

CAPSULE SUMMARY

CT-1365

Kin Deesa

3010 Amaranth Road

Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland

1951

Private

Kin Deesa (Peter Cabin) occupies Lot 664 at the east end of Amaranth Road in the community of Scientists' Cliffs (CT-1049) in Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland. The house consists of a one-and-one-half-story rustic log cabin constructed in 1951. The lot is positioned atop a ridge that overlooks the Chesapeake Bay. Consequently, the lot slopes gently downward from southwest to east so that the basement level of the house is fully exposed on the east elevation.

Kin Deesa was designed and constructed in 1951 as a retirement home for Dr. William Wesley Peter and his wife, Dr. Eleanor Whipple Peter. The Peters named their cabin "Kin Deesa," Navajo for "Cliff House." The single-family rustic log cabin sits within Scientists' Cliffs, a progressive twentieth-century residential subdivision situated on the cliffs overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. The private community, consisting of approximately 244 buildings, was created in 1935, when George Flippo Gravatt and his wife, Annie Evelyn Rathburn, both forest pathologists for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, acquired the original 238 acres as a site for establishing a summer colony of scientists. The community association's bylaws later extended membership to all college graduates and professionals. In 2012, the community continues to carefully maintain the original spirit of its founders and developers by incorporating important landscape features that include plant and tree preservation and conservation of the cliffs and ravines.

7. Description

Inventory No. CT-1365

Condition

excellent ___ deteriorated
 good ___ ruins
 fair ___ altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Kin Deesa (Peter Cabin) occupies Lot 664 at the east end of Amaranth Road in the community of Scientists' Cliffs (CT-1049) in Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland. The house consists of a one-and-one-half-story rustic log cabin constructed in 1951. The lot is positioned atop a ridge that overlooks the Chesapeake Bay. Consequently, the lot slopes gently downward from southwest to east so that the basement level of the house is fully exposed on the east elevation.

Kin Deesa measures one-and-one-half stories in height atop a full basement. The exterior of the basement, constructed of concrete blocks, is fully visible at the east elevation. The exterior walls consist of poplar logs. An asymmetrical side-gable roof, sheathed in asphalt shingles and featuring overhanging eaves, caps the dwelling. The roof slope at the east side extends into a shed roof that extends over one additional enclosed bay at the rear. Evenly spaced skylights are visible in the eastern roof slope. A gabled dormer extends from the southeast corner of the roof. A one-bay, one-story, shed-roof addition is situated at the northwest corner of the dwelling. An exterior tapered fieldstone chimney is located at the southeast corner of the addition and main dwelling. Typical windows consist of one-light, replacement, aluminum, casement types, except where noted.

Kin Deesa is oriented to the south (Photograph 1). Due to the slope of the lot, only the second story is visible at the façade. A wood entry deck with a bench at the east side provides access to the main entry into the dwelling that occupies the western bay. Two sets of paired typical windows occupy the bays to the east (right) (Photograph 2). A tripartite simple picture window occupies the easternmost bay. A smaller typical window is situated in the gable.

The east elevation of the cabin features three glass doors in the southernmost bays that lead from the interior of the dwelling to a deck situated at the east elevation (Photograph 2). Nine typical elongated windows occupy the remaining openings in the first story of the elevation. The dormer features a typical window in the south and north elevations, and a paired, sliding, aluminum window in the east elevation. The basement level of the east elevation is visible at the north side and features three two-light, sliding, aluminum windows (Photograph 3).

The north elevation contains a two-light sliding window in the easternmost bay of the basement level (Photograph 4). An entry consisting of a single-light door is located to the west, followed by a typical window in the westernmost bay. The first story contains a tripartite simple picture window in the easternmost bay. Two sets of two-light sliding aluminum windows are evenly spaced in the north elevation of the main dwelling. A typical square-shaped window occupies the gable. The shed-roof addition contains two sets of two-light, sliding, aluminum windows

The west elevation, largely concealed by vegetation, contains a set of two-light, sliding, aluminum windows in the shed-roof addition. The main dwelling is devoid of openings.

A small parking lot is located to the southwest of the dwelling. Dense shrubbery and vegetative cover characterizes the lot, which is interspersed with mature evergreen and deciduous trees. A walkway leads east

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

from the parking lot, past the façade, through a garden to the east side of the dwelling. The east and northeast sides of the lot command a sweeping overlook of the Chesapeake Bay and beach below.

