

CH - 310
ROSS-HANCOCK HOUSE (ruin)
Grayton vicinity
Private

antebellum 19th century

Local informants William Diggs and Benjamin Ross, the latter born in this house in 1883, identify it as the ruin of a structure built as a slave house and later used as a Negro tenant house. They describe it as originally a one-story log dwelling with one room downstairs and another above. It had an earthen floor and a log chimney that was later replaced by a stone one. It was in general typical of the houses occupied by non-landowning black families during most of the 19th century.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

0-55-30
MAIL #0703106527

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

CHAS-310

1 NAME

HISTORIC
ROSS-HANCOCK HOUSE (RUIN)
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER (Riverside Road)
West side of Rt. 6, 100 yards south of Jct. of
Rt. 6 and Hancock Run Road

CITY, TOWN Nanjemoy CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3
STATE Md. COUNTY Charles

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME ASHBURTON INVESTMENT CO. Telephone #: Ruins
STREET & NUMBER 7007 Old Cabin Lane
CITY, TOWN Rockville STATE, zip code Md.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Charles County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN La Plata STATE Maryland

Map #: 69, Parcel 62
Liber #: 135
Folio #: 292

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE NONE

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Due to the completely ruinous condition of this house, much of the information about its original design and construction could not be seen and was provided by William Digges, the black oral informant in Charles County who took me to the site and who came here often as a child to play with the Hancock family who lived here. According to him, this small log house consisted of two rooms: one up and one down. The house faced south. Into its facade opened one door located in the center. There was only one window in the entire house, located in the eastern gable end. Outside of the opposite gable end ascended a log chimney originally, which was later replaced by a brick chimney, according to Digges. The log walls were unsheathed on the exterior, heavily chinked with mud, and the sills laid directly on the ground. The corners were half dove-tailed, a type of notching that is not unusual in this area, though V notching is more common. To hold and brace the walls more securely, the logs were fastened to one another by pegs running vertically through the center of the logs. In St. Mary's County log posts are often found pegged to the log walls for the same purpose.

The downstairs rooms had an earthen floor, which Digges said was typical of the old log slave and tenant houses he knew that were still standing in the early 1900's in Charles County. His memory is supported by oral informants in other counties in southern Maryland (James Scribber in St. Mary's, and McKinley Gantt in Calvert). In the northwest corner of the room, an enclosed, steep ladder stairway led to the upstairs chamber, which was unheated and used as the sleeping quarters for the children, according to Digges. Since there was no separate kitchen, cooking was first done over the open fireplace in the downstairs and later over a wood burning stove. Due to the scarcity of openings into the house, the interior was dimly lit; in fact, Digges said that it was "as dark as a barn".

When he visited here, the land around the house was farm land; today it is a forest. Digges remembers too how small and cramped and inadequate this house was (14 children were raised in it) and ~~he remembers~~ ^{yet} also the "many a good time we had" despite the living conditions.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		Black History	

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house was representative of the log houses in which most black families in southern Maryland lived in the 19th century first as slaves or free blacks and after the Civil War as tenants or landowners. However, if they could become landowners, these small houses were usually left behind or enlarged.

This upward mobility in housing is illustrated by this site. The family of Joseph Ross occupied it in the 1880's as tenants; later ^{they} became landowners ^{AND} moved, and built a larger frame house on ^{their new} property. William Digges the oral informant in Charles County, took me to Benjamin Ross, now 94 years old, who was born in this house, and the description of the houses of the Ross family comes from him. His father Joseph ^{Ross} had been a slave, had run away and joined the Union Army, and upon his return was a tenant farmer for a number of years until he managed to buy property further south in the county, near Grayton. The house that he built is now destroyed, but the house of his son still stands and has been recorded in this survey as the William Ross house, CH-331. William Ross (now deceased) is Benjamin's brother, and according to Benjamin, that house was similar in appearance to his father's. Thus this Hancock-Ross house and the William Ross house should be seen together. In contrast, the Hancock family were tenant farmers and therefore, did not participate in that upward mobility in housing.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

268-3321

NAME / TITLE

George W. McDaniel, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Md. Commission on Afro-American History & Culture

DATE

February, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

20 Dean Street

TELEPHONE

269-2893

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis, Maryland

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





Ross - Hancock House
Nanjemoy, Md.
South Side

CH 310

GWM

S. Side



ROSS-HANCOCK HOUSE
NANJEMOY, MD.
NORTHEAST CORNER
1176
CH 310 GWM

N.E. corner



Nanjemoy, Md.
North side
CH 310 1/76 GWM

N.
Side