

Thomas Hotel
CH-704
Benedict, MD
Private

1908

The Thomas Hotel is significant as one of the only documented examples of an African American owned and operated business in Charles County dating from the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1908 James E. Thomas and Harriet his wife purchased part of Lot #2 of the old Benedict Farm and built a large and fashionable wood frame building within the maritime village of Benedict (CH-229). Considered an American Foursquare after its two-story cube-like form, the Thomas Hotel roof is hipped with hipped dormers and has a full-width porch adorning the river elevation. A two story gabled service wing is attached to th rear elevation. Benedict was one of the more important steamboat ports and commercial centers in Charles County and along the Patuxent River. Because of its location at the dividing line between the upper and lower Patuxent River it was a natural layover point and a terminus for shorter runs out of Baltimore.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-704

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Thomas Hotel
 other Watercolour

2. Location

street and number 7802 Mill Creek not for publication
 city, town Benedict vicinity
 county Charles

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Roger and Austine Fink
 street and number P.O. Box 167 telephone 301-274-9112
 city, town Benedict state MD zip code 20612-0167

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 49 p. 77
 city, town LaPLata liber 1729 folio 37

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report
- Other _____

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic		structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education		objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	1	Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			0	

7. Description

Inventory No. CH-704

Condition

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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

Erected during the first decade of the 20th century on a small lot overlooking the Patuxent River within the maritime village of Benedict (CH-229), the Thomas Hotel is decidedly residential in design. It is considered an American Foursquare after its two story, cube-like form. The roof is hipped with hipped dormers and a full-width porch adorns the river elevation. A two story gabled service wing is attached to the rear elevation.

The wood frame is covered with wood siding and rests on a brick pier and infill foundation. The asphalt shingled roof is pierced by two hipped dormers. The exterior walls of the dormers reveal fishscale siding. The wrap-around hipped roof porch is supported by turned wooden posts adorned with decorative brackets and spindlework. The rear service wing is likely original. A partially enclosed L-shaped shed-roofed porch spans the rear elevation and includes narrow turned wooden posts, modest spindlework. The dwelling retains a fair amount of original material including several 2/2 windows and novelty siding.

The three bay façade faces east overlooking the Patuxent River and includes. The first floor fenestration, sheltered by the porch has been altered, now including two sets of paired French doors on the outside bays and a large multi-light window in the center bay. This center bay likely contained the original exterior door as evidenced by the existing sidelights. The second story includes single replacement windows on the outside bays and a pair of windows in the center bay. One replacement window is found in the dormer.

The south elevation includes two bays, with single, original 2/2 windows symmetrically placed throughout, totaling four windows. The north elevation first floor was not accessible at the time of the survey but is believed to mirror the south elevation with the exception of a doorway in place of a window, likely opening onto the wrap-around porch.

The rear elevation of the main block includes a 6-panel door with 5-light sidelights on either end. This door, near the south wall, is sheltered by the back porch. The second story includes two windows below a small dormer window.

The service wing, extending from the northwest corner of the main block is a simple gable-roof structure. The south wall has a partially enclosed porch now containing three windows and one door. The second story has two 1/1 windows. A single first floor window is found on the gable end. The north end of the wing has two second story windows, while a pair of 1/1 windows are positioned on the first floor. A break in the weatherboard suggests that the ell may have been constructed in two periods.

The yard is enclosed with an attractive picket fence that evokes the historic setting of the site. The interior was not available at the time of the survey.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-704

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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

Specific dates 1908 **Architect/Builder** Unknown

Construction dates 1908

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 reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

The Thomas Hotel, standing in the waterfront village of Benedict, is significant as one of the only documented examples of an African American owned and operated business in Charles County. Dating from the first quarter of the 20th century, it is also one of the few remaining buildings erected as a hotel. Around 1908 James E. Thomas and Harriet his wife purchased part of Lot #2 of the Benedict Farm from James and Louis Horseman.