INTEGRITY

Kin Deesa (Peter Cabin) retains its integrity of location and setting, on the east side of Amaranth Road amongst early to mid-twentieth-century rustic cabins and dwellings. The dwelling retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship through the retention of original wall cladding and overall footprint. The continued use of log wall cladding and the retention of the fieldstone chimney, as well as the landscape features, contribute to integrity of association and feeling as a 1951 rustic cabin located in the progressive twentieth-century community of Scientists' Cliffs.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CT-1365

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	1951	Architect/Builder	Unknown
Construction dates	1951		

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Kin Deesa was designed and constructed in 1951 as a retirement home for Dr. William Wesley Peter and his wife, Dr. Eleanor Whipple Peter. The single-family rustic log cabin sits within Scientists' Cliffs, a progressive twentieth-century residential subdivision situated on the cliffs overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. The private community, consisting of approximately 244 buildings, was created in 1935, when George Flippo Gravatt and his wife, Annie Evelyn Rathburn, both forest pathologists for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, acquired the original 238 acres as a site for establishing a summer colony of scientists. The community association's bylaws later extended membership to all college graduates and professionals. In 2012, the community continues to carefully maintain the original spirit of its founders and developers by incorporating important landscape features that include plant and tree preservation and conservation of the cliffs and ravines.

HISTORY OF SCIENTISTS' CLIFFS¹

The community of Scientists' Cliffs was founded in 1935, by George "Flippo" Gravatt and his wife, Annie Evelyn Rathburn (Gravatt), both forest pathologists for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In the early 1930s, the Gravatts sought a suitable site for the establishment of a summer colony for scientists, within an easy commuting distance from Washington, D.C. At the time, George Flippo Gravatt was working on the blight that was devastating American Chestnut trees. The large swaths of seemingly unaffected American Chestnut trees combined with the streams, ravines, cliffs, and a stretch of beach along the Chesapeake Bay ultimately attracted the Gravatts to the site. On July 25, 1935, they acquired 238 acres from Marmaduke White of Baltimore. Additional purchases were made by them as well as Gravatt's sister, Margaret Gravatt Miles, between 1936 and 1961 so that the total subdivision eventually encompassed 752 acres.

In the fall of 1935, the Gravatts were joined by a number of USDA colleagues for a picnic on their newly acquired land. The picnic included speeches and a dedication of the formal community name, "Scientists' Cliffs," homage to the fact that Gravatt intended for the community to be exclusively for the use of scientists

¹ The following comes from Chestnut Museum Committee, "A Dream Realized: A History of the Scientists' Cliffs Association, 1937-1987," an unpublished manuscript, pages 1-28, except where noted.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

and their families.² Development subsequently ensued. The Gravatts oversaw the construction of their house, the first within the site, in the spring of 1936. The dwelling was constructed completely out of the blight-killed chestnut trees. Dubbed "Chestnut Cabin," the dwelling stands in 2012 and serves as the community center. Five smaller cabins were built nearby for use by daily and weekend guests. The first purchaser, Dorothy Jane Blaisdell, bought Lot 7 in 1936, and from there, the community began to grow. Original construction mainly utilized logs, and a sawmill was installed at the site in the late 1930s. The initial cabins used the chestnut trees killed by blight, with later cabins constructed of tulip poplar or pine logs. Log construction eventually gave way to wood siding by the mid-1950s.

The Scientists' Cliffs Association was officially incorporated on September 9, 1937 by nine charter members.³ The mission was to promote an interest in the natural sciences by maintaining a library and fossil museum, preserving natural areas and open space, and encouraging and organizing scientific lectures and field trips. The community remains the only one within Maryland and perhaps throughout the United States that maintains a museum of fossils collected on its beach.⁴ The association initially included restrictive bylaws that required all property owners and members to be scientists; however, this was later revised to include those with college degrees and those without formal college education but who had demonstrated professional distinction. Children and spouses of members are also eligible for membership.

The community served as an early attempt to create a residential community that operated on a sustainable ecological philosophy, which completely diverged from the common large-scale "tract" residential subdivisions that characterized the mid-twentieth century. Due to Gravatt's interest in horticulture pathology, this practice was a central focus in the landscape design of the Scientists' Cliffs community. In addition to maintaining undeveloped woodlands, horticultural activities also consisted of planting filberts, bamboo, figs, blight-resistant Chinese Chestnut trees, grapes, and fruit trees. Additionally, over 70 varieties of azaleas were planted at the site.

