

K-13

Esau Watkins House
Water Street, Chestertown
c. 1739

The earliest remaining dwelling on the Chester River in Chestertown is that located at 109 Water Street. Built by Esau and Sarah Watkins, it stands on ^{water} Lot No. 11, which was deeded to them on August 24, 1739 by Sarah's father, William Ringgold. In that deed, as well in other deeds, and in his own will, Esau is listed as a blacksmith by trade.

In general form and material the house is similar to the Buck-Bacchus Store, a building constructed a few years earlier on the corner of High and Queen Streets. Like the store, the principal facade of the Watkins house was the narrower dimension of the house. Its front door, however, was located not in the center of the three bays, but to the left. This facade and its southwest counterpart are laid in flemish bond with glazed headers. Again like the store, the water table jogs above the basement windows, which have segmental arches of alternating stretchers and double headers. The roof is hipped and has a plain plaster cove cornice. There is one dormer on the facade and two on the flanking sides.

The plan of the Watkins House appears to have had two rooms per floor with a central chimney stack adjacent its southwest wall and the stair on the opposite side of the chimney with passage between. Its plan would have been similar to a typical New England house, except for the placement of the entrance. Being constructed at grade on the river

side, the kitchen was located in the basement, like other houses on the street. The presence of soot on the cellar beams in the room closest to the river points to its original use as a kitchen. In the attic or third floor, original feather edge board partitions separate the hall from the bedrooms. There is one original four-panel door and one five-panel door dating from late in the century.

In his will, Esau Watkins left his dwelling to his son, John and for whom he stipulated Dr. William Murray as guardian until he reached 21 years of age. In 1776, John was planning to leave the area. He was heavily indebted to the firm of Morgan and Sluby, and the house was mortgaged to them to secure the debt.¹ Interestingly, three years later he was still living in Kent County.²

109 Water Street passed through many hands until it was purchased in 1820 by Samuel Merritt of Godlington Manor. It remained in the Merritt family until 1880 when it was sold to Benjamin Fleming for \$1000. It was probably during the Fleming period that the house was lengthened by 6'10" toward the river. A fate similar to 103 Water Street befell this house: the belt course was chopped off, windows were altered and the difference in brickwork was concealed by the addition of a coat of stucco. The old central chimney was removed and a new one installed in the new addition. The floor plan was altered to suit the owners. It remained in the Fleming ownership until 1944 when Miss Francis Denton, of River House, purchased it and built the block and brick wall separating the two properties.

Louis and Ellen Perry Skinner acquired the property in 1946 and

remodeled it into the existing plan, with a side stairhall, kitchen and pantry in the front, dining room in the center with bay window overlooking the River House garden and a living room. A screened porch was built on the river side which was later enclosed.

1. Lib. DD 5, fol. 140.
2. Lib. DD 5, fol. 374.

K-13 Esau Watkins House

c. 1740

Chestertown

private

This is by tradition the oldest house on Water Street and both architectural and documentary evidence suggest the claim is at least reasonable. It is a classic example of the small scale early Georgian hipped roof brick dwelling, its original shape marred only by the alteration of the rear hip; it was ~~later~~ replaced by a gable when a small addition was made. Esau Watkins and his wife, Sarah Ringgold, received the land as a wedding gift from William Ringgold, father of the bride, in 1739, presumably to build on. Documentary evidence proves the house was up by ~~about~~ 1742.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Esau Watkins House

K-13

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

109 Water Street

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Kent

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Robert Bryan Bryan

Telephone #: 773-1141

STREET & NUMBER

109 Water Street

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21620

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Clerk's Office

Liber #: BNP 37

Folio #: 452

STREET & NUMBER

Kent County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

By J. Browne Metcalfe

DATE

April 25, 1946

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

K-13

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

This house is located on the southeast (river) side of Water Street in Chestertown on the southern half of Water Lot 11. It is built close to the street.

It is a small 2 1/2 story brick Georgian style dwelling with a hipped roof; there is a gabled dormer on the front section of the hip and two each on the two sides. (The rear hip was replaced by a gable end when a short addition was made there.) The house is 3 bays wide and 3 deep, but ~~is~~ is about twice as deep as it is wide.

The basement is brick and there is a water table which jogs over the basement windows; the basement windows have segmental arches. The entrance is in the north (left) bay. There are five brick steps to a 4-panel door which is framed by fluted Doric pilasters. There is a cornice above the door with miniature dentils. There is a 5-pane transom below the cornice.

All of the windows on the first story of the facade have segmental arches and wood sills. The second story windows have wood lintels and sills. All windows on the house, including those in the dormers, are 6/6 double hung sash, and all of those on the first and second stories have louvered shutters.

There is a cove cornice. The roof is of composition shingles, and there is a chimney in the southeast corner (right rear) of the house, which was originally in the center. The brick is laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers.

There are signs of an original belt course on the south (right) elevation. There is ~~is~~ a door in the left bay of this elevation, ~~is~~ a central bay window and a smaller window in the right bay. The original arrangement appears to have been three windows, one somewhat closer to the front than would be symmetrical. Only the door retains its segmental arch. On the second story of this elevation there are three windows directly over the door, bay window, and right bay window beneath. ~~XX~~

The north elevation (left) has two windows on each story. Apparently both first story windows had segmental arches, though only the one in the front bay does now.

The short (approximately 6 feet) addition at the rear is continuous with the main mass of the house, but is laid in common bond. A screened porch has been added behind it.

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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input 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				

SPECIFIC DATES 1739-1742

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This is by tradition the oldest house on Water Street; ~~though~~ the Hynson-Ringgold house (or "Abbey") may ~~have predated~~ pre-date it by 4-5 years, but the claim seems to be fairly reasonable. It is a classic example of the small scale early Georgian dwelling, its original shape marred only by the alteration of the rear hip.

