

K-514

George Vickers House (Site)  
Mill Street, Chestertown  
c. 1850's

Nearly a half century before the construction of the old grammar school on the lot bounded by High, Mill and Calvert Streets, the home of the Honorable and Mrs. George Vickers stood as one of the most formidable examples of the Italianate style in Chestertown.

Vickers, educated at Washington College, entered the office of the Clerk of the Court after graduating. While there, he studied law and was admitted to the Bar in 1832. In 1836 he became a state senator, but eventually returned to the practice of law and was quite successful in that respect for several years to follow. He was reelected to the State Senate in 1868, just four years after having been appointed Major General of the Militia of the Eastern Shore. And in 1868, he was elected to the United States Senate. Locally, Vickers donated three acres for the formation of Chester Cemetery at the edge of town and was also president of the Kent County Railroad which was built before he died in the 1870's. Vickers' name is indeed one which is frequently encountered in the study of mid-19th century documents of the area.<sup>1</sup>

Vickers had married Mary Mansfield in 1828 and it was from Miss Mansfield's parents that they acquired the lot on which they built their home sometime before 1860.<sup>2</sup> The house was similar to the Captain Taylor House built a few years earlier on the river front, but the Vickers House was a full three stories tall. The view over Chestertown from the observatory must have been impressive, as it was the highest residential

rooftop in town at that time.

k-514

The house designer employed many of the stock millwork items available through catalogues of the period. There were corner pilasters, window cornices, and brackets. The low-pitch hip roof was topped with a covered belvedere. It appears that the High Street yard was the pleasure garden or yard and the Calvert Street yard was a service area. It was the most ambitious antebellum residence to be built in Chestertown.

In 1880, after the death of Senator Vickers, his widow sold the house and lot to Amanda M. Hurtt for the sum of \$5,000.00.<sup>3</sup> The house remained in the Hurtt family until her daughters sold it in 1900 to the Board of County School Commissioners.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the house was demolished and replaced with the grammar school which remains on the lot today.

1. Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Maryland, 1876.
2. Land Records, Lib. JNG 4, fol. 380.
3. Land Records, Lib. SB 1, fol. 92.
4. Land Records, Lib. JTD 3, fol. 473.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. K-514

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Lot #51

and/or common George Vickers House

## 2. Location

street & number N. Mill Street  not for publication

city, town Chestertown  vicinity of 1<sup>st</sup> congressional district

state Maryland county Kent

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name County Commissioners of Kent Co.

street & number Cross Street telephone no.: 410-778-2400

city, town Chestertown state and zip code MD 21620

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Courthouse liber JTD3

street & number Cross Street folio 473

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date  federal  state  county  local

pository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. K-514

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<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 type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

The building currently situated on lot #51 is the 1903 grammar school, which is discussed under the Kent County survey number K-57. The reason for tracing the lot's history before the school was built is that a significant personage and his house existed thereon in the 19th century.

The person who owned the lot from 1836 until 1880 was one of Chestertown's best known lawyers, George Vickers. Senator Vickers built a substantial residence on the property, probably in the late 1850's. One existing photograph and an engraving on the Martinet Map (1860) are the only representations of the house to exist.

The house was constructed approximately in the center of the lot with its principal facade on Mill Street. It was five bays wide and three stories tall with a shallow hip roof having a covered belvedere, like the ones that still exist at the Taylor House on Water Street and Cony Warren near Melitota. A porch in front of its entrance was accessible from both sides, like the Ringgold House porch. The first and second story windows had cornices, like Pentridge, paneled shutters on the first story and louvered blinds on the second and third stories. The center windows had narrow sidelights which undoubtedly repeated the design of the front entrance. At the corners of the building were paneled pilasters and at the roof was a bold bracketed cornice, similar to the cornice of the porch. Four chimneys rose above the roof, two on each side.

The two chimneys on the High Street side were flanked by windows below. Across the two center bays of that facade was another flat roof porch. Details of windows and porch were the same as the Mill Street facade. From the 1877 Atlas and 1885 Sanborne Insurance Map, the house was depicted with another structure on its north corner which undoubtedly housed the kitchen.

From the form of the house it is safe to conjecture its floor plan as a central stair hall with four nearly equal size rooms on each floor. It is probable that the High Street yard was a lawn or garden while the Calvert Street yard was a service yard.

The Vickers house was the most ambitious ante bellum house to be built in Kent County. The only other house that would have been close was the Kennedy House which stood north of Kennedyville.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>			
<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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** before 1860 **Builder/Architect** Probably James Mansfield, contractor

check: Applicable Criteria:  A  B  C  D  
and/or

Applicable Exception:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Level of Significance:  national  state  local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The lot of ground bounded by High, Mill and Calvert Streets, Chestertown, on which the old grammar school was built in 1903, had an earlier history associated with one of Chestertown's most import mid-19th century figures, Honorable George Vickers.

Lot 51 was first sold to John and Katherine Tilden in 1730. It was subsequently purchased by Stephen Bondley, Jr. There must have been a substantial house built thereon because his heirs sold it in 1779 for 3 2000. Between 1779 and 1805, the lot and improvements were owned by Robert Roberts. In the deed recorded in 1806 there is a reference to the property being sold for back taxes and being advertised in both the Baltimore Telegraph and the Easton Republican Star (Aug. 20, 1806). James Mansfield owned the property until selling the half lot along Mill Street to his son-in-law, George Vickers, in 1836, for \$600.