Gravatt also worked closely with the early builders and contractors in the construction and development of the community. Originally, the network of roads were named after the sciences, including Botany Lane, Geology Lane, etc.; however, as the community grew and at the urging of the emergency services, the roads were renamed systematically (based again on botanical names), and all cabins received new numbers based on the lot numbers. Sections were designed by their entrance gate from the county road: A, B, C, D, and E.

The community also featured common spaces (including Chestnut Cabin [community center], swimming pool and tennis courts) and a cohesive, rustic building type. In 1936, Gravatt brought Harold M. Matteson, Sr., to

² Although the community was named "Scientists' Cliffs," Annie Rathburn affectionately referred to it as "Flippos Folley," a name that hung around for quite some time afterwards.

³ These members included Gravatt as well as his mother, Inez Gravatt and brother-in-law, Gilbert F. Miles, along with Dorothy Blaisdell, Ruble Dawson, Sebastian Karrer, Isabel Young, Erston Miller, and James Thigpen.

⁴ *Chesapeake Current*, "Visit Homes at Scientists' Cliffs," May 5, 2011.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

design and build the early cabins. The Mattesons lived in an old farm house adjacent to Scientists' Cliffs, and later relocated to a farm house within the community.⁵ Their three sons, Harold M. Matteson, Jr., Eddie, and Melvin, grew up within Scientists' Cliffs, and Harold Matteson Sr., eventually left the construction business as other builders began to offer additional choices.

The Scientists' Cliffs community continued to grow until gasoline rationing during World War II deterred long road trips to and from Washington, D.C. In addition, the federal government restricted new building due to the use of building supplies for war efforts; however, after World War II, the community again boomed, and many homeowners soon began using their dwellings year-round as their primary residence. In the early years, many property owners who only used the community for weekend and summer retreats opted to leave their lots in a natural state. Conversely, as year-round residents began to take root, yards were soon landscaped and mowed, with owners establishing extensive gardens. By the mid 1950s, the number of cabins within the community had doubled.⁶

Circa 1966, after hundreds of tourists began frequenting the community and adjacent beaches, the community began restricting access and numerous signs denoting the area as private property appeared.⁷ Many of these signs, although replaced, exist today as does the makeshift guard house near the main entrance to the community.

The Scientists' Cliffs community continues, in 2012, to feature limited access, narrow curvilinear roads, and residential buildings of rusticated construction, within a densely landscaped setting overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. What began as a unique cluster of rustic summer cabins has grown to include 244 homes, approximately 120 of which are used as year-round residences.⁸ Although the community is no longer limited exclusively to scientists, the name continues as does the long tradition of historic and ecological conservation.

HISTORY OF KIN DEESA (PETER CABIN)

According to a local history, Kin Deesa was designed and built in 1951 as a retirement home for Dr. William Wesley Peter and his wife, Dr. Eleanor Whipple Peter.⁹ On January 6, 1951, George Flippo Gravatt and his wife, Annie, conveyed Lot 644 to Hollis W. and Salli Crane Peter, who ten months later, sold the property to

⁵ In 1971, this farm house was torn down and a pre-fabricated house was placed on the site in 1972.

⁶ Scientists' Cliffs Official Website, "Abbreviated History of Scientists' Cliffs,"

http://cliffers.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=138, accessed May 2012.

⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, "Signs Point Way to Calvert Cliffs' History," January 6, 1967.

⁸ Scientists' Cliffs Official Website, 2012.

⁹ Scientists' Cliffs Association, *Scientists' Cliffs, Community and Context: Living on the Chesapeake Bay in Calvert County, Maryland, Volume II: Context* (Scientists' Cliffs, Maryland, The Scientists' Cliffs History Book Committee, 2010), 125.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

Hollis' parents, Dr. William Wesley Peter and his wife, Eleanor.¹⁰ The Peters were both missionaries in China during the early twentieth century, and later, Dr. William W. Peter taught at Yale University and later went to work for the State Department in Washington, D.C. From 1935 until World War II, Dr. William Peter served as the Medical Director for the Navajo Indian Reservation.¹¹ The name "Kin Deesa," which the Peters gave their new Scientists' Cliffs dwelling, is Navajo for "Cliff House."¹²

