

K-580

Circa 1880

Georgetown River House

Georgetown

Private

Georgetown's River House is located on the northeast corner at the intersection of Route 213 (King Street) with Front Street in Georgetown. The main, five-bay-wide facade faces Route 213, and a secondary, perpendicular, rear-wing facade, also with central roof gable, faces Front Street. To the east of the main wing, at its east end, is a one-bay, lower two-storey section that appears to be the remnant of an earlier building that perhaps dates from the early nineteenth century. A five-bay porch spans the main facade, and three-bay porches are on both north and south sides of the main wing. The frame house is covered with horizontal, lapped weatherboard. River House is representative of the largest and best appointed of the vernacular Victorian Gothic Revival county frame houses constructed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that are 2-1/2 storeys, five bays wide with central gable, and have a perpendicular rear wing. The plan became virtually standard, with a secondary hall at the wing's main entry, with access to stair, pantry, and both main section and wing rooms from it. These houses, scattered through the upper county, had bay-window projections (on one storey or two), very large main-entry architraves, almost floor-to-ceiling first-storey windows that opened onto a porch with walk-through access possible, and often a secondary facade, also with central gable. Other examples are Swan Meadow (K-587), Ivingo (K-565), Boxwood Place (K-615), Hickory Ridge (K-639), and the Puposzar House (K-633). They indicate that their original owners, John Fletcher Wilson and his wife Catherine, must have been among the most prosperous citizens of their time in upper Kent County. This is the only house of its type in Georgetown. River House is particularly notable for its plaster cornices, ceiling moldings, and medallions in the two first-storey rooms of the main section. These are rarely seen in Kent County.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Wilson House

and/or common Georgetown River House (Current)

2. Location

street & number East side Rt. 213 at Front Street (northeast corner) not for publication

city, town Georgetown 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Mr. & Mrs. Frederick C. Berg, Jr.

street & number P.O. Box 96 telephone no.: 648-5126

city, town Georgetown state and zip code Maryland 21930

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Court House liber EHP 50

street & number Cross Street folio 233

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys NONE

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. K-580

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

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(Continued)

8. Significance

Survey No. K-580

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/
<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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Circa 1880

Builder/Architect

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.

River House is representative of the largest and best appointed of the Victorian Gothic Revival county frame houses constructed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that are 2-1/2 stories, five bays wide with central gable, and have a perpendicular rear wing. The plan had become virtually standard with a secondary hall at the wing's main entry, with stair, pantry, and access to both main section and wing room from it. These houses, scattered through the upper county, had bays (on one story or two), very large main entry architraves, almost floor-to-ceiling first-story windows that opened onto a porch with walk-through access possible, and often a secondary facade, also with central gable. Other examples are Swan Meadow (K-587), Ivingo (K-565), Boxwood Place (K-615), Hickory Ridge (K-639), and the Puposzar House (K-633). They indicate that their original owners must have been among the most prosperous citizens of their time in Kent County. River House is particularly notable for its plaster cornices, ceiling moldings, and medallions in the two first-story rooms of the main section. These are rarely seen in Kent County.

(Continued)

Horizontal, lapped weatherboard is used on all sections. On the main section and major wing, the exposure is 5", and there are double cornerboards. On the old rear wing, which probably has been raised from 1-1/2 storey to 2, there are evidences in the weatherboard of alterations. A drip remains on the east end's north bay, indicating the probable location of a former cellar entry, where there is now a window. The siding is broken by a vertical board on the first storey where the wing room meets the enclosed porch. This is continuous on the second storey, indicating second-storey changes, perhaps involving enlargement above with a new roof, and raising the height from 1-1/2 storeys to two.

The foundation of the main section is brick above stone, granite that is roughly faced but rubble-laid. Georgetown probably was the main county port to receive this stone during the nineteenth century from quarries in the Port Deposit area. Numerous upper county houses's foundations are built with it, beginning in the early part of the century. At the north end of the main section, where the ground slopes and the foundation is higher, much of the granite foundation is exposed; it appears to have cement-mortar beveled joints. The main section is built over a crawl space; the joists run north-south, with the axis of the house. The wings have cellars, with communication between them. The east wing cellar is three-sided, appearing to be the cellar of an older building, perhaps even predating the frame structure above it. After the burning of Georgetown in 1813, lower Georgetown (where this house is located) was said to have been entirely destroyed. However, brick cellars would have remained and may have been re-used.

