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: Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House
other names/site number: Methodist Parsonage HA-854

2. Location

street & number: 3604 Philadelphia Road N/A ☐ not for publication
city, town: Abingdon N/A ☐ vicinity
state: Maryland code: MD county: Harford code: 025 zip code: 21009

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☒ private	☒ building(s)	2	0 buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district		sites
☐ public-State	☐ site		structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure		objects
	☐ object	2	0 Total

me 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 ☒ 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 12/21/90

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

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

FEDERAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WOOD
roof SLATE
other WOOD, BRICK

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House faces south towards Old Post Road (Maryland Route 7; anciently Paca Street) in the unincorporated village of Abingdon in southern Harford County, Maryland. The two-part frame house has a c.1785 five-bay, two-story front section and a three-bay, one-room rear service wing; the wing was originally 1-1/2 stories tall but was raised to two in the late 19th century. The principal entrance forms the center bay of the front section and is centered between two six-over-nine sash windows; five regularly placed windows light the second story; all windows appear to have their original framing, shutter dogs, and glass. Exterior walls in both sections are covered with their original random-width beaded weatherboards except the added second story of the rear wing which is sheathed in its original German siding. A six-post porch spans the front of the house; it is signed JB, is thought to be the work of Harford County mastercraftsman Jacob Bull, and is among the oldest documented porches in the County. Inside, the main section has a center stairhall plan with one room to each side. All rooms have architrave trim, and simple chairrail and baseboards; side rooms have original mantels; the dining room is flanked by an original cupboard with panelled doors; stairs have scrolled step ends. All this trim is typical of the local restrained Federal style and is original and in place. Flooring is new but was placed over and without removing the original. The rear wing has one room per floor with a pantry/storeroom and a simple back stair. Just west of the house is a 10' by 10' brick springhouse/dairy. Laid in common bond, the structure has a hip roof and the date 1802 carved in the slate doorsill.

[X] See continuation sheet 7.1

8. Statement of Significance

HA-854

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.1785-1888	c.1785
		c.1888

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bull, Jacob, builder

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

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House is architecturally significant as an intact example of a Federal period I house, and as the oldest documented frame dwelling in Harford County. This house form would have once housed a significant number of middle-class Marylanders throughout the state but, in part at least because it is seemingly unexceptional, few examples remain in Harford County in such unaltered condition with floor plan, plaster walls, mantel and other woodwork still in place. Additional architectural significance comes from the front porch, built c.1888, which is one of the few documented examples of the work of Harford County master builder Jacob Bull.

☒ See continuation sheet 8.1

For HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[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

Acreage of property 2.45 acres
USGS Quad: Edgewood, Maryland

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	389960	4368860
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property consists of Parcel 333, on State Tax Assessment Map No. 62 for Harford County.

[X] See continuation sheet 10.1

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the town lot upon which the resource stands.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christopher Weeks, Preservation Planner
organization Department of Planning and Zoning date August 1, 1990
street & number 220 S. Main Street telephone (301)838-6000 x103
city or town Bel Air state Maryland zip code 21014

★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House faces south towards Old Post Road (Maryland Route 7; anciently Paca Street) in the unincorporated village of Abingdon in southern Harford County, Maryland. The house sits on the southwestern half of Lot #3 of the original plat of Abingdon as laid out by John Paca in 1779. The lot is dotted with plantings of mature trees and shrubs all placed in an informal manner fully in keeping with the restrained character of the house.

Built c.1785, the frame house has a five-bay, two-story I-house front section. There is a three-bay service wing to the rear (north); built contemporaneously with the front section, the rear wing was originally 1-1/2 stories; it was raised to two in the late 19th century. The principal entrance forms the center bay of the front section. The panelled door appears to be original as does its hardware. It is placed between two six-over-nine sash windows; five regularly placed six-over-six windows light the second floor; all windows appear to have their original simple framing and are flanked by louvered shutters held in place by original shutter dogs.

A six-post, shed-roofed porch spans the front of the house. The porch is supported by deeply chamfered wooden posts and has squared baluster railings and simple scroll trim. One board is incised JB, a signature widely believed to be that of jacob Bull, Harford County's mid and late 19th century "Master-Builder;"[1] it appears to be unchanged and is one of the oldest documented porches in the County, according to restoration architect James Wollon, AIA.[2]

Exterior walls in both sections are sheathed in original random-width beaded weatherboards except for the second story of the rear wing which is covered in German siding; the German siding dates to the late 19th century, when the house was used as a Methodist parsonage and the service wing was raised from 1-1/2

---

[1]Marilynn M. Larew, Bel Air: The Town Through its Buildings. (Bel Air: privately printed, 1981, p.68.

