

K-127

Rich Hill, The Griffith House, The Adventure
Sassafras
Private

1753

Rich Hill, "The Adventure," was built by Alexander Baird soon after the land was patented to him in 1753. The five bay, two and one-half story, brick building has a two story, brick kitchen wing on the northeast gable end. The southeast facade overlooks a lawn. The house has Flemish bond walls, and English bond water table and rests on a stone foundation.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maryland	
COUNTY: Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Rich Hill, The Griffith House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
The Adventure

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Maryland Route 299

CITY OR TOWN:
Sassafras

STATE Maryland	CODE 24	COUNTY: Kent	CODE 029
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	Rectory for Episcopal Church	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
~~Multiple ownership~~ 1981 New Owners Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Lewis

STREET AND NUMBER:
Contact: ~~The Reverend James O. Reynolds, "Rich Hill"~~

CITY OR TOWN: Warrick Post Office, Kent County	STATE: Maryland	CODE 24
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Kent County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
Cross Street

CITY OR TOWN: Chestertown	STATE: Maryland	CODE 24
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Maryland Register of historic sites and landmarks

DATE OF SURVEY: 1970 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Maryland Historical Trust

STREET AND NUMBER:
94 College Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Annapolis	STATE: Maryland	CODE 24
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Maryland
COUNTY: Kent
ENTRY NUMBER:
DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Rich Hill, on the north side of Maryland Route 299, 0.2 miles northeast of the intersection of Maryland Route 299 and Maryland Route 290 at Sassafras, is in a location where this mid-eighteenth-century Georgian-style elaborate dwelling is an enigma. Built as a status symbol by Alexander Baird, a "tobacco planter turned builder," who in his day was a prominent member of the community, the house during the twentieth century has been converted into the Episcopal Rectory for nearby St. Augustine Parish, Cecil County, Maryland.

The dwelling, Rich Hill, is owned (1971) by the Vestry of St. Augustine Parish, St. Augustine Church, Chesapeake City, Cecil County, Maryland, and is occupied by the Rector of St. Augustine Church, The Reverend James O. Reynolds.

Rich Hill, "The Adventure," was built by Alexander Baird soon after the land was patented to him in 1753. The five-bay, two-and-a-half story, brick building has a two-story, brick kitchen wing on the northeast gable end. The southeast facade overlooks a lawn as well as a driveway and cultivated field crops on both sides of the main road to Sassafras.

The original, eight-paneled entrance door is surmounted by a five-light transom. The door frame, similar to all the frames and sashes throughout the house, is not original, dating after the mid-nineteenth century. The central door in the northwest facade has been lowered and does not have a transom due to the interior stair arrangement. Each doorway originally had flanking seats, each partly set into the brick exterior of the building. The northwest facade, having been restored to its original appearance, has irregular fenestration above the basement: three windows on the first story, two windows on the second story and a smaller opening at the level of the staircase landing.

Above the stone foundation, with galleting below the basement windows, is English bond brickwork between the sills and the molded water table. The remainder of the brickwork is Flemish bond, interspersed on the northwest and southwest sides by glazed headers at random.

All the openings support segmental brick arches with the exception of the flat-arch on the attic windows. The lintels on the northwest facade of the main block and the southeast facade of the kitchen wing have alternate glazed headers in a vertical pattern in the brick lintels.

The kitchen wing is laid in Flemish bond with the glazed headers on the southeast facade in reverse to the main block. The thin coat of (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) patented 1753, built soon afterwards

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Alexander Baird, for whom "The Adventure" was patented in 1753, was of local importance as a successful tobacco planter and an active member of the vestry of Shrewsbury Parish (1755-1792) in Kent County. During his lifetime he acquired approximately 2500 acres of land near Head of Sassafras, now the Sassafras River, where he lived, owned a grist mill and a saw mill as well as the wharf, later called "the public landing," from which the crops were shipped to market. In 1782 we find his name among the subscribers to Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland.

In October of 1746 he married Elizabeth Ellis. Of their eleven children six daughters lived to maturity and married members of the Keene, Hanson, Johns and Stoops families. At the time of Alexander Baird's death, "The Adventure" passed to his daughter, Ann Baird Stoops. Elizabeth Stoops, daughter of Ann Baird and Jonas Stoops, later married Charles Thomas of New Castle, Delaware, who became the Governor of Delaware in 1830.