Access to the main, five-bay, main-facade porch is now from the south end, from which the balustrade has been removed and placed in the former entry area, in the center bay. The main entry doors are double and large, with heavy bolection molding. There is an unusual large, one-light transom with upper architrave corners rounded. The first-storey main-facade windows are double-hung and unusually tall, with large 2-over-four lights. They can be raised for walk-out access to the porch. The shutters at these windows have two sections of fixed louvers above a single panel that is recessed and slightly raised. The panel molding is an applied ogee-and-bevel. The shutters are very tall to match the windows. The other shutters on the house have movable louvers. The porch balustrade is quite simple. The posts are large, square, and chamfered, with scroll-sawn brackets on the post faces to the porch roof soffit. It resembles the work on the store building farther to the north on Route 213, where there is, however, a sawn partial spandrel. Windows elsewhere in the main section and main wing are double-hung and have 2-over-2 sash.

The central gable of both main section and wing is steep. In the center is a double-hung window with upper sash triangularly pointed. The weatherboard is continuous from main wall into the gables; there is no pedimenting or cornice return extending as gable base, as is sometimes seen in lower parts of the county. There are two steeply-gable-roofed dormers in the main-section's west roof slope; their roofs are broadly overhanging. The

(continued)

windows, with their heads shallowly segmented, are double-hung with 2-over-2 lights. The main section has a pair of chimneys through the main ridge that appear to be either side of the central gable. They extend down through the house on both sides of the central hall, within the side rooms whose fireplaces they serve.

The main section's ends have openings only in the center. On the south end there is a three-part bay on the first storey, the windows have shallowly-segmented heads. On the second and third levels above there is a single window. On the north end there is a single window on each of the three levels, shorter on each succeeding level; they have 2-over-2 lights.

The three-bay main wing, though it has a central gable (and no roof dormers) does not have its entry in the center bay, but in the west bay, into a small hall. The wing chimney is at its east gable end, formerly for a dining room fireplace and evidently also to serve the kitchen stove that was in the wing to the east.

The end wing is several steps lower than the main wing. It is here on the first storey that window trim survives with a backband of ovolo and fillets.

First-storey mantels are elaborate marbelized slate catalogue items, prefabricated, with central keystones. The stair is open string, with two compoundly turned balusters per tread. The rail appears to be walnut and is continuous till its end on the third level. There is a bold newel that appears to be of walnut. It is compoundly turned with a tapered octagonal main shaft. The stair is dogleg, and at the landing there is access to the second-storey wing.

Georgetown's River House was built about 1880 by John Fletcher Wilson and his wife Katherine Rebecca Woodall, who was one of the children of Andrew Woodall, the leading, wealthy entrepreneur of Georgetown and, by the time of his death in 1906, the owner of more than 30 farms in Kent and Cecil counties (Woodall was born in 1819). John Fletcher Wilson was a boat captain who operated out of Georgetown; he may have had a small fleet, taking farm commodities to Baltimore and bringing city items back. He was a son of Alexander Wilson of Wilson Point/Shorewood, by his first wife. Whether with financial resources from one side of the family or the other, or from the shipping business, the Wilsons appeared to have been one of the comfortably prosperous families of Georgetown and in a position to build a fine house. Until purchase by the present owners, the property had remained within the original family.

On the original plat of Georgetown (laid out during the 1730s), of which only a 1787 resurvey survives, lot no. 7 ran along King Street (Route 213) all the way from Front Street to the Sassafras River. The house is built on the upper end of lot no. 7 and probably part of lot no. 6, adjacent to the east. Even in the eighteenth century lots were divided, as old no. 7 is today. There were buildings there in the eighteenth century and very likely were those lost during the War of 1812, when the British burned all of lower Georgetown and parts of upper Georgetown (up the hill). Under the easternmost wing is a foundation that looks old and appears reworked. Above one window shows old trim, presumably from the early nineteenth century, though the foundation itself may be earlier. Evidently this new late nineteenth century house incorporated part of an old one standing either on the eastern part of the lot or on lot no. 6. An old photograph taken before this house was built appears to indicate a 1-1/2 storey house standing in its general vicinity. The portion evidently used in the new house was raised at some point to two full storeys, though lower than the two-storey new wing to its west.