William Ringgold gave the land for the house to his daughter, Sarah Ringgold Watkins and ^{first} his son-in-law, Esau Watkins, in 1739, presumably for them to build on. The evidence that the house was soon built is a deed in which Watkins transferred the property to John Calder and back again (in trust) in 1742: in the deed is mentioned "a tenement or messuage." Watkins left the property to his son, John, by a will dated 1757.

It is worth following the title a step further for some remarks made later on. John Watkins sold the property to Thomas Kemp in 1779. The deed in this sale mentions "the brick house where Esau Watkins formerly dwelt" specifically. The ~~xxxxxx~~ southwestern half of Town Lot 14 across the street had got into the transfers by now. (Esau bought it in 1754, left it to his daughter, who later sold it to John.) It stayed a part of the property until the early nineteenth century.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .090 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION : Beginning at a point on the easterly side of Front Street where the division line between the lands and the lands now or formerly of Elizabeth Trew Russell (23.50 feet wide) intersect said easterly line of Front Street and running thence by and with said Russell lands perpendicular to the line of Front St. a distance of 108 feet, more or less, to the waters of the Chester River; thence by and with the waters of said river in a southwesterly direction a distance of 38.30 feet to a point marked by a cross cut in the top of a concrete retaining wall; thence by and with a dividing line to the lands and parallel to the said Russell lands and also perpendicular to the line of Front St. a distance of 107

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES
feet, more or less, to the center of a 6-inch by 6-inch monument set in the easterly side of Front Street; thence by and with the easterly side of Front St., a distance of 38.30 feet to the point of beginning.

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert Neill Historic Site Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust and Town of Chestertown

DATE

April, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

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

Summary of Title Search: 109 Water Street

William Ringgold to Sarah Ringgold Watkins Liber 5 200 (1739)
(Water Lot 11)

Esau Watkins to John Calder Liber 5 518 (1742)

John Calder to Esau Watkins Liber 5 521 (1742)

(Water Lot 11...tenement or message) Watkins buys southwestern half of Town Lot 14 across the street in 1754 from Dowdall Thompson of Q.A. County for £31.

Esau Watkins to John Watkins Wills Liber 4 25 (1757)

(Water Lot 11 and 109 Water Street. Half lot 14 goes to daughter, Sarah.)

John Watkins to Thomas Kemp DD 5 374 (1779) £2500

(Watkins had bought half lot 14 from Sarah and presumably ~~developed~~ developed it because deed refers to other tenements in addition to 109 and the price suggests fairly substantial)

Thomas Kemp to Benjamin R. Morgan and William Slubey, in an act of ejection.

William Slubey to Benjamin Morgan (1798)

Benjamin Morgan to Robert Anderson TW 1 378 (1800) £300

(All of water lot 11, including 109 Water Street, and the southwestern half of Town Lot 14. Price drop suggests something happened on Lot 14...)

James Houston, Trustee for Robert Anderson, to John Quimby.

(Water Lot 11 and 109 Water Street)

John Quimby leaves property to his daughter, Sophia Quimby Primrose.

James L. Primrose and Sophia to Ann Page TW 4 11 7 (1822) \$650.

Ann Page to Samuel Merritt TW 4 284 (1820) \$800

Samuel Merritt leaves it to his daughter, Frances Olivia Merritt Watkins (1842) "worth \$800)

Frances died in 1877, her husband, Colonel Edward Wilkens, in 1878.

James A. Pearce, Trustee for Wilkens, to Ben F. Fleming SB 1 308 (1880)

Mary J. Fleming to Mary Elizabeth Fleming, her daughter, RRA 6 567 (1926)

Herbert E. Perkins, for Mary J. and Ben F. Fleming, to Frances B. Denton RAS 33 418 (1944)
\$5700

Frances B. Denton to Louis E. Skinner and Ellen RAS 39 49 (1946)

Ellen P. Skinner, widow, to Louis Skinner WHG 43- 343 (1955)

Louis Skinner and Elizabeth to Mary M. Connor EHP 25 182 (1967)

James P. Connor to Robert Bryan EHP 37 452 (1970) \$48,000.

K-13

N

CEMETERY

VITA FOODS

FOODS (NEW) FARM

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COUNTY

KENT

TWILLEY LANE QUEEN

WATER CANNON

HIGH STREET

MAPLE AVENUE

LYNCHBURG RD. STREET

POPLAR STREET

KENT STREET

MILL STREET

CROSS STREET

ROW STREET

PARK COURT ST.

CHURCH ST.

STREET

MAPLE AVENUE

RIVERSIDE TERRACE

STREET

STREET

STREET

PROSPECT ST.

STREET

STREET

STREET

CALVERT STREET

SPRING ST.

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

COLLEGE

CAMPUS

MT. VERNON

WASHINGTON

U.S. 213

PHILOSOPHERS

TERRACE

KENT

BYFORD DRIVE

WALDO DRIVE

DAVID DRIVE

BARROLL DRIVE

MORRIS

STREET

WASHINGTON AVENUE

COLLEGE AVENUE

COLLEGE AVENUE

BROWN VIEW RD.

RIVER

STREET

SCHOOL STREET

SCHOOL AVENUE

STREET

BYFORD COURT

STREET

STREET

AVENUE

STREET

MORNING

STREET

ELM STREET

GREENWOOD

VALLEY

CEDAR

SCHOOL

SCHOOL

AVENUE

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

K-13

Chester

River

U.S. 213

K-13
Esau Watkins House
109 Water St.
Chestertown
Chestertown Quad.
Kent County





K 13 Egan Watkins House, 109 Water

1/77 W + N views



A 13 Esau Watkins House
107 Water St

1/77 W + S