NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

427

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

APR 17 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Port Tobacco

other names/site number: CH-372

2. Location

street & number: Maryland Route 6 and Chapel Road ☐ not for publication

city, town: Port Tobacco ☒ vicinity

state: Maryland code: MD county: Charles code: 017 zip code: 20677

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☒ private	☐ building(s)	7	11 buildings
☒ public-local	☒ district	43	sites
☐ public-State	☐ site		structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure		objects
	☐ object	50	11 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1.

4. 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 ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER — Date: 4-13-89

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade	Domestic/Single dwelling
Domestic	Culture/Museum
Social	

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls
roof
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Located along both sides of Chapel Point Road immediately south of Maryland Route 6, in a rural setting approximately three miles southwest of La Plata, Port Tobacco is one of Charles County's three incorporated municipalities. Founded as a port in 1684 and designated the county's seat of government in 1727, the town comprised more than 80 homes, commercial structures and public buildings by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. But after 1895, when the county seat was moved to La Plata following a fire that destroyed the courthouse, the town all but ceased to exist as a physical entity. Today, only a handful of buildings remain from that period when Port Tobacco was one of Maryland's most economically viable ports and a major center of commercial, political and social activity for the entire region. Of the five surviving eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings, four have been privately restored as single family residences. Another was recently renovated for use as a children's museum. Two of these buildings, Chimney House and Stagg Hall, are immediately adjacent to one another at one corner of the town square and are considered particularly significant examples of local eighteenth century architecture. In 1972, the 1821-1892 courthouse was reconstructed on its original site for use as a museum of local history. Other buildings include several private residences built after 1940, and a brick wellhouse that was erected in 1958 over a nineteenth century hydrant to commemorate the county's tercentenary. Approximately ninety percent of the historic features of the community constitute archeological sites, nearly all of which have remained undisturbed by later development since the end of the last century.

[X] See continuation sheet 7/1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The 50 acres included within the 1888 corporate limits of Port Tobacco encompass the site of Chandler's Town, a settlement established in 1684 under the Maryland Ports Act. Previous to this it had been the location of a centuries old Indian village called Potobac abandoned circa 1650. While it is probable that some buildings were constructed by colonists before 1684, no conclusive written evidence has been found, nor have any archeological studies been undertaken.

Charles County possesses one of the most complete series of colonial period records of any county in Maryland, yet remarkably little information survives relating to Chandler's Town's initial period of development. Thus, the actual size and configuration of the town, the number of lots that were sold, and the type and number of buildings that were actually constructed remains unknown. There are contemporary references to a church built there by 1684, but only very general information for other buildings. Nevertheless, it is clear that by the beginning of the eighteenth century Chandler's Town had developed into a sizeable settlement by local standards, though stores and ordinaries far outnumbered dwellings.

In 1727 the county built a courthouse and jail on a three-acre site contiguous to Chandler's Town, replacing an antiquated and deteriorating 1674 building located several miles to the east. In 1729 an Act of Assembly provided for the purchase of an additional sixty acres for a new town, embracing the new courthouse and jail, the church, and a major portion of the earlier Chandler's Town settlement.

Named Charles Town by direction of Assembly (though then and throughout its history commonly known as Portobacco or Port Tobacco), the new town was surveyed and divided in September 1729 by Robert Hanson, county surveyor. A total of 100 lots were arranged along a grid of streets, lanes and alleys, and one acre provided for a market place. In laying out the new town Hanson incorporated a number of improved lots dating from the Chandler's Town era, including those owned by John Parnham, Walter Pye, John Smallwood, Francis Goodrick, Mary Speake, William Chandler and Francis Ware, Sr.

Although a certificate of survey was entered in the county land records, the actual plat has been lost. This is unfortunate, but Port Tobacco's original plan could be reconstructed with a reasonable degree of accuracy using eighteenth century property descriptions and an extant 1888 survey plat identifying buildings, streets and other features existing at that time.

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With construction of a number of substantial private homes, mercantile establishments, taverns, tradesman's shops, smaller dwellings and supporting ancillary structures Port Tobacco had achieved an appearance of prosperity and permanence by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The most important buildings bordered the four sides of the town square, on which the courthouse and Protestant church stood. As would be expected, older and less sophisticated buildings were scattered throughout the town, such as Walter Scott's 18 by 12-foot dwelling with a wooden chimney.

In 1781 a visiting French officer noted in his diary that Port Tobacco possessed about 20 houses he considered especially noteworthy, and described the Protestant church as "very handsome." Twenty years later the town evidently reflected the less positive effects of the Revolution: the loss of the Scottish merchants that had not only been the lifesblood of its economy, but its principal property owners as well. In a 1796 publication Port Tobacco was represented as a town of about 80 houses that on the whole were somewhat rundown in appearance, and the church as "formerly an ornament ... now out of repair."

The 1783 tax assessment records for Charles County are a useful research tool, recording invaluable descriptions of individual buildings located throughout the county, but unfortunately those for Port Tobacco have not survived. The 1798 tax lists do include "Port Tobacco Towne," but only give the number of buildings standing on a specific lot, the owner's name but not the lot number, and does not list those properties valued for less than $100.00. According to these documents the town comprised 108 separate structures, from taverns and houses to stables and meathouses, in addition to the church, courthouse, jail and other public buildings.

By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century the physical condition of the town had apparently deteriorated even further. A marked change had also occurred in the makeup of the permanent population - that is, those who lived in the town full time as opposed to absentee property owners - and its status as a major port and center of commerce and trade for the entire region had considerably diminished. One of the several factors that contributed toward the town's decline during this period was the silting in of the Port Tobacco River as a result of the continued cultivation of the bordering hillsides and complete absence of erosion control. The town was now separated from the water by a growing expanse of marshland. The wharves where ocean-traveling ships were loaded and unloaded of their cargoes of tobacco and commercial goods had to be moved further and further downriver as the river became more narrow and more shallow.

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In 1816 a bill was passed by the Maryland General Assembly empowering a commission to oversee improvements to the town and the regulation of its market. A new jail had already been provided a few years earlier, and by 1821 the church and courthouse had been replaced as well. It was about this same time that a number of new houses and commercial structures were built, many of them along the east boundary of the town. Later, water was piped to the town from a spring on a hill to the east.

The buildings and features recorded in the 1888 survey plat drawn by H.C. Page reflect many of those changes that were made between about 1816 and 1840, including the apparent realignment of some of the streets and the abandonment of others. Also, until about 1825 boundary description of lots recorded in the land records were very specific regarding lot numbers and boundary reference points that had remained in use since 1729, and often included a brief history of ownership. Afterward, deeds became very general when identifying property boundaries, suggesting that the configuration of many of the lots might have been altered during this period as well. Additionally, many contiguous lots had been combined into single parcels, like that owned by merchant Basil R. Spalding and known as "Spalding's Square."

Early issues of Port Tobacco's two newspapers provide a wealth of information concerning the town's appearance during the latter part of the nineteenth century. During the 1870s and 1880s several village landmarks were destroyed by fires. Other buildings were razed by their owners, sometimes to the consternation of townspeople who recognized their historic value. Both papers made frequent mention of problems with the town's water system. The Port Tobacco canal, dug in the early 1870s to drain the marsh and which still forms the west boundary of the town, was regularly in need of repair. With the exception of yet another rebuilding of the Protestant church in 1884, very little building of any consequence took place in the town after about 1870, however.

The Page survey of 1888 shows about 70 dwellings and outbuildings, shops and stores, tavern-hotels and public buildings standing at that time. But within 25 years of the destruction of the courthouse and the removal of the county seat to La Plata, this number had been reduced to less than two dozen. Many of these, long abandoned, were by then in ruins. Today, Port Tobacco is an attractive rural community of seemingly randomly placed houses separated by lawns, buildings adjacent to the town square, and the rebuilt courthouse; there remains little to visually suggest that a considerably larger and infinitely more physically cohesive town once existed.

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The following site-specific discussion of former and existing structures and features within the proposed historic district is based on historical research, the 1888 Page survey, a plat of the town and sketches of buildings standing in 1894 prepared by the late Robert G. Barbour, photographic documentation, and information contained in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties for Charles County. Each structure, site and feature described is keyed to the attached plot plan. The CH numbers refer to the state inventory.

EXISTING HISTORIC STRUCTURES

1. STAGG HALL (PARNHAM-PADGETT HOUSE) [National Register Listed]

Built between 1739 and 1746 by merchant John Parnham, Stagg Hall is considered one of Charles County's finest surviving examples of mid-eighteenth century regional domestic architecture. A five-bay, one story, gambrel-roofed frame dwelling over a full cellar, it retains a remarkable amount of its original interior and exterior finishes and woodwork. The existing two-part wing is a replication of a former kitchen-service structure and incorporates the eighteenth century chimney and fireplaces of the earlier building. In the 1798 tax assessments for Port Tobacco the house and seven outbuildings (a store and dependencies) received the fourth highest valuation. From the time of its construction until the beginning of this century, Stagg Hall was owned by a succession of Port Tobacco's most prominent citizens and merchants, including three members of the Parnham family, Zephaniah Turner, Thomas H. Ridgate, Robert Fergusson, Basil R. Spalding and the Padgett family. Port tobacco's oldest standing structure whose date of construction is supported by historical documentation, Stagg Hall was nominated for listing in the National Register in April, 1988 on the basis of its architectural significance in a broader context (CH-13).

2. CHIMNEY HOUSE (RIDGATE-COMPTON HOUSE)

A large two-story frame house dating from the third quarter of the eighteenth century, Chimney House may stand on the site of a dwelling built in the 1730s by Robert Hanson. Construction of the existing house is attributed to merchant Thomas Howe Ridgate, and it originally functioned as a combined residence and store. It is noted for its impressive double chimney with a three-story connecting pent that stands at the west end. Containing six fireplaces, closets at the first and second floor levels, and a large arched doorway at the base, this chimney is an especially fine example of the chimney and pent

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combinations so characteristic of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century vernacular architecture of lower Southern Maryland. A 1796 advertisement described this building as having a "large store and back storeroom" at the first floor, "four rooms and a passage upstairs ... piazzas and platforms on the north, south and part of the west end," as well as a kitchen and washhouse. Used as a tavern, lawyer's offices and a court building at various times in the nineteenth century, it had fallen into disrepair when it was purchased and restored circa 1930 by Mrs. Alice Fergusson, a local philanthropist. This was the first restoration project to take place in the town and one of the first in Charles County. Chimney House meets the criteria necessary for individual listing in the National Register for its local architectural significance (CH-14).

3. PORT TOBACCO COURTHOUSE

The reconstructed courthouse is included in this list of historic structures since it incorporates the south wing of the original building. A simple, three-part Federal-style brick structure built between 1819 and 1821, the central block of the courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1892 and only the two flanking wings were left standing. Eventually the north wing was demolished, and the south wing renovated as a Baptist Chapel. In 1972, with State funding, the main block and north wing were rebuilt and the surviving south wing returned to its original appearance. In the course of an archeological study of the site in 1968, a portion of what is believed to have been the foundations of the 1709 Protestant church were found beneath the west wall of the south wing and the south wall of the main block. As this building is mostly new construction and the original wing extensively restored, it is counted as non-contributing for the purpose of this nomination.

Owned by the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, the building is maintained by that organization as their headquarters and as a museum of local history, and is a frequently visited county tourist attraction (CH-169).

4. BURCH HOUSE (CAT SLIDE HOUSE)

One of Port Tobacco's three surviving eighteenth century buildings, the Burch House, evolved to its present form from a one story, two-room, timber-framed structure that is said to have been built as a store. In the early nineteenth century two sheds were added across the back wall. In the mid-1800s the original section was raised to two stories and the rear roof extended to cover the shed rooms. A single exterior chimney with tiled weatherings stands at each end. One of the

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chimneys has an arched opening in its base that provided access to a cellar that was later filled in. The building is traditionally said to date circa 1720, though extensively altered (including a nearly complete rebuilding of its front wall early in this century), and the only structure surviving from the Chandler's Town era of the town's development. Owned by the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, the Burch House was recently renovated for use as a children's museum (CH-23).

5. BOSWELL-COMPTON HOUSE

The three-bay, side passage plan of the main block of this attractive, four-part frame house suggests that like so many of its type scattered throughout the county, it was probably built during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The street front elevation is of a telescoping configuration, with a modern, one-story section at the south end that replaced an earlier kitchen of similar design. Another two-story wing extends out from the back of main block (CH-115).

6. MT. BLEAK

Sited on the crest of a ridge at the far, northeast corner of town, Mt. Bleak, as it has been known since the early nineteenth century, was probably built by Dr. Oscar Fergusson, a prominent local physician, in about 1850. A two-story, three-bay frame house, its attractive situation, the decorative treatment of its overhanging eaves, and its double unit windows give it considerable visual interest. How extensively this end of the town was developed in the eighteenth century is not known, but early nineteenth century records suggest that the existing house was preceeded by another building (CH-116).

7. PORT TOBACCO SCHOOL

A rectangular, clapboarded frame structure built shortly after the county seat was moved to La Plata, this is one of the few one room schoolhouses remaining in Charles County. Although the building was stabilized about 20 years ago, it has remained vacant and is now in a deteriorating condition (CH-126).

8. WILMER OFFICE

Raised to two stories circa 1930, this was originally a one story frame building dating from the nineteenth century and which served as the office of a local physician who lived in the adjacent Wilmer House (#45).

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NON-CONTRIBUTING

Until very recently the cultivation, curing, and export of tobacco had been the staple of Charles county's economy since its initial settlement. It was the importance of the tobacco trade that created Port Tobacco, and on which it depended for two hundred years.

There are at present four framed curing barns located within Port Tobacco's corporate limits, two of which serve other agriculturally related uses as well. These barns range in date from circa 1900 to about 1940, and are not by themselves historic, but they are an integral part of the historic landscape and serve as a reminder of the significant role tobacco played in the growth and development of the town and region.

(a) WELL HOUSE. A square, pyramid-roofed brick structure with arched openings in each side, this was built in 1958 to commemorate Charles County's tercentenary. The building shelters a public hydrant dating from the mid-nineteenth century and fed by a system of pipes that brought water here from a spring on a hill east of town. In a February, 1897 article in the Port Tobacco Times regarding long overdue repairs to the town hydrants, the editor quipped:

"One of the old residents told me that until the water supply was piped to our village from Mr. Digges' hill no children were raised in Port Tobacco. From the difficulty in getting the spring again in running order it would seem that another blow is to be struck at an infant industry which makes the nation great and populous."

(b) PRIVATE RESIDENCE. This one story frame house with a three-bay north facade and an end chimney was built in 1953 on the site of Quenzel's Store. It was recently enlarged by a two-part one story wing at its east end.

(c) PRIVATE RESIDENCE. A modest one story frame structure immediately adjacent to the Burch House, this building stands on or in close proximity to the site of The Matthews House. Late-1950s.

(d) PRIVATE RESIDENCE. A one story "T"-shaped structure, the principal portion of which is faced with formstone. Mid-twentieth century.

(e) PRIVATE RESIDENCE. A one story brick house with dormered roof. Mid-twentieth century.

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(f) GARAGE. A two-bay, gable-fronted building of brick and frame construction. Mid-twentieth century.

HISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

9. ST. CHARLES HOTEL

Facing south over the town square, the St. Charles Hotel, known also as the Browner House and by various other names in its long history, was Port Tobacco's best known and most prosperous tavern-hotel. A large, two-story frame structure built over a partially elevated brick-walled cellar, it had double porches across the front, a rear brick-walled cellar, it had double porches across the front, a rear wing nearly as large as the main block, and other structural appendages. A late-eighteenth century advertisement described it as having 25 bedrooms, a dining room seating 200 people, game room, breakfast room, reception rooms, a proprietor's suite and quarters for servants. It and the Matthew Blair house and store both received a valuation of $4,000.00 in the 1798 assessments, making them the two most important privately owned properties in Port Tobacco at that time. It continued to be Port Tobacco's most popular hostelry throughout the nineteenth century. An 1881 newspaper account of various social events referred to a dinner-reception held there "in the style for which the accomplished hostess of that establishment is famous." In 1969 the site was partially excavated, exposing a brick floored cellar room with an expansive cooking fireplace at one end. An analysis of clay pipe stems and other artifacts revealed during the excavation suggested a mid-eighteenth century date of construction (CH-170).

10. THE SMOOT HALL

A square, two-story, hip-roofed structure of frame construction that was probably built between about 1880 and 1900. It may have been built to replace the Smoot Hotel, which burned in 1883, the heat from which broke numerous windows in the nearby courthouse (CH-259).

11. PORT TOBACCO JAIL

A rectangular, two-story, gable-roofed brick structure that appears to have been three bays in width with the principal entrance door at the west end of the north facade. According to a 1916 account, the jail had heavy oak doors with iron gratings that opened onto a passage with an adjacent large room with "a number of fireplaces." A stair in the passage led to a hall and at least two more rooms (one for

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women) on the second floor, with additional holding cells in the attic. The building was erected circa 1811, presumably on the site of the previous jail. Its location adjacent to Christ Church, and the known relocation of the courthouse in 1819-21, suggests that the 1727 courthouse may have stood at this end of the town square, possibly on the site later occupied by the church (CH-172).

12. CHRIST CHURCH

The site of the original Protestant church built by Michael Ashford and completed by 1684 is not known. It was likely a frame structure inasmuch as it was replaced in 1709. (See Section 8: Resource History.) The brick foundations of an apsidal-shaped building found beneath the foundations of the 1818-21 courthouse may have been those of the 1709 church (See #3 above). The relatively modest dimensions of the foundations, however, suggest that it was not the "large" and "elegant" church noted in eighteenth and early nineteenth century descriptions of the town. By 1818 a stone church had been built on this specific site, and it is possible that the materials used in its construction were salvaged from an earlier church that was located elsewhere in the town. The stone is believed to have originated from Virginia's Aquia Creek quaries. In 1884 the church was remodeled in the Victorian-Gothic style. In 1904 it was dismantled, moved to La Plata, and re-erected adjacent to the new courthouse. The foundations of the church have been outlined in brick, and there is a small cemetery adjacent to the site associated with the Baptist Chapel that formerly occupied the south wing of the courthouse early in this century. Port Tobacco Parish was one of the original parishes established in Maryland in 1692 (CH-171).

13. UNNAMED SITE

In early photographs, this structure appears as a two-part frame dwelling, the two-story, three-bay main block of which faced north. The building had exterior chimneys and was probably built circa 1800 (CH-260).

14. SWANN HOUSE

This small but architecturally intriguing frame dwelling with quarried stone foundations faced north and was of one story height. The three-bay facade featured a centered door, and a single exterior chimney with flanking pents stood at the west end. Of brick construction, the chimney and pents extended the full width of that elevation. The raised foundations enclosed a full cellar. A later shed addition stood on the

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south side. Probably eighteenth century (CH-261).

15. CENTENNIAL HOTEL

This long, two-story clapboarded frame structure featured a galleried porch across its north facade. Photographs taken of the building early in this century show exposed framing details that suggest it was built in several stages. Probably early nineteenth century with later alterations (CH-262).

16. WADE HOUSE

A two-story, five-bay, clapboarded frame house with double chimneys at each end that had two-story flush pents. Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (CH-263).

17. WADE'S STORE

Built circa 1850, this was a one-story, three-bay frame structure with a centered entrance door.

18. WILLIAM WADE HOUSE

Facing east, this was a two-story frame house with a single exterior chimney at each end. Possibly circa 1800 (CH-265).

19. UNIDENTIFIED BUILDING SITE (CH-266).

20. BAKE SHOP

Age and appearance unknown (CH-267).

21. QUENZEL HOUSE AND STORE

Julius Quenzel sold dry goods, millinery, jewelry and watches and clocks from this location in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The building was of frame construction, one-story in height, with a centered door flanked by two windows on its north facade. A mid-twentieth century building now stands on the same site (CH-268).

22. STORE OR WAREHOUSE

A rectangular, one-story frame structure. Age unknown (CH-269).

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23. Bowie House

A two-story frame structure. Age unknown, but possibly mid-nineteenth century (CH-270).

24. BOWIE STORE

Appearance and age unknown (CH-271).

25. STORE

Appearance and age unknown (CH-272).

26. STORE

Appearance and age unknown (CH-273).

27. STORE

Appearance and age unknown (CH-274).

28. MARYLAND INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER BUILDING

The Maryland Independent, founded in 1872 and still published, occupied this two-story frame building in the late nineteenth century. At one end stood a one-story frame addition. Early nineteenth century or older (CH-175).

29. SMOOT WAREHOUSE

The principal facade of this large, rectangular building of frame construction is believed to have been at its north end. Age unknown; possibly before 1800 (CH-276).

30. PORT TOBACCO TIMES BUILDING

Surviving photographs show this to have been a one story frame structure with a dormered gable roof. The stone foundation walls enclosed a full cellar and a single exterior chimney stood at one end. The Port Tobacco Times and other publications were printed here by Elija Wells. Eighteenth century (CH-173).

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31. UNNAMED SITE

A one story frame structure with a three-bay east end facade. Age unknown (CH-277).

32. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

A one story frame structure that may have initially functioned as a domestic dependency. Age unknown (CH-278).

33. MATTHEWS HOUSE

This two-story frame structure faced north. In the late nineteenth century it served as a community hall. Age unknown (CH-279).

34. LACY HOUSE

A two-story frame house with a single large chimney at one end, the Lacy House had a two-story detached kitchen that was later connected to the rear elevation of the main block by a smaller frame hyphen. Probably eighteenth century (CH-280).

35. WELCH HOUSE

A two-story frame dwelling, three-bays in width on the west side and with a single exterior chimney at each end. Eighteenth century (CH-281).

36. OWENS HOUSE

A large, three-part frame house, each of the main parts of which were two bays in width on the west front elevation. The main block had a single chimney at its north end. Late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (CH-282).

37. LACY HOUSE

A two-story, three-bay frame dwelling with centered front and rear doors. Facing west, it had a single exterior chimney at the north end. Probably eighteenth century (CH-283).

38. HUTTON-JENKINS HOUSE

This modestly scaled dwelling was, besides Stagg Hall, the only gambrel-roofed structure standing in Port Tobacco by the close of the

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nineteenth century. A frame house with brick ends, it faced north and had exterior chimneys with tiled weatherings. Eighteenth century (CH-284).

39. HAMILTON HOUSE

A substantial, two-story frame house with exterior chimneys, the Hamilton House faced west and had a one story frame wing at the south end of the rear elevation. Probably eighteenth century (CH-285).

40. ROBERTS' STORE

A two-story, frame, commercial structure with its principal entrance at the west end and one story additions at the north side and east end. When this building was torn down, parts of it were salvaged and re-used in constructing Wade's Store. Probably mid-nineteenth century (CH-286).

41. WADE'S BARN

A tobacco curing barn built circa 1900 by George A. Wade (CH-287).

42. ROBERTS HOUSE

Similar to the Hamilton House (#39) in architecture and age (CH-288).

43. WADE'S STORE

Recently destroyed by fire, this was a small, one-story frame structure with wood shutters and a three-bay end facade. It was built circa 1900 by George A. Wade using materials salvaged from Roberts' Store (#40) (CH-133).

44. BARBOUR-ALBRITTAIN HOUSE

Designed as a duplex residence, this was a two-story frame building with its principal facade at the east end. A series of smaller extensions, including semi-detached kitchens, stood at the opposite end. Probably third quarter, nineteenth century (CH-184).

45. WILMER HOUSE

This two-part, two-story frame house had a single exterior chimney at each end. Both parts of the house were three bays in width. The

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lower two-story section may have predated the main block. At the far south end stood a one-story, two-bay kitchen wing. Probably early nineteenth century (CH-252).

46. W.W. PADGETT'S STORE

A two-story commercial-use structure, this frame building had an east end facade featuring a stepped, storefront gable line. A large double door occupied the middle bay. Probably third quarter, nineteenth century (CH-253).

47. JENKINS HOUSE

Facing east, this one story frame dwelling featured a three-bay facade with a centered door and an interior chimney at the south end. Probably eighteenth century.

48. BOSWELL HOUSE

The second floor level of this two-story frame structure projected beyond the first floor wall plane by several inches at the south end facade. This was probably originally built as a store. Age unknown (CH-255).

49. BARBER SHOP

This small, frame structure may have originally been built as the medical office of Dr. Francis Parnham, and later that of his son, Dr. John Parnham, in the eighteenth century (CH-256).

50. PRINT SHOP

According to associated land records, the second floor level of this building was used as a printing shop. It had originally been built as a granary. Probably eighteenth century (CH-257).

51. LACEY'S STORE

This one-story, gable-roofed frame structure was four bays in width on its west front and had paneled shutters and batten doors, and featured a centered chimney. This may have been built in 1768 by Daniel Jenifer. Probably eighteenth century (CH-258).

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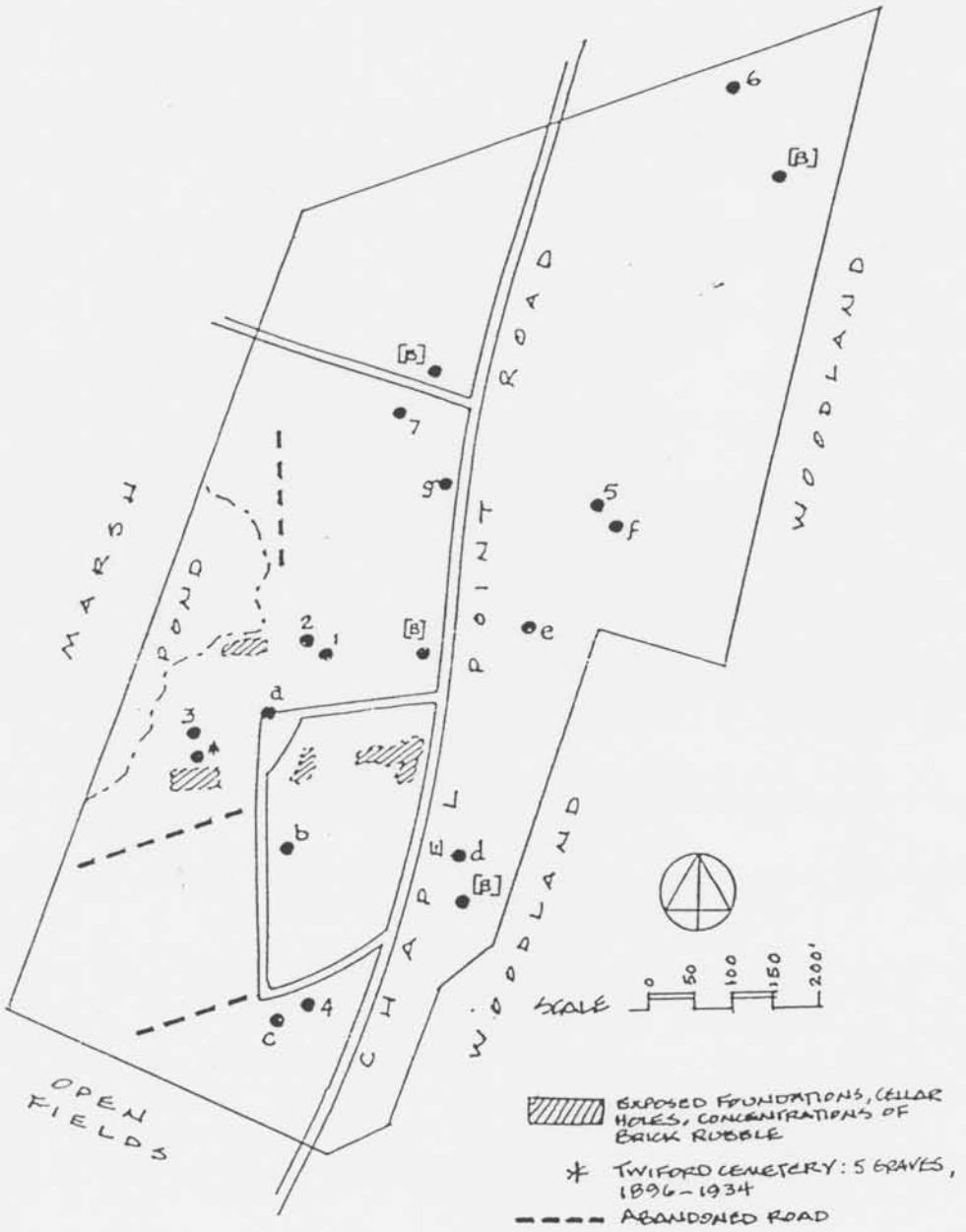
NOTE:

The buildings described or noted under Archeological Sites existed in 1888 and 1894. The names used to identify these sites (i.e. "Roberts' Store," or "Wilmer House") represent the names of their owners during that period. Some of those buildings indicated to be of probable nineteenth century date may in fact be older structures that were altered. Historical research into these and additional suspected sites is continuing. Outbuildings shown on the 1888 Page survey and the "1894" Barbour plat are not included since with only a few exceptions their appearance, age and actual use are not presently known.

PRE-HISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

There are no specifically identified pre-historic or historic-aboriginal archeological sites within the corporate limits of Port Tobacco. Field collections gathered by professionals and non-professionals suggest that such sites probably exist, however.

See Continuation Sheet 7/16



PLOT PLAN SHOWING THE CORPORATE BOUNDARIES, EXISTING ROADS, AND EXISTING HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC FEATURES.

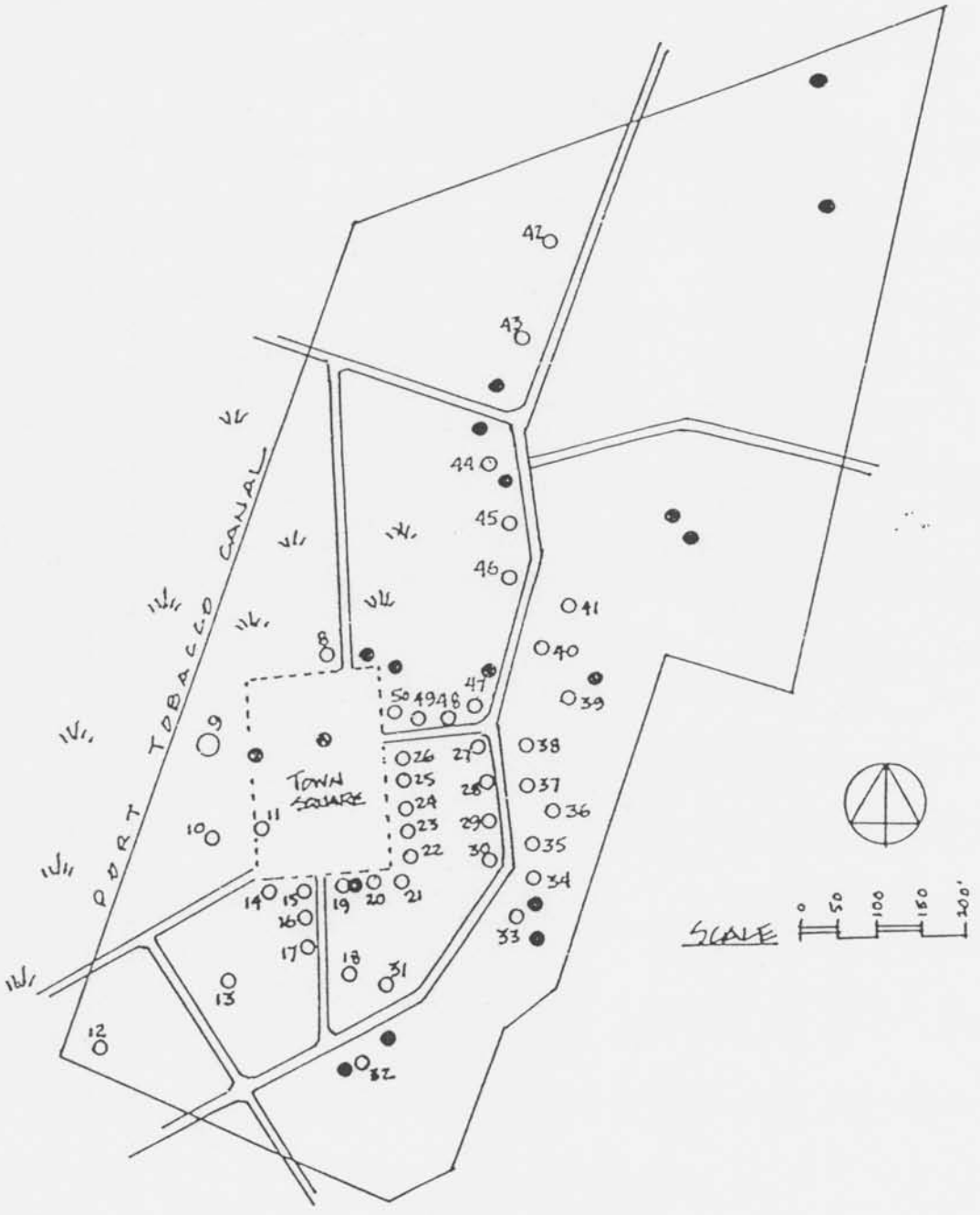
See Continuation Sheet 7/17

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Port Tobacco CH-372
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 17



PLOT PLAN SHOWING CORPORATE BOUNDARIES, ROADS EXISTING IN 1888, AND KNOWN HISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES.

APR 17 1989

CH-372

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Exploration/Settlement	1684 - 1900	1684
[illegible]		1729
Commerce		1895
Architecture		
Archeology		
Economics		
Social History		

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

In the context of lower Southern Maryland, Port Tobacco is a singularly unique cultural resource. Believed to be the region's oldest continuously occupied site, it was Charles County's largest and most important town from the late-seventeenth century through to the end of the nineteenth century, and, from 1727 until 1895, its seat of government. Established in 1684 on the site of an Indian settlement of the late Woodland period whose existance was noted by Captain John Smith in 1608, by the mid-eighteenth century Port Tobacco was recognized throughout the colonies as one of Maryland's premier centers of commerce and trans-Atlantic trade. A gathering place for the dissemination of information and the training of soldiers during the American Revolution, it also produced several individuals who attained considerable political prominence during the Revolutionary period, including Thomas Stone, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Hanson, first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation, and Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, a signer of the U.S. Constitution. By the early-nineteenth century, Port Tobacco's status as a port had declined, but it remained central to the economic, political and social life of the county until other commercially viable communities began to develop following the advent of rail transportation in this locality in the early-1870s. During the Civil War, Port Tobacco was well known for the pro-southern activities and sympathies of its citizens, and then again in 1865 when Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was traced to this location. When the courthouse burned in 1892 and the county seat was moved to La Plata, Port Tobacco seemingly disappeared overnight. Little now remains to recall the town's former existance, although two architecturally significant eighteenth century buildings survive, and its 1819/21-1892 courthouse, a visual focal point for the town, was reconstructed on its original site in 1972. Port Tobacco's history and physical development is remarkably well documented in the county's archives and other historic documents. This information, in combination with its large number of known building sites, supports the conclusion that it is an archeological resource of inestimable value whose continued study will greatly advance our knowledge of the material culture of the Chesapeake region.

☒ See continuation sheet for HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data

8. Statement of Significance

CH-372

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Exploration/Settlement	900 A.D. - 1900	1684
Politics/Government		1729
Commerce		1895
Architecture		
Archeology		
Economics		
Social History		

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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☒ See continuation sheet for HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Periods:

Contact and Settlement Period, A.D. 1570-1750
Rural Agrarian Intensification, A.D. 1680-1815
Agricultural-Industrial Transition, A.D. 1815-1870

Prehistoric/Historic Period Themes:

Settlement
Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning
Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
Government/Law
Social/Education/Cultural

Resource Type:

Category:

District

Historic Environment:

Rural

Historic Functions and Uses:

Domestic/Single Dwellings/Residences
Domestic/Secondary Structures/Dependencies
Commerce/Trade/Business/Professional/Law
Offices/Shops/Stores/Market Places/Taverns/Warehouses
Social/Meeting Halls/Social/Fraternal
Government/Courthouse/Jail/Post Office
Defense/Military Post
Other

Known Design Source:

Unknown

See Continuation Sheet 8/2

HISTORIC CONTEXT: HISTORIC SETTING

Port Tobacco, also known variously in its history as Potobac, Portobacco, Chandler's Town and Charles Town, was first developed as a port town in 1684 on a site previously occupied by a centuries-old Indian settlement. Strategically located in the center of Charles County (established 1658), it became county seat in 1727 with the building of the county courthouse on a contiguous three-acre tract. The original settlement was incorporated into a larger town laid out in 1729. By the mid-eighteenth century it was the base of operations for factors representing a number of British and European merchant houses, and had grown to be one of the largest and most economically important ports on Maryland's Western Shore. Though its status changed after the Revolution with the loss of its European trade contracts and the silting in of the adjacent river, Port Tobacco remained the center of mercantile, political and social activity for Charles Countians until the close of the nineteenth century.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: RESOURCE HISTORY

One of Maryland's oldest continuously occupied communities, Port Tobacco's recorded history predates by a quarter-century the arrival of the first groups of English colonists to permanently settle in Maryland and the founding of St. Mary's City in 1634.

In 1608, while making his exploratory voyage up the Potomac River, Captain John Smith noted the existance of an Indian village named Potobac in this location. Smith estimated the inhabitants to include about 20 warriors, and it is possible that between 100 and 200 individuals made up this particular tribe. Rather than sharing one common village, however, the Indians lived in small, scattered groups in relative close proximity to one another. The Potobacs were of the Potomac Creek complex, and their period of occupation of the site was predominantly during the Late Woodland period (900-1600 A.D.).[1]

The importance of the tribe, the relative security their "friendliness" provided against the more aggressive Susquehannocks, and the strategic value of the site itself is reflected in the fact that it was here that the Jesuit priest, Andrew White, established a mission in about 1639. Father White, often referred to as Maryland's first missionary and historian, wrote extensively of the appearance and customs of the natives in reports returned to Rome, and while at the Port Tobacco mission compiled a dictionary and grammar of the Indian language and composed a catechism in the native dialect. Before the political turmoil created by the English Civil Wars resulted in his

See Continuation Sheet 8/3

forced return to Rome, Father White recorded the conversion of the "young Queen of Portobaco" and most of her subjects to the Christian faith.[2]

The Potobacs are believed to have abandoned the valley by the late-1660s, migrating west and north and assimilating into other friendly tribes and cultures. It has been theorized that at least part of the tribe moved into Essex County on Virginia's Northern Neck near Tappahanock, where there is now a tributary of the Rappahanock River called Port Tobacco Creek.[3] Some of the Indians are said to have remained in the vicinity, and it is conceivable that three Indian servants identified in the 1681 inventory of the Port Tobacco estates of merchant Benjamin Rozer were members of this tribe. One of the three, "Nicholas ye Indian," was an indentured servant with one year to serve at the time of Rozer's death. The other two, identified only as "one Indian Lad" and "one Indian man," were committed to servitude "for life."[4]

Archeological studies of several camp sites and burial ossuaries in the area by William Graham in the 1930s revealed evidence of centuries of Indian occupation. Particularly rich concentrations of artifacts were discovered between the cultivated fields at the south end of Port Tobacco and the point of land known as Warehouse Landing. In the 1960s and 1970s, field surveys and the excavation of several colonial and post-colonial building sites in the town revealed additional artifacts similar in age and type to those recorded by Graham.[5]

The mid-1600s witnessed a steady influx of colonists into this area of Charles county as they moved outward from St. Mary's City in search of land and opportunity. Between 1638 and 1674, several major proprietary grants were made to land bordering the Port Tobacco River. The earliest of these, 500 acres at the mouth of the river on its east side, was granted to the Jesuits in 1638, and increased by an additional 3,500 acres on the west side of the river in 1649. The Jesuits divided much of the land, called St. Thomas Manor, into leaseholds and began renting to tenants as early as 1652.[6] It was also in 1649 that Lieutenant William Lewis received a manorial grant of 2,000 acres on the east side of the river, north of St. Thomas Manor and encompassing the existing town site. Lewis shortly afterward transferred ownership to Job Chandler and Simon Oversee. Brothers-in-law as well as business partners, Chandler and Oversee divided the property, with Chandler taking the upper half and Oversee the 1,000 acres to the south.[7] In 1654 Job Chandler patented Goose Creek, a 1,600-acre tract on the west side of the river, and in 1658, 550 acres called Chandler's Hills that

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bordered the north side of the present town.[8]

It was Job Chandler, his son and grandson, and Job's north half of the original Lewis tract that figures most prominently in the town's early colonial period of development. Born in England, Job Chandler immigrated to Maryland via Virginia where he had married into the prominent Thorowgood family. It is assumed he first settled on the north end of the land he and Oversee acquired from Lieutenant Lewis. The oldest part of a house standing on that property, resurveyed and patented in 1674 as Chandler's Hope, is traditionally said to have been a dwelling Job Chandler built and occupied, but its architecture and carpentry details indicate a considerably later date of construction. It is much more likely that Chandler's first home and store, possibly shared with his wife's sister and brother-in-law, was located closer to the river. There is also reason to believe that Chandler was living on his Goose Creek plantation by the time of his death in 1659, a location that placed him in closer proximity to the leaseholders of St. Thomas Manor, on whose business he undoubtedly depended.[9]

By the late-1650s Chandler and Oversee had been joined by another merchant, Benjamin Rozer. Probably the most financially successful of the merchant-planters to settle here in the seventeenth century, Rozer's first acquisition of land in the vicinity was a 300-acre tract called May Day bordering the north end of Chandler's Hope. Rozer subsequently purchased Oversee's share of the original Lewis grant when it was declared escheat on Oversee's death intestate and without direct heirs. Renamed Rozer's Refuge, it was here that Rozer lived in a fairly substantial house built before his death in 1680.[10] Chandler and Rozer enjoyed levels of affluence that were in marked contrast to that of a majority of colonists, whose life was a dreary, day-to-day struggle. Protestants, yet loyal to the colony's Catholic proprietor, Chandler and Rozer held important offices and positions of influence in the proprietary government, including service in the Upper and Lower Houses of the Assembly and as justices of the Provincial Court. Further unifying the two families and their connection to the proprietor was the marriage of Job's son, Colonel William Chandler, to Mary Sewall, a step-daughter of Charles Calvert, 3rd Lord Baltimore.[11] Benjamin Rozer's second wife was Mary's sister, Anne.

CHANDLER'S TOWN/PORTOBACCO

Port Tobacco's identification as a town site first appears in a series of legislative documents recorded between 1668 and 1671 proposing the establishment of specific ports in Maryland where "all export as well as import trade (was) to be channeled." On Augustine Hermann's

See Continuation Sheet 8/5

now-famous map of Virginia and Maryland, prepared in 1670 and published in 1673, it is shown as one of 13 ports in Maryland at that time. However, while there may have been a few buildings standing on the site in the 1660s and 1670s, it was not actually developed as a town until after 1683 when a bill entitled "An Act for Advancing the Trade of Tobacco," proposed a year earlier, was amended and approved by the Governor's Council. In the earliest of these documents the town's location appears to have been slated for the east side of the river at or near chapel Point, but by 1684 had been moved to the west end of the 1674 Chandler's Hope land owned by Colonel William Chandler.[12] The newly established port was appropriately named Chandler's Town.

The 1683 Act of Assembly directed a group of designated commissioners - Colonel William Chandler among them - to acquire 100 acres and after arranging its purchase to have the land surveyed and divided with "streets, lanes and allies." An open space for a church or chapel, a market house and/or other public buildings was to be provided, and the balance of the land marked into 100 lots of equal size. The original owner of the property was to be given first choice of one lot. Sales were limited to county residents for the first four months lots were available, at one lot per person. Each of those purchasing a lot were required to build a house at least 400 square feet in size before August 31, 1685 or forfeit ownership. Any lots remaining unsold after five years reverted to the original land owner (Chandler).[13]

Unfortunately, there is no surviving survey of Chandler's Town, nor a listing of those who purchased lots and what was built where, though it is known that a Protestant church was under construction in 1683 and that county court was held in the town on various occasions beginning in the late-1680s.[14] While deeds recorded in the 1720s describe improved lots on both sides of Port Tobacco Creek this may be the result of a natural or artificially induced change in the course of the creek. The creek, the actual headwater of the Port Tobacco River, began silting in at this point - not many decades after the town was founded - as more and more of the bordering lands were put under cultivation.

It is likely that few if any of the buildings constructed in the town before 1720 were larger than the required 400 square feet. Many were probably smaller, given the fact that during this period even the most prosperous colonist rarely lived in a house larger than two rooms with attic chambers above. The majority were undoubtedly timber framed, with clapboarded walls and roofs, built around hole-set posts or supported by wood blocks, and there were probably as many chimneys (or more) built of wood as there were of brick.

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Like Charles County's first courthouse, located about two miles east of town and built in 1674 in a similarly impermanent manner characteristic of seventeenth Century Chesapeake architecture, these buildings probably deteriorated quickly.[15] It is known that the church was rebuilt in 1709, and there are references to only a few Chandler's Town buildings that survived into the 1720s, though most of these were apparently constructed after 1700.[16] A 1729 document states that a number of the buildings dating from the Chandler's Town era "are now decayed and gone," and that other lots in the town had been vacant for so long that their rightful ownership was unknown.[17]

Its central location in the county, economic importance as a naval port of entry for the inspection and levying of duties on tobacco, and accessibility by water as well as a rapidly expanding network of roads all contributed toward Chandler's Town's emergence as a center of commerce, trade and communication for the entire region. In 1696 the county considered the purchase of "... a House and two Lots in Chandler's Town ... for holding and keeping courts in," and by 1698 horse races and other social activities were being held there on a regular basis. By the end of the century the settlement included several stores and at least three ordinaries.[18]

On the death of Colonel William Chandler in 1685 and his brother Richard in 1697, most of the Port Tobacco lands granted to Job Chandler in the 1650s descended to Colonel Chandler's son, William.[19] In 1715 William Chandler leased 20 acres of Chandler's Hills "whereon a water mill now stands ... which was formerly built by Mr. Edward Digges ..." to the sons of Anthony Neale for a term of 80 years. Located less than a half-mile from town, and later owned by Thomas Stone, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, the ruins of the mill are still evident today.[20]

Between 1716 and 1720 a number of tracts of land in Charles County were resurveyed to establish their actual boundaries and true acreage. This was necessitated by the fact that surveys for tracts patented during the previous century were more of a written than physical exercise since "... at the first settlement of this province the heathen Indian Enemies were so very Numerous and Barbarous that Both the Persons Desirous to purchase lands and Settle & Inhabit on the Same and also the Surveyors appointed ... to Survey or lett out Such Lands ... were Deterred from (doing so) ..." Among the properties resurveyed were three bordering or in close proximity to Chandler's Town: Lyne's Delight, owned by the Ministry of Port Tobacco Parish; May Day, by then the dwelling plantation of the Smallwood family and subsequently part of Dr. James Craik's La Grange (NR) estate; and His Excellency's Gift, then

See Continuation Sheet 8/7

owned by Elizabeth Rogers but later part of the Ellerslie (NR) and Retreat (NR) plantations of the prominent Hanson and Jenifer families. On several occasions the Land Commission appointed to this task met at Chandler's Town, though it is referred to in related court documents as Portobacco. For instance, on March 12, 1717, while establishing the correct lines of May Day, the commissioners met "at the House of John Speake's in Portobacco Towne ... in Order to Inspect the Land Records." Speake was at that time Chandler's Town's most prosperous innholder, a position he had held since the beginning of the century.[21]

CHARLES TOWN/PORT TOBACCO

Charles County was established by order of the Governor's Council in 1658, but it wasn't until 1674 that a courthouse was actually built. Until that time county business was conducted in private homes and ordinaries in locations convenient for those whose attendance was required.

The courthouse of 1674 was initially intended as a private residence, and construction was already in progress when the owner-builder, John Allen, agreed to sell the site and building and modify the latter to accommodate the county's needs. A one-story structure, 25 by 22-feet, with a front porch tower and a rear shed, the building was constructed around hole set posts. As a result of the impermanent manner of its original construction it had to be almost completely rebuilt in 1699 and then again in 1715. It was undoubtedly because of its deteriorating condition that the county contemplated the purchase of land and an existing building at Chandler's Town in 1696.[22]

The 1674/1699/1715 courthouse was located about two miles east of Port Tobacco on the road leading to Allen's Mill (Allen's Fresh) near where The Exchange (NR) now stands.[23] By 1727, despite the renovation twelve years earlier, the courthouse was again "impaired, ruined and decayed." County officials, who had long been expressing increased exasperation with the expense and inconvenience of a building that was in constant need of repair, too small and too "remote," finally petitioned the Assembly to authorize them to build a new courthouse and prison, giving as the preferred location "the East Side of Port Tobacco Creek at a place called Chandler's Town." Assembly approval was granted and by the spring of 1729 a new brick courthouse, jail, stocks and pillory were under construction. Robert Hanson and Joshua Doyne supervised the project,[24] for which the county had appropriated 122,000 pounds of tobacco.

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In August of 1729 another Act of Assembly empowered the county to purchase sixty acres adjacent to the site where "the Courthouse ... is now Building" in response to a petition stating that "the land contiguous (to the new courthouse) is very convenient for a Town, being near the Center of the County and Commodious for Trade." To this the General Assembly agreed, responding "that the erection of a Town at the Place aforesaid, will be advantageous, as well to the Inhabitants of the said County, as others Trading or Resorting thereto."[25]

The Act of 1729 appointed a seven man commission to purchase the required sixty acres, "and to cause the same to be Surveyed and laid out in the most Convenient Manner so as to adjoin to and encompass the Lands belonging to Port Tobacco Church, and the said Court-house."

The requirements set forth by the Assembly for the laying out of the town were remarkably similar to those of 1684. One acre was to be set aside for a market place and the remaining 59 acres divided into 100 lots of equal size "... distinguished by some Posts or Stakes, towards the Streets, lanes and Alleys, marked No. 1, 2, 3 and so on to 100. Purchasers of lots were "obliged to build ... within eighteen Months from the Time (of purchase) a House that shall cover Four Hundred Square Feet, exclusive of Sheds," and that all houses were to be built "on the Edge of some Street, Lane or Alley, and front the same."

William Chandler, from whose Chandler's Hope property the sixty acres were subdivided, was to be given first choice of two lots, after which the remainder would be available to county residents, one lot per person, for a period of four months. Proceeds from sales were used to pay Chandler for the land, which had been given a value of 15,000 pounds of tobacco. After four months unclaimed lots could be purchased by "any persons of persons whatsoever."

By order of the Assembly the new town was to be "called and distinguished by the name of Charles Town, and not by any other name or Distinction whatsoever." Nevertheless, while the earlier Chandler's Town name was quickly dropped, local residents persisted in referring to the town as either Portobacco or Port Tobacco. For many years both Port Tobacco and Charles Town were used in the same legal documents when referring to the town ("... a lot of land in Charles Town commonly called Port Tobacco ..."). By the last decade or two of the eighteenth century the use of the Assembly name largely disappeared, but it wasn't until 1820 that the name was officially changed to Port Tobacco.

On August 14, 1729, documents were filed in the county archives recording the first meeting of the commissioners appointed to lay out

See Continuation Sheet 8/9

the new town. The meeting was held at the original courthouse, and adjourned with the decision to meet again at "the new Courthouse at the head of Portobacco Creek" to proceed with arranging for the purchase of town land with William Chandler, "proprietor of the lands thereabouts."[26]

At a meeting with the commissioners several weeks later, Chandler stated that he could not guarantee clear title to all of the sixty acres "because part of it had been formerly laid out for a Town and Severall of the Lotts taken up and built on tho the houses are now decayed and gone and the bounds as well as the proprietors of some of the said lotts (have) become uncertain." The commissioners then requested the sheriff to appoint a special jury to establish damages or compensation that would be awarded to lot owners adversely affected by the resurvey, and instructed the county surveyor to "always have respect to the lotts heretofore laid out and built on."[27]

Although a plat was clearly made, a copy was not entered in the county land records, so the actual plan of the town can only be partially recreated by the boundary descriptions of individual lots contained in later deeds. Fortunately, however, a list of those who purchased lots, or "reentered" their claims in cases where improvements were not made within the stipulated eighteen months has been preserved.

The first entry was made on October 8, 1729, where it was noted that "Mr. William Chandler, proprietor of the land made choice of the following lots: No. 3 and No. 4." By the end of that year a total of 32 lots had been spoken for, including Chandler's two and another two lots owned by John Parnham that were "formerly laid out in the Old Town." The purchase of an additional twelve lots were recorded the following year, bringing the total number of lots sold to 44, with lot numbers ranging from 1 to 95. In 1731 and 1732 fifteen of these lots were "reentered" by their owners because they had "not yet been built on according to ye Directions of the Act of Assembly." More than three years after their original purchase at least three of the lots were still unimproved, though some had passed through two or three separate ownerships between 1729 and 1732.[28]

Although this particular record of the sales of numbered lots does not extend beyond October, 1732, ownerships of lots not included in the original list appear in later conveyances. After the first four months, during which sales were limited to one lot per person, a few investors began purchasing additional contiguous lots.

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It is reasonable to conclude from the 1729-1732 records that at least fifteen new buildings had been constructed in the town by 1732. These were in addition to six privately owned dwellings, stores and ordinaries built before 1727 for which documentation exists, as well as the church, courthouse and jail. This number had undoubtedly doubled by 1740, and by the 1760s Port Tobacco had grown to be one of the largest, most physically cohesive settlements on Maryland's Western Shore, its stature as a port and center of commercial activity rivaling that of Annapolis, Alexandria, Georgetown and the emerging Baltimore. Within the context of lower Southern Maryland, where towns were often little more than a few scattered buildings at a crossroads, Port Tobacco's size, importance and longevity was unparalleled.

During the first four decades of its establishment as the county's seat of government and Southern Maryland's principal port, the town enjoyed a significant degree of economic prosperity. By the late-1740s, its importance as a "terminus of trans-Atlantic trade," together with improving marketing conditions attracted agents representing some of the major merchant houses of London, Glasgow and continental Europe.[29] In 1752 a troupe of professional performers staged a production of the "Beggar's Opera" at Port Tobacco while on a tour of several cities. By 1758 the town became a regular weekly stop for delivery of the Maryland Gazette, and in 1768 it was designated one of several post locations in a route established to improve communications between the state capitol and the outlying counties. Throughout the eighteenth century, particularly as roads were improved and more ferries began operating along the Potomac, the town was a convenient stopping place for those traveling between the major cities located along the eastern seaboard.[30]

Port Tobacco's pre-Revolutionary appearance was essentially that of an oversized village, with houses, stores and inns, some in various stages of construction or repair, lining dirt streets that were alternately rutted, dry and dusty, or virtual quagmires. Though until the end of the Revolution it was a scene of lively and often colorful activity, it could also be extremely unpleasant, particularly during the region's notoriously hot and humid summers when its low, waterside setting, bordering marshlands and high water table exacerbated the ever-present problem of waste disposal and a permanent population that included as many animals as people. Such conditions were, of course, an expected reality of eighteenth century life, especially in most port towns, though dramatically different from the images portrayed by today's modern museum villages.

Port Tobacco's buildings were stylistically reflective of the architectural traditions of the region as a whole: of frame or brick

See Continuation Sheet 8/11

construction, one or two stories high, with gabled or gambrel roofs and exterior chimneys. While some brick houses are known to have been built in the town in the eighteenth century most were of frame, which may partly account for the fact that so few survived to this century.

According to contemporary descriptions, most of those lots maintained as private residences, or inns and stores with living quarters above, were usually fenced with paling or posts and rails for the better properties, and wattle or brush fencing for others. Almost all of the lots included a small garden, a detached kitchen, a meat house and one or two smaller outbuildings. Lot sizes were a half-acre or less, and a surprising number had as many as seven or eight buildings standing on them.

On-going research into the physical history of the town has revealed a remarkable amount of information regarding the basic appearance of many eighteenth century Port Tobacco buildings culled from surveys, deed and probate records and newspaper advertisements.

For example, the 1748 inventory of the home of John Parnham, now known as Stagg Hall, illustrates the material comfort enjoyed by one of the town's most prosperous merchants, and provides an invaluable detailed account of the contents of his store. Also inventoried were items contained in the kitchen and three additional dependencies.[31] In 1763, two contiguous lots owned by Janel Kinnsman, a widow who had taken over operation of her late-husband's tavern, "The Sign Of The Ship," were improved by a building 18-feet wide and 22-feet long with a brick chimney, and a two-story dwelling 30 by 28-feet with two brick chimneys and a passage on the first floor, but had had "no inside work done above the stairs." Occupying a prominent location in close proximity to the courthouse and town square, Kinnsman's house was "much out of repair" and the grounds partially enclosed by "300 feet of very rough old paling."[32]

In 1768 merchant Daniel Jenifer advertised three Port Tobacco lots for sale. On one stood "the well known tavern occupied by Mrs. Halkerson." This is believed to have been the same building described in 1783 as an "exceedingly good dwelling, 56 by 20-feet, fronting on the fourth side of the courthouse." The house had a hipped roof, three rooms with a fireplace in each on both floor levels, "with a slip partition for (the) purpose of (a) ballroom."[33] Another of Jenifer's lots was improved by "a good brick dwelling house with offices below (and) a good kitchen at a convenient distance," an unusually large meathouse (18 by 24-feet, a henhouse and a fenced garden. The third lot had a "dwelling house soon to be finished, 14 by 32-feet with a chimney

See Continuation Sheet 8/12

in the center."[34]

Another Port Tobacco merchant, Matthew Blair, possessed what was probably one of the most impressive privately owned buildings, a large frame house measuring 46 by 34-feet, with a "range of piazzas supported by brick pillars" on its south and west sides. The house had two wings, each 24 by 18-feet, one used as a countinghouse and the other a kitchen. The property was fenced with "locust posts and painted palings."[35]

A 1777 notice in the Maryland Gazette advertised the sale of a "well accustomed public house" fronting the courthouse, 40 by 20-feet with five rooms below and six above. Ancillary structures included a separate kitchen, meathouse, stable, and two other houses "suitable for tailor or tradesman."[36] The most prominent hotel in the town in the latter part of the century was advertised as having 25 large bedrooms, a dining room seating 200 people, a breakfast room, card room, double parlors, kitchen, a private proprietor's suite and separate quarters for servants.[37] These buildings were in sharp contrast to others of less sophisticated architecture, such as the "old dwelling house, 18 by 12-feet with a small outside wooden chimney" owned by Patrick Graham in 1774, and of which there were undoubtedly many other similar examples.[38]

Port Tobacco's greatest period of growth and economic viability seems to have occurred between about 1750 and the beginning of the Revolution. By the 1750s, factors representing some of the largest Scottish merchant houses had made considerable investments in the town, and by the early 1770s most of Port Tobacco's most valuable real estate was owned by the firms of Barnes and Ridgate; John Glassford and Co.; Fergusson, Henderson and Gibson; Hood, Stone and Co.; and Cunninghame, Findlay and Co., among others. Extraordinarily detailed account books and correspondence of two of the town's leading merchants, John Glassford and Co. and Robert Fergusson, are preserved in the collections of the Library of Congress and provide valuable documentation for not only the manner in which these businesses operated, but the goods and services they provided the local populace on a day-to-day basis. Fergusson's letter books are particularly significant in that they include highly detailed, articulate and often witty commentaries on events and activities in the town during the late-eighteenth and early-ninteenth centuries.

In the fifteen years preceeding the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Port Tobacco was the home of several Marylanders who attained considerable political prominence and public recognition. Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, a Signer of the U.S. Constitution, had an impressive 40-year political career that included many influential

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positions, such as that of the first president of Maryland's first State dwelling plantation, Coate's Retirement, and though he moved to Annapolis in about 1770, he continued to maintain close business and personal ties to Port Tobacco throughout his life. By the time of his death in 1790, he possessed vast real estate holdings in Charles County, including a number of valuable improved properties in Port Tobacco.[39]

Thomas Stone, a nephew of Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, was a Port Tobacco merchant-lawyer, planter, Maryland legislator, delegate to the Continental Congress and a Signer of the Declaration of Independence. His home, Habre de Venture, located about three-miles from Port Tobacco, is now a National Historical Park. John Hanson, who became the first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation, began his career as a Port Tobacco merchant and lawyer. Like Stone and Jenifer a scion of one of Charles County's most prominent families, Hanson lived at Rozer's Refuge following his marriage to Jane Contee. Other historical figures associated with Port Tobacco include Dr. James Craik, Chief physician and surgeon of the Continental Army and Surgeon General under George Washington. Craik's home, La Grange, is about a mile and a half east of Port Tobacco. Dr. Gustavus Brown, an equally well known citizen, and a close friend and physician to the Washington family, built a fine Georgian residence on a hill overlooking Port Tobacco circa 1784.[40]

As county seat and a center for trade and communication, Port Tobacco was the scene of considerable activity during the American Revolution. The fact that almost all of its most prominent citizens were involved at high political and military levels made it especially important to have this exchange of information; meetings and debates, enlistments and military appointments, and the election of representatives to Maryland's provincial conventions and the continental congresses.

In addition to the sight and sounds of military exercises on the town square and the fields and meadows of surrounding farms, the involvement by all townspeople in collecting clothes, food and other supplies for the army, as well as a complete disruption of life as it had been, Port Tobacco occasionally came close to physically experiencing the reality of war first hand.

In December, 1777, the town was threatened by British ships on the Potomac, and as time passed the enemy fleets became increasingly more aggressive. In 1780, the British plundered several well known homes along the Potomac near the mouth of the Port Tobacco River. At least one, the elegant Prospect Hill seat of George Dent, was "reduced to

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ashes." On April 17, 1781, a British fleet entered the Port Tobacco River and the following day "marauders" raided Port Tobacco and "stole the church furnishings." Other dangers of equal or greater concern to the townspeople were the frequent outbreaks of smallpox and malaria among the soldiers camped there, and a growing antagonism against several of the Scottish merchants, even toward those who had elected to join the colonists in their fight for independence.[41]

The end of the Revolution was no doubt joyously celebrated in Port Tobacco, but it brought with it dramatic changes that were not necessarily positive. The resultant closing of the British merchant houses on which the town's economy was so dependent, the confiscation and sale of their extensive in-town property holdings, financial hardships suffered as a result of the war by a majority of townspeople, and the town's diminished use as a port due to the silting in of the river all took their toll.

In 1781 a visiting French officer recorded in his diary that Port Tobacco had "about 20 quite pretty houses" and a large, "very handsome" Episcopal church. Not fifteen years later, its 80-odd buildings were described as mostly of wood "and very poor," and the church as "formerly an ornament (but) now out of repair."[42]

Port Tobacco had fallen on hard times, and it never fully recovered. By the 1790s most of the town's more affluent citizens had moved to outlying plantations, many because of the generally unhealthy environment resulting from Port Tobacco's physical location. Between about 1785 and 1810 nearly every property in town had changed ownership at least once, and some many more times than that. Several of the most valuable houses and taverns remained unsold for more than five years.[43]

According to the 1798 tax assessment records for Charles County there were, in addition to the church and other public buildings, a total of 34 dwelling houses and 74 mixed-use structures (domestic dependencies, shops, tenements, etc.) standing in the town at that time. The owners of most of these properties, particularly the most valuable commercial structures, lived out-of-town and the buildings leased to tenants. The number of negro slaves living in the town appears to have been more than double that of whites.

Most of the improved properties occupied a half-acre or less, and values ranged from $100.00 to $4,000.00. Approximately one-third were assessed for less than $500.00, one-third for between $500.00 and $900.00, and the balance for $1,000.00 or more.

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A value of $3,500.00 was placed on the house of Matthew Blair discussed earlier. Stagg Hall, then owned by Robert Fergusson, had seven other buildings standing on the lot, including the house and Fergusson's store, and was assessed for $3,250.00. The adjacent Ridgate-Compton House (generally known today as Chimney House) had five outbuildings and was valued at $2,500.00. The two properties that received the highest assessment were both tavern-hotels, valued at $4,000.00 each. The owner of the largest number of improved lots was Dr. Daniel Jenifer, a merchant and physician who by then was living on the Retreat plantation he had inherited from his father. The lot on which Jenifer's former house and store stood was assessed for $2,000.00, and five other lots he owned from $105.00 to $800.00 (Two years later Jenifer offered all of these properties for sale for cash or trade for farmland).[44]

By 1807, according to Joseph Scott's Geographic Description of the States of Maryland and Delaware, Port Tobacco contained "about 50 houses, a large elegant Episcopal church, partly out of repair, a warehouse for the inspection of tobacco, a courthouse and (a) jail."

Undeclared naval wars, severe droughts, then the War of 1812 and disruption of commerce in the entire Chesapeake region, further weakened an already fragile local economy. By 1810, in contrast to the years preceeding the Revolution, the number of Port Tobacco merchants had dwindled to only two or three who could be considered financially successful. Until his death in 1814, Robert Fergusson was the foremost Port Tobacco merchant during this period, and though he had moved to Rozer's Refuge (renamed Mulberry Grove) by 1807, he owned Port Tobacco's largest store and several other income producing shops and houses.

Following the Revolution, Fergusson was appointed to handle the sale of the confiscated properties and the collection of pre-war debts owed the Scottish merchant firm of John Glassford and Co. In 1811 he was still involved in conducting their affairs, and it is quite possible the fees he earned from this obligation helped keep him solvent when others attempting a mercantile business in Port Tobacco had either failed or were barely surviving.

Fergusson's letter books for the period 1789 to 1811, especially those for the later years, discuss in some detail changing agricultural practices in the area, from a decline in the cultivation of tobacco to increased production of wheat and other grain crops for export. In July, 1811, Fergusson wrote that his Mulberry Grove plantation annually produced between five and nine hogsheads of tobacco and from 800 to 1,000 bushels of wheat, but that he did not expect much if any profit

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that year due to lengthy droughts and "the prohibition of sale in Europe by Bonaparte." His closing comment, "I wish better times and speedily," echoed the thoughts of many.[45]

Economic conditions in Maryland finally did improve following the War of 1812. This is particularly evident in the amount of building activity that took place in the county between about 1820 and 1840. Today, fully half of Charles County's buildings dating before 1860 were either built during those years or represent an earlier structure that was extensively remodeled at that time.

During these same years, Port Tobacco experienced its own form of rejuvenation. In 1815 the Maryland General Assembly authorized the county to build a new courthouse, which was completed and in use by 1821. The county's jail had been rebuilt by 1815, and a new Episcopal church in about 1818. Photographs and a collection of sketches of Port Tobacco buildings standing in the 1880s and 1890s show many of them as architectural types generally characteristic of the early and mid-nineteenth century.[46]

Despite this face-lift, the growth of other service-oriented communities elsewhere in the county caused Port Tobacco to lose much of its importance as a regional mercantile center by the late-1850s. Also, sail had given way to steam, and by 1860 the river seemed virtually lined with wharves and steamboat landings that made personal transportation easier and more comfortable as well as expediting the shipments and deliveries of everything from agricultural products to building materials. Unfortunately for Port Tobacco, its closest wharf was now located some three miles form town. These factors combined to eventually render Port Tobacco's economy almost totally dependent on local trade and the business it derived from its position as county seat.

As county seat Port Tobacco was especially vulnerable to, and illustrative of, the profound sense of unease that began overtaking the county as the anti-slavery issue gained momentum. By the end of the 1850s, countians could no longer choose to ignore what had become a very real threat to the foundation on which an entire society had been built. Having an agricultural system largely dependent on slave labor, and a deep economic, cultural and intellectual bond with the South, Charles County and the people of Port Tobacco found themselves playing a much more prominent role in the Civil War than they did in either the Revolution or the War of 1812.

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In December of 1860, a formerly Whig-voting populace now predominently aligned with the Democratic party exhibited their astonishment and anger over the Republican's recent victory by issuing a proclamation censuring those who cast their vote for Lincoln. Leaving no doubt as to the seriousness of their position (and their fear) they further called for the expulsion of Nathan Burnham, a county resident, stating that "His own vote for Lincoln and the influence which he has exercised point to him as a Black Republican emissary and renders his presence intolerable." Burnham was given until the first of January to leave the county, and if not gone by then would be removed by force of arms.[47]

The following April, in response to the mob riots directed at federal troops passing through Baltimore from Massachusetts to Washington, a series of resolutions were passed at a public meeting in Port Tobacco praising the resistance displayed by Baltimore's citizens, and offering the assistance of the citizens of Charles County to "repel any attack and drive back those who invade and pollute the soil of Maryland." This action followed an attempt by many prominent Marylanders, including several from Port Tobacco, to work out a compromise with Virginia that would allow both to remain in the Union but retain their slaves. When this maneuver failed, the county's seccessionist attitude intensified. Through intense political coercion, Maryland eventually joined the Union, but Charles County remained committed to the southern cause.[48]

Port Tobacco's strategic proximity to the northern edge of the secceeded states, on a major route of north-south travel, and the fervent southern sympathies of its citizenry quickly established it as a critical part of an intricate network of espionage and the clandestine movement of men and munitions destined for the Confederate army. One contemporary account described a line of communication between Toronto, Canada, and Richmond, Virginia. British subjects, travelling with British passports and secret messages ingeniously hidden on their person, would travel from Canada to Washington, and then southeast to Port Tobacco. There, the messenger "would be sheltered ... and in the dead of night cross in an india rubber boat to the south side of the Potomac ..."[49]

In late-October, 1861, the first regiment of what was to eventually number as many as 20,000 federal troops arrived at Port Tobacco and camped at Mulberry Grove. This was initiated to quell the pro-southern activities of its residents and protect the vulnerable city of Washington from rebels crossing the Potomac from Virginia. From that point until the end of the war, most of lower Southern Maryland was

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treated as occupied territory by the national government, a fact that Charles Countians regarded with a mixture of outright hostility and a deep bitterness that lasted long after the war was over.[50]

The economic and social ramifications of the final outcome of the war had yet to be fully realized when Port Tobacco was again brought to national attention with Lincoln's assassination and John Wilkes Booth's flight through Charles County to Virginia. The search for Booth soon focused on Port Tobacco and the surrounding countryside when Booth's escape route was alledgedly discovered and it became known that George Atzerodt, a Port Tobacco house painter and carriage maker, was implicated in the conspiracy.

The contempt with which the federal soldiers and northern civilian police searching for Booth viewed the inhabitants of the area is clearly illustrated in a discussion of Port Tobacco contained in a recounting of the search published in Philadelphia in 1867. The author, General L.C. Baker, Chief, National Detective Police, first introduces Port Tobacco by stating that civilian police detectives had to travel there from Bryantown "over the worse road in the world." Baker then presents Port Tobacco as having once been "the seat of a tobacco aristocracy and a haunt for negro traders (that) passed very naturally into a rebel post for blockade runners ..." According to Baker, "corner-fighting and shooting matches were (Port Tobacco's) lyceum education ... violence and ignorance had every suffrage ... its people were smugglers ... (and) there was neither Bible nor geography to the whole region adjacent."

After stating that the area was "utterly given over to depravity," Baker provides his northern readership with an extraordinarily unflattering description of the town itself: "The hotel here is called the Brawner House; it has a bar in the nethermost cellar, and its patrons, carousing in that imperfect light, look like the denizens of some burglar's crib, talking robbery between their cups; its dining room is dark and tumble down, and the cuisine bears traces of Kaffir origin; a barbeque is nothing to a dinner here. The courthouse of Port Tobacco is the most superfluous house in the place, except the church. It stands in the center of the town in a square, and the dwellings lie about it closely, as if to throttle justice."[51]

By the end of April, 1865, some 8,000 federal troops were still garrisoned in Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties. The largest contingent of soldiers was bivouaced at nearby Chapel Point, where they did extensive damage to buildings making up the Jesuit manor house-church complex, including the destruction of all but one of the tombstones in the cemetery.[52]

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On May 1, 1865, an edict was issued by H.H. Wells, the commanding officer of the Military District of Patuxent headquartered at Port Tobacco stating that "no person will be allowed to engage in any occupation, trade or profession without taking an unconditional oath of allegiance" to the United States government, and that all "officers, soldiers and citizens who have been in rebel service and haven't taken the oath of allegiance ... will be arrested." The wearing of "rebel uniforms ... the possession of any rebel flags or insignia of rank (or the) utterance of any disloyal sentiments" was strictly forbidden. Port Tobacco was one of twelve military stations in the county where the oath of allegiance would be administered.[53]

For Charles county the post-Civil War years were as economically devastating as they were for all of the South. A great many families found themselves in desperate financial straits, among them those who had enjoyed significant prosperity and social prominence only a decade before. Possessions and land were sold for whatever they could bring, too often for far less than needed. Extensive acreage, once cultivated by slaves, was left fallow. With increasing frequency, those young enough to attempt a fresh start left in search of better opportunities in the industrialized parts of the country. The difficulties most countians experienced during this period developed into an apathetic attitude that hindered the county's progress until well into the next century.[54]

In the 1870 census the population of Port Tobacco numbered 209 individuals, representing 41 families. The 39 dwellings (probably a combination of houses, shops, stores and hotels) that were listed were given a value of $60,000.00. About one-quarter of the population was black, with seven heads of households occupied in a trade, and 28 listed as servants. The most prosperous Port Tobacco citizen was William Boswell, a merchant and farmer, whose personalty was valued at $20,000.00 and his real estate holdings, including part of the original Chandler's Hope tract as well as in-town properties, at $25,000.00. Boswell was worth more than seven times that of the next largest property owner. Chimney House, purchased from Barnes Compton in 1868, was among the improved lots he owned in the town.[55]

According to the 1871 edition of the State Gazette and Merchant's and Farmer's Directory for Maryland and the District of Columbia, Port Tobacco had 10 lawyers and 4 physicians. The 28 separate businesses listed, exclusive of professional categories, were divided among hotel keepers and merchants, carpenters and cabinet-makers, harness-makers, carriage-makers and blacksmiths, barbers, tailors and printers. The directory described Port Tobacco as "An enterprising place (containing)

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a number of stores and public buildings, such as Courthouse, churches, school houses, etc. Considerable trade is carried on between this port and Baltimore, in fish and oysters, which are found here in great abundance."

In 1872 the Maryland Independent newspaper was founded in Port Tobacco, joining the Port Tobacco Times established in 1844. Published weekly, these were and continue to be the county's only local newspapers, though the Port Tobacco Times later merged with La Plata's Crescent and is now published as the Times Crescent. The Port Tobacco Times was particularly noted for the literary elegance of its editorials and feature stories, a tradition it maintained until well into this century.[56]

Also in 1872, the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad (now the Pennsylvania Railroad) was extended through Charles County to Popes Creek, unfortunately bypassing Port Tobacco by about three miles to the northeast. By the beginning of 1873, the train made daily runs between Bowie, Maryland, and Popes Creek, carrying passengers as well as freight. In February, 1873, it was announced that the railroad would be building a warehouse and passenger room at the La Plata station. A community of shops, stores and hotels appeared shortly thereafter.

The railroad, and Port Tobacco's distance from it, gave impetus to an already growing movement to relocate the county seat to a more favorable site. La Plata's rapid growth, the political influence of several of its resident investors, and its central location on the rail line soon made it a principal contender, though Chapel Point and Bel Alton were also given consideration.

In 1888, Port Tobacco became a chartered municipality (the same year that La Plata was incorporated), and numerous attempts were made to improve the quality of life in the town. Nevertheless, the argument for and against the move of the county seat continued, becoming more and more bitter as it gained momentum.

In 1890 a legislative act was passed calling for the move of the county seat to La Plata, but the bill was vetoed by the Governor. Two years later, on May 7th, a special election was held, but the proposal was defeated by a vote of 995 for and 1,329 against. Interestingly, in the Port Tobacco district it was a tie, with 167 votes cast by each side.[57]

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On the night of August 3, 1892, the courthouse was engulfed by a fire that completely destroyed its two-story central section. The origin of the fire was immediately labeled as "suspicious." A writer for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle expressed what is a general concensus of opinion still debated today: the fire was deliberately set by a member of the La Plata faction. Fortunately, almost all of the county's most valuable records were saved, including what are now among the only surviving documents pertaining to the proceedings of Maryland's seventeenth century provincial court.[58]

Destruction of the courthouse effectively removed Port Tobacco's strongest argument for remaining county seat, and in 1895 voters agreed to have the courthouse rebuilt at La Plata. The new courthouse was completed in 1896, and almost immediately afterward Port Tobacco's population sharply declined. A rather poignant editorial comment in the Port Tobacco Times in 1897 read in part "The style of architecture in this town is mostly antique, but its citizens are up to date and progressive. The only difficulty is, they are so few."[59]

In 1904 Christ Church was dismantled, its stones and woodwork transported by ox cart to La Plata, and there the church was reassembled in the same physical relationship to the new courthouse it had to the old. By 1915 many of Port Tobacco's buildings had been abandoned or torn down, and within another decade or so all that remained was a wing of the courthouse that had been converted for use as a Baptist Chapel, a handful of private homes, a school and a general store.

In 1947 a group of local citizens formed "The Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, Inc." The Society eventually acquired the site of the 1819-1821 courthouse, and following extensive research and archeological studies of the site a facsimile of the building was erected on the foundations of the original structure for use as a museum of Port Tobacco and Charles County history. The Society also owns the property generally referred to as the Cat Slide House, and recently renovated it as a children's museum.

Through the efforts of town officials and residents, the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco, and with the aid and support of various private groups and state and county agencies, Port Tobacco is now one of Charles County's most frequently visited tourist attractions.

For RESOURCE ANALYSIS, see Continuation Sheet 8/22

For RESOURCE HISTORY, see Continuation Sheet 8/25

HISTORIC CONTEXT: RESOURCE ANALYSIS

As illustrated by the General Description of Section 7 and the Historic Context/Resource History of Section 8 of this nomination, the area proposed for National Register listing comprises a unique resource of considerable significance at both the state and local level.

The extraordinarily rich history of the site is clearly evident, beginning with the Potobac village of the Late Woodland period recorded by Captain John Smith in 1608 and where Father Andrew White, S.J. established one of colonial Maryland's first Catholic missions. Of particular significance is the prominence Port Tobacco attained - and held - as one of Maryland's foremost port towns and centers of commerce and trans-Atlantic trade during Maryland's Rural Agrarian Intensification period, and then as a major regional center of mercantile, political and social activity throughout the Agricultural-Industrial Transition phase in Maryland's post-colonial history. It was Charles County's seat of government for almost 170 years and central to its socioeconomic development. Until this century, it was Charles County's largest town and is believed to be its oldest continuously occupied site.

While few buildings dating from the town's period of greatest significance (1684-1865) remain standing, the site has remained essentially undisturbed by additional development since the move of the county seat to La Plata in 1896. The number of known building sites and those of other attendant features, the overall physical integrity of these sites, and the remarkable amount of supporting historical documentation, underscore its uniqueness as an archeological resource. Port Tobacco unquestionably possesses the potential to yield information of incalculable value regarding the material culture of this region over a period of 200 years. The only similarly "undisturbed" site of comparable significance in the lower Southern Maryland area is St. Mary's City, capitol of Maryland from 1634 to 1690. St. Mary's City was abandoned shortly after the capitol was moved to Annapolis, just a few years after Port Tobacco was founded. Thus, rather than two sites reflecting similar historic contexts, St. Mary's City and Port Tobacco complement each other in the chronological continuity they provide.

Two of Port Tobacco's four remaining early buildings (those dating before 1825) are considered exceptional examples of regional domestic architecture. Additionally, substantial documentary evidence exists for the locations and appearance for many other early structures. The impressive amount of information yielded by past and currently on-going research had already vastly improved our knowledge and understanding of

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local architectural history. The descriptions contained in many of these records has proved especially useful since, as a general rule, such information is not available for historic sites and standing buildings in more isolated settings. If this documentation was to be augmented by professional archeological studies of specific sites, our knowledge of the region's architecture and aspects of its material culture would be greatly enhanced.

Prehistoric Resources

A quick survey of the USGS quad map for Port Tobacco indicates an area of high potential for archeological resources, both historic and prehistoric. The interface of several environmental zones would have provided particularly abundant resources for human use. A number of archeological sites have been identified along the east side of the Port Tobacco River. The Tobacco Point Site (18Ch97) is located quite close to Port Tobacco. This Late Woodland (900 A.D. - 1600 A.D.) site was identified on the basis of quartz flakes and Potomac Creek pottery shards. The site has not been further studied. It's extremely likely that as yet significant but undiscovered prehistoric resources exist both in the Port Tobacco vicinity and on the property under consideration for nomination. THE PREHISTORIC ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED AS TO ELIGIBILITY FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER DUE TO INSUFFICIENCY OF DOCUMENTATION.

Historic Resources

The Port Tobacco area obviously contains significant historic resources. Settlements from the second quarter of the 17th century are, as you know, rare. Sites from that period are even more rare, and the study of early settlement would increase our understanding of colonization - both on Europeans and native American groups. Depending on the preservation of these resources, the Port Tobacco area has much potential for both state and local significance according to National Register criteria.

The archeological study of the Port Tobacco area could address the following research question:

1. The 17th Century Component:

   How did European groups interact with native American groups in the earliest years of colonization? How did the English settlers adapt to this strange new environment? We have a good idea about settlement at St. Mary's City. What about

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these "Hinterland" settlements even more far removed from contact with the mother country? A large number of more specific research questions could be derived from these basic questions.

2. The County Seat Component:

Very little is known about town planning in early Maryland - for example, new research in St. Mary's City has suggested an ambitious "baroque" plan. How was the original Port Tobacco town organized and laid out? What were the functions of this town, including governmental affairs? How did the town plan change over 140 years and how did the town's functions change? Who lived in the town and what were their standards of living? What kind of interaction with local, regional and national markets occurred in this town (i.e., what kinds of resources are coming from outlying farms or nearby urban areas and how do these proportions change through time)? Historical documentation tells us much about past life, but does not document daily life - especially the lives of the "invisibles" - i.e., women, children, slaves, servants. Archeology provides this information in a powerful way.

Why did Port Tobacco cease to function as the county seat in 1895 and what happened to it?

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HISTORIC CONTEXT: FOOTNOTES FOR RESOURCE HISTORY

Key to abbreviations used for frequently cited sources or archival repositories:

CCLR: Charles County Land Records, Office of the Clerk of the Court, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

CCPR: Charles County Probate Records, Office of the Register of Wills, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor: Margaret Brown Klapthor, History of Charles County, Maryland, (n.p.), La Plata, Maryland, 1958.

HR: Hall of Records (Maryland State Archives), Annapolis, Maryland.

WC: John M. Wearmouth Collection, Southern Maryland Studies Center, Learning Resource Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, Maryland. (Accession # 850027). John Wearmouth directed the archeological excavation and research on which the reconstructed courthouse in Port Tobacco is based, and the resultant data comprises most of this collection. The data covers other periods of Port Tobacco's history as well, however.

WC/CHD: In citing information contained in these files, WC/CHD refers to records relating to the archeological studies of the courthouse site and the partial excavation of the St. Charles Hotel site. These documents are found in Box 1 of the Wearmouth Collection.

WC/SA: Sources cited as WC/SA refer to an exceedingly important collection of abstracts culled from early newspapers, other period publications, as well as archival documents compiled by Edith Sprouse. Most of this information is contained in Box 10 of the Wearmouth Collection. In citing Mrs. Sprouse's research notes, the name of the original source is given in parenthesis, i.e. (Maryland Gazette, October 3, 1782).

Liber and folio numbers for land and probate records are given as: Liber #/folio #.

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1. William J. Graham, The Indians of Port Tobacco River, Maryland, and Their Burial Places (Washington, D.C., 1935); Klapthor, pp. 1-6; "Tobacco Point Historic Site: 18CH97," Maryland Archeological Site Survey File, Maryland Geological Survey, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.
2. Klapthor, pp. 4,6,7,33.
3. WC/CHD. Source cited: Archeological Society of Virginia.
4. CCPR: Inventories, 1673-1717 (1681), f. 16.
5. WC/CHD, Box 1.
6. HR: Patents, 3/77. For a comprehensive discussion of the Jesuit's management of St. Thomas Manor see Lorena Walsh, "Land, Landlord and Leaseholder: Estate Management and Tenant Fortunes in Southern Maryland, 1642-1820" (Agricultural History, 1985).
7. HR: Patents, 2/537, 15/194.
8. ibid, AB&H/425, Q/238.
9. Edward Pappenfuse, et al, A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University at the Goose Bay plantation derived from an analysis of documents relating to the family, 1650-1750 and conditions in the Port Tobacco valley at that time. Both Colonel William Chandler and William Chandler, Jr., son and grandson respectively of Job Chandler, maintained Goose Creek (a/k/a Steepside, and later as part of Chandler's Hope Resurveyed) as their principal dwelling plantation following their inheritance of those lands.
10. HR: Patents, 19/93. CCLR: N#1/210.
11. Pappenfuse, Vol II (1985), 707.
12. John Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland, (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972), p. 92.
13. ibid.
14. HR: Charles County Court and Provincial Records, K/325. CCLR: L#1/4.
15. Cary Carson, et al, "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," (Winterthur Portfolio, 1981).
16. Jack D. Brown, et al, Charles County, Maryland: A History, (n.p., Charles County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), p. 87.
17. CCLR: M#2/176.
18. HR: Charles County Court and Provincial Records, V/119, R/332.
19. CCPR: Wills, A#2/113, 178 and AB#3/236.
20. CCLR: H#2/4. HR: 1783 Tax Assessments, Charles County, District (Land). Pappenfuse, Vol. II, pp. 786-788.
21. CCLR: M#2/79.
22. Carson, p. 196. Klapthor, pp. 16-23.
23. CCLR: O#1/124.
24. Archives of Maryland.
25. ibid, 457-459.

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26. CCLR: M#2/176.
27. ibid.
28. ibid, 179-180.
29. Jean B. Lee, "The Social Order of a Revolutionary People: Charles County, Maryland, 1733-1786," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1984), p. 13.
30. Klapthor, p. 49. WC/SA, Box 10.
31. HR: Inventories, 36/9. The buildings in which inventoried items were found were noted in the borders (i.e. "Goods in the Store"). The inventory covered 13 pages. Among Parnham's more valuable personal possessions was a collection of "Effigies of the British Monarchy." The total value of Parnham's personal estate was estimated at 1,881.6.9 1/2 pounds, ranking him among Charles County's most affluent citizens during that period.
32. HR: Patents, Cert. #508.
33. WC/SA: (Maryland Gazette, 3/2/1768, ?/?/1783).
34. ibid, 3/2/1768.
35. ibid, 5/2/1799.
36. ibid, ?/?/1777.
37. Klapthor, 46-47.
38. HR: Patents, Cert. #270.
39. Pappenfuse, Vol. II, p. 485. See also NR nomination form for Retreat, Charles County, Maryland: J.R. Rivoire (1987).
40. Pappenfuse, Vol. I, p. 405; Vol. II, pp. 2860288. Klapthor, pp. 77-81, 92 (Hanson was not born at Mulberry Grove - then known as Rozer's Refuge - as is traditionally believed. Hanson purchased the land from his in-laws in 176 ; nevertheless, his ties to Port Tobacco were and remain irrefutable. See Rivoire, "Mulberry Grove," SMSC/CCCC).
41. WC/SA (from the Calendar of Maryland State Papers, Part I 1776: pp. 26, 73; 1777: pp. 212, 222; 1780: p. 139; 1781: pp. 190, 191). See also WC/SA, addendum on page 155 of original notes, Box 10.
42. WC: Research notes contained in card file regarding early descriptions of Port Tobacco and property transfers.
43. This assessment is based on sales advertisements contained in the WC/SA, a catalogue file of property transfers of Port Tobacco lots (WC), and a compilation of similar data prepared by the author of this nomination.
44. HR: 1798 Federal Direct Tax, Charles County. WC/SA (Maryland Gazette, 4/24/1800).
45. WC/SA, p. 127-133 and 155-159 of original notes (Box 10).
46. Klapthor, 101, 105. WC, card file. WC/SA (Easton Gazette, 3/15/1821).
47. Klapthor, 120, 121.

See Continuation Sheet 8/28

48. ibid, 121-124. Sarah L. Barley, "The Mitchells of Linden," A Window on the Past: The Mitchells of Linden, 1845-1870, (Charles County Community College, 1984).
49. WC/SA (Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1877), p. 499; Cincinnati Enquirer, 7/12/1881.
50. Klapthor, 122.
51. General L.C. Baker, History of the United States Secret Service (Philadelphia: privately published, 1867), pp. 490, 491.
52. WC/SA, Box 10 folder 7, p. 5. WC, card file of miscellaneous research notes.
53. Klapthor, 134.
54. ibid, 136. In an 1897 commentary on Port Tobacco's history by "Judge Leisure," it was said that "Hard conditions following the war have led many (Charles Countians) to shut up in their shells and drift along with the tide until they accept these conditions as a matter of course and give up striving to better themselves," (WC/SA: Port Tobacco Times, 2/19/1897).
55. WC/SA, Box 10, folder 7, pp. 115-117.
56. Klapthor, 111, 142, 143.
57. ibid, 142, 143. WC/SA (Baltimore Weekly Sun, 5/14/1892).
58. WC/SA (Alexandria Gazette, 8/4/1892). Apparently these records had been removed from the building before the fire. In 1889 Francis Cregar of Annapolis gathered most of these documents together after a search of various county office and the courthouse attic. According to the Maryland Independent, "many old historical documents (had not been) accessible to the public for generations." The records, all in bound volumes, were described as "extremely valuable," but in "decaying and ruinous condition," (WC/SA).
59. WC/SA (Port Tobacco Times, 1/29/1897).

See Continuation Sheet 8/29

9. Major Bibliographical References

CH-372

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Maryland Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD

[x] See continuation sheet 8/25

Previous documentation on file (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
- [x] Local government
- [ ] University
- [x] Other

Specify repository:
Charles County Community College
Charles County Courthouse

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 50

USGS Quad Port Tobacco, Maryland

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	324280	4264760
B	18	324110	4264030
C	18	323730	4264140
D	18	323948	4264680

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

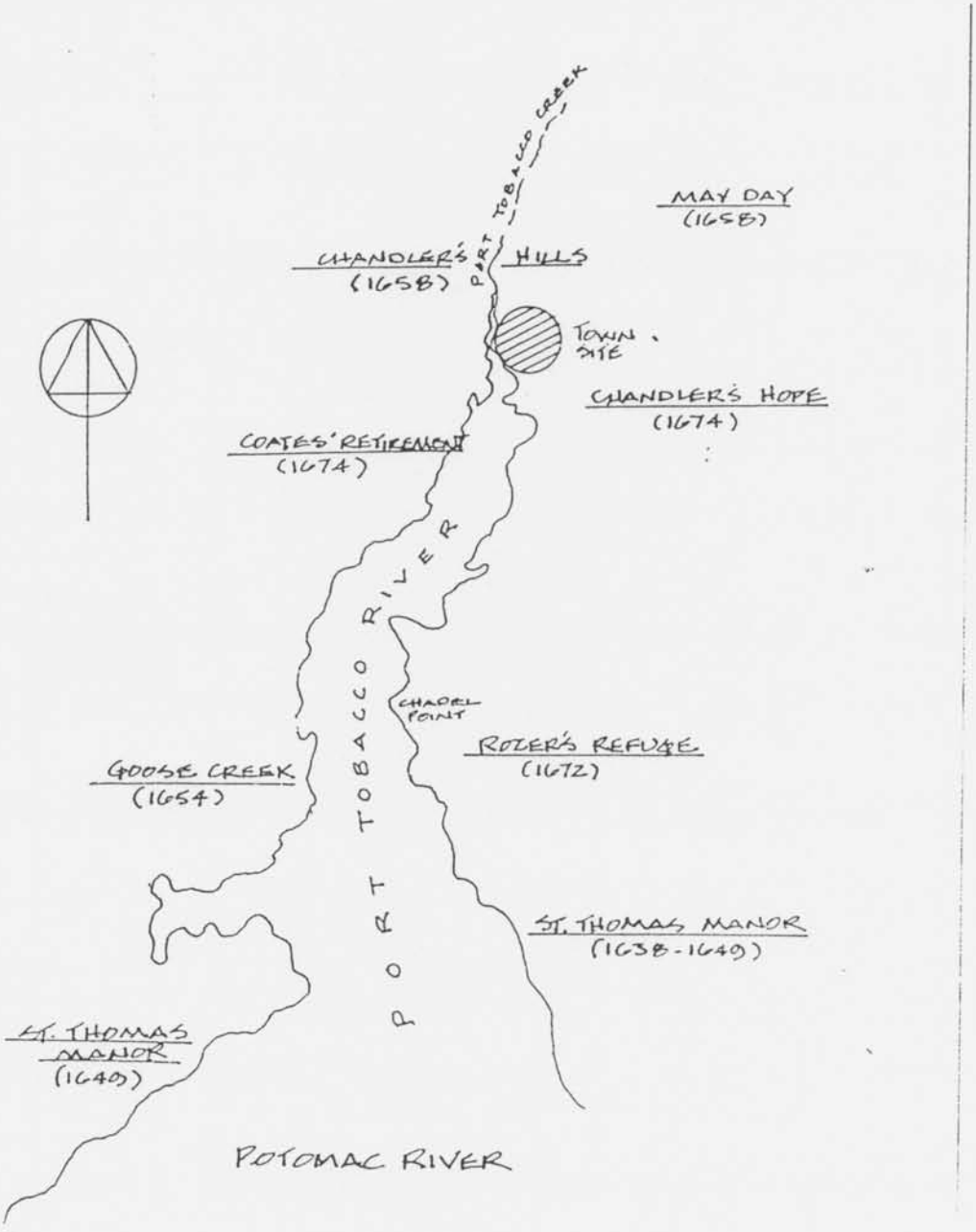
[x] See continuation sheet 10/1

Boundary Justification

[x] See continuation sheet 10/1

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Richard Rivoire
organization _____ date August 1, 1988
street & number P.O. Box 132 telephone (301)932-1000
city or town La Plata state Maryland zip code 20646



LOCATION MAP FOR THE PRINCIPAL SEVENTEENTH CENTURY LAND GRANTS IN THE PORT TOBACCO VALLEY.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

As presented in Section 133 of the Municipal Charter of Port Tobacco (1881);

Beginning at a stone and post now fixed on the east side of the Port Tobacco canal as it now runneth, and running thence with the dividing line between the lands now in possession of Henry G. Robertson and Doctor Robert Diggs (William Reeves, 1988), called and known as "Plenty," north eighty-seven degrees twenty-five minutes, east twelve hundred and fifty feet to a stone now fixed near an old cherry tree; thence leaving said lands and running through the lands of the heirs of James E. Wingate (John T. Hyde, 1988), known as "Mount Bleak," and the lands of H. Heber Boswell (heirs of Elva De Mott, 1988), known as "Chandler's Hope," The following courses and distances, to wit: south twenty degrees forty-five minutes, west fourteen hundred and thirty feet; north sixty-five degrees thirty minutes, west two hundred and seventy-one feet; south twenty-seven degrees fifty-two minutes, west three hundred and fourteen feet; south twenty-five degrees, west three hundred and eighty-three feet to a branch; thence with the said branch south forty-eight degrees, west one hundred and seventeen feet; thence leaving the branch and running with a fence, south thirty-five degrees thirty minutes, west one hundred and twenty-eight feet; south thirty-nine degrees fifteen minutes, west one hundred feet; south forty-five degrees, west one hundred and eighty-seven feet to the end of or corner of said fence; thence north fifty-eight degrees fifteen minutes, west eight hundred and thirty-five feet to the aforesaid canal; thence up and with the said canal, as it now runneth, north twenty-nine degrees twenty-five minutes, east eighteen hundred and eight feet to the first beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundaries presented above define the corporate limits of Port Tobacco and have remained unchanged since 1888. The area so defined embraces all of the known historic buildings and historic archeological sites associated with Port Tobacco except the eighteenth century Protestant cemetery. The latter is several hundred yards west of Port Tobacco's northwest (canal) boundary and has been completely inundated for the past seventy-five years. This nomination will be amended with the annexation of any additional lands encompassing identified sites.

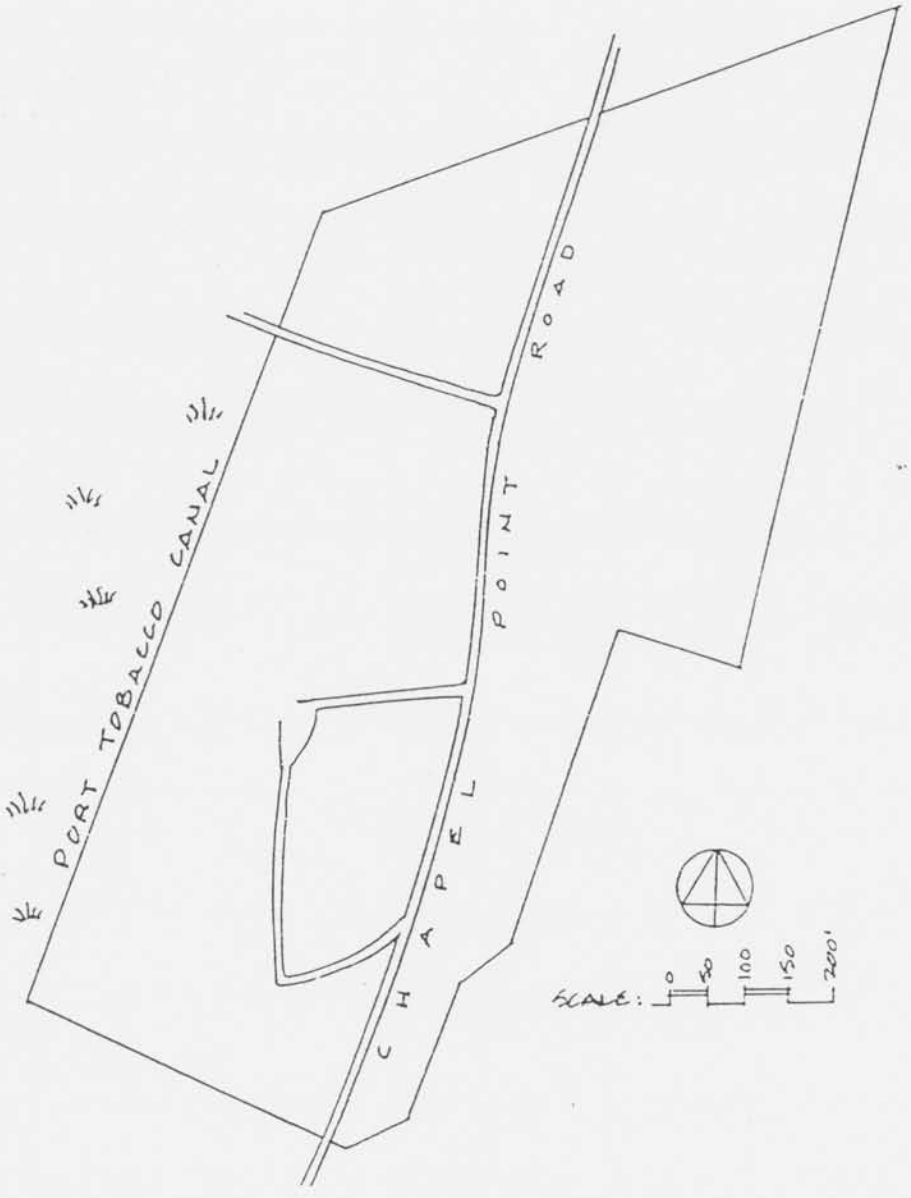
See Continuation Sheet 10/2

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

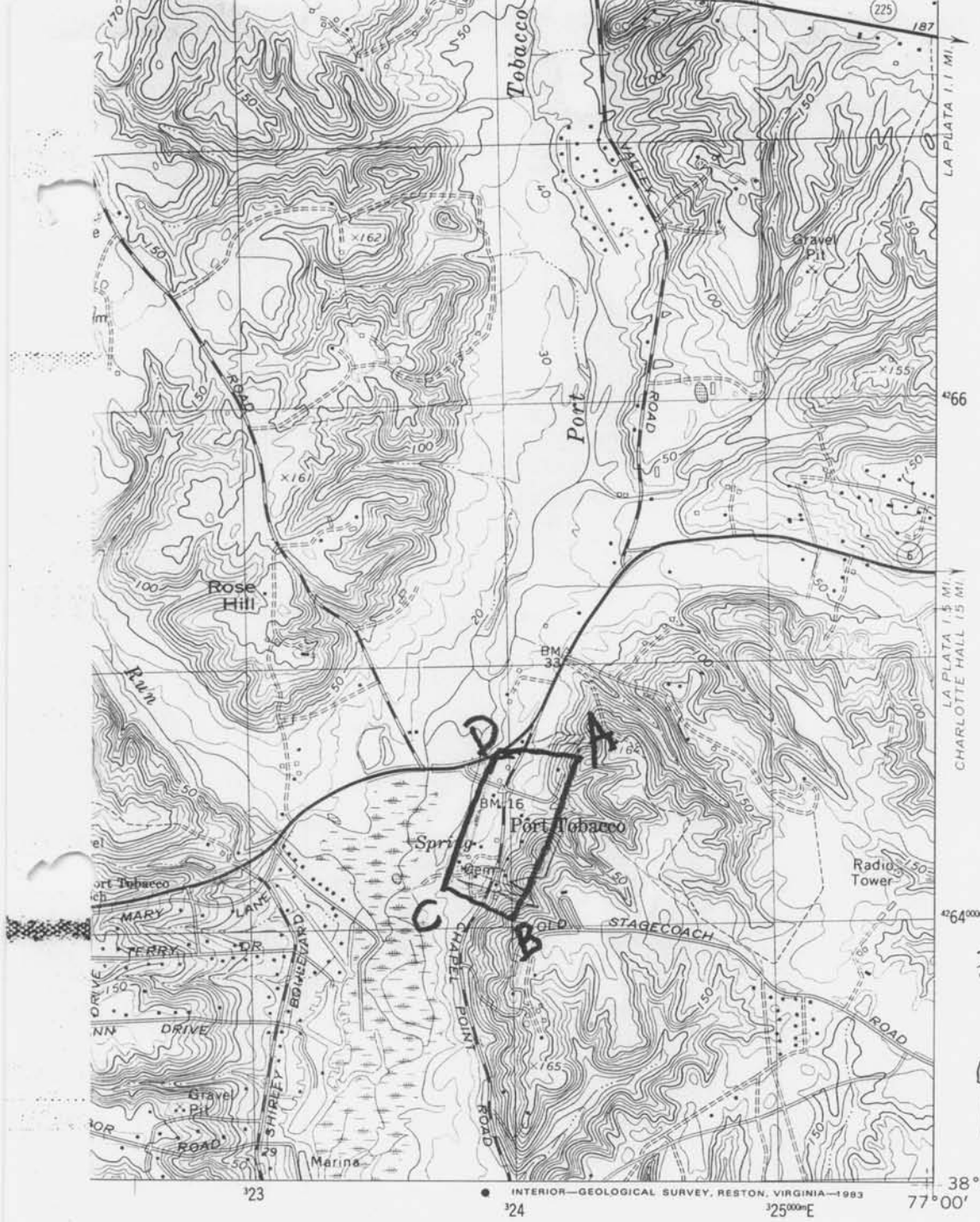
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Port Tobacco CH-372
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 10 Page 2



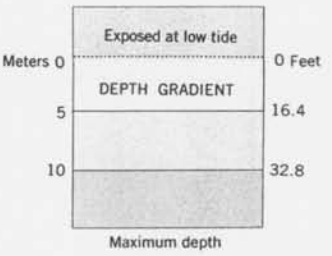
BOUNDARY MAP
(Boundaries equal corporate limits)



6	1.8288
7	2.1336
8	2.4384
9	2.7432
10	3.0480

To convert feet to meters multiply by .3048

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808



Port Tobacco
CH-372

Charles Co.
Maryland

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1983

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty — Light-duty

Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt

State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

PORT TOBACCO, MD.

SE/4 INDIAN HEAD 15' QUADRANGLE
N3830—W7700/7.5

1966
PHOTOREVISED 1978
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982
DMA 5561 II SE—SERIES V833

(POPES CREEK)
5660 IV NW

A 18/324280/4264760

B 18/324010/4264030

C 18/323730/4264140

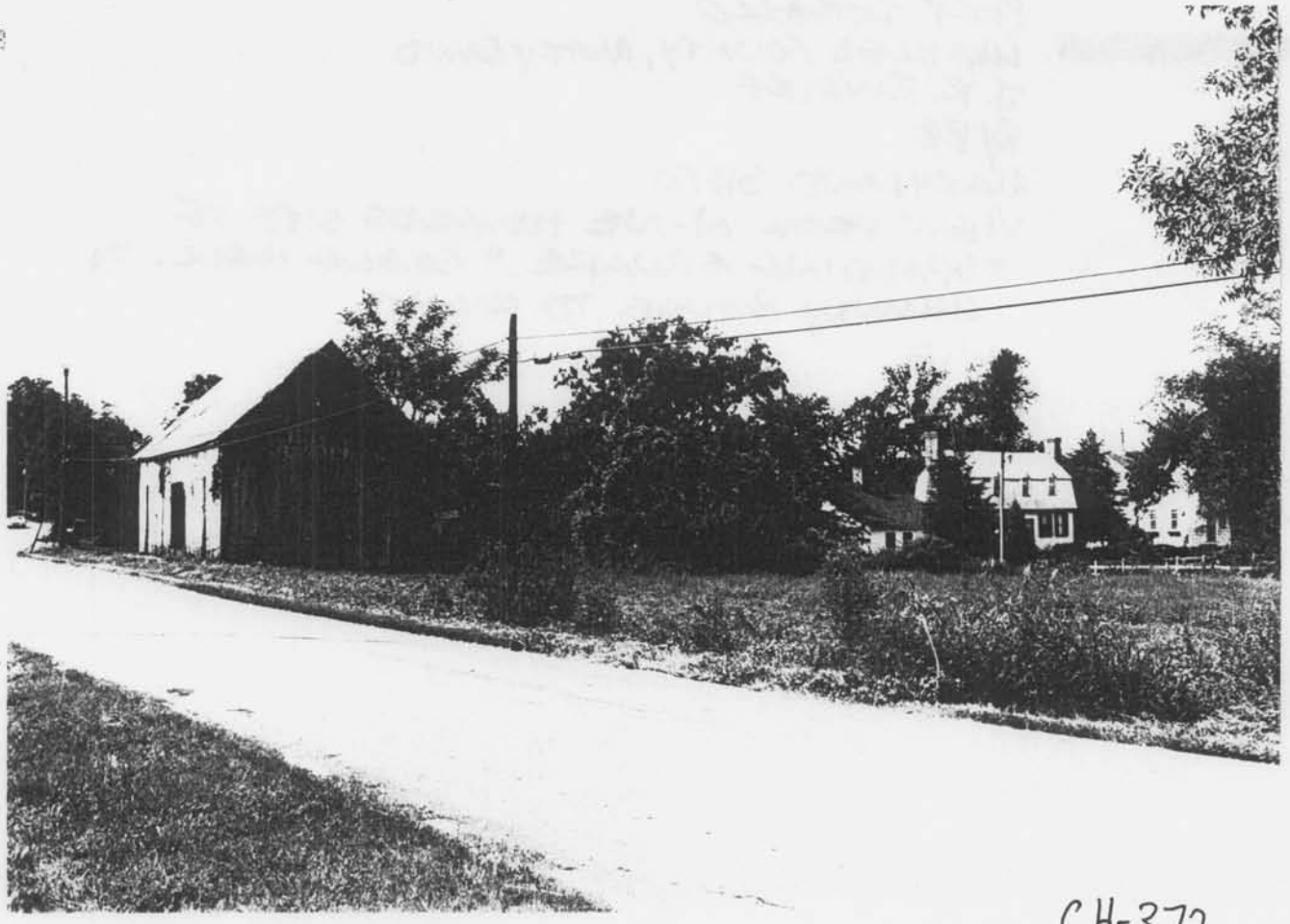
D 18/323940/4264680

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
PORT TOBACCO SCHOOL, FROM N.
1/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
MT. BLEAK, S. FRONT ELE.
2/18



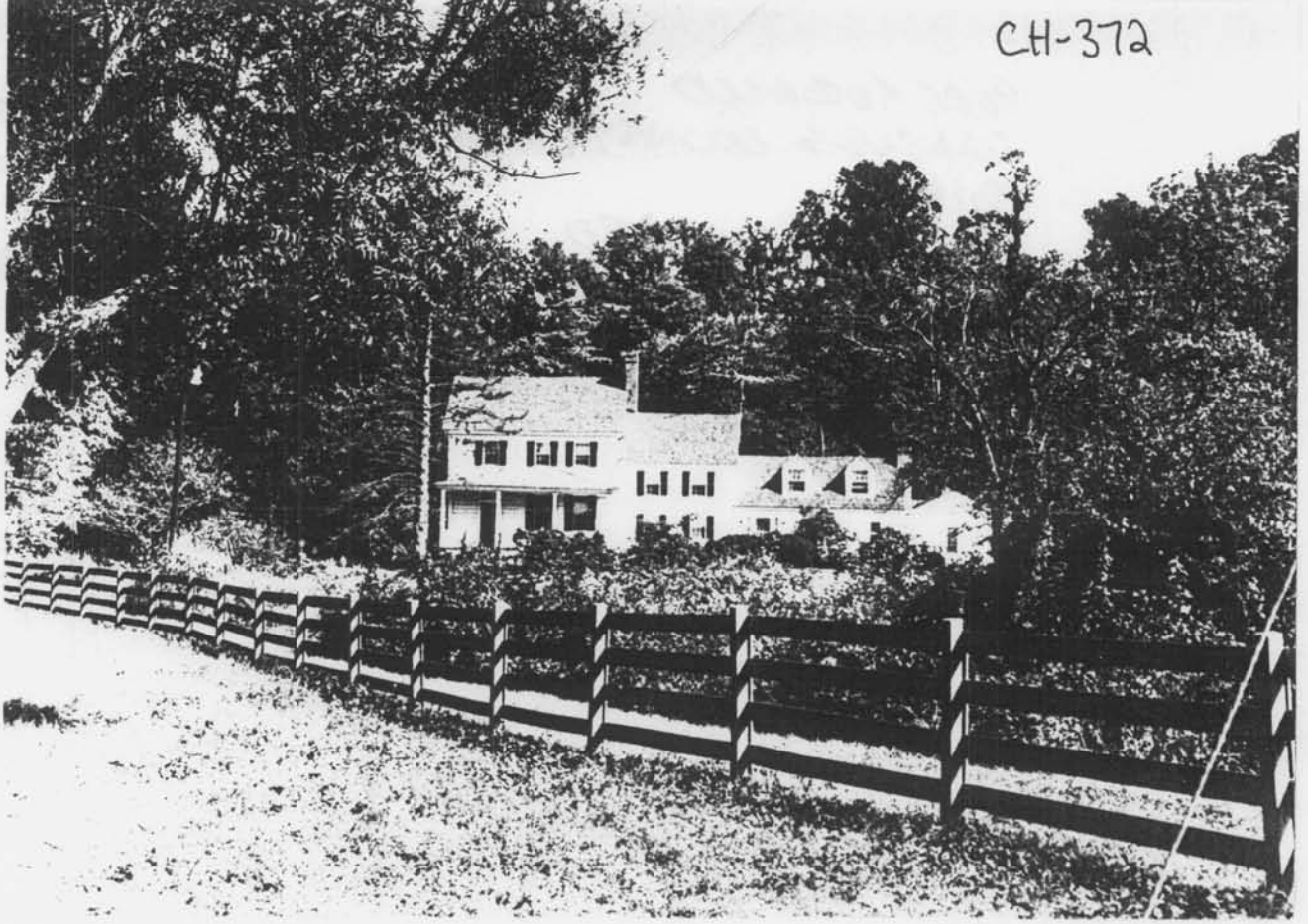
CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
"WILMER OFFICE", FROM N.
3/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW FROM N-NE TOWARDS SITE OF "SPALDING SQUARE." STAGG HALL & CHIMNEY HOUSE TO RIGHT.
4/18

CH-372



CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
BOSWELL-COMPTON HOUSE, W. FRONT, FROM CHAPEL POINT ROAD
5/18

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
EAST FRONT OF 1819-1821 COURTHOUSE (RECON.); 1958 WELL HOUSE TO VIEWERS RIGHT
6/18

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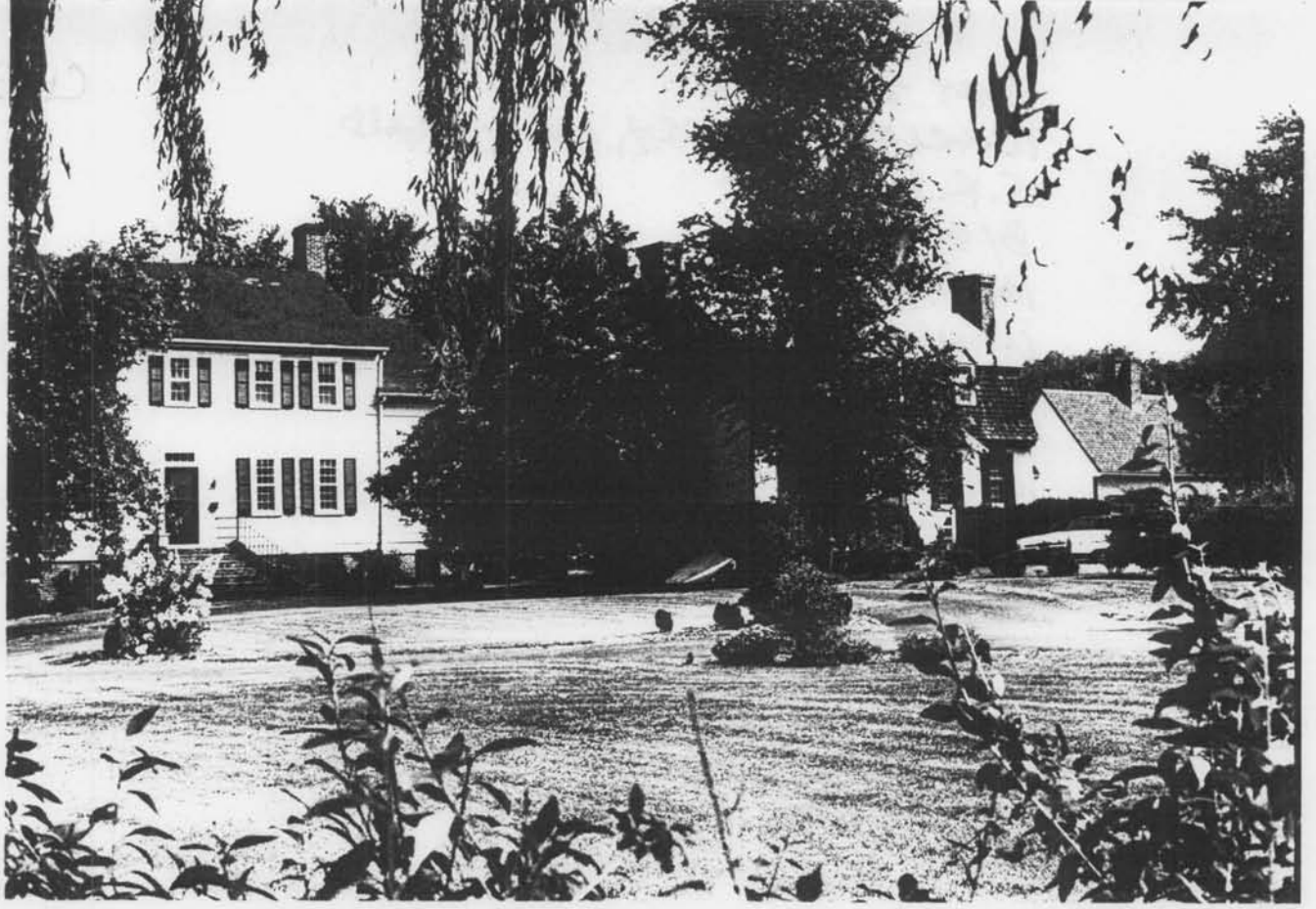
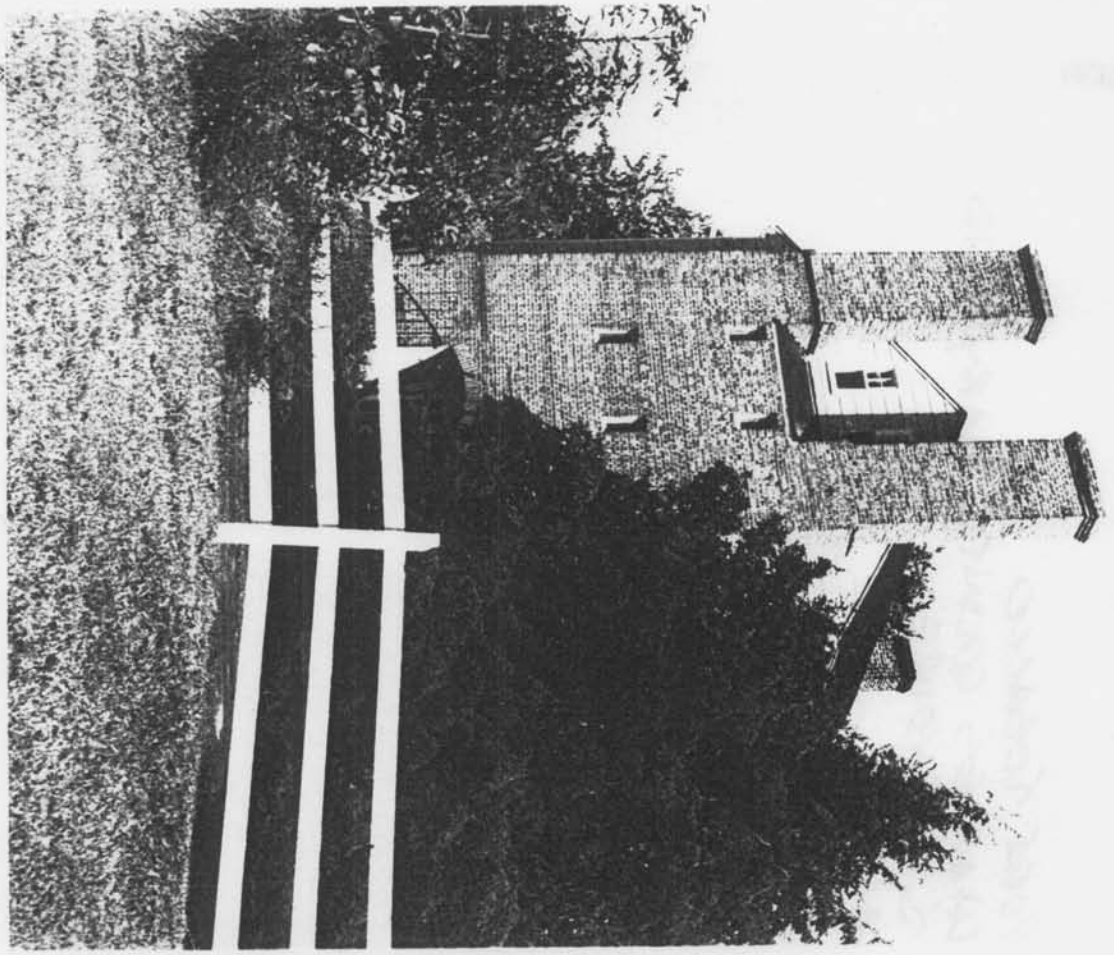
PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
1819-1824 COURTHOUSE (RECON.) AS VIEWED FROM NE
7/18

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
CHIMNEY HOUSE TO LEFT; STAGG HALL TO RIGHT. CAMERA FACING NORTH
8/18





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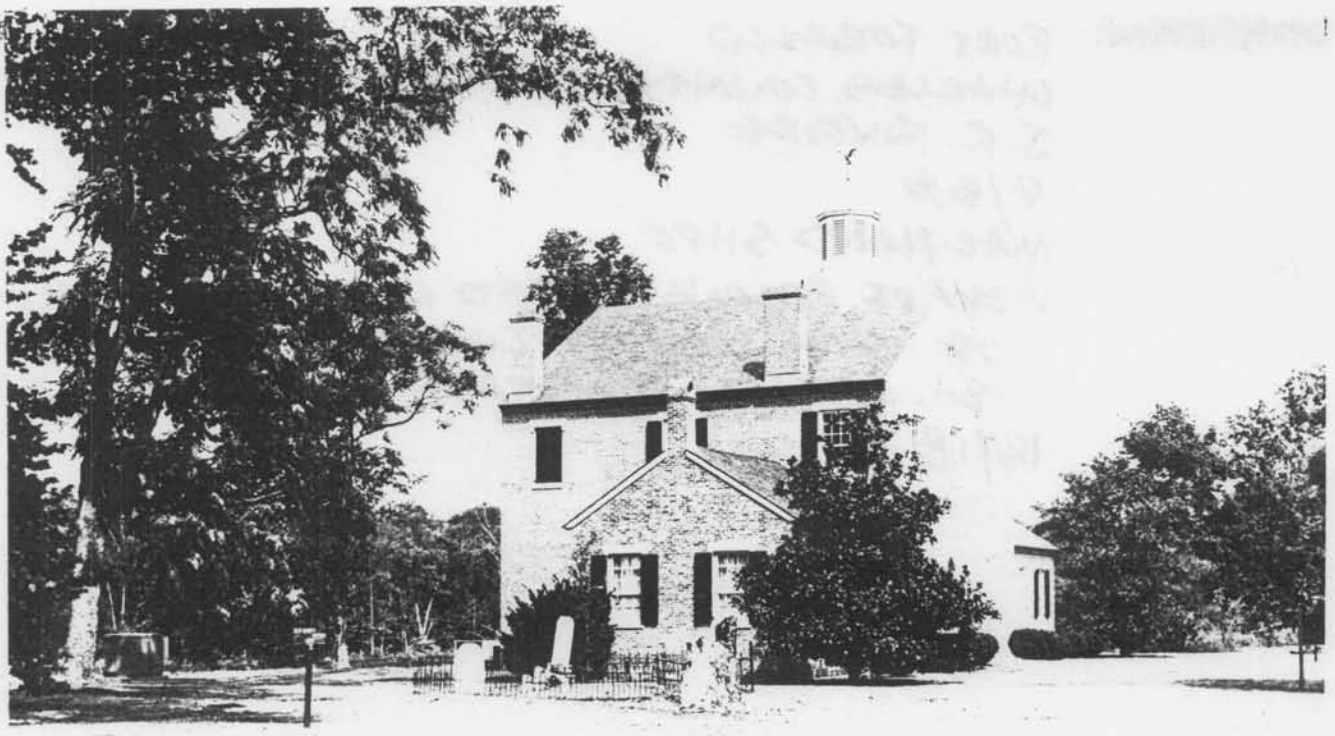
CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
CHIMNEY HOUSE TO LEFT; STABLE HALL RIGHT. BUILDING SITES IN FOREGROUND. CAMERA FACING NE.
9/18

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
CHIMNEY HOUSE, W. END, CAMERA FACING N-NE
10/18



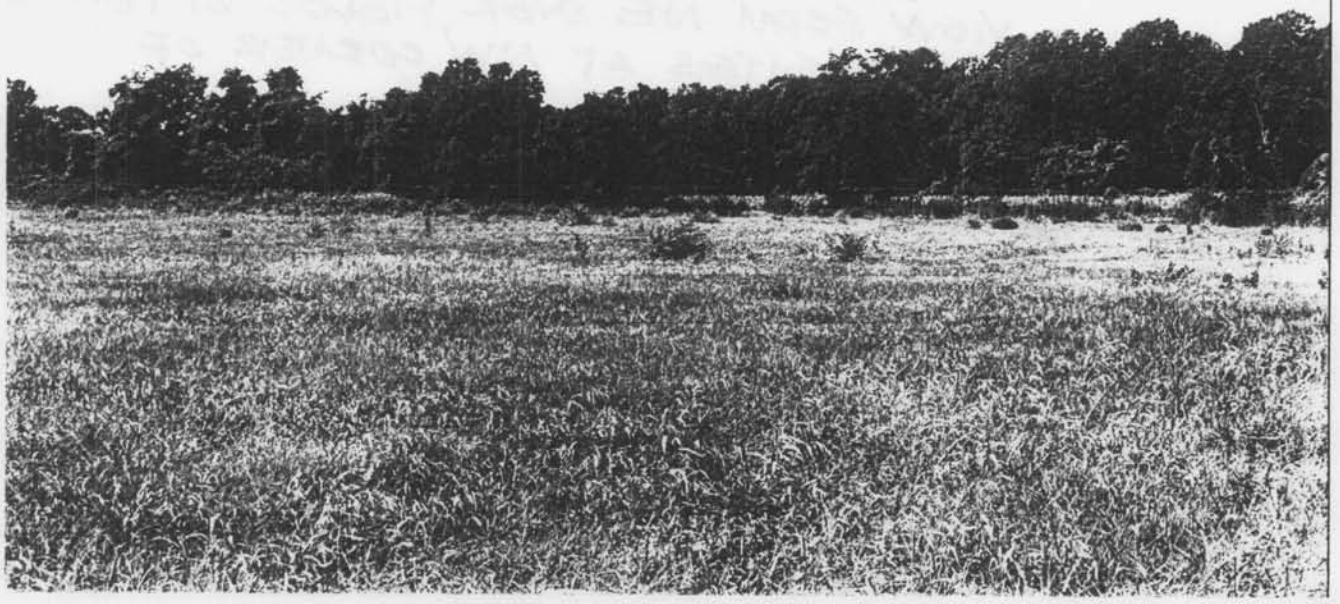
CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
MODERN RESIDENCE ON SITE OF BUENZEL'S STORE. EARLY BUILDING SITES IN FOREGROUND.
11/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW OF RECONSTRUCTED COURTHOUSE FROM SE WITH SITE OF CHRIST CHURCH '81 EA. 20TH C. CEMETERY IN FOREGROUND.
12/18

CH-372

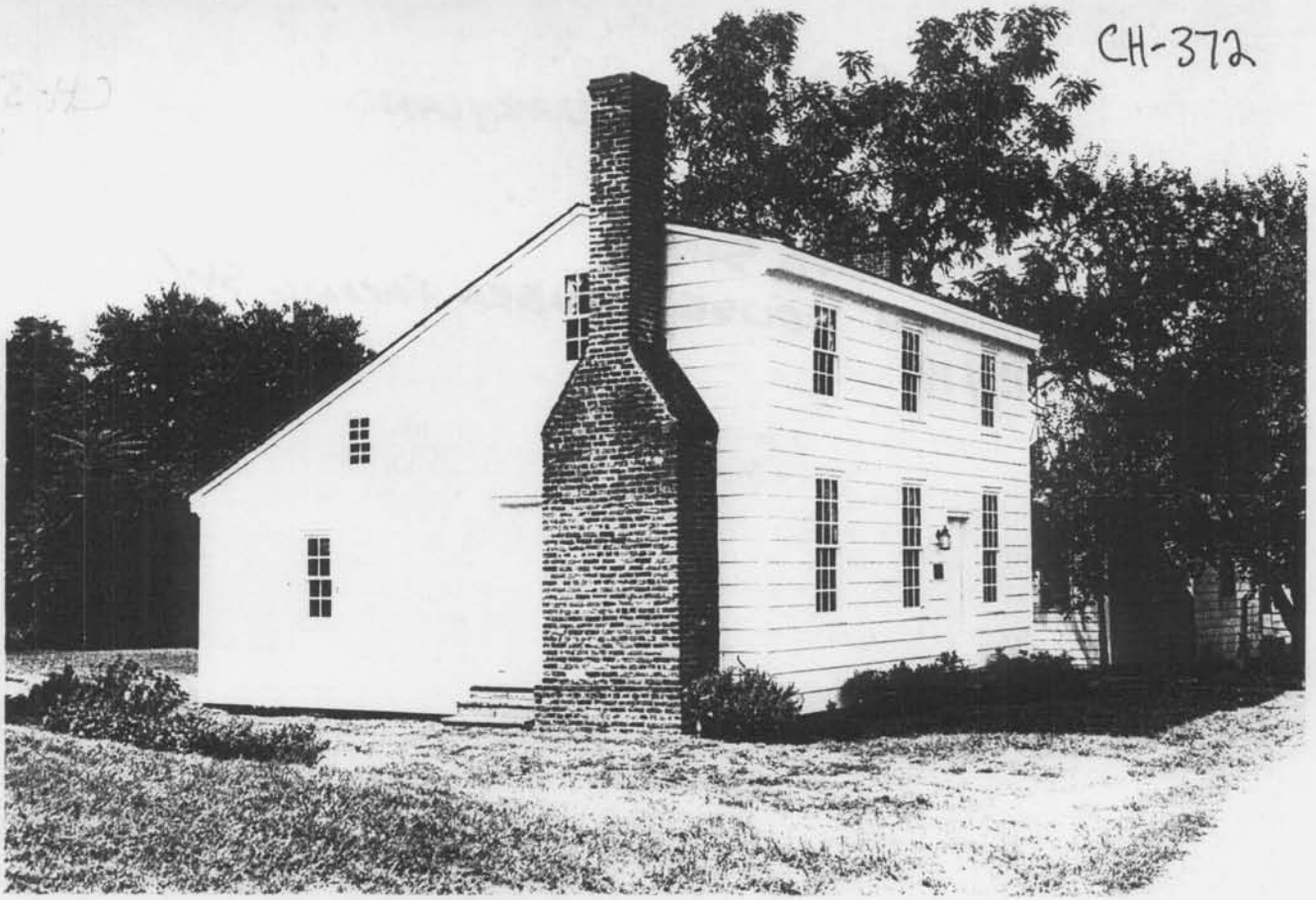


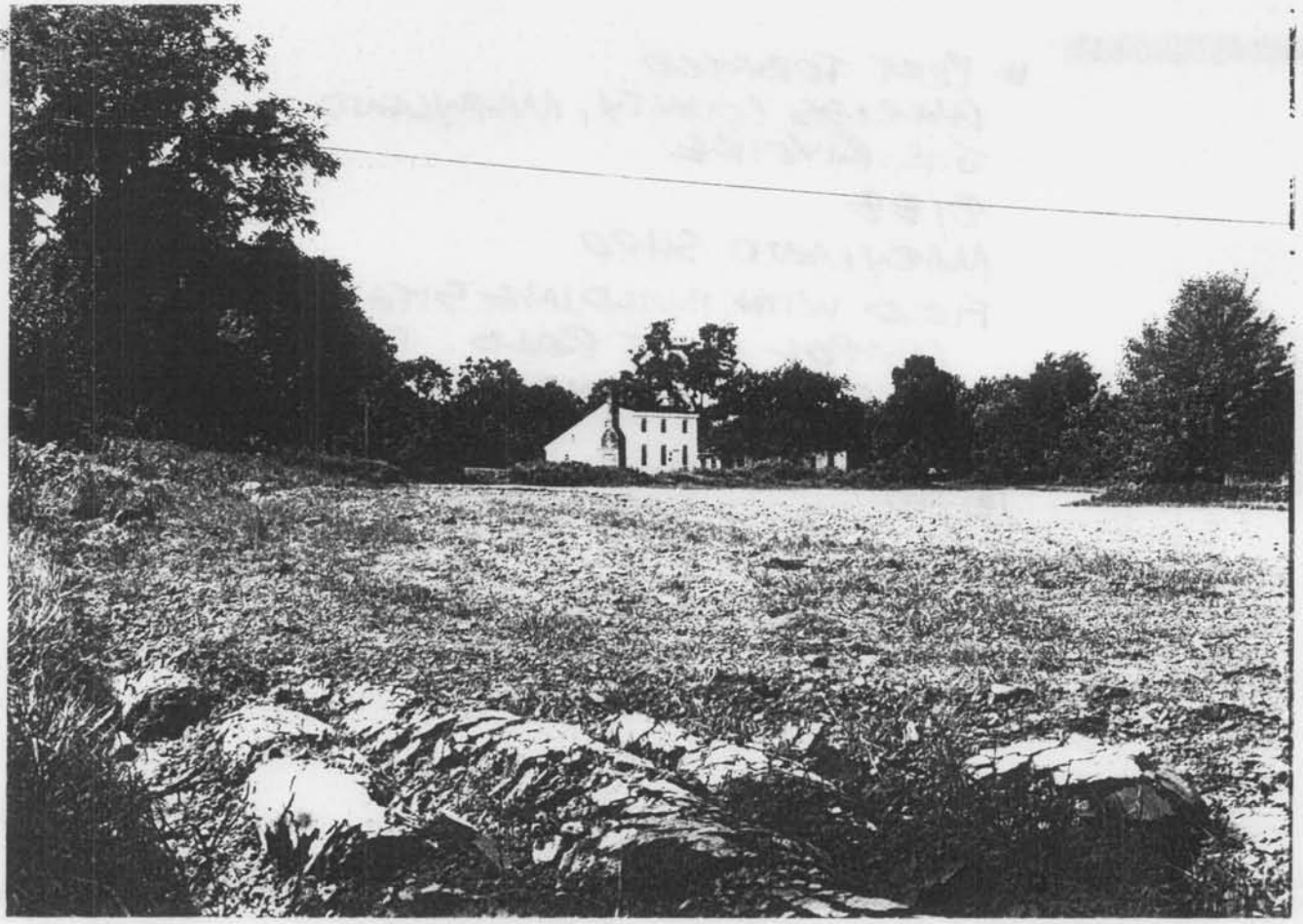
PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
VIEW FROM NE OVER FIELDS TO 18TH C.
BLDG. SITES AT NW CORNER OF
TOWN
1 13/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
MODERN RESIDENCE ADJACENT
TO BURCH HOUSE
14/18

CH-372





PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
BURCH HOUSE. CAMERA FACING SW.
15/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
FIELD WITH BUILDING SITES ON W. SIDE CHAPEL POINT ROAD. BURCH HOUSE IN BACKGROUND. CAMERA FACING S-SW
16/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
MODERN RESIDENCE, E. SIDE CHAPEL POINT ROAD. CAMERA FACING NE FROM BURCH HOUSE.
17/18

CH-372

PORT TOBACCO
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J. R. RIVOIRE
8/88
MARYLAND SHPO
MODERN RESIDENCE, E. SIDE CHAPEL POINT ROAD. CAMERA FACING E.
18/18