Dr. William W. Peter died in 1959; however, his wife, continued to live at the cabin until her death in 1980. On April 13, 1981, Hollis W. Peter and his wife sold Lots 644 and part of Lot 642 (vacant) to Richard W.C. Falknor and his wife, Karan Rak, for \$87,234.¹³ On October 27, 1995, Karen Rak conveyed her portion of the property to her former husband, Richard W.C. Falknor in a marital settlement agreement.¹⁴ Five years later, Richard Falknor remarried, and the property was legally deeded to himself and his wife, Susan Freis on December 8, 2000.¹⁵ Less than a year later, on September 5, 2001, Richard Falknor and Susan Freis conveyed the property to M. Susan Cole, who retains ownership of Lots 644 and 642 in 2012.¹⁶

Susan Cole undertook extensive work to preserve the cabin. Approximately 65 of the original poplar logs were replaced. All of the exterior logs were scraped down to bare wood and subsequently stained and sealed to resemble the cabin when originally built. New chinking was applied, and the foundation was repaired. Most of the windows have been replaced, and the skylights added.¹⁷ Overall, Kin Deesa remains in excellent condition.

¹⁰ Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Record Liber 24: 447.

¹¹ "Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging: The Founders," <http://www.grc.nia.nih.gov/branches/blsa/founders.pdf>, accessed May 2012.

¹² Susan Cole, personal communication with author, May 2012.

¹³ Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Record Liber 272: 682.

¹⁴ Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Record Liber 828: 222.

¹⁵ Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Record Liber 1327: 128.

¹⁶ Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Record Liber 1439: 530.

¹⁷ Scientists' Cliffs Association 2010, 126.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CT-1365

Chestnut Museum Committee, "A Dream Realized: A History of Scientists' Cliffs Association, 1937-1987" unpublished.

Calvert County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Land Records, Prince Frederick, Maryland.

Scientists' Cliffs Association, *Scientists' Cliffs, Community and Context: Living on the Chesapeake Bay in Calvert County, Maryland, Volume II: Context*. Scientists' Cliffs, Maryland, The Scientists' Cliffs History Book Committee, 2010.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 0.23 acres
Acreage of historical setting 0.23 acres
Quadrangle name Prince Frederick, MD

Quadrangle scale: 1: 24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary for Kin Deesa includes all of Lot 664 and portions of Lot 642, Section 5 of Subdivision 129 of Scientists' Cliffs. The boundary includes the 1951 dwelling that has occupied the site since the time of its construction.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Emma K. Diehl/Sr. Architectural Historian		
organization	A.D. Marble & Company	date	June 2012
street & number	10989 Red Run Boulevard, Suite 211	telephone	410.902.1421
city or town	Owings Mills	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

**Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form**

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1



Photograph 1: Kin Deesa, south elevation, view looking north. March 2012.

**Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form**

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 2



Photograph 2: Kin Deesa, east elevation, view looking northwest. March 2012.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 3



Photograph 3: Kin Deesa, east elevation, view looking southwest. March 2012.

**Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form**

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 4



Photograph 4: Kin Deesa, east and north elevations, view looking south. March 2012.

**Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form**

Inventory No. CT-1365

Name Kin Deesa
Continuation Sheet

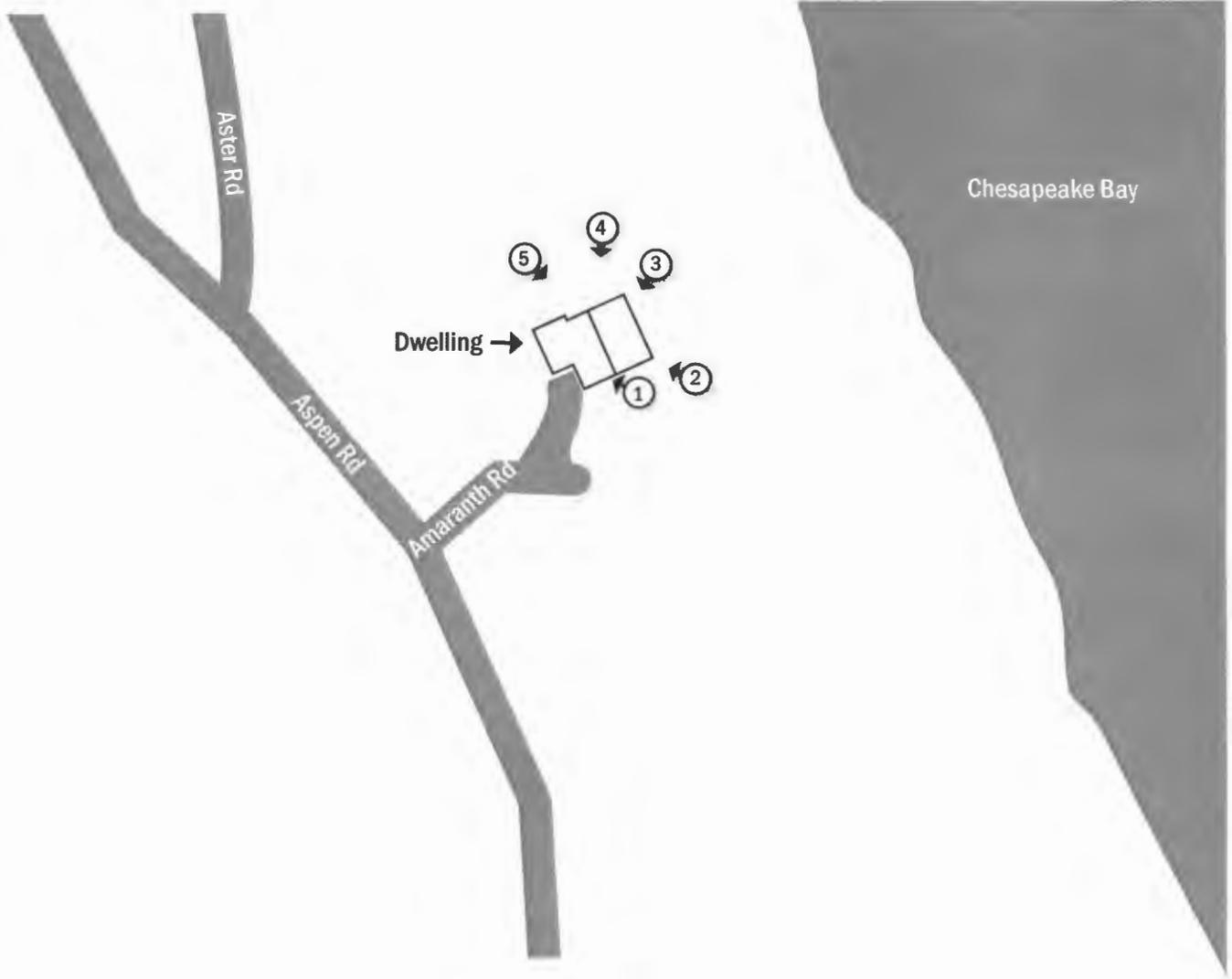
Number 9 Page 5



Photograph 5: Kin Deesa, north elevation, view looking southeast. March 2012.

Kin Deesa (Peter Cabin)
CT-1365
3010 Amaranth Road
Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland





50'

Site Plan and Photograph Locations
Kin Deesa (Peter Cabin)
CT-1365
3010 Amaranth Road
Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland



 Photograph Locations

Kin Deesa (CT-1365)**Digital Photo Log: All photographs printed using Epson Ultrachrome Pigmented Ink on Epson Premium Matte Photo Paper**

Photo File Name	MIHP #	Property Name	County	Photographer	Date of Photo	Photo Description	Photo Sequence
CT 1365_201203_01	CT-1365	Kin Deesa	Calvert	E. Diehl	03/2012	South elevation, view looking north.	1 of 5
CT 1365_201203_02	"	"	"	"	"	East elevation, view looking northwest.	2 of 5
CT 1365_201203_03	"	"	"	"	"	East elevation, view looking southwest.	3 of 5
CT 1365_201203_04	"	"	"	"	"	East and north elevations, view looking south.	4 of 5
CT 1365_201203_05	"	"	"	"	"	North elevation, view looking southeast.	5 of 5



3010

MT-1365

KLN DEESA

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

E. DIEHL

03.2012

MD SHPO

SOUTH ELEVATION, VIEW LOOKING NORTH

PHOTO # 1 of 5



LT-1365

KLN DEESA

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

E. DIEHL

03.2012

MD SHPD

EAST ELEVATION, VIEW LOOKING NORTHWEST.

PHOTO # 2 of 5



LT-1365

KIN DEESA

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

EDIEHL

03.2012

MD SHPO

EAST ELEVATION, VIEW LOOKING SOUTHWEST

PHOTO # 3 of 5



MT-1365

KIN DEESA

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

E. DIEHL

03.2012

MD&HPO

EAST & NORTH ELEVATIONS, VIEW LOOKING SOUTH.

PHOTO # 4 of 5



LT-1365

KIN DEESA

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

E. DIEHL

03.2012

MD SHPO

NORTH ELEVATION, VIEW LOOKING SOUTHEAST.

PHOTO # 5 of 5