

BA 1257

9/78

James Thomas Store/Currie Store

Reisterstown, Maryland

Public Access

239 MAIN STREET is a very typical large combined house and business of the early nineteenth century, with most of its original features and detailing in place, all reflecting a specific way of life. (It illustrates the earlier tradition of combining a business with the proprietor's residence) The attached later shop wing (237MAIN) is typical of many in Reisterstown, a local tradition.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

**JAMES THOMAS STORE/ CURRIE'S STORE**

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

**237-237 1/2-239 Main Street**

**6th**

CITY, TOWN

**Reisterstown**

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**Baltimore county**

STATE

**Maryland**

COUNTY

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_\_DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_\_SITE

\_\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_PUBLIC

PRIVATE

\_\_\_BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

\_\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_PARK

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

**Ms. Tina Johansson**

Telephone #: **833-9337**

STREET & NUMBER

**408 Main Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Reisterstown**

— VICINITY OF

**Maryland**

STATE, zip code

**21136**

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

**Baltimore County**

Liber #: **5885**

Folio #: **210**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

**Towson**

STATE

**Maryland**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_FEDERAL \_\_\_STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

**239 MAIN STREET**

239 Main Street is a two storey brick house five bays in length with a gable roof; it faces the street to the west. Behind its two northerly bays is a one-storey brick kitchen wing with a shed roof falling to the south, perpendicular to the main house. This house and its kitchen wing date from ca.1830-1845. The west facade is laid in Flemish bond and other walls are in common bond, every sixth course headers. Wide chimneys rise flush above each gable of the main house and a square single-flue chimney rises flush above the tall north-east corner of the original kitchen wing.

Late nineteenth century (1890's) additions include a steep gable centered on the front (west) roof, wide eave and rake cornices supported by scrolled brackets, a one storey hipped-roof porch extending across the street-front facade, a one storey frame shop wing at the north end and immediately south of the original kitchen wing a two storey frame addition connected to the main house by a short one-storey frame hyphen.

The shop wing has a shallow-pitched shed roof falling to the north, screened at the front (west) by a parapet or "false front", the latter faced with vertical wainscot as a wide frieze containing scrolled brackets which support a cornice above. Modern display windows flank the centered entrance., the whole sheltered by a modern wood-shingled mansard. German siding covers the walls of the shop wing.

The later frame additions to the rear (east) are also covered with German siding. The shed roofs are of shallow pitch, falling to the south; a single-flue chimney rises internally centered on the east end.

The principal entrance to 239 MAIN STREET, semi-elliptically arched, is centered in the west or street-front, its original door with eight panels arranged as six small panels above the wide lock rail, two taller panels below; the door is surrounded by sidelights and semi-elliptically arched transom; jambs are paneled and slim engaged Tuscan columns embellish the mullion between the door and its sidelights. Typical original windows are 9/6 in both storeys although modern 6/6 sash have been installed in first-storey windows. The window in the later west gable has a raked head, following the steep pitch of the gable roof; a mullion dividing it into two lancets splits into straight tracery to form a small square light at the peak and raked heads above each lancet. The northerly bay of the street-front facade has a door, its masonry opening slightly narrower than the jack arch above it, possibly formerly serving a typical window. The door has paneled jambs and, as will be seen in the interior description discussed below, a door is not unexpected here. The next window to the south has been widened for a narrow pair of 4/4 windows. The rear or east facade is expressed as three bays. Two windows are in each storey in the south end, close to the corners.

See continuation sheet #2

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

239 MAIN STREET

Continuation sheet

#2

## 7 Description

A central hall extends through the middle bay and at its east end the stair rises, with intermediate landings, clear to the third floor. Two rooms are on either side of the hall although there is no apparent door from the hall to the northwest (front-left) room; the door to the northeast (rear-left) is beneath the stair landing and the northeast room has no chimney, apparently its original condition; it also has a secondary stair to the second floor, possibly a replacement of an original. The kitchen is directly behind (east of) the northeast room. The absence of a chimney in the northeast room and the (apparent) absence of a door from the center hall into the northwest room are probably related to a particular function intended in this structure, such as that of a tavern operation, the northerly rooms being the public rooms, the hall and southerly rooms being the proprietor's dwelling.