Benedict was one of the more important steamboat ports and commercial centers in Charles County and along the Patuxent River. Because of its location at the dividing line between the upper and lower Patuxent River it was a natural layover point and a terminus point for shorter runs out of Baltimore. Transporting passengers as well as farm products and commercial products, steamboats provided a vital link between rural southern Maryland and the markets of Baltimore and Washington. Some of the more prominent steamboats to ply the Patuxent were the St. Mary's, Three Rivers, and the Anne Arundel, B.S. Ford and Westmoreland. After the first decade of the 20th century, steamboat companies found it increasingly difficult to compete and service became intermittent. By the middle of the 1930's there was but a single weekly trip to the Patuxent. One incident of note was the burning of the St. Mary's on December 5, 1907 while aground on Holland Bar across from Benedict.

Along the Patuxent River, Solomon's Island was the site of the first large scale fishery which was established just after the Civil War in 1867. Soon after other villages developed similar industries including Benedict, and Broomes Island. Benedict, in Charles County had seven oyster packing companies in existence from 1903 to 1975, more than any other area including Solomon's. The heyday appears to have lasted from 1930 to 1945 when three packing plants, W.E. Northam Co 1913-1945, Harry Messick, Sr. 1930-1945 and Linwood T. Sollers, 1930-1967 were in operation in the village.

Although little is currently known about the Thomas' family photographs are housed in the Southern Maryland Studies Center. The 1920 Federal Census identified James E. Thomas, as the head of a household. He was described as a 64 year old male mulatto whose occupation was that of a hotel manager. His wife Harriet A., 57 and daughters Blanche E. unmarried, age 30 and Josephine Hall, age 23 also lived in the household as well as several grandchildren. The Thomas' were a part of a relatively small number of property owners in the early 20th century and an even smaller number of African American entrepreneurs.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-704

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1.21

Acreage of historical setting 1

Quadrangle name Benedict

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The James E. Thomas House is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 49, Parcel 77.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cathy Currey/Historic Sites Survey

organization Charles County Planning Dept

date 8/9/01

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

city or town LaPlata

state MD zip code 20646

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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-704

Section 8 Page 1

Thomas Hotel
name of property
Charles County, MD
county and state

Chain of title:

December 10, 1992	Geraldine Whiting for Orion T. Whiting to Roger L. and Austine Fink 1729:37
September 29, 1976	Geraldine Whiting to Geraldine and Orion Whiting 471:64
October 30, 1970	Blanche Thomas to Geraldine Whiting 228:86
January 18, 1909	James H. M. Louisa E. Horseman to James E. and Harriet Thomas. Parcel or lot of ground, 33 perches, near the village of Benedict, Being part of Lot #2 of Benedict Farm. 19:688

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No.CH-704

Section 9 Page 1

Thomas Hotel
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

Major Bibliographic References:

Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland, A History. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. The History of Charles County, Maryland. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.



James Thomas ? wife Harriet
George Howard Post Collection MSS 850193
Southern Maryland Studies Center
College of Southern Maryland
La Plata, MD

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

Date: 7 01

North arrow:



