D-127

Handsell, (Webb House)

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 01-31-2013
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 Handsell
   other names Webb House, D-127

2. Location
   street & number  4835 Vienna Rhodesdale Road
   city or town Vienna
   state Maryland
   code MD county Dorchester
   code 019 zip code 21869

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets or does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant on a scale of: [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

   Signature of certifying official/Title
   Date

   State or Federal agency and bureau

   In my opinion, the property meets or does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

   Signature of certifying 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.
   [ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
   [ ] removed from the National Register.

   Explanation:

   Signature of the Keeper
   Date of Action

   State or Federal agency and bureau

   Other (explain):
### 5. Classification

<table>
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<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
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<td>Check only one box</td>
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- Name of related multiple property listing:
  - Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing
  - N/A

- Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:
  - 0

### 6. Function or Use

- Historic Functions:
  - Domestic/single dwelling

- Current Functions:
  - Vacant/not in use

### 7. Description

- Architectural Classification:
  - Colonial/Georgian

- Materials:
  - foundation Brick
  - walls Brick
  - roof Metal
  - other

- Narrative Description:
  - (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)
8. Statement of Significance

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 pattern of our history.
- □ B Property 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)

Property is:

- □ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- □ B removed from its original location.
- □ C a birthplace or 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.

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

Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance
ca. 1770 – ca. 1820

Significant Dates
ca. 1770

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on files (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:
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  2 acres  Rhoadesdale, MD quad

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

Zone  Easting  Northing
1  1 8 4 2 9 1 9 4 4 2 6 2 6 1
2  3  Zone  Easting  Northing
4

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  Jacquelyn K. Bateman
Organization  Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance, Inc.
date  August 3, 2007
street & number  50 Bay Breeze Drive
city or town  Lewes
state  DE
zip code  19958

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 SHPO or FPO)

name
street & number

city or town
state
telephone
zip code

Paperwork Reduction 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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
Handsell, also known as the Webb House, is located on Vienna Rhodesdale Road (formerly Indiantown Road), north of the town of Vienna in Dorchester County, Maryland. The late 18th century brick house is located in a rural agricultural area and sits on a two acre parcel surrounded by 1400 acres of farmland which has been placed under an agricultural conservation easement. The property bears the historic name of a 1665 land grant; the original 484 acre land grant has been in the Webb family since 1892. The current owners of the house, David and Carol Lewis, purchased Handsell and the two acres with the intention of preserving it and to study the history of the house and the land.

The house is a fine example of a late 18th century Georgian style manor house. It is a brick structure, one and a half stories over an English basement. The south façade is laid in Flemish bond above a quarter-round molded water table. Handsell is five bays wide and has a central entrance holding a double door flanked by windows; the brickwork in this area projects from the wall surface by about four inches to suggest a pavilion. The windows on the south façade have been reduced in width by about four inches and the original jack arches have been replaced with crude flat arches, the brickwork of which is not as fine as the original. The secondary elevations are laid in common bond, the east gable having a string course. There is an interior chimney in both gables and a single dormer on each side of the “A” roof. The interior retains a fair amount of original fabric including an early fireplace surround which has been removed to a protected site for restoration. The west side of the basement originally housed the kitchen, as evidenced by a cooking fireplace and the remains of a beehive oven, reputedly the only surviving oven of its kind on the Eastern Shore (Stump, 2005). The remainder of the basement was divided into two smaller rooms. A fire in the early 19th century required some exterior rebuilding to the rear and end walls, and the interior woodwork appears to date from the period 1810-20. The house has remained vacant for some seventy years, but despite deterioration and vandalism retains sufficient integrity to inform a comprehensive and accurate restoration.

