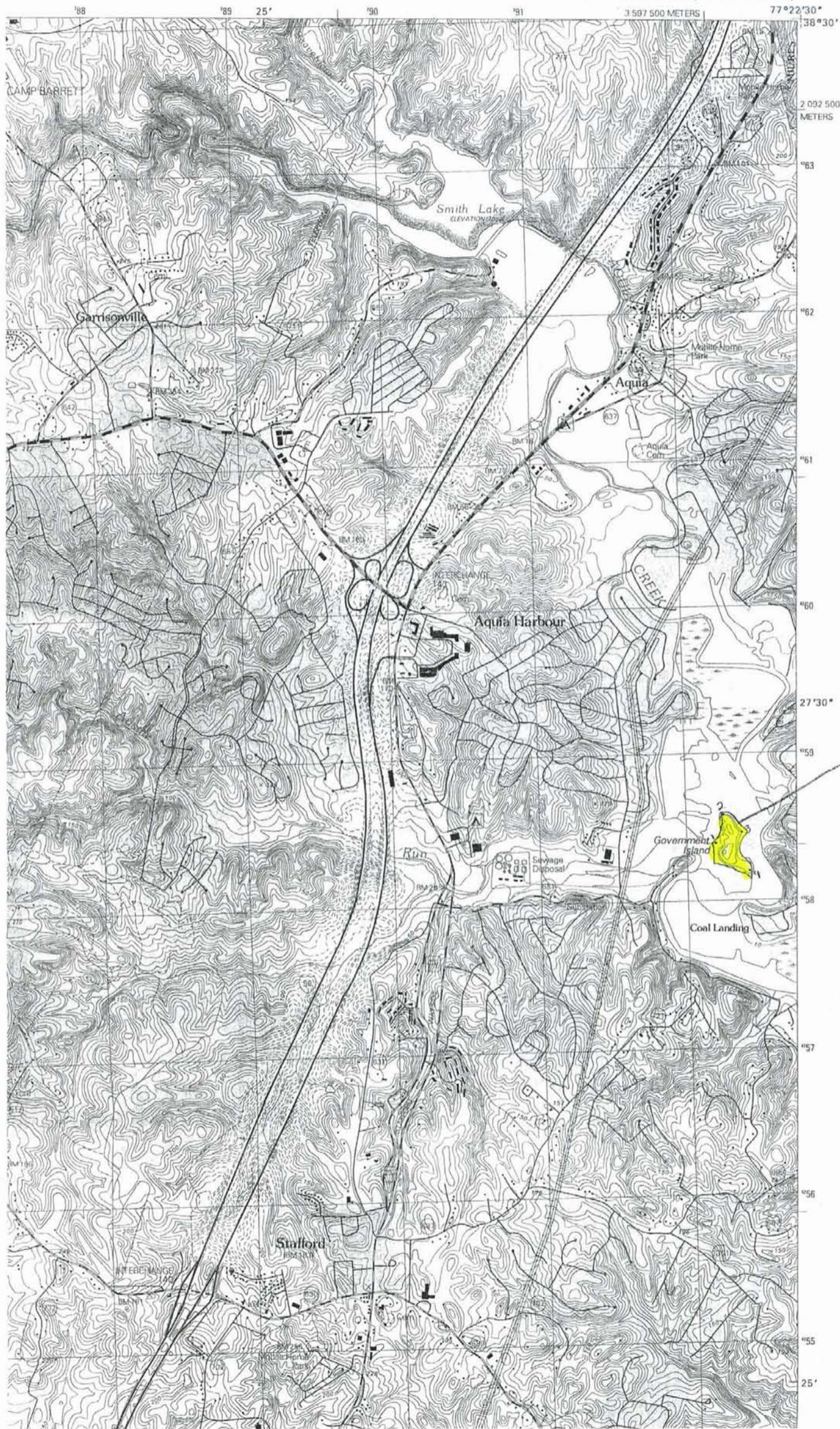
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The following information is common to all photographs:

Government Island  
Stafford County, Virginia  
Photographer: W. Wheatcraft  
Date of Photographs: December 15, 2006  
Digital copies stored at: Stafford County  
Department of Planning & Community Development  
1300 Courthouse Road  
Stafford, VA 22554

<u>Photo Number</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Direction</u>
1	Quarry 1	South
2	Quarry 2 Northern End	East
3	Quarry 3	South
4	Quarry 3	Northeast
5	Quarry 3 Chisel Marks	West
6	Quarry 3 From Within Trench	South
7	Quarry 3 Trench Opening	North
8	Quarry 3 Looking Into Trench	North
9	Stone-Lined Pit	East
10	Robert Steuart Boundary Marker	Southwest
11	Robert Steuart Boundary Marker Detail	Southwest
12	Trench	West
13	Marsh/Canal	West
14	Discarded Cut Stone, West Side of Peninsula	West
15	Landing/Wharf	Southeast
16	Historic Roadbed	South
17	Dwelling Foundation	Southeast
18	Dwelling Foundation East Wall	West
19	Quarry 4 End	East
20	Quarry 4 Middle	East
21	Prehistoric Camp	Southeast



Public Quarry of Government Island  
Stafford County, Virginia  
DHR file # = 445F0110  
Stafford Quadrangle

1. 18 292194 4258361    3. 18 292244 4258584    4. 18 292428 4258184