Until the present owners, the first storey of the small, old wing was used for a kitchen. It had corner stairs to a cook's room above. On its north side was and still is a kitchen porch that led or or was connected in some way to a summer kitchen. According to Kitty Baxter, whose grandparents built the house, the porch and summer kitchen were all screened together. Both the regular kitchen and the summer kitchen had their own stoves.

Mrs. Baxter also offered interesting information about the use of some of the house's space. The north first-storey room of the main section was built to be the "company" parlor, but in practice in Kent County these rooms, isolated beyond the central hall, often came to serve functions other than what was intended. This one came to be largely a storage room; it had wardrobes for her grandfather's hunting clothes, and the grandchildren played there. It was also a summer bedroom for her grandparents, together with the front porch that was accessible through the large windows. At one time the north section of the front porch was screened. The family living room was the south main section room, and the first room back in the wing was the dining room. The present owners use the old dining room for a kitchen (altered, with an addition of old pantry space) and the old family living room for a dining room. The old, rear-wing kitchen is now used for a den.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Berg House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Northeast corner of U.S. Rt. 213 and Front Street

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY
Kent

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- GOVERNMENT
- TRANSPORTATION
- INDUSTRIAL
- OTHER
- MILITARY

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick C. Berg, Jr. Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

Box 96

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

VICINITY OF

STATE zip code
Md., 21930

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kent Co. Courthouse

Liber #: EHP 50
Folio #: 233

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown, Md., 21620

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

K-580

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

On the northeast corner of Rt. 213 and Front Street stands a large frame Victorian Gothic residence with principal facade paralleling Rt. 213 and secondary 'L' along Front Street.

It is a two and a half story structure upon a granite and brick foundation, the walls of which are covered with white weatherboard. The principal facade is 5 bays long with a one story porch along the entire first story. Access to the porch is from the south end, nearest Front Street. The plain double door entrance has a single-pane transom. Flanking the entrance are two windows on each side extending to the floor with two-over-four pane sash and louvered blinds. The porch has a simple balustrade extending between the square chamfered posts, in all but the south side thereof. there are scrolled brackets on the face of each post extending up to the soffit of the porch cornice and roof. It is similar to the porch on the adjoining store property, except that it lacks fretwork between the posts, which it probably had originally. On the second story of the facade are five plain windows with two-over-two sash and louvered blinds. In the center of the facade is a gable with window having triangular upper sash. Flanking the gable are two dormers with wide eaves and two chimneys at the apex of the roof.

On the south gable is a one story bay window with single window above on each floor. Set back from the plane of the gable, the three bay 'L' is a smaller version of the facade, except that its door is to the west side and there are no dormers on the roof, only a gable. Its chimney is located at the east side of the roof. Beyond the 'L' is a low one and a half story section, one bay long and closer to the ground.

Upon closer examination this small section appears to date prior to the other sections because of the presence of wide window trim with ovolo backband molding typical of the early 19th Century. This assumption is confirmed on the two early photos taken in 1870 and 1880; however, only half of the building in the photos remains as part of the present house.

The interior of the building is divided into stair passage (central) with flanking rooms in the principal section with entrance hall and single room behind and finally the oldest room down a couple of steps from the rest. A modern kitchen is located in what was formerly a continuation of the side entrance hall.

Most of the interior trim remains of the 1880's period, including slate mantels in imitation of marble, wide rather oddly molded trim, 4-panel doors, tall baseboards, etc. Both front rooms have plaster cornices and medallions in the center of the ceilings. The stair has turned newels and balusters and a walnut rail.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

K-580

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
REHISTORIC	<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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Berg House was constructed in the early 1880's by Fletcher Wilson on parts of Lots #6 and #7 of the original town plat. It is a representative house of the period for a prosperous family. It is also the only such house in the town of Georgetown, even though other buildings were being modified in the same period. It is also of interest because it possesses part of an early 19th Century dwelling which would have been constructed after the majority of the town had been destroyed by the British in 1814.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See attached.

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael Bourne, Consultant

October 1979

ORGANIZATION

Georgetown Association

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

c/o Richard A. Rosan

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Georgetown, Md., 21930

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.