[2]Conversation between James Wollon and Christopher Weeks, July 1990.

See Continuation Sheet 7.2

stories to 2; the porch was probably added at about the same time.

Inside, the main section has a center stairhall plan with one room to each side. All major rooms on both floors have architrave cornices and door surrounds and simple chairrails and baseboards; many have original six-panel doors; all trim is original. T h e stair, placed against the west wall, has scrolled step ends. This trim is apparently original as are the simple rail and square balusters.

Each of the two side rooms has a projecting chimney breast on the outside wall; the fireplaces are centered in the wall and each has a simple mantel consisting of plain shelf, molded cornice, panelled center and end blocks, and pilasters. That in the parlor is somewhat more elaborate. Both fireplaces have chimneys with corbelled caps which are good examples of 19th-century masonry and are probably contemporaneous with the porch and with the service wing enlargement. The dining room (west room) has built in double-level cupboards filling the space south of the fireplace (see plan); presumably original, they have two panel doors in their upper level and one-panel doors below.

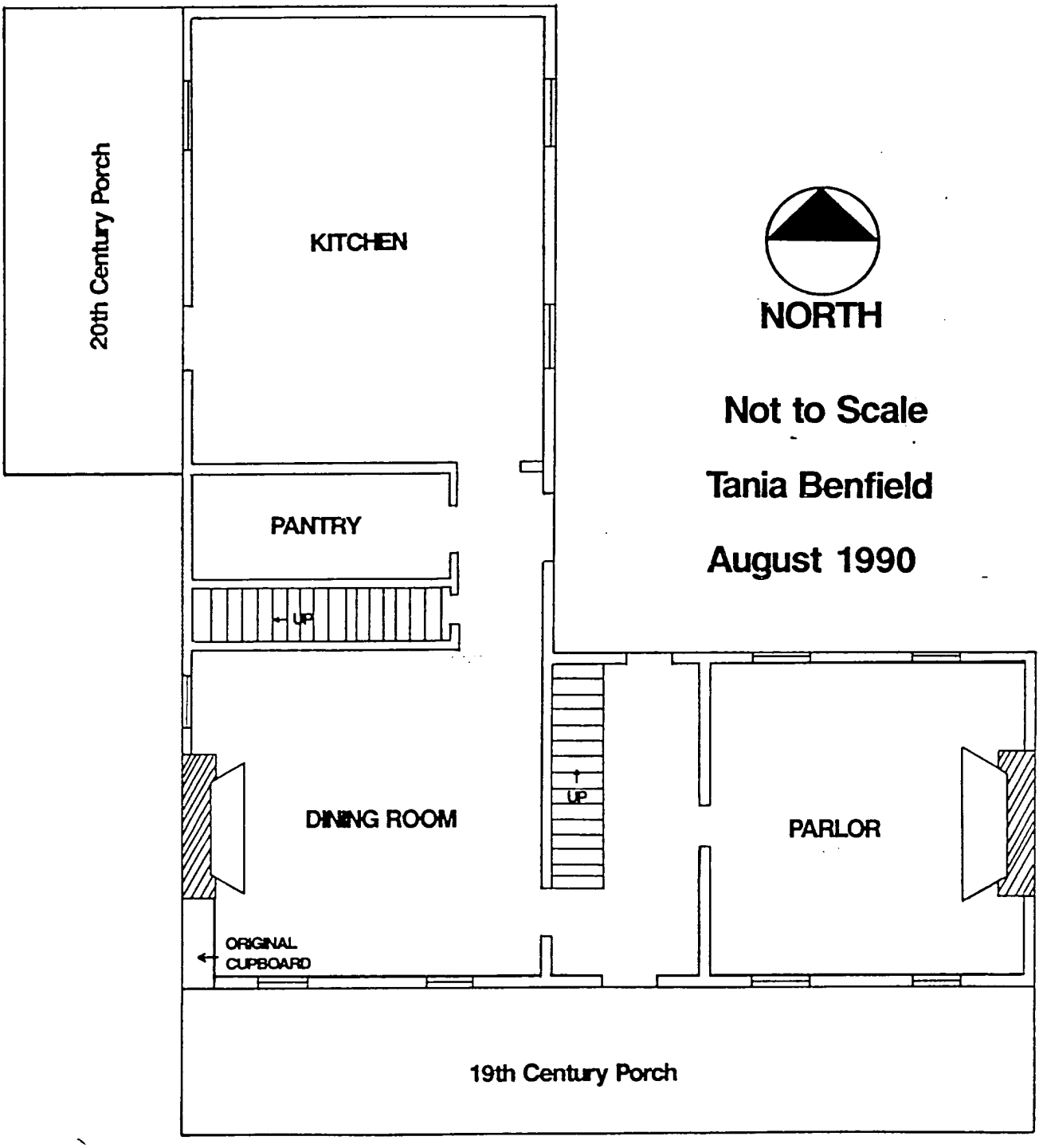
Floors throughout the house are modern but are placed directly over the original planks, which are still in place and which the present owners plan to expose and restore.