General Description:

The 40’3” x 20’11” brick house was built on a tall basement, 6’6” from grade to the ovolo-molded water table. Its principal façade, laid in Flemish bond, is five bays wide with the center door and two flanking windows in a pavilion 4” forward of the rest of the façade. Basement windows were located directly beneath the openings of the first floor including the door. A single dormer window centered above the door is the only window on this side of the “A” roof (currently sheathed in corrugated metal). Both gables have two small windows flanking the chimneys. Although the back of the building is five bays long on the first story, there are only three bays below. The rear façade is all on a single plane, laid in common bond without water table. Like the principal façade there is a single dormer penetrating the roof.
The plan of the first and second floors consists of a central stair passage with two flanking rooms. Each of the two rooms on the first story contains a fireplace on the gable wall, one of which retains an original Federal period mantel. Ceilings in the first-floor rooms measure 11’ high. On the second story there is a structure in the west room which was a fireplace, but its hearth is approximately two and one-half feet above the floor. The east room chimney rises through the room approximately one foot from the gable wall. The basement contains neither central passage nor stair but only three rooms consisting of a three-bay-long kitchen, a pantry and another smaller room on the east that may have served as a cook’s room. Apparently, access to the upper stories was by way of an exterior stair which no longer exists.

A small one-story shed was built adjoining the east gable early in the 20th century to house the office of the farm overseer. There was no communication between it and the main block. It did not contribute to the significance of the site and has since been removed.
Summary Statement of Significance:

Handsell is significant under Criterion C for its architecture, as an example of a substantial manor house of the late 18th century. Its form, 1-1/2 stories over a raised basement, is unusual in the region. The house retains evidence of a kitchen in the basement which apparently did not communicate directly with the upper story, a rare plan feature; the remnant of a beehive oven is also noteworthy. Some rebuilding of exterior walls, and interior finishes dating from ca. 1810-1820, reflect the effects of a fire in the early 19th century. Despite deterioration and vandalism, the house retains sufficient historic fabric to inform a comprehensive and accurate restoration.

Resource History and Historic Context:

The land surrounding Handsell is historically linked to the early Native Americans of the Nanticoke and Chicone tribes. Located on the Nanticoke River and Chicone Creek north of Vienna, Dorchester County, the land was the site of a Chicone village. This site was established as an Indian reservation by the state of Maryland in 1720, but in 1768 the Maryland legislature passed a bill authorizing the purchase of all remaining rights to Chicone Indian lands from the Nanticoke Indians. (Rountree and Davidson, 159). The house called Handsell was most likely built between 1770 and 1782 by Henry Steele. Today the house stands alone in the middle of 1,400 acres of farmland recently placed in an agricultural conservation easement.

A 1678 proclamation by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland formally acknowledged the Eastern Shore “Indian towns” including Chicone on the Nanticoke River. Chicone, one of the largest Native American villages, already contained some land patented by the English and held by men who had no interest in displacing the native people who lived there.

The property derives its name from a patent awarded in 1665 to Thomas Taylor, a licensed “Indian trader” and later a high ranking military officer. On July 13, 1665 he received a land grant called Handsell for 700 acres which encompassed the main Native American residential sites within the Chicone Indian town lands. It is likely these were friendly patents held by Taylor to protect the Indian towns from other Englishmen. During the late 17th century, Taylor was an influential county justice who often served Maryland’s provincial government as an envoy to the Nanticokes and was also the nominal landlord of the Nanticoke paramount chief since he was the owner of record for the land grant that included the site of the Nanticoke Fort at Chicone. (Rountree and Davidson, 146). Taylor served in many capacities including sheriff of Dorchester County 1665-1668.

In 1693 ownership of Handsell was transferred to a Christopher Nutter, an “Indian trader” who had served since 1670 as the interpreter for the region. In 1721 a serious conflict arose between the colonists and the Native Americans after Nutter’s heirs sold their land to a John Rider, who almost immediately tried to seize the 700
acres of Handsell, including the site of the Nanticoke Fort. The Maryland government sided with the Native Americans and ordered John Rider off the reservation. By 1742 only a few Nanticokes remained on their land.

In 1753 Chicone was made a proprietary manor, making the reservation the property of Lord Baltimore. By 1768 the Maryland legislature passed a bill authorizing the purchase of all remaining rights to the Chicone lands from the Nanticokes. In 1770 the land was deeded back to the heirs of John Rider, by then deceased. Henry Steele and his wife Ann Billings, a step-granddaughter of John Rider, were deeded 484 acres of the southern half of the Handsell tract, the portion bordered by the Chicone Creek and Nanticoke River, the site of the Native American village. According to Dorchester County history, Henry Steele built a “large and pretentious home” on this property. The Steele family continued to distinguish itself with descendants such as Isaac Nevitt Steele, who was among the most distinguished lawyers in the history of the Maryland bar and became Deputy Attorney General.