The two southerly rooms were double parlors, opened by double doors; the doors are now missing. A wide opening of more recent vintage is between the two northly rooms and a later open stair rises to the second floor in the southeast corner of the north-east room, adjacent to the main stair. The stair may replace an original secondary stair, undoubtedly enclosed. Most original interior detailing remains including the principal stair with its round cherry rail supported by turned birds-eye or tiger maple newels of moderate proportions and plain balusters; the corner-block trim at windows and doors; most six-panel doors hung on heavy cast-iron hinges and all mantels but the ones in the rear or southeast parlor and in the northwest (the public) room. The frontparlor mantel consists of Tuscan columns supporting a paneled frieze with a bed moulding and a moulded shelf. Second storey trim generally is simpler than first and mantels have pilasters of architrave material. The staircase to the third storey has been enclosed with later wainscoting; only a small space at the top of the stair is plastered, the remainder of the attic being unfinished. Much nineteenth century wallpaper, in a Japanese motif, remains in the stairwell to the attic storey.

The original kitchen is plain, void of a fireplace, an item which was probably removed. The later rear wing is accessible from the original east door out of the central hall. Interior finishes of the addition are plain and an enclosed stairway rises to its second floor.

In the attic of the main house the two chimneys centered on the south walls of the southerly rooms meet to rise above the roof as a single wide chimney; there is no evidence of a northeast chimney. The straight-sawn rafters are pegged at the ridge with a mortise-and-tenon joint; collar beams are dovetailed into rafters and nailed with cut nails. Framing of the west gable is of circular--sawn material with a ridge board.

Access to the cellar is by an east entrance near the south-east corner; formerly there was a cellar entrance in the street front near the northwest corner. The cellar extends under the entire house and original kitchen. Original first floor framing remains; massive hewn girders spanning beneath the partitions and the original straight-sawn flooring is relieved above joists. There is no evidence of a northeast chimney. Two cellar windows, now blocked by the shop wing to the north, have the remains of square iron bars.

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW					
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	<b>local history</b>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1830's BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Thomas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
239-237 MAIN STREET

An important commercial site since the early 1800's, 239 is a very typical large commercial house and business of the early nineteenth century, with most of its original features and detailing in place, all reflecting a specific way of life. (It illustrates the earlier tradition of combining a business with the proprietor's residence). The attached later shop wing is typical of many in Reisterstown, a local tradition.

It stands on land which, in 1804, John Reister, Jr, deeded to his son-in-law, Ephraim Igo (WG 83/145ff). Igo was married to Reister's 2nd daughter, Margaret. He was a blacksmith and a farmer and had his shop and house on this lot (not this building) In 1811, he purchased adjoining property to the north from William Dean, another of Reister's in-laws. (WG 115/416.)

In 1812, Igo moved out West. In 1813 Samuel Clark bought the shop and house. A mortgage was taken out, the deed was not recorded, and litigation over the title ensued. The property finally was ordered to be sold. Notice of the sale described the property as including a comfortable dwelling house with outhouses calculated for use of a blacksmith or wheelwright shop. The property was subsequently sold in 1815 to William Jameson for \$626.00. (WG 117/613; 133/364; 134/619 and Chancery Recs. No. 95;120-35)  
(The above from Marks, op cit., p/ 191-192) It could not be determined if any of these improvements remain.

In 1833, James Thomas, son-in-law of Ephraim Igo, bought this property from Jameson. (TK 226/37). Thomas was a "very enterprising man, in addition to merchandising, he was engaged in manufacturing of brick and dealt in almost everything from groceries to building materials and farming implements, a forerunner of the modern department stores" (Maryland Monthly Magazine p.11) Originally he operated very successfully in a location next to the Methodist Church. When he had the chance to purchase a vacant lot across the street, he did so and "built a dwelling and storeroom".(Ibid)He enlarged his business and took his rank as one of the most enterprising merchants in the town.(Ibid) This dwelling and storeroom is almost certainly the present 239. He also purchased his mother-in-law's interest in Igo's estate (he had died in 1828). His wife became ill out of loneliness for her family out west, so Thomas had to abandon his flourishing business in 1838 to go West. He sold the property "1 ac. & 7/4 sq. poles with 1 frame and 2 two story brick dwelling houses and all improvements (along with other holdings in Reisterstown to Daniel Banks for \$2,600.00. (TK 226/37 and 277/513) (Marks, op.cit. p.86).