The farm was sold in 1839 to Joseph Griffith, who changed the name to "Rich Hill." The Griffith family owned surrounding farms which had previously been owned by Alexander Baird. Their farming endeavors prospered and the sons built homes on the adjoining early tract, "Morton," the latter patented in 1670.

Since the late nineteenth century it has been used as a house for tenant farmers until it was acquired for the Vestry of St. Augustine Parish, Cecil County, as the rectory. Since its acquisition in 1968, the house has been preserved and restored. It is occupied in 1971 by the Reverend James O. Reynolds, Rector of St. Augustine Parish, Chesapeake City, Cecil County, Maryland.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Recorder: Michael Bourne, Maryland Historical Trust,
94 College Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland

Hanson, George A., Old Kent. Regional Publishing Company,
Baltimore, 1967 (orig. 1876).

Kent County Wills & Land Records, Kent County Courthouse,
Chestertown, Maryland.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	39 °	22 ' 10 "		75 °	48 ' 38 "		0			0		
NE	39 °	22 ' 18 "		75 °	48 ' 24 "							
SE	39 °	22 ' 08 "		75 °	48 ' 15 "							
SW	39 °	22 ' 01 "		75 °	48 ' 27 "							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 64 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mrs. Preston Parish, Keeper of the Maryland Register

ORGANIZATION: Maryland Historical Trust DATE: Jan. 18, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
94 College Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Annapolis STATE: Maryland CODE: 24

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Orlando Ridout IV
Orlando Ridout IV

Title State Liaison Officer
for Maryland

Date January 19, 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Maryland	
COUNTY	
Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

Rich Hill, The Griffith House

#7. DESCRIPTION continued

stucco covering the northeast gable hides the brickwork. On the northwest facade is a modern screened porch.

The interior cornices, chair rails and baseboards are intact as well as a paneled chimney breast over each fireplace opening. The turned balusters on the closed-string stair conforms with the early character of the woodwork.

The front entrance of Rich Hill faces the public road, Maryland Route 299, and looks across the road to open fields. The sixty-four acres designated will protect the immediate area surrounding the house and the vista to and across the public road.

#9. REFERENCES continued

Kent County Wills & Land Records, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

Kent County Chancery Records, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

K-127

The Adventure, Rich Hill
Near Sassafras
c. 1760

The Adventure is significant as an example of mid-18th century Georgian architecture and as the home of Alexander and Elizabeth Ellis Baird, tobacco planters and prominent members of their community. It is located south of the Sassafras River, facing the main road.

After Alexander and Elizabeth were married in 1746, Elizabeth's father, William Ellis, assigned a warrant for 200 acres of Moreton to the couple, who were then residing in Cecil County. It was patented in 1749.¹ The land adjoining, on which they built their house was patented in 1753 under the name – The Adventure.² The larger part of Moreton, 400 acres, was acquired in 1761 from James Louttit of Mount Harmon Plantation in Cecil County.³ Soon after these three parcels of land were amassed, the Bairds built their house. They would stay here for the next forty years, with the farm as their livelihood.

The Bairds chose a design for their house similar to that of Bungay Hill and the Violet Farm located in the lower part of the County—a plain, rectangular two-story structure with two-story kitchen wing. Its southeast facade was laid in Flemish bond above a molded watertable and employed a decorative string course at second floor level, the center course being all header bond. Segmental arches were used above all of the openings, except above the attic gable windows where vertical headers were used. The northwest facade and southwest gable were also laid in Flemish bond, but burned and glazed headers were used throughout.

Flanking both center entrances, benches were let into the brick walls. The front entrance had a large 8-panel door with 5 pane transom above a wide frame. Windows on both stories were the same size and had 12/12 sash with paneled shutters on the first floor only. The lower two-bay kitchen wing had a door and three windows with 6/6 sash. Its facade has glazed-headed Flemish bond.

The Adventure's floor plan consisted of a central stairhall with one room on each side, and a kitchen. Its architectural millwork was amongst the best in the County. The living room fireplace wall was fitted with paneling executed in the Doric order. Fluted pilasters on paneled bases flanked the large arched fireplace. Beyond the pilasters arched cabinets were installed, one paneled and one glazed with superb architectural shell cabinet within. A metope beneath the cornice ran the full length of the wall, and the cornice 'broke out' above the pilasters, keystones of the cabinets, and above the windows in the flanking walls.