Upstairs, there are two rooms to the west, one to the east, and a modern bathroom to the south. All rooms have simple chairrails and beaded vertical board doors. The two west rooms have small blocked-in fireplaces but it is likely that in the original configuration the two rooms were one. The large west bedroom retains its original mantel and other trim.

The rear service wing has one, modern, large room per floor. The ground floor has a pantry/storeroom and a back stair which may be original to the house (see significance). A modern one-story, shed-roofed screened in porch shades the western wall of the service wing. All rooms upstairs and down have plain plastered walls which appear to be original as does the lathing beneath.

Placed about 15 feet west of the rear wing is a common bond brick springhouse/dairy. It has a hip roof, slit-like louvered windows on the east and west sides, and a slate doorsill with the date 1802 inscribed on it.

See Continuation Sheet 7.3


20th Century Porch
KITCHEN
NORTH
Not to Scale
Tania Benfield
August 1990
PANTRY
UP
UP
DINING ROOM
PARLOR
ORIGINAL
CUPBOARD
19th Century Porch

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period:
Rural Agrarian Intensification - A.D. 1680-1815
Agricultural-Industrial Transition - A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial/Urban Dominance - A.D. 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):
Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning
Religion

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) or Use(s):
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Known Design Source: None

See Continuation Sheet 8.2

NOTE: Numbers given in this section which have an HA prefix refer to Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties forms.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The town of Abingdon was laid out by John Paca in 1779. Its reason for being was the Old Post Road (Maryland Route 7) laid out as the major 18th-century colonial road to connect Philadelphia with Alexandria but which closely follows, at least in Harford County, a post road laid out as early as 1687. The Pacas had been large landowners in the area since the early 18th century and William Paca, one of John's sons, was a future Governor and Signer of the Declaration of Independence. Paca's plat for Abingdon, recorded in the courthouse in Bel Air, contains 66 lots laid out around seven streets; Prospect and Washington streets ran north-south while High, Market, Harford, Johnson, and Paca (most important of all as the Post Road) streets ran east-west. Paca and Washington streets were to be 66 feet wide; the others 33 feet.

Artisans, educators, and all the other professions associated with villages quickly appeared in Abingdon. The town was Harford's center of silversmithing: Joseph Toy, Isaac Nicholas Toy, and William Wilson were all Abingdonians and examples of their work may be seen in the American Wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art. (It was in fact with the lot sold to "Joseph Toy, Silversmith" that Paca recorded the official town plat in December 1780, see deed book JLG d page 39.) William Dorney operated a gunsmith shop in Abingdon "said to be unsurpassed anywhere in the colonies."[3] In addition, there were three cabinetmakers, a pottery, and a funeral parlor (the latter established in 1808); Abingdon was also the home of The Abingdon Patriot, established in 1805 as the first newspaper in Harford County. So thriving was Abingdon that the compilers of the first (1790) census used it to mark "the center of the United States" insofar as an equal number of people lived north and south of town. In sum, the second (1799) edition of Joseph Scott's U.S. Gazetteer observed that Abingdon contained "51 dwellings and 240 inhabitants of which 66 are black. It is situated on a lofty Eminence...[and]has 8 stores filled with West India produce and the various manufacturers of Europe, a tanyard, and several shops in which all the useful and mechanical arts are carried on...Here are

[3]Harford County Directory, 1953, p.337.

See Continuation Sheet 8.3

two schoolhouses and a Methodist Episcopal Church.[4]

That last mention refers to what was undoubtedly Abingdon's greatest institution, namely the Methodist Episcopal Church and the various activities associated with it, particularly the founding of Cokesbury College. John Wesley appointed an Englishman, the Reverend Thomas Coke, to be Superintendent of Methodism in America. Coke cam to the United States around 1780 to meet with Francis Asbury and the two chartered the course of that faith. The two men quickly agreed on the need for a college, to be modeled after Wesley's famous Kingswood School in England and "the Christmas Conference of Methodism in America authorized the organization of Cokesbury College in 1780."[5] At a church conference in 1783, Coke and Asbury decided that the college should be located in Harford County, a geographic midway point in the country, and that it should be called Cokesbury after their combined names. Abingdon was newly-founded, its future seemed promising, so they settled on this for the new institution, Coke himself writing, "the place delights me more and more..."[6]

The church purchased ground from John Paca on July 3, 1784, and after fund-raising, the cornerstone was laid on June 5, 1785, Bishop Asbury giving a keynote speech. The resulting building was brick, quite large (108 feet by 40 feet and three stories tall) and built in a provincial Georgian manner with five bays in a projecting pedimented center section and four bays to each side all crowned by a curious steeple. One contemporary described the college as being in "dimensions and style of architecture fully equal if not superior, to anything of the kind in the country." John Wesley outlined the curriculum in a 1788 letter and it was to be traditional: "I pray you not to adopt any of the modern innovations. Do not throw away the accents in Greek or the vowels in Hebrew."[7]

---

[4]Quoted in "Harford Historical Bulletin," No. 44, Spring 1990.

[5]"Bulletin."

[6]C. Milton Wright, Our Harford Heritage, (Bel Air: privately printed, 1967), p.236.

[7]"Bulletin."

See Continuation Sheet 8.4

Despite these grand beginnings, Cokesbury College didn't have a very long career. As early as 1788 its president was fired for being inefficient in teaching Latin; debt continued to mount, totalling $6,000 by 1794; finally in December 1795 the building burned, the result of suspected arson. There was no attempt to rebuild. As Bishop Asbury wrote in his Journal on January 5, 1796, "Cokesbury College is consumed to ashes...Its enemies may rejoice, and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me 10,000 pounds per year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it. The Lord called not...the Methodists to build colleges."[8] The college bell, however, was saved; it remained in Abingdon until 1888 when President John F. Goucher moved it to his new Woman's College of Baltimore (now Goucher College).

But that was not to be the end of education in town for the Abingdon Academy opened in 1828; this was succeeded by the public school system in 1850.

Abingdon would gain some further fame in the 1820s as the site of Charles Sewell's silk hat factory, one of a few such establishments in America. Begun in 1821 on the northwest corner of Paca and Washington Streets, Sewell's factory flourished with customers recorded, thanks to the nearby dock at Otter Point in the Bush River, from as far away as the West Indies. The factory's best year was its first, 1821, when 1689 hats were manufactured; demand slacked off quickly until by 1824 only 40 hats were produced every other month. The factory closed late that year. (Sewell went on to serve in the state legislature from 1823, the U.S. Congress in 1832, and as President of the Board of Trustees of the Abingdon Academy from 1829 until his death in 1848.)[9]

All of Abingdon, in fact, generally suffered a lengthy decline during the 19th century; an account published by the county's Historical Society wryly noted that Scott's 1799 account of the town "reads like a dream when we think of the Abingdon of the present day [c.1980]." This decline is certainly borne out in the various state Directories and Gazetteers that were so popular a century ago. If an observer was able to gaze at the town

---

[8]"Bulletin."

[9]"Bulletin."

See Continuation Sheet 8.5

rhapsodically in 1799, noting the "lofty eminence," the "stores filled with West India produce," and the shops "in which all the useful and mechanical arts are carried on," by 1851 R.S. Fisher, in his Gazetteer of the State of Maryland could only note of Abingdon that it was in "Harford Co. Situate on the w. side of the Bush r., 6 m. s. of Bel-Air, and 52 N.N.E. of Annapolis." That was all Fisher had to say about the town; but if Abingdon was thus summarily dismissed, other Harford County villages of similar size were able to draw complimentary adjectives and adverbs: note Darlington whose "vicinity is a very cultivated district" or Bel Air, "a pleasant village...[in] a fine agricultural district" or villages which today seem more states of mind that actual places such as Sandy Hook, "the vicinity has excellent farm lands and is being improved rapidly...there is an abundance of fine stone, of which the houses are mostly built" or Pylesville, located "in the midst of a flourishing neighborhood, where, besides agricultural pursuits, many of the mechanic arts are successfully engaged in."[10]

Driving through Abingdon today, one sees very little to remind one of the village's boom years, from its founding in 1779 until c.1830. In fact, the only standing structure which is visibly intact (one or two others may be beneath remodelings and layers of vinyl and asbestos) is the Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House. On May 9, 1785, Aquila Paca sold Lot #3 in Abingdon, amounting to one acre, to John Reardon for "5 shillings sterling."[11]

Reardon presumably built the extant frame house shortly after purchasing the lot since, when property owners were assessed for the Federal Direct Tax in 1798, it was noted that Reardon's lot "in Abingdon" was improved by a "2-story wood house" worth $180. (Unfortunately no dimensions for the house are given.) This seemingly low figure is about right for "urban" dwellings in Harford County at the time; some comparable freeholders include Peregrine Browning with his 80 perches lot in Abingdon, and his 20' by 10' wood house all valued at $100.50; Francis Crawford (80 perches in Abingdon, a 22' by 16' wood house with a 10' by 10' wood kitchen and 2 slaves for a total of $240); David Maulsby (80 perches in Bel Air with an 18' by 15' 2-story wood house and a 20'

[10]R.S. Fisher, Gazetteer of the State of Maryland, (Baltimore: James S. Watters, 1852), pp. 47, 56, 67, 90.

[11]Harford County Deed Book JLG No. G, Page 41.

See Continuation Sheet 8.6

by 16' stable, $215); and Jason Moore (Lot #39 in Bel Air with a brace of wooden houses--one 31-1/2' by 18', the other 30' by 27'--as well as a 15' by 18' kitchen and a 20' by 15' stable all worth $500).

Some further evidence to support the contention that Reardon built the present house is given by his estate inventory, made when he died in April 1819. While the appraisers did not describe the house in the room-by-room manner so often used in larger establishments, it is possible to read through Reardon's possessions as listed and draw some conclusions. First cited were things which obviously stayed outside ("one pig...$1.50," "13 dung hill fowl," "5 Ducks," and other livestock); then come what sound like kitchen goods (kettles, pots, mortar and pestle, tea canisters, "2 sugar Scoops and Sausage Stuffer" and so forth) and one might assume they began in the back wing. Then an abrupt shift to more high-style goods such as tea cups, "green edged plates," salt cellars and mustard pots, silver tumblers, a dozen silver teaspoons, "7 winsor [sic] chairs," "1 large tea board" and "3 old waiters" suggests they were in the dining room; then a shift to a formal bedroom (a "raizor [sic] case," bedsteads, bolsters, quilts, etc.) makes one today assume they had gone upstairs to the present main bedroom while another shift in the groupings of goods suggests a store room presumably over the kitchen (a churn, "5 whiskey barrels," some stone jugs, a warming pan, and "1 lot old flour barrels") and items such as "1 old carpet" and "1 bedstead" and a pair of knee buckles suggest a secondary bedroom (the latter bed worth $2; the one cited earlier, $26) while the concluding goods (a looking glass, corner cupboard, desk, chairs, etc.) lead to the conclusion that they ended in the parlor.

In all, the furnishings suggest a prosperous, unflashy, upper middle class lifestyle. The house itself suggests that Reardon was way above average economically since of the 80 houses included in the Bush River Lower Hundred on the 1798 tax rolls (the hundred that included Abingdon and the county seat, Bel Air) Reardon's was one of only 26 that were two stories; one was 1-1/2 stories and the vast majority--64--were one story.

Such evidence as exists suggests that Reardon's c.1786 house would have fit in perfectly with other dwellings built by Harford County's more prosperous citizens at the time. Moreover, the house also holds its own important place in the county's overall architectural history. The earliest extant houses in Harford

See Continuation Sheet 8.7

County date roughly to the 1740s and include Webster's Forest (HA-442), Joshua's Meadows (HA-356), the John Norris House (HA-881), Broom's Bloom (HA-1075), and Woodview (HA-1228 which are all either already listed in the National Register or are National Register-pending. All these houses are variations on Henry Glassie's "British Cabin" form, that is, a stone dwelling with one room per floor each with an enclosed end wall fireplace and a corner winder stair. More prosperous citizens in Harford County simply built two of these cabins side by side to create a two-room plan.

A generation or so later sensibilities had shifted and the stair was moved out from its hidden corner and was placed in a stair hall; smaller houses would have one room beside the stairhall (note the Hays House, HA-225, in Bel Air; c.1788; National Register) and larger houses, such as the Nelson-Reardon-Kennard House, would have a room to each side of the stair. The larger version might be taken as representing Glassie's two-story I-house, popular throughout the Mid-Atlantic and the South at that time.[12] The form would in Harford County persist well into the 19th century and high-style Federal examples include the Col. John Streett House (HA-1517; c.1805; National Register) and Woodside (HA-693; 1823; National Register). Both these later houses differ from Reardon's house in that they are larger in scale and possess items of refinement Reardon's lacks (such as marbleized woodwork), but they resemble the house in Abingdon in plan at least.

The Streett house is brick and Woodside is stone; the house Reardon built is frame and it is significant that while Harford County presumably had at least a few similar frame houses from c.1800 (the 1798 tax rolls support this conclusion) only a figurative handful remain. One of the oldest documented frame houses is, as noted, the Hays House, generally dated c.1788, making it an almost exact contemporary to Reardon's house, if a smaller scale one. The Harford County countryside is today characterized by five-bay, center hall, two-story frame farmhouses dating to the mid 19th century; it would be reasonable to view them all as descendants of Reardon's c.1785 house in Abingdon.

---

[12]Henry Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 66-71.

See Continuation Sheet 8.8

After John Reardon died, James Reardon sold the southwest half of Lot #3 to John M. Nelson in 1825 for $125. (James's relationship to John is unknown; the Historical Society of Harford County does contain much material such as letters concerning a Dr. James Reardon, fl. 1820-1840, who lived in Magnolia, a hamlet about 3 miles from Abingdon.) But perhaps James had been renting the house to Nelson during the four years after John Reardon's death since Nelson's mortgage says it is "the lot where John M. Nelson now resides." In 1838 the lot and house were purchased at public auction by Richard F. Hollis for $500.

In 1850 Hollis sold the property to Howard Kennard for $800 and the latter is shown as living at this site on the very accurate 1878 Martinet map of the county. Kennard was something of an entrepreneur for he had put together nine acres around the house and also owned a 372-acre farm on the Bush River. When he died in 1888 his estate inventory valued the Abingdon property at $1500 (for nine acres and the house) while his farm was thought to be worth $7500. The personal property appraisal was not done in any detail, but it does indicated that Kennard's house generally had the same configuration the house does today--and that it seems to have had in Reardon's day--for it lists in the main section a Dining Room, Parlour, and Hall on one floor with "Front Chamber" and Room over Dining Room" above. The only departure would be the "Front Chamber," now divided into two small bedrooms (see Description). It is not known how the bachelor Kennard occupied his time, for his inventories personalty gives no clues; the only item out of the ordinary is "35 Hives of Bees" worth $25. He did, however, own over $9000 worth of Baltimore City stock, $2470 worth of Maryland bonds, and $11,520 worth of "U.S. Consolidated," thus suggesting that the house had maintained its upper middle class associations.

These associations would continue--and would perhaps be strengthened--over the next 40 years when the Methodist Episcopal Church reentered the scene by purchasing the house and lot (for $120) and using it as a parsonage. The church, as noted above, was a crucial force in the history of Abingdon; that its trustees would choose this house as a parsonage suggests the esteem in which the dwelling was viewed in the 19th century for the county land records show that several other properties were changing hands in town at about the same time.

See Continuation Sheet 8.9

The church kept the house basically intact but made two significant modifications: they raised the height of the kitchen wing from 1-1/2 to 2 full stories and, it is assumed, they added the present front porch. One porch board is incised JB and restoration architect James Wollon, AIA, believes that to be the signature of Jacob Bull, a man recently described as "Harford County" Bull (1848-1899) was a son of Edmund Bull, a "successful and prominent carpenter...well known throughout the state as one of its most efficient and extensive builder." Young Bull attended the Bel Air Academy for a time and, "when twenty years of age he commenced to learn the trade of a carpenter."[13] Bull's papers, on file at the Steppingstone Museum near Bel Air, reveal that his first dated project in Bel Air came in 1872. His practice grew during the 1880s and he is documented to have worked throughout Harford County--"most of the fine buildings of Harford County have been erected under his supervision"-- and he is known to have designed whole houses as well as additions such as mantels and porches for older dwellings. Stylistically the porch at the Abingdon house is similar to others known to have come from Bull's pen and saw and certainly the carved initial would add credence to such an attribution.

Church trustees sold the house and 3-1/2 acres from $4000 in 1929. In sum, the building was one of the first substantial houses built in Abingdon and is more or less all that is left of that once-prosperous late 18th-century village; it remained intact and in prosperous hands throughout the 19th century with the one major modification--the porch--being import in its own right as a product of the county's leading master builder; and for 40 years it was the parsonage for the Methodist Episcopal Church, the leading institution in the area.