In 1779-1780 British privateers raided and robbed homes along the waters of the Chesapeake Bay including the Nanticoke River. Raids continued on the River through 1781. Again in 1812-1814 the British raided and burned homes along the Nanticoke including “Weston”, the home of Governor John Henry in the town of Vienna. A record of an 1856 interview with a local citizen, Henry Winder, mentions a fire at a “property north of Vienna where the large brick house and other structures burned in the fall of 1804-06” (Dorchester County Library, Rider family files). Located just north of Vienna, Handsell which stands today exhibits signs of a fire and a partial collapse. Today it retains a brick façade and east wall that date from the 18th century, however, the roof, chimney tops and interior woodwork date from the 1810-1820 period, indicating it was rebuilt to a smaller scale after the fire.

Handsell remained in the Steele family until 1837 when it was sold to John Sheehee. In 1849 the trustee of Sheehee’s estate sold it to Jacob Wilson, who owned it until 1859 when it was sold to the Thompson family. In 1892 the Thompsons sold Handsell to the Webb family, who have held the large farm in various family partnerships, and have continuously farmed approximately 1400 acres of land surrounding the Handsell house since that date.

The house at Handsell with two acres and a right-of-way to the Chicone Creek were recently purchased by David and Carol Lewis. The Webb family has also placed the entire 1400 acres under an agricultural conservation easement. The Lewises have expressed their willingness to sell Handsell to the newly formed Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving Handsell for future generations to study and explore the rich history of the land, the river and the people of this place.

Considerable archeological investigations have taken place at the Chicone Site (e.g. Busby 2000) in the vicinity of Handsell. The present nomination is limited to the two-acre parcel immediately surrounding the house. The surrounding property has not yet been fully evaluated for possible significance under Criterion D.
Dorchester County, MD

Major Bibliographical References:

Bourne, Michael  Handsell Analysis 2006


Dorchester County Land Records, Courthouse, Cambridge, MD


Maryland State Archives, Survey of Papers (Division of Plats) MSA A 65-135.


Stump, Brice  Heritage Style Section, Salisbury Daily Times 2005 Gannett Press


Weeks, Christopher  Between the Nanticoke and the Choptank  Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 115.
Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described among the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Liber MLB 567, Folio 407.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property, two acres, comprises the remnant of the property historically associated with the resource.
HANDSELL - FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE · ¼" = 1'-0" · AUGUST, 2006 · M. BOURNE

WEST ROOM
STAIR PASSAGE
EAST ROOM

40'3" X 20'11"

LEGEND
\[\text{PERIOD I}\]
\[\text{PERIOD II}\]
HANDSELL - SECOND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

[P] PERIOD I
[XX] PERIOD II

HANDSELL - SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" - AUGUST, 2006 - M. BOURNE

40' 3" X 20' 11"
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD

David Harp
4/2006

Digital CD - MD Historic Trust

South facade - exterior

#1 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co. MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - Maryland Historic Trust
South facade - exterior

#2 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
West facade

#3 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD-MD Historic Trust
North facade

#4 of 23
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
Stair passage, west wall
1st fl.

#5 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co. MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl. stair passage - north view

#6 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl, East Room - north view

#7 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl. East Room - NE corner

#8 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co. MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Hist. Trust
1st Fl. East Room - east view

#9 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl. East Room - SE Corner

# 10 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Hist. Trust
1st fl. East Room - South view

#11 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Hist. Trust
1st Fl. East Room - west wall

#12 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl. West Room - NW Corner

#13 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
1st fl. West Room - north view

#14 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD: MD Historic Trust
1st fl. West Room - SW Corner

#15 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Hist. Trust
2nd Fl. West Chamber, NW corner

#16 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD, MD Historic Trust
2nd fl, West chamber, West view

#17 of 23
D - 127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Hist. Trust
2nd fl - Hall, north view

#18 of 23
D-127
HANDSELL
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
2nd fl. - East Chamber, east view