Name: THOMAS HOTEL

Address: 7802 MILL CREEK ROAD

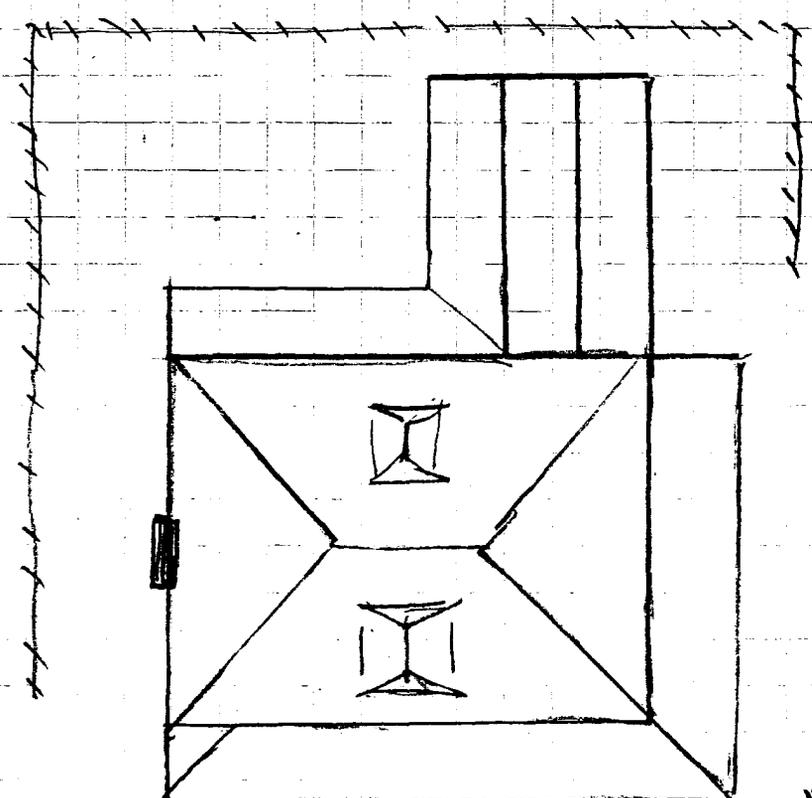
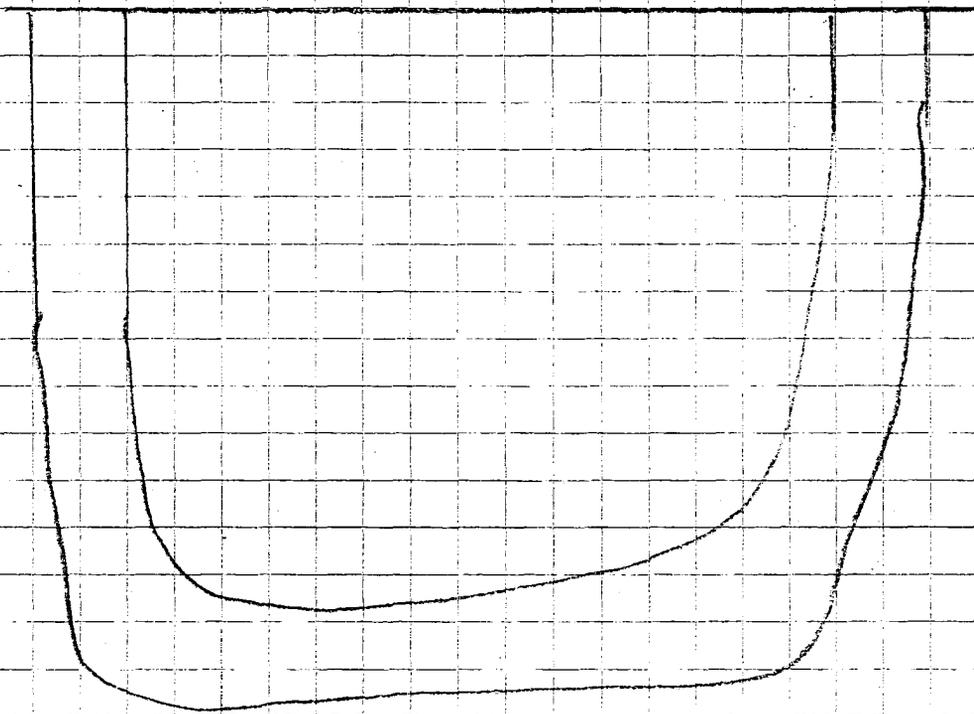
CH - 704

