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: MOUNT AVENTINE
other names/site number: Gryme's Ditch, Chapman's Landing, Pomonkey

2. Location

street & number: Chapman's Landing Road — N/A — [ ] not for publication
city, town: Bryans Road — [X] vicinity
state: Maryland — code: MD — county: Charles — code: 017 — zip code: 20616

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[X] private	[ ] building(s)	4	8 buildings
[ ] public-local	[X] district	9	sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site		1 structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure		objects
	[ ] object	13	9 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: 10-24-95

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)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling	DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure	DOMESTIC/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
GREEK REVIVAL	foundation Brick
	walls Brick
	Stone
	roof Slate
	other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Mount Aventine is a farm complex located along the Potomac River in western Charles County. Maryland. The complex consists primarily of domestic and agricultural resources. Prominent among the resources is the main house, a second quarter nineteenth century Greek Revival-influenced brick house enlarged about 1860 to its present five-bay, center-passage, two-and-a-half-story appearance. Also on the property are a nineteenth century frame smokehouse, the site of another nineteenth century house complex, late nineteenth/early twentieth century agricultural buildings,a c.1900 house and dairy barn complex, historic roadbeds, a family cemetery, and sites of a nineteenth century fishery and an eighteenth century house. The main house sits on a knoll overlooking a floodplain/pasture leading down to the river.

[X] See continuation sheet no. 1 for General Description

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)
Architecture

Period of Significance
c.1760-1916

Significant Dates

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:

The existing Mt. Aventine house is one of Charles County's most important examples of local antebellum architecture, notable for the manner it evolved to its present two-story, five-bay, central passage plan c.1860 from a side-passage, double-parlor dwelling constructed about 1840. The building's overall historic architectural integrity and its locally unique stone wing considerably enhances its architectural significance. So, too, does this building's obviously intentionally planned siting to provide a broad unobstructed vista of the Potomac River, Chapman's Landing and the Chapman's Point fishery. It was this building's physical prominence from the river that undoubtedly led to the use of its former cupola as a signal station by the federal government during the Civil War. Mt. Aventine was one of a number of strategically located signal stations along both shores of the lower Potomac that included Mt. Vernon and Hallowing Point.

The Chapmans were very active in Charles County political and agricultural history. The Chapman family, owners of the Mt. Aventine tract from 1751 until 1916, maintained extensive landholdings and investments throughout Northern Virginia, including scattered plantations and mills on the Occoquan, town lots and houses in the port city of Alexandria, investment shares in the Ohio Company, ironworks in both Maryland and Virginia and other profitable enterprises. Their use of their Charles County estate was similarly diverse. Mt. Aventine was not only a valued family-occupied plantation cultivated by a large labor force of slaves, but was also the location of a ferry operation established in the latter part of the eighteenth century and a commercial fishery in the nineteenth century. The Chapmans' ferry, which operated from at least the early 1780s through the mid-nineteenth century, was one of several important crossings of the Potomac river connecting Northern Virginia to Maryland. By the 1840s, the ferry had been expanded to include a wharf servicing steamboats traveling between Washington,Alexandria, Annapolis and Baltimore. The Chapman's Point fishery was one of several similar enterprises that existed along the county's northwest and west shoreline beginning as early as the 1740s. The Chapmans' fishery was one of the largest and most economically viable of these fisheries.

The period of significance, c.1760-1916, corresponds to the period of occupation by the Chapman family, during which time the historic resources which characterize the property came into being. The period begins with the probable

☒ See continuation sheet no. 13
for Historic Context and Maryland
Comprehensive Historic Preservation
Plan data

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Rambler Photograph Collection, Historical Society of Washington, Washington, D.C.