The windows had splayed window jambs and crossetted trim which was attached to the cornice like those at the Custom House in Chestertown. The fireplace surround had a bolection molding with small panels in the corners conforming to the arch of the fireplace. On each side of the fireplace there were plaster coves which reduced the size of the firebox. Both of the above features were similar to the treatments at Rose Hill and the Violet Farm – both of which date from the 1760's.

The stair was a bold three-flight composition with square-paneled newels and a close-string balustrade with turned balusters and drop finials.

In general, the form of the stair was similar to Tibbalds, the home of Baird's co-parishioner Isaac Freeman. Another feature similar to Tibbalds was the placement of a secondary winder stair behind the paneling in the dining room.

Both second story rooms were well finished, with paneled fireplace walls, but with less detail than the rooms below.

During his lifetime, Alexander Baird acquired about 2500 acres of land near Head of Sassafra where he lived and owned a grist mill and a saw mill, as well as a wharf from which the crops were shipped to market. In 1783 his name was listed as a subscriber to Washington College in Chestertown.⁴ In the same year his holdings included 1040 acres on which were four houses, two brick and two frame. He owned 25 slaves, six of whom were elderly and were not included in the valuation. His sum worth at that time was @3007, a huge fortune for the day when @1000 was considered the low end of "wealthy."⁵

Alexander and Elizabeth Baird had eleven children, six of whom lived to maturity. All six were daughters and they married into the Kieve, Hanson, Johns and Stoops families. At the time of his death in 1792, Alexander Baird passed the Adventure onto his daughter Ann Stoops.⁶ It remained in the family until Ann's daughter Elizabeth Thomas sold the farm.⁷ Elizabeth and her husband Charles lived in New Castle and he became the Governor of Delaware in 1830.

Joseph Griffith, who changed the name to Rich Hill, purchased the

farm from the Thomases in 1839.⁸ Two of Joseph's sons established themselves on the other parts of Baird's lands and built substantial houses as a result of the successful farming operations. During the ownership of Joseph Griffith, an 80' long frame bank barn was built west of the house which remains standing today, a lone survivor of a once common form of farm structure.

Griffith sold the farm in 1859 to his son Robert who undertook the remodeling of the old house.⁹ He must have appreciated the quality of the interior, for nothing was removed. The house, however, did receive new window frames and sash and an overhanging eave and dormer on the roof. A larger porch was built on the front facade.

From the time the Griffiths lost the property in the late 19th Century, the house was occupied by tenants until purchased by Waldo Hagelgans, an antique dealer, in 1968.¹⁰ Mr. Hagelgans installed a central heating system, but within a year sold it to St. Augustine Parish for use as its rectory.¹¹ Under the direction of its rector, Rev. J. O. Reynolds, the house was gradually refurbished. It remained the rectory for St. Augustine Parish until sold at auction. Since that time there have been two owners, the last owner being responsible for the restoration of the great barn.

1. Warrants, 17 March 1748,
2. Patents, Lib. BY AGS No. 3, fol. 508.
Certificate, Lib. GS 1, fol. 179
3. Rent Rolls, Lib. 5, fol. 164.
- 4.

5. 1783 Tax Assessment.
6. Land Records, Lib. JNG 6, fol. 177.
7. Land Records, Lib. WS 3, fol. 294.
8. Land Records, Lib. JNG 6, fol. 177.
9. Land Records, Lib. JKH 1, fol. 560.
10. Land Records, Lib. EHP 27, fol. 365.
11. Land Records, Lib. EHP 29, fol. 259.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Maryland K-127	
COUNTY Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

MHT
K-127

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON:		Rich Hill, The Griffith House	
AND/OR HISTORIC:		The Adventure	
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Maryland Route 299			
CITY OR TOWN: Sassafras			
STATE: Maryland	CODE 24	COUNTY: Kent	CODE 029
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT:		Michael Bourne	
DATE OF PHOTO:		February 1970	
NEGATIVE FILED AT:		Maryland Historical Trust 94 College Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland 21401	
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Southeast facade			



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE	
Maryland	
COUNTY	
Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON:		Rich Hill, The Griffith House	
AND OR HISTORIC:		The Adventure	
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Maryland Route 299			
CITY OR TOWN:			
Sassafras			
STATE:		CODE	COUNTY:
Maryland		24	Kent
			029
3. MAP REFERENCE			
SOURCE:			
U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute map; Millington Quadrangle, Maryland			
SCALE: 1:24,000			
DATE: 1953			
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			