#19 of 23
D - 127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD- MD Hist, Trust
2nd Fl. Hall - South View

#20 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
Ground floor, Kitchen, west view

#21 of 23
D-127
Handsell
Dorchester Co, MD
David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust
Ground floor - east view
Pantry + chamber

#22 of 23
Handsell
Dorchester Co., MD

David Harp
4/2006
Digital CD - MD Historic Trust

1st fl. View from West room, looking into stair passage, showing Millwork

Pictured: David Lewis, owner 2006

#23 of 23
Handsell 1970-72

2 large trees
Small outbuilding
Barn
Outbuilding, barn close to HOUSE

"Handsell" circa 1930s
**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST WORKSHEET**

**NOMINATION FORM**

for the

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE**

---

### 1. NAME

**COMMON:**

The Webb House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**

---

### 2. LOCATION

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

Indiantown Road, 1.8 miles north of route 50

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Vienna

**STATE:**

Maryland

**COUNTY:**

Dorchester

---

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

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**PRESENT USE** (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Museum
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Park
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)
- Other
- Scientific

---

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

**OWNER'S NAME:**

J. W. T. Webb estate

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

c/o Alan P. S. Webb

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Vienna

**STATE:**

Maryland

**ZIP CODE:**

21869

---

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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**STREET AND NUMBER:**

High Street

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Cambridge

**STATE:**

Maryland

**ZIP CODE:**

21613

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### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE OF SURVEY:**

---

**DATE OF SURVEY:**

- Federal
- State
- County
- Local

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**

---

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

---

**CITY OR TOWN:**

---

**STATE:**

---
The Webb House north of Vienna is a handsome brick structure, 1½ stories over an English basement. The south facade is laid in Flemish bond above a quarter-round molded water table and is five bays long. The central double door and one window flanking the door on each side protrudes from the other surface of the wall by about four inches to suggest a pavillion, but it stops at the cornice and lacks the pediment or other termination. Each of the windows have been decreased in width by about four inches and the original jack arches have been replaced with crude flat arches, which brickwork is not as fine as the original. Each of the other sides of the house are laid in common bond, the east gable having a string course. There is an interior chimney in both gables and a single dormer on each side of the "A" roof.

In many ways it resembles the brickwork and general facade arrangement of the house at Weston Farm, south of Vienna. It is in very poor condition and appears to have been used recently as a hog pen.

The basement originally housed the kitchen in the west side of the structure. Beside the fireplace is half of the original brick oven. On the two other bays were two smaller rooms.
Webb House is one of the most interesting buildings in the Vienna area. Its brickwork is finely executed and the fact that there is the beginnings of a pavilion is indicative of the builder's knowledge of design.

This building should be researched to find the original owner/builder as it may have been the home of an important county figure. This building is a prime candidate for restoration as it could adapt itself easily to comfortable living and be a handsome element in the Dorchester landscape.
**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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<tr>
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**APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:**

Acreage Justification:

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME AND TITLE:** Michael Bourne, Architectural Consultant

**ORGANIZATION:** Maryland Historical Trust

**STREET AND NUMBER:** Shaw House, 21 State Circle

**CITY OR TOWN:** Annapolis

**STATE:** Maryland

**21401**

**DATE:** Summer, 1972

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER REVIEW:** (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:

- National [ ] State [ ] Local [ ]

Signature
The Webb House north of Vienna is a handsome brick structure, 1 1/2 stories over an English basement. The south facade is laid in Flemish bond above a quarter-round molded water table and is five bays long. The central double door and one window flanking the door on each side protrudes from the other surface of the wall by about four inches to suggest a pavillion, but it stops at the cornice and lacks the pediment or other termination. Each of the windows have been decreased in width by about four inches and the original jack arches have been replaced with crude flat arches which brickwork is not as fine as the original. Each of the other sides of the house are laid in common bond, the east gable giving a string course. There is an interior chimney in both gables and a single dorner on each side of the A"A roof.

In many ways it resembles the brickwork and general facade arrangement of the house at Weston Farm, south of Vienna. It is in very poor condition and appears to have been used recently as a hog pen.