☐ See continuation sheet

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
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 185 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	315890	4276960
B	18	316240	4276040
C	18	315600	4275580
D	18	314930	4276440

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet no. 52

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet no. 52

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Richard Rivoire
organization Consultant date Jan. 1992 & July 15, 1992
street & number P.O. Box 132 telephone (301) 932-1000
city or town LaPlatta state Maryland zip code 20646

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MOUNT AVENTINE
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Mt. Aventine is located on the northwest side of Chapman's Landing Road, approximately 1.8 miles southwest of Bryans Road. Entered from Chapman's Landing Road via a private gravel drive, the property is surrounded by dense woods on its southeast, northeast and southwest sides. The Potomac River forms the property's entire northwest boundary. Most of the cleared land, now used for pasturing horses, is located between the existing historic house and the Potomac River.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

1. MAIN HOUSE, 2nd quarter nineteenth century, enlarged c.1860, sited on the brow of a hill and built on an east-west axis, Mt. Aventine is a two-story, common bond brick structure with lower flanking wings. The main block's principal facade, fronted by a cedar lined approach drive, faces south while the building's more important viewshed is to the north. Both side elevations are five bays wide. The centered entrance door of the south facade is sheltered by a small, gable fronted porch that appears to have mid-nineteenth century origins. On the north side of the house there is a three-quarter porch with brick piers and a shed roof featuring a central cross gable. This porch appears to represent an enlargement of an original smaller porch matching that of the south elevation and in its present form is probably contemporary with Phase II in the building's construction. Other exterior features of the main block include cellar windows with three-over-three pane sashes, three gable-fronted dormers on each side of the roof, and a catwalk bridging the roof end to end. Two flush gable chimney stacks stand at the west end of the roof and are joined by a curtain wall that is an extension of the gable masonry. At the east end there are two partially exposed chimneys with tapered weatherings. The stacks are also joined by a brick curtain at the line of the gable peak.

The interior room arrangement of the main block includes a through central stair hall at the first floor level that is flanked by a single large room with two fireplaces to the east and two rooms with a triple-leafed door between to the west. This same room arrangement is repeated at the second floor but with an additional room at the forward end of the stair passage. There are several finished attic chambers off a stair lobby above, as well as a small stair giving access to the roof.

The first and second floor trim includes molded one-piece door and window facings with corner blocks. In the two first floor west rooms the angled window reveals are plastered while those of the east room are paneled. The first floor east room was converted from two parlors by removal of a partition wall at an unknown date (probably early twentieth century). This end of the house is believed to represent the second phase in the building's

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

construction, a conclusion based on the location of the stair, exterior masonry and structural evidence observable in the building's full cellar. The two Federal-style mantels, ceiling cornice and ceiling medallions in the first floor east room are twentieth century additions. The mantels in the two room opposite the first floor hall and in the rooms above are of a heavy, late Greek Revival style and may date from the building's second phase. The stair rises in four flights to the attic level and features striped maple newels and balusters. The interior of this part of the house was extensively renovated at various times in the twentieth century and included the provision of new spaces for bathrooms, cabinets and closets. Nevertheless, most of the original interior trim and wall placements remain preserved. An 1862 map of this section of the Potomac River notes that the house was at that time crowned by a cupola.

Mt. Aventine's off-set west wing is a one and one-half story structure built of cut stone that possibly originated from Virginia's Aquia Creek quarries. Its two exposed elevations include two evenly spaced windows in its north wall and a centered, gable-roofed dormer directly above. At the west end there is an exterior chimney similar in form to the two east chimneys of the main block. The chimney has tapered weatherings and the stonework terminates just below the gable peak, angling inward toward a brick stack. To the right of the chimney is a first floor exterior door. The presence of large quoins at the three exposed corners of the structure suggest that it was constructed independent of the masonry of the adjacent main block. Early in this century a brick shed was added to the south wall of the wing, covering over a former exterior door and window. The lower rooms of the wing, one of which once featured a large fireplace, were renovated in this century, although the basic original room arrangement and the location of the corner stair appears to have been retained. What appears to be original woodwork in a second floor chamber and the stairwell, together with certain framing details, are all consistent with a second quarter, nineteenth century period of construction. According to an 1877 will , the stone wing was used as a kitchen and housed as well a back stair and pantries.

At the east end of the main block stands a one-story, two-bay, gable-roofed, brick garage. Neither the garage nor the brick shed

See Continuation Sheet No. 4

addition to the kitchen wing appears in an undated photograph of the house published in 1946 but both are depicted in a photograph dated 1955.

The entire exterior of the house is painted white, a common practice in this locality in the nineteenth century. The house may have been painted at the time it was enlarged to camouflage its alteration and/or to enhance its visibility from the river.