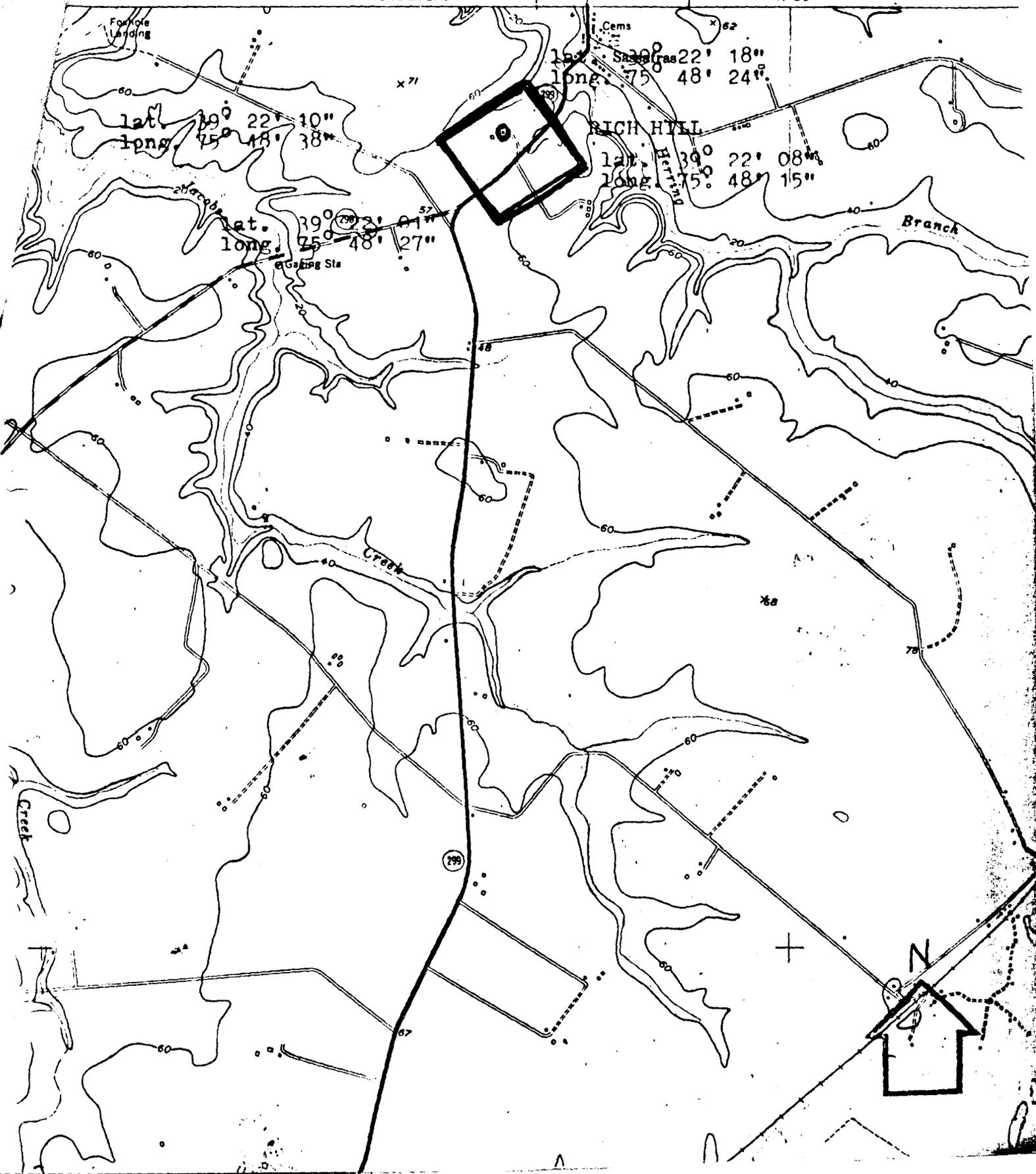
MILLINGTON QUADRANGLE
USGS 7.5 minute map (Maryland)
scale: 1: 24,000
1953 UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

K-127

MIDDLETOWN, DEL. 7.4 MI.
WARWICK 3.8 MI.

47°30'

(CECILTON)





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KENT COUNTY