Charles County, Maryland

BENEDICT

Vicinity

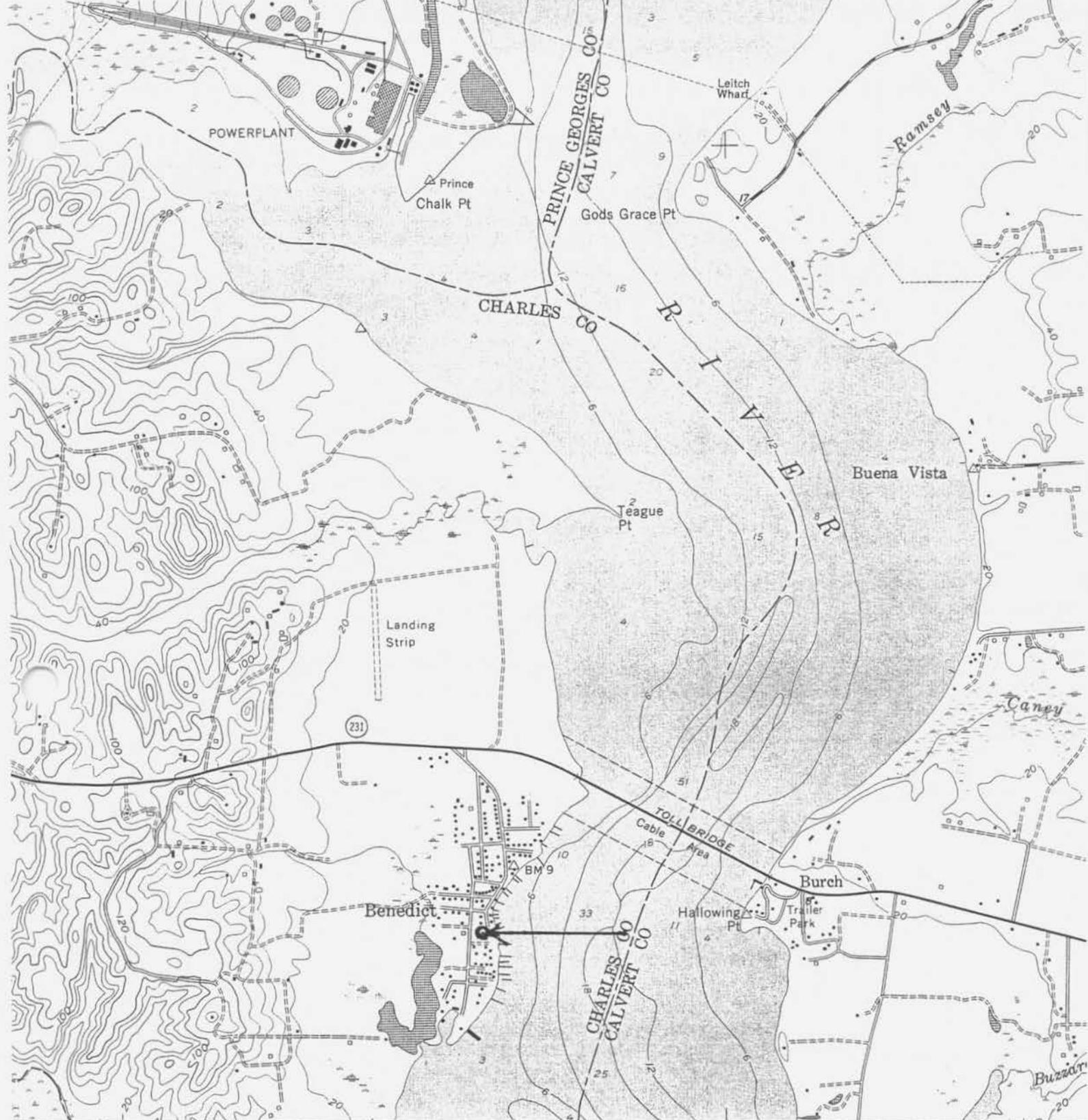
MILL CREEK



FENCE

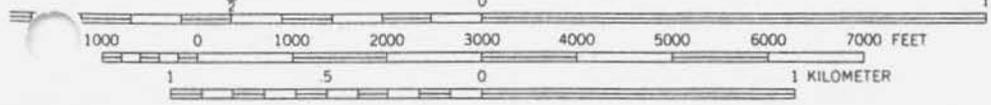
↓ PATUXENT RIVER

Not drawn to scale



352 (MECHANICSVILLE) 5660 1 NW 354

SCALE 1:24000



CH-704 Charles County, MD
 Name: THOMAS HOTEL
 Location: 7802 MILL CREEK RD
 Quad: BENEDICT

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
 SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS 1.6 FEET



QUADRANGLE LOCATION



CH-704
THOMAS HOTEL
CHARLES CO. MD
C. CURREY
5/01

MD SHPO
FRONT ELEVATION
1 OF 2



CH-704
THOMAS HOTEL
CHARLES CO, MD
C. CURREY
5/01
MD SHPO
REAR ELEVATION
2 OF 2