George Vickers, after receiving his education at Washington College, entered the office of the Clerk of the Court. While in that office, he studied law and was admitted to the Bar in 1832, six years after marrying Mary Mansfield. In 1836, the year he purchased part of lot #51, he became a State Senator. Afterward, he returned to his legal profession which was very successful. His name is one of the most frequently encountered in mid-19th century legal documents. In 1861, he was appointed Major General of the Militia of the Eastern Shore. In 1865 he was elected to the State Senate again. In 1868 he was elected to the United States Senate which he served for five years. Senator Vickers donated three acres for the formation of Chester Cemetery at the edge of town. He was also the first President of the Kent County Railroad which was built before he died in the 1870's.

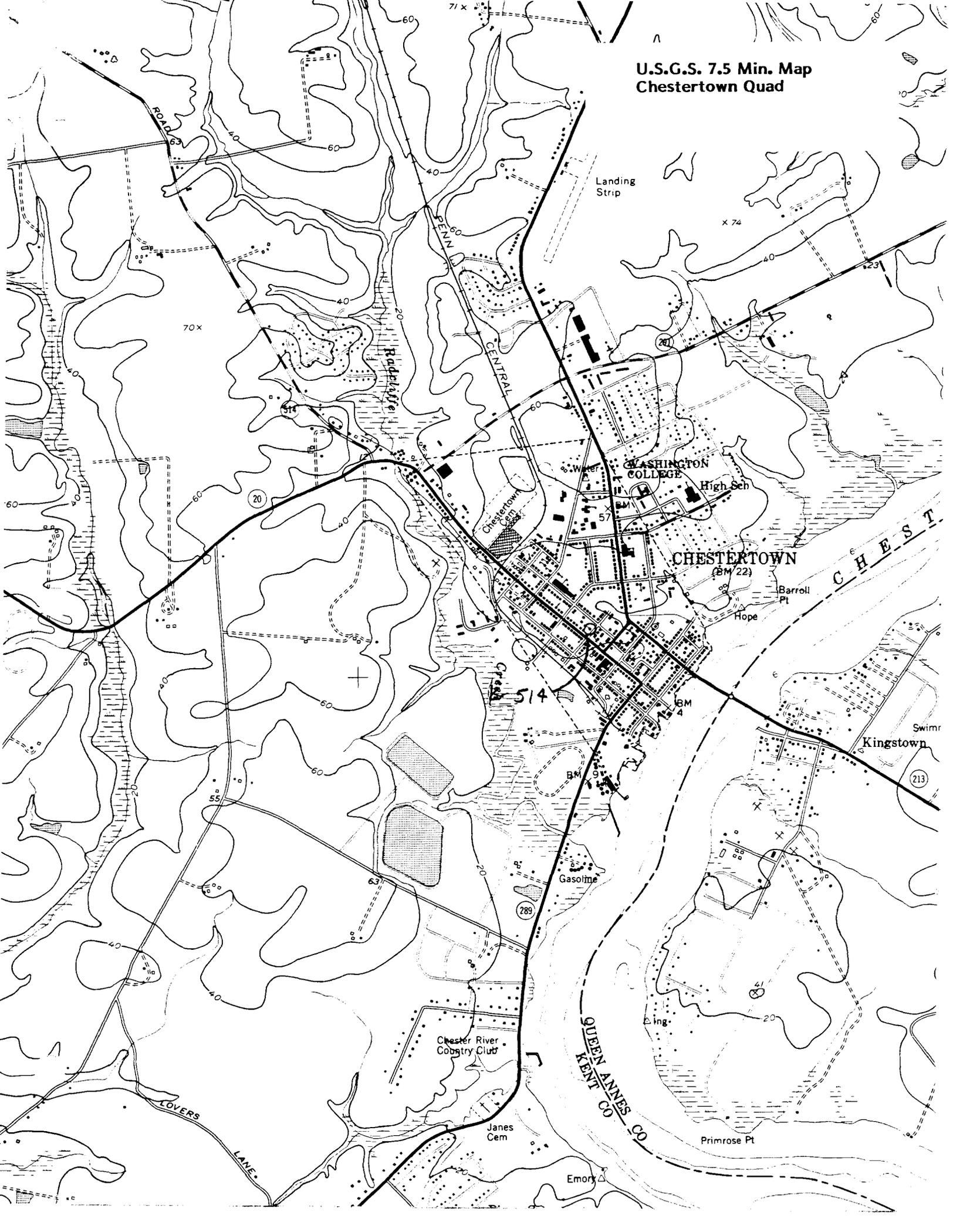
Before 1860, the Vickers built one of the grandest houses of the day on the lot which they had purchased from Mrs. Vickers' parents. Simon Martinet published a map of Kent County in that year and depicted a large three-story house in the margin. The house was similar to Captain Taylor's house built a few years earlier on the waterfront, but the Vickers house was three full stones tall with a covered observatory on its roof. The view over Chestertown from the observatory must have been impressive as it was the highest residential roof top in Chestertown at the time.

In 1880, after the death of Senator Vickers, his widow, Mary, sold the hosue and lot to Amanda M. Hurtt for the sum of \$5,000. The house remained in the Hurtt family ntil her daughters sold it in 1900 to the Board of County School Commissioners. Thereafter, the house was demolished and replaced with the grammar school which still remains on the same site. See K- for information on the school.





U.S.G.S. 7.5 Min. Map  
Chestertown Quad



Landing Strip

WASHINGTON COLLEGE  
High Sch

CHESTERTOWN  
(BM 22)

CHEST

Barroll Pt  
Hope

Swim  
Kingstown  
(213)

Gasolme

Chester River  
Country Club

Janes Cem

Emory

Primrose Pt

LOVERS

LANE

QUEEN ANNES CO  
KENT CO

70x

60

40

60

60

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20

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71x



George Vickers House, K-514 -  
Mill St., Chestertown

MSA SC 4138-24

Courtesy: Jane Brooks Sprinkle