2. SMOKEHOUSE. This pyramid-roofed, timber-framed structure stands northwest of the stone wing and is typical of smokehouses built in this locality in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The structure measures approximately 16 feet on a side and dates about 1850. In the mid-twentieth century the building's south door was widened and the structure converted for stabling a horse. The original framing remains intact, but the existing interior and exterior finishes are contemporary with its conversion.

3. SITE: Located here are ruins of a log building that is traditionally said to have seventeenth century origins; however, this is not supported by the physical evidence. Construction details suggest a much later building date, with extensive twentieth-century repairs and modifications. This building is not nearly as sophisticated as most surviving log structures in this area, especially in regard to its oversailing lapped corners. The building may originally have been used as a small barn or storage facility. The relative scarcity of extant historic log buildings in Charles County heightens this structure's interest, warranting further investigation to determine its age and original architecture and use.

The 1917 "Rambler" photograph of this building's west elevation shows it to have been a rectangular log structure with a single window opening near the top of the wall and to have had a wood-shingled gable roof. Lean-to additions stood at each end, one of frame and the other of log. The published copy of this photograph carries the caption "old log barn". Now in ruin, the building appears to have been in good repair in 1917.

See Continuation Sheet No. 5

4. SITE: This site consists of one standing chimney, a considerable amount of brick rubble, the masonry underpinnings of at least one ancillary building, an abandoned dug well, and evidence of other possible structures.

The existing brick chimney, which houses a single fireplace, was an external gable-end feature of a former one-story wooden dwelling. The building may have had a second exterior chimney and appears to have had a full-width front porch. Possibly there were later additions to one end and/or off the rear elevation. The house stood about three feet above grade on wood posts. The uniforms size and color of the chimney brick, the presence of stepped weathering and a slightly off-set stack suggest a mid-nineteenth century date of construction.

5. TOBACCO BARN: This rectangular frame barn has vertical board siding and a metal clad roof and was in existence in 1914. It probably dates from after 1900.

6. SITE: CHAPMAN'S POINT. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century maps identify this as Chapman's Point, site of the fishery operated by the Chapman family throughout most of the nineteenth century. Buildings, including a "boathouse" and a "storehouse" once existed but no discernible evidence of their locations remains. The fishery operation involved the whole of the property's shoreline but the support facilities appear from historical records to have been concentrated in this location. (See Section 8: Resource History: Chapman's Point Fishery.)

7. HISTORIC ROADBED: This roadway is shown on the Hosmer map of 1862 and almost all other maps prepared subsequent to that date. It is conceivable that the road was established about the time the existing Mt. Aventine house was erected to provide a direct link between the house and the landing as well as the fishery and fishing shore. The road was undoubtedly used for public access to the landing as well.

8. CHAPMAN'S LANDING: Historic and modern maps designate this as Chapman's Landing, site of the Chapmans' ferry landing and steamboat wharf. A building is shown as standing in this location in 1862; the ruins of a frame structure in the same

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

location today are thought to be later, and may be those of the "ducking house on shore" mentioned in a 1955 sales advertisement of the property. The same building, in a good state of repair, is also shown on a 1955 aerial view of Mt. Aventine.

9. HISTORIC ROADBED: This roadbed, now only traceable under the most favorable conditions, appears on historic maps of the area. Originally, it was probably the most direct route between the ferry landing, the original Chapman home, Pomonkey, and the public road leading to Port Tobacco.

10. CEMETERY: This is a small, unenclosed clearing at the edge of the lower field. There are four vertical monuments marking the graves of John Chapman (d. 1841), Matilda Chapman (1799-1874), Pearson Chapman (d. 1877), and Susan P. M. Chapman (d. 1879). There is one grave between two of these monuments clearly marked by fieldstones, and there is evidence of at least five other interments that are similarly marked. The 1827 will of George Chapman referred to this as the burying ground where my "parents, brothers and sisters" were interred.

11. SITE: This area is the most likely location of the c.1760 Chapman home which the existing nineteenth-century house replaced. In 1827 the cemetery was described as "lying near the foot of the garden," implying that the house stood within several hundred feet of that location. Most gardens of the period were closely situated to and often encompassed the house and averaged about 250 feet on a side according to early accounts contained in county estate valuations.

A 1761 inventory taken not long after the house was built shows it to have been a one and one-half or two-story brick structure, five bays in width on the front and three on the rear. Chimneys stood at each end of the building, servicing at least six fireplaces. The room arