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

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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: Best Endeavor (preferred)

other names/site number: Buena Vista Farm — HA-1056

2. Location

street & number: 1612 Calvary Road — N/A [ ] not for publication

city, town: Churchville — [X] vicinity

state: Maryland code: MD county: Harford code: 025 zip code: 21028

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property: Contributing	Noncontributing	
[X] private	[X] building(s)	4	4	buildings
[ ] public-local	[ ] district	1		sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site		1	structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure			objects
	[ ] object	5	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER — Date: 11/24/90

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

HA-1056

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling	DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures	DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuildings	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuildings

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Federal	foundation STONE
Greek Revival	walls STONE
	roof SLATE
	other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Best Endeavor is a large, multi-sectioned, mid to late 18th century, partially stuccoed stone telescope house located on the west side of Calvary Road (State Route 136) near Churchville in south-central Harford County, Maryland. The principal facade faces south. The building comprises two primary sections: the western unit, constructed ca. 1740, is four bays wide. Probably around 1785, the eastern half of this section was raised to two stories, and a 2½-story, three bay, side passage/double parlor block was added against the east gable. At about the same time, an unusual wellhouse was attached at the west gable end. The house is characterized by interior decorative detailing reflecting these two periods, and a partial remodeling which took place c.1841. The resource retains several outbuildings dating from the mid-nineteenth century or earlier, including a stone smokehouse, a timber framed barn with board and batten siding, a timber framed shed, and the ruin of a large stone and frame bank barn. A late 19th/early 20th century frame tenant house and four mid-20th century outbuildings do not contribute to the significance of the resource.

[X] See continuation sheet 7.1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Best Endeavor is a large, multi-sectioned stone telescope house located on the west side of Calvary Road (State Route 136) near the village of Churchville in south-central Harford County, Maryland. The property is located approximately six miles east of the county seat, the town of Bel Air. The landscape is generally characterized by gently rolling fields; although land use in the area remains generally agricultural, suburban development has begun to occur.

The building comprises several gable-roofed sections of varying heights, and achieved its present configuration in the late eighteenth century. The earliest section, probably built around 1740, is four bays wide, constructed of random rubble masonry. Examination of the stonework of the south facade of this section suggests that it was originally 1½ stories in height; it appears that the eastern half was subsequently raised to two stories, probably coincident with the construction of the large, 2½-story wing at that end in the late eighteenth century. As a result, the two western bays of the south elevation are 1½ stories high, while the two eastern bays rise to two stories. A one-story wellhouse projects from the west gable.

On the south facade, the 2½-story block and the raised two-story section of the early wing are united by a boxed cornice with complex bed and crown moldings. The south slope of the gable roof is covered with slate, and interior chimneys mark the gable ends. Two pedimented dormers are located onthe south slope of the roof in the 2½-story block. The two first-floor windows in this section were increased in height in a mid-nineteenth century remodeling, and have mitered frames. The other windows in both sections have 6/6 sash in original pegged frames enriched with ovolo/fillet backband molding. Exterior sills have been replaced with concrete. The entrance is located in the westernmost bay of the 2½-story block, reflecting a side-passage plan; the door is framed with wide plain boards and surmounted by a four-light transom. A modern, one-story porch marks the entrance.

See Continuation Sheet 7.2

The western half of the early wing is 1½ stories high and two bays wide. An entrance is located in the eastern bay, with an early frame of wide boards with a bead at the inner edge. The other bay holds a 6/6 window in an early beaded frame. There is a simple boxed cornice; a large reworked gable dormer is centered on the slate-clad south slope of the roof.

The east gable end, facing Calvary Road, is unfenestrated except for two small four-light windows at the attic level.

The north elevation of the 2½ story block is similar to the south facade, except that the bay adjacent to the door is blank. The north slope of the roof is covered in asphalt; there are no dormers on this side.

The north wall of the early section steps back from the plane of the main block, forming a wing. A two-tier gallery was created across this section, probably in the mid-nineteenth century; the lower level of this gallery was enclosed to form a garage, which was later remodeled to accommodate a modern kitchen. The kitchen extends across the 1½ story section.

The west gable of the main block is exposed above the shed roof of the gallery, and is lighted by a four-pane window. This area, and the exposed area of the west gable of the two-story section, have been stuccoed. A small 6/6 window is centered in the peak of the gable of the 1½ story section, and a 6/6 window has been cut into the west wall of the wellhouse.

When the present owners acquired the property, the building was covered with stucco, which was failing in several areas and most of which was therefore removed. The character of the masonry suggests that the building had received this treatment at an early date, probably upon completion of the 2½-story section; this would have integrated the several sections in a unified whole, consistent with the aesthetic ideals of the period.

See Continuation Sheet 7.3

On the interior, the western section consists of two approximately equal-sized rooms on the ground floor, each measuring roughly 15' by 15', with fireplaces located back-to-back on the partition wall. The western room was the original kitchen; its large cooking fireplace retains an iron crane. The fireplace was recently treated with a projecting stone facing to improve the draft; the opening is topped with a simple board shelf. There are exterior doorways in the center of the north wall and in one bay of the south wall; the opening in the north wall provides access to a modern kitchen. The south wall has a replaced Dutch door in an early beaded frame, and a replaced 6/6 window with an early interior sill. An enclosed winder stair, behind a beaded-batten door, is located in the northwest corner of this room, rising to a chamber in the loft; stair treads are secured with T-head nails. Baseboards in this room are topped with a Greek ogee. A door in the southwest corner of this room provides access to a 12' by 12' wellhouse adjoining the kitchen. There is no exterior access to the wellhouse; such direct interior communication with a well is an unusual plan feature in the vernacular architecture of Piedmont Maryland, where it is more customary to find the water source located in a separate building at some distance from the dwelling house. Even where an early building may incorporate a spring room in its cellar, this area is usually accessible from the exterior. The well room has been remodeled to provide modern bath and laundry facilities.

The other ground floor room is reached through an opening in the partition wall south of the fireplace. Its floor level is two steps higher than the west room. This room also has more formal woodwork than the west room, including fielded panel doors and a Greek Revival mantel. A former window opening in the north wall has been converted to a cupboard and blocked with decorative paneled shutters; a doorway in this wall, framed with Greek Revival stepped molding with a beaded inner edge, provides access to the modern kitchen. The windows in the south wall also are framed with stepped molding, with molded sills and beaded subsills. The mantel framing the fireplace on the west partition wall features tapered pilasters supporting a recessed-panel frieze and Greek ovolo molded shelf; this mantel, as well as the stepped window and door trim, appears to have been installed in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, probably coincident with a remodeling of the

See Continuation Sheet 7.4

two parlors in the late 18th century block. An enclosed winder stair is located in the northwest corner of this room, leading to a chamber above. The door enclosing this stair is treated with four raised fielded panels. A built-in cupboard with a paneled door is located next to the stair. Both openings have beaded architrave trim. This room also retains a brick hearth, early pine flooring and beaded baseboards.

The present main section of the house is a large 2½-story stone wing, constructed about 1785 against the east end of the earlier section. This section originally had a side-passage, double-parlor plan, comprising two approximately equal-sized rooms opening off an unusually spacious, 8'-10" wide entrance/stair hall. All of the trim in the hall appears to be original to the ca. 1785 period. In the hall, a dogleg stair rises against the west wall; the stair has a turned newel, slender turned balusters (three per tread), a molded handrail and shadow rail, and scrolled step ends. The area below the stair carriage is framed with beaded architrave molding and ovolo/fillet backband; this area is enriched with raised fielded paneling with complex panel molds. Similar details are found on the door below the stair, leading to the cellar. All the openings off the stair hall are framed with beaded architrave molding with ovolo/fillet backband. The chair rail has a half-round shelf above a coved bed molding and a beaded lower edge; these profiles are mirrored in the baseboard. The partition between the hall and parlors is unusually thin, measuring only 4" thick, indicating that lath and plaster were applied to vertical boards rather than conventional frame construction.

The partition which separated the two parlors was removed in the 1950s; its former location is revealed by patches in the flooring and plasterwork. Narrow hardwood floorboards were installed over early flooring in this area. The door architraves, baseboards, complex molded window sills and beaded subsills in the parlors remain from the ca. 1785 period. Other decorative detailing dates from the second quarter of the nineteenth century; it is probable that this remodeling took place in 1841, when Noah Webster purchased the property from his father. At that time, two elaborate Greek Revival mantels were installed against the east gable wall, featuring freestanding columns supporting a frieze comprising a fielded panel with Greek ogee panel molds below a

See Continuation Sheet 7.5

complex bed molding employing Greek ovolo, step, fillet, and bead motifs, and a Greek ovolo molded shelf. Windows were treated with symmetrically-molded surrounds with corner blocks.

On the second story of the main block are two chambers above the parlors, and a third smaller room at the south end of the hall. These areas retain late eighteenth century woodwork which is consistent in character with that of the first floor stair hall. The doors opening off the hall have six raised fielded panels with complex panel molds, and are hung in openings framed with beaded surrounds with ovolo/fillet backbands.

The northeast chamber has a fireplace with a simple architrave surround; an unusual original closet occupies the space to the north of the chimney breast, with a peg rail running around three sides. Another closet, probably of nineteenth-century date, has been created in the corresponding space on the other side of the fireplace. This room retains early window and door surrounds, chair rail, and baseboard trim.

The layout of the southeast chamber is similar; the fireplace has been blocked, and both flanking closets appear to date from the nineteenth century. The door frame is beaded, with an ovolo/fillet backband; window surrounds reflect Greek Revival influence, with stepped architrave molding and symmetrically molded subsills. The baseboard in this room is plain; there is no chair rail.

The room at the end of the hall has been remodeled to accommodate a modern bathroom. It retains an early paneled door in a beaded architrave with ovolo/fillet backband; there is an early keyhole-shaped spring latch on this door. The window trim is Greek, as in the southeast chamber.

At the southwest corner of the hall, a mid-nineteenth century paneled door opens into a bedroom in the upper story of the east half of the earlier section of the house. This room has simple, mid-nineteenth century woodwork featuring stepped window and door surrounds. Closets flank the chimney stack on the west wall; there is no fireplace.

See Continuation Sheet 7.6

The attic is reached by a stair rising from the northwest corner of the hall, enclosed with a beaded-batten door with a nineteenth-century spring latch. The attic comprises three rooms; all are fully plastered (where it is evident, lath appears to be riven and secured with double-struck nails). Batten doors are framed with architrave trim which is plain except for a heavy bead at the inner edge. Hanging strips are set into the plaster at several locations. The east room runs the full depth of the building; a fireplace is centered against this wall, with an elaborate Federal period mantel which probably was relocated to the attic from an original location in one of the parlors when the parlors were remodeled in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The house retains a good level of integrity. Its accretive growth and series of remodelings into the nineteenth century reflect the increasing prosperity of its builders and occupants. It retains an especially noteworthy collection of late 18th and early 19th century interior decorative detailing. The most significant alteration to the historic interior spaces was the removal of the partition which separated the two parlors in the main block; despite this change, the original configuration remains clearly expressed in patches in the floorboards and ceiling plaster. Otherwise, interior alterations have been limited to replastering, installation of hardwood flooring in certain areas, and refacing the fireplaces in the older section to improve their draft. On the exterior, deterioration of the stucco prompted its removal, and rotted wooden window sills were replaced with concrete.

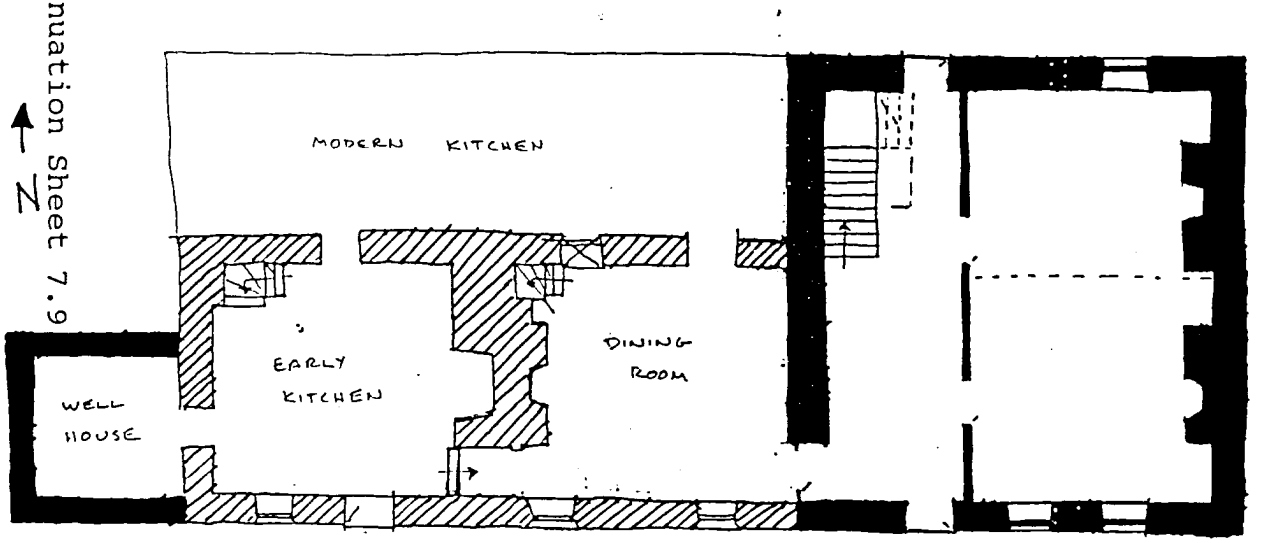
Also on the property are several secondary buildings and a site which date from the period of significance of the main house and contribute to its historic setting. These include a stone smokehouse, a timber frame barn with board and batten siding which rests on a rubble stone foundation, and a timber frame shed. The stone foundation of a large bank barn, destroyed in a recent storm, also remains on the property. These probably date from the period between the circa 1785 additions and the circa 1841 renovations. Non-contributing buildings and structures include a late 19th/early 20th century tenant house, and several outbuildings dating to the mid-20th century: a small barn, a workshop, and a garage, all

See Continuation Sheet 7.7

constructed of cinderblock, and a frame corncrib.

The house and outbuildings are situated within an informally landscaped domestic yard, which is surrounded by agricultural fields. There is no evidence of historic landscape features.

See Continuation Sheet 7.8



See Continuation Sheet 7.9

N

HA-1056

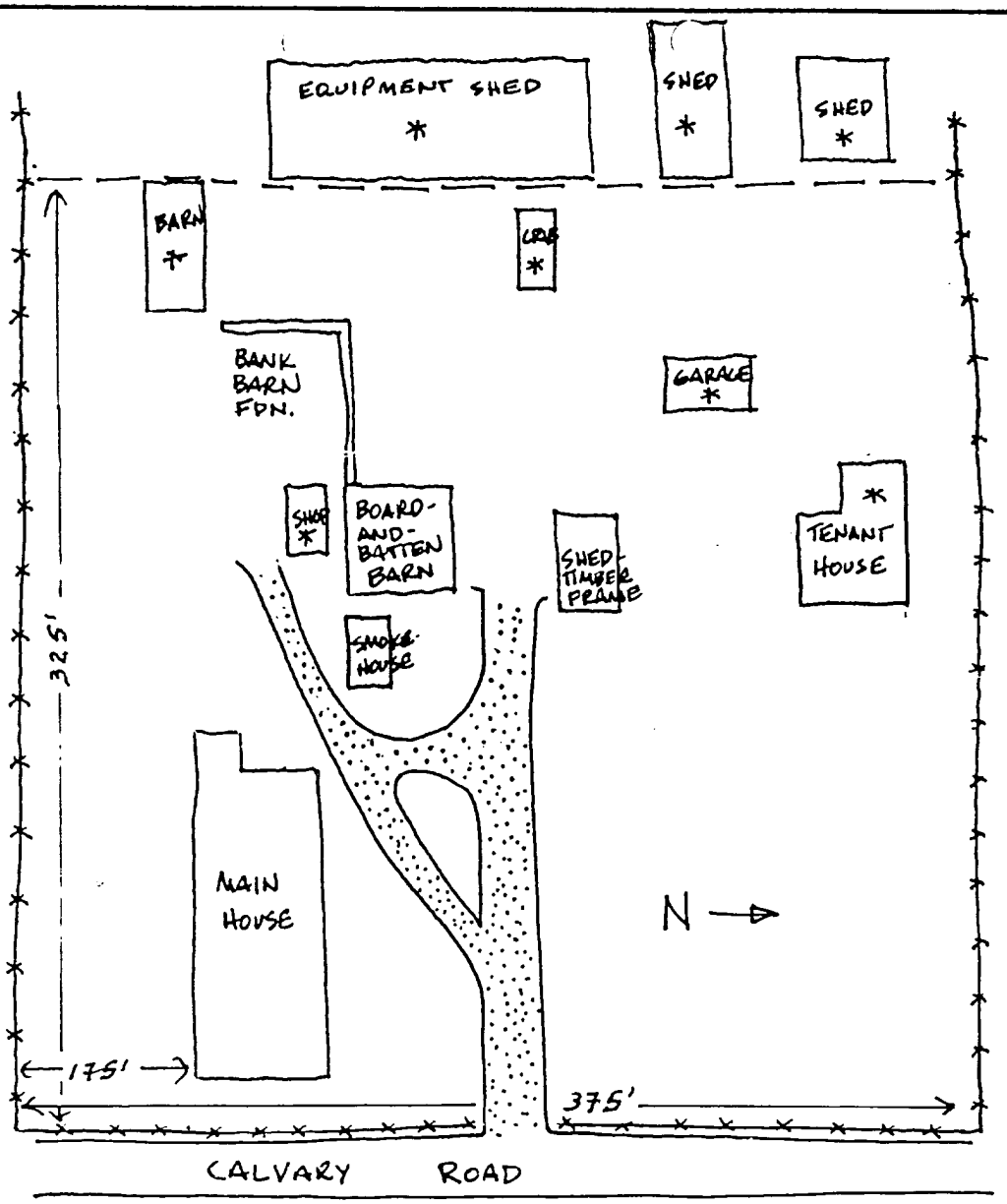
BEST ENDEAVOR

SKETCH FLOOR PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

PERIOD 1, MID-18TH CENTURY

PERIOD 2, LATE 18TH CENTURY

PEK 9/90



HA-1056 BEST ENDEAVOR

SKETCH SITE PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

* = NON-CONTRIBUTING

PEK 9/90

8. Statement of Significance

HA-1056

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
Architecture	c.1740-c.1841	c.1740
		c.1785
		c.1841

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Best Endeavor is significant for its architecture. The house presents a significant example of the domestic vernacular architecture of rural Harford County, reflecting accretive growth and remodeling over time from about 1740 through the mid-nineteenth century. The building comprises a ca. 1740 hall/parlor section, to which a large side passage, double parlor block was added late in the eighteenth century; around 1841, a partial interior remodeling was carried out. It retains an exceptional collection of historic decorative detailing, reflecting two periods of craftsmanship: the stair hall and second story retain a full complement of quality Federal period woodwork, and the trim in the parlors and dining room reflects Greek Revival influence. An elaborate Federal mantel was apparently relocated in the attic when the parlors were remodeled in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, reflecting changing tastes and uses of space. An early wellhouse adjoins the original kitchen and communicates with it; this is an unusual feature in the vernacular architecture of Piedmont Maryland. Other notable plan features include an unusually spacious stair hall separated from the parlors by a board partition, and several built-in closets. The property also retains several domestic and agricultural outbuildings contemporaneous with the house, including a stone smokehouse, a frame barn and shed, and the ruins of a large bank barn. The period of significance extends to the mid-19th century, when the house achieved its present character.

☒ See continuation sheet 8.1

For HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Rural Agrarian Intensification - A.D. 1680-1815
Agricultural-Industrial Transition - A.D. 1815-1870

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning
Agriculture

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuildings

Known Design Source: None

See Continuation Sheet 8.2

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The resource is situated on part of the tract called Best Endeavor, which was patented to Thomas Lytfoot in 1686. This tract became part of the extensive land holdings of the Webster family by the early eighteenth century. The construction of the 1½-story, hall/parlor section of the house is attributed to Samuel Webster, a tobacco farmer who served as inspector of tobacco at Joppa, one of the principal early ports on the Chesapeake. Despite this important position, Samuel Webster's means appear to have been relatively modest. Upon his death in 1785, his estate inventory revealed a net worth of only £100; the total list of his chattels reads: "wearing apparel, 1 bed and frame, 1 old bed, 2 books, 1 pewter dish, 1 silver watch."

The large, formal side passage/double parlor section of the house was added after Samuel Webster's death by his grandson, Richard Webster II (1765-1855). Richard Webster II had abandoned tobacco production in favor of grain; he also ran Webster's Mill, which he had inherited from his father along with the house and land.

In 1841, Richard Webster II sold the property to his son, Noah; the Greek Revival woodwork in the house seems to coincide with Noah Webster's acquisition of the property. When Noah Webster died in 1874, he left Best Endeavor to his son, Richard E. Webster (1833-1908), who capitalized on Harford County's important 19th century canning industry by raising fruit, as well as grain and cattle. The property passed out of the Webster family in 1908.

In its accretive growth and remodeling, the property reflects changes in the agrarian economic base which affected residents throughout Harford County during the period. The 1½-story, hall/parlor wing was constructed about 1740 by a moderately successful tobacco planter. By the post-Revolutionary period, the economic base of the county had shifted from tobacco to a more stable and lucrative production of grain; the large 2½-story side-passage, double parlor east wing reflects the prosperity of its builder, a grain farmer and miller. A remodeling of the parlors in the second quarter of the nineteenth century speaks of the continuing success of the grain-based economy, and the beginnings

See Continuation Sheet 8.3

of agricultural diversification and scientific farming.

A review of the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties for Harford County indicates that Best Endeavor is probably the best-preserved eighteenth-century house in the Churchville area. Two other properties in the area represent this period: Webster's Forest, a 1½-story gambrel-roofed stone house with a side-passage plan, and Broom's Bloom, a frame building. Both these properties suffered fires at some time in their history, and their interiors are not as fully intact as that of Best Endeavor.

The property is threatened by increasing development and transportation improvements in the immediate area. The location of the house, within a few feet of the right-of-way of Calvary Road (State Route 136), makes it especially vulnerable to road widening.

9. Major Bibliographical References

HA-1056

[X] See continuation sheet 9.1

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:
- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

creage of property Approximately 2.8 acres

USGS Quad: Bel Air, Maryland

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	391220	4373190
B			
C			
D			

[ ] 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 Peter E. Kurtze, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date August 31, 1990

street & number 109 Brandon Road telephone (301)828-1644

city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21212

★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Land and Probate Records of Harford County

Preston, Walter Wilkes. History of Harford County, Maryland. orig. pub. Baltimore, 1901; rpt. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1972.

Tax Records: Maryland 1783, 1814; Federal 1798

Wright, C. Milton. Our Harford Heritage. Bel Air, Maryland: privately printed, 1967.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties: Harford County. Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland. (Susan Deeney and Christopher Weeks manuscripts, in particular.)

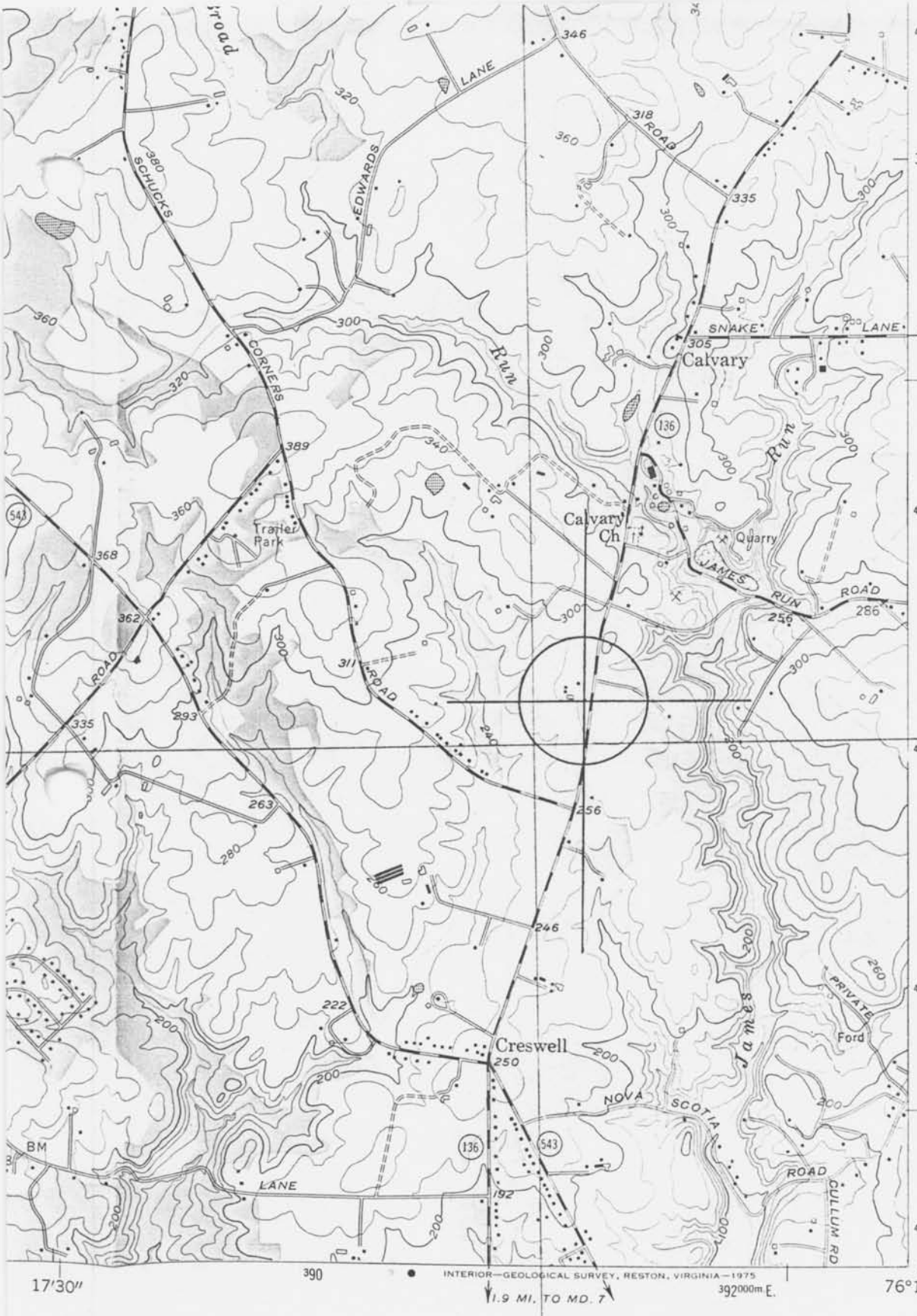
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Boundaries form a rectangle measuring 375' north-south along Calvary Road by 325' east-west. The south boundary is 175' from and parallel to the south side of the house. These boundaries correspond roughly to the area of the domestic yard which provides the immediate setting for the historically-significant buildings and structures. These boundaries are generally defined on the east by the existing right-of-way of Calvary Road (State Route 136), and on the north, south, and southwest by fence lines; the western boundary follows a projection of this line from the southwest to northeast corners of the defined area, completing the rectangle.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property comprises approximately 2.8 acres, including the significant buildings and structures within their immediate environment and excluding modern outbuildings and surrounding property which do not contribute to the significance of the resource.

Bel Air Quadrangle 7.5 Minute Series - U.S. Geological Survey



Best Endeavor
HA-1056
Harford Co.
Maryland

18/391220/4373190

1 MILE

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty — Light-duty

Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt

U. S. Route — State Route

(PERRYMAN) 5762 I NW

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

BEL AIR, MD.

N3930—W7615/7.5

1956