See continuation sheet #2

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 Statement of significance

The property remained in the Banks family until 1890. Other stores apparently came & went on the premises. The Maryland Monthly Magazine article on Reisterstown stores mentions that other store-keepers were; Philip Reister Owings, Nimrod Cronwell, F.K.Haughey (who also ran the Post Office from there 1857-1862). The 1877 Atlas shows George Brooks Apothecary in this location and carries his ad indicating that his office and residence were in the same location.

In 1890 Daniel Banks's son, Andrew, was declared insolvent, and Richard S. Culbreth was appointed to sell the lands which made up the vast estate. It was at this point that Igo's land was divided up. What is now 237-239 was purchased in 1890 by James M. Currie (179/95) who operated a celebrated store there until 1920. It was Currie who probably added the frame shop wing #237, and the other additions mentioned in the description. The Curries were members of All Saints Episcopal Church where Mrs. Currie is listed as on Exec. Committee of the Ladies Aid Society. (All Saints Parish Centennial Booklet, 1971, p.10. J.M. Currie was elected Secretary of the new Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Company in 1913.

(Fire Company Commemorative Booklet, 1963, p.2.)

When Currie finally sold out in 1920, the tradition of a store at 237 did not cease. The new owners, Israel Kriger and Louis Hermon, continued to operate one. (WPC 523/418) This continued for only a few months, and then they sold to Wolf Rubin (WPC 526/71) Rubin's operated then until 1947. Many Reisterstown residents can still remember the flavor of this store, with its fancy tin ceiling.

Rubin sold the property to Morris Harmatz in September 1947 (JWB 1601/248)  
 Harmatz sold to Guy Parker, Jr. in 1955 (GLB 2738/132)  
 Parker sold to Jack Nichols, et al in 1959 (WJR 3484/493)  
 Nichols conveyed the property to Charles Emery Shutter, Jr. in 1967  
 (OTC 4732/477)

The Shutters put an auto parts business into #237. This venture was short-lived and in 1969, Mr. Robert Zgorski bought out the Shutters and maintained the auto parts store. (OTG 5022/73) The dwelling house #239 was turned into a commercial establishment which housed antique shops, country stores and an interior design shop over the years.

After relocating his business, Mr. Zgorski sold this property in 1977 to Christine Johansson, an antique-artisan entrepreneur. (5885/210) With much work, #237 was transformed into an antique center, its 14' tin ceiling once again exposed. #239 was again occupied by antique shops and are open daily for public viewing. It is interesting to note that no modern heating system has ever been built into this building.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

1. Lillian B. Marks, Reisters Desire (Baltimore, 1975)
2. "Stores" Maryland Monthly Magazine September, 1906
3. All Saints Episcopal Church, Parish Centennial 1871-1971- locally Published 1971
4. Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Company, In Recognition of Service 1913-1963  
(Published locally 1963)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY See continuation sheet #3

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

James T. Wollon A.I.A.

NAME / TITLE

Ms Tina Johansson Volunteer Researcher

September, 1978

ORGANIZATION

Historic Reisterstown, Inc

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

430 Main Street

TELEPHONE

833-3078 (Ms Ives)

CITY OR TOWN

Reisterstown, Md 21136

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

BA-1257

237-239 MAIN STREET

Continuation sheet

#3

9 Major Bibliographical References

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5. Land Records- Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland
6. John McGrain, Industrial-Archaeological Survey of the Northwest Transportation Corridor (Baltimore County, Md. 1975)



BA 1257

Thomas store

237-239 Main St

Reist. Md

Carot Pollack

4.77

East.