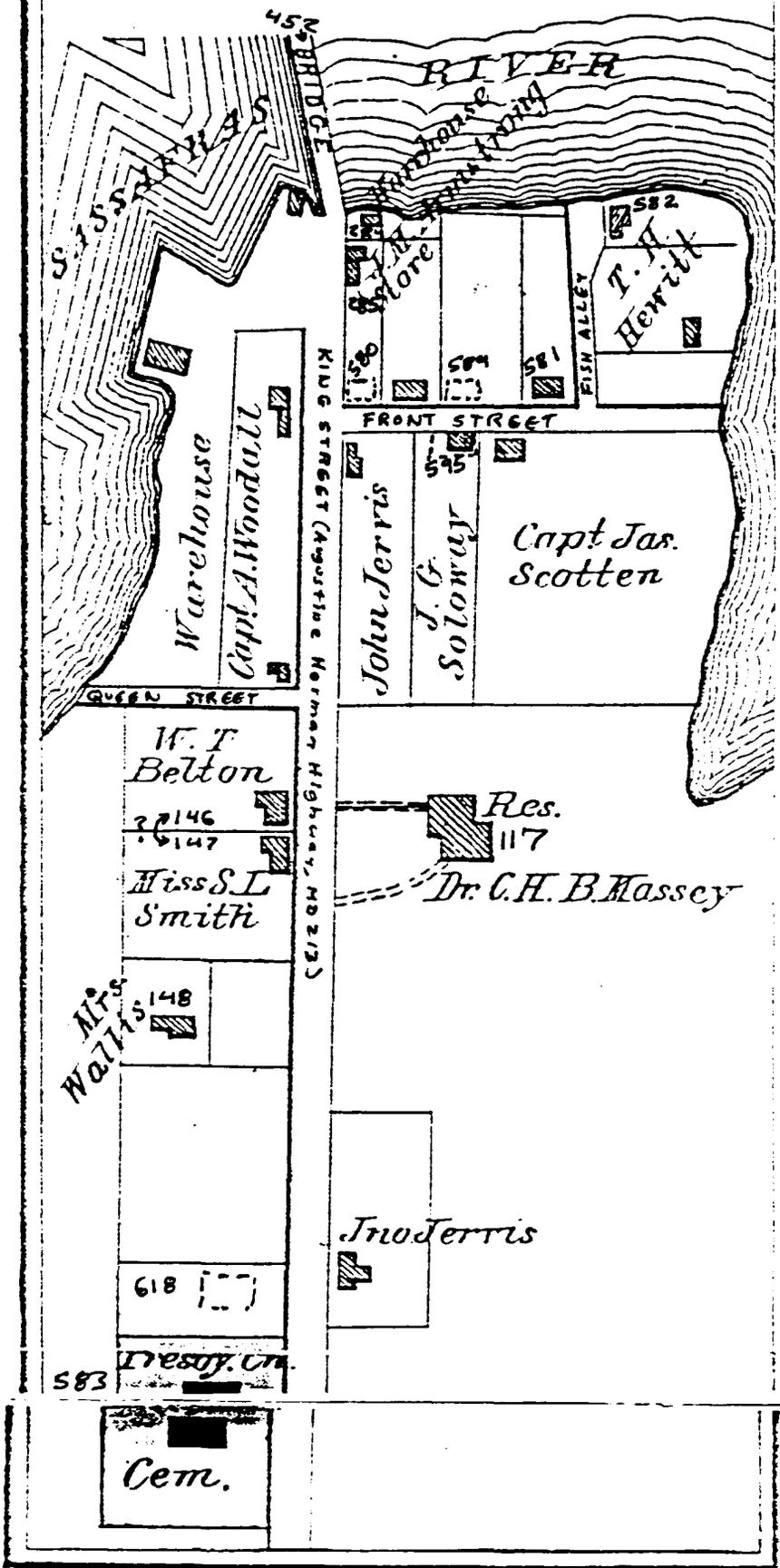
RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

GEORGETOWN

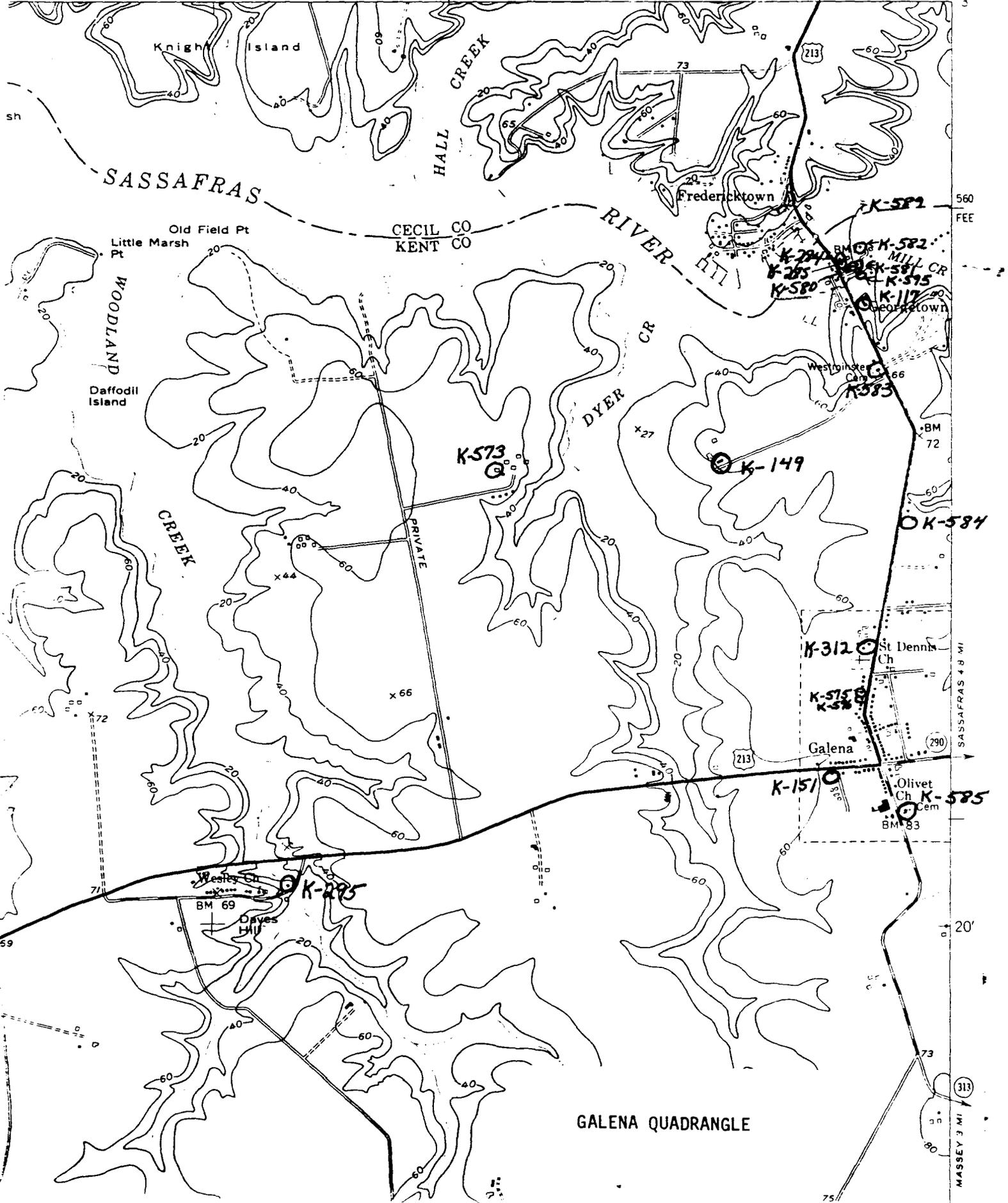
KENT CO.

Dist. No 7

K-580



55' | 110000 FEET



GALENA QUADRANGLE

MASSEY 3 MI



K-580

Georgetown River House

Rt. 213, Georgetown

M. Q. Fallaw - 8/28/85

View to northeast

K580-12



K-580

Georgetown River House

Rt. 213, Georgetown

M. Q. Fallaw - 8/28/85

View to south

K580-15



K-580

The Berg House, Georgetown

Georgetown River House
(Wilson House)

South ~~west~~

M. Bourne 3/79