The period of significance begins with the date of building of the house, includes construction of the front porch, and ends with 1900 by which point this house was the only evidence of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century commercial center.

---

[13] Portrait and Biographical Record of Harford and Cecil Counties. (New York: Chapman Publishing Company), pp. 151-152.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Land, Equity and Probate records, Harford County. Courthouse, Bel Air, Maryland.

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

"Harford Historical Bulletin," No. 44, Spring 1990.

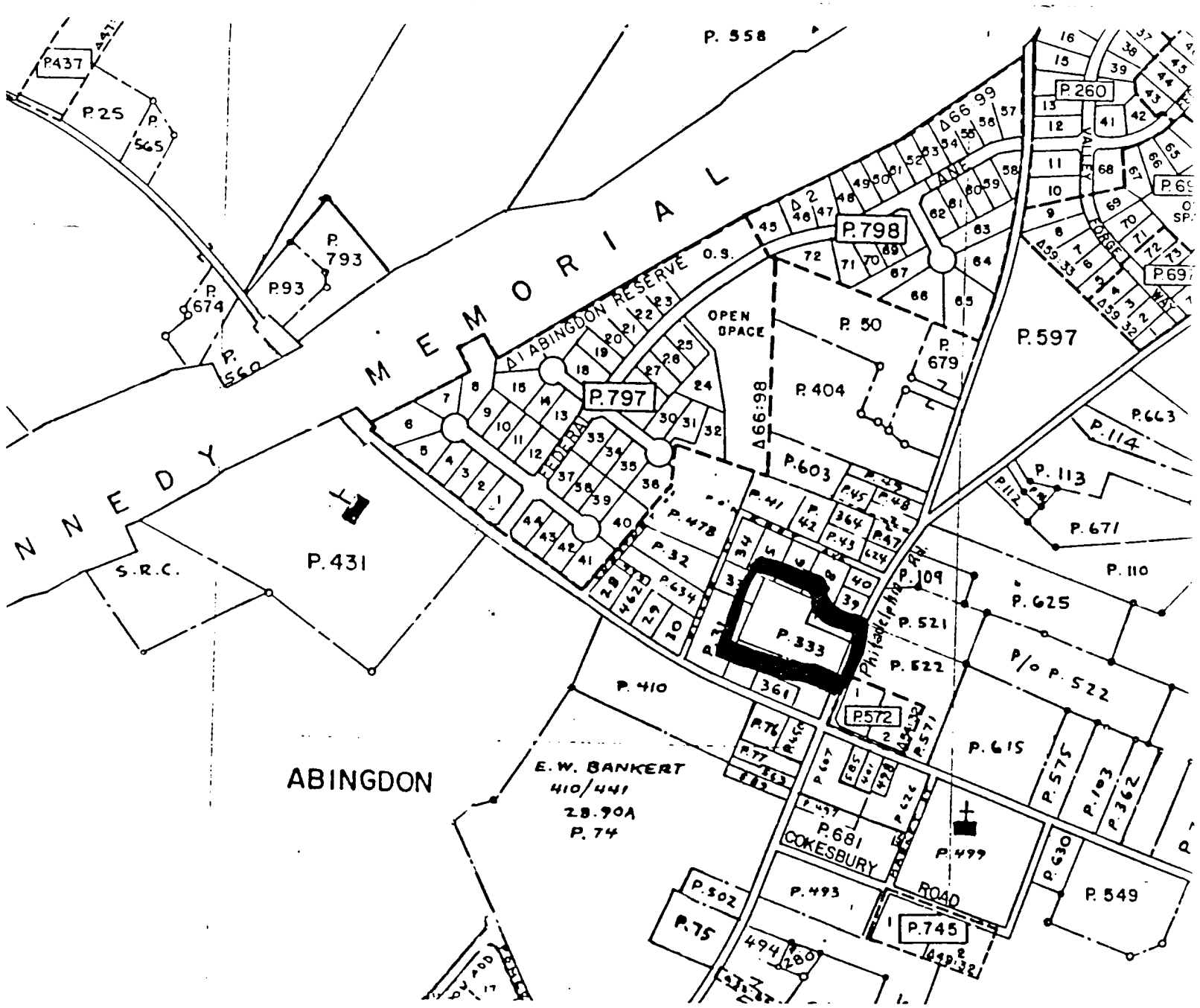
Harford County Directory, 1953.

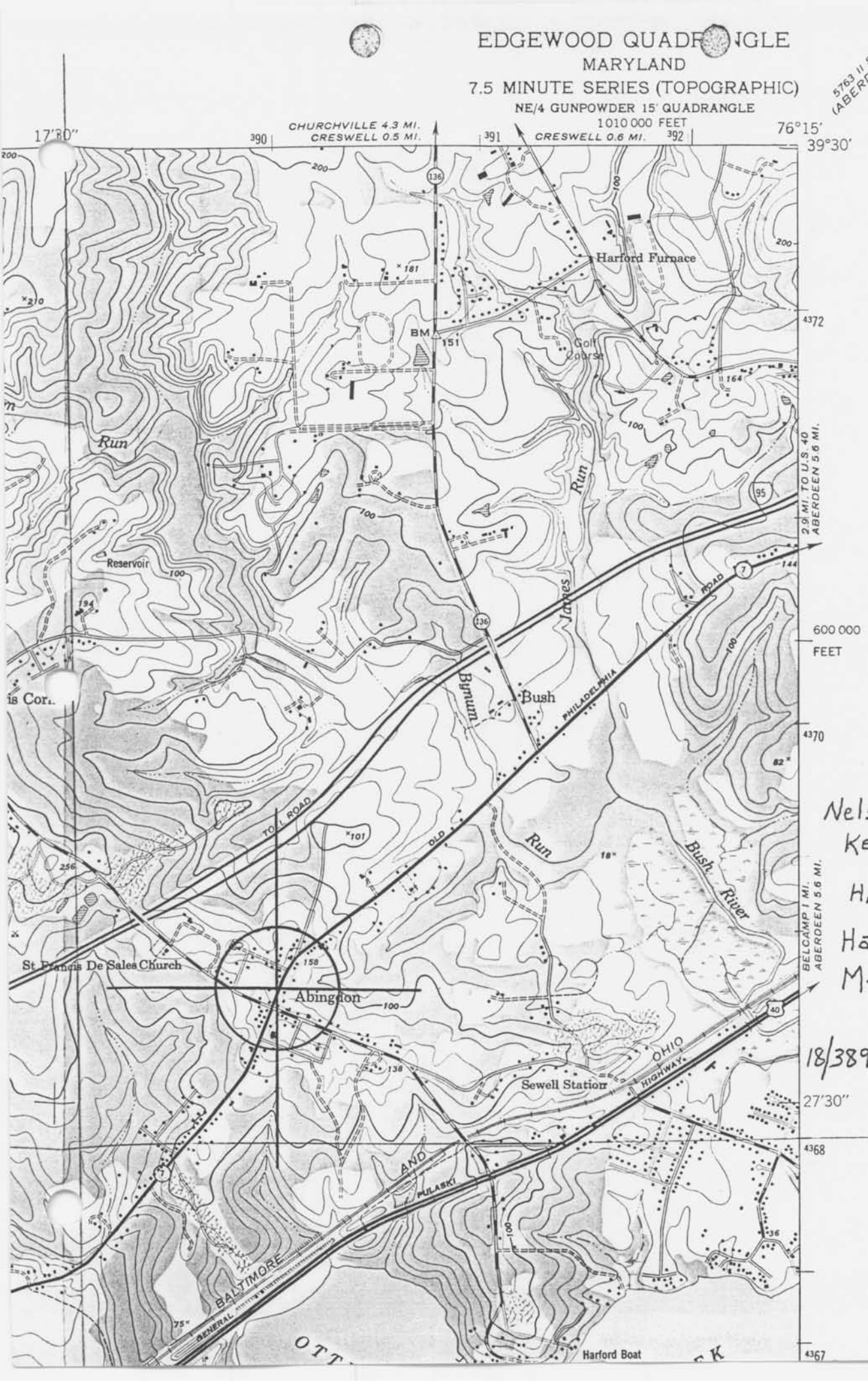
R.S. Fisher, Gazetteer of the State of Maryland. (Baltimore: James S. Watters, 1852).

Marilynn M. Larew: Bel Air: The Town Through its Buildings. (Bel Air, privately printed, 1981).

Maryland Inventory of Historic Places: Harford County. Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland.

The property consists of Parcel 333, on State Tax Assessment Map No. 62 for Harford County.





Nelson-Reardon-Kennardon House

HA-854

Harford Co. Maryland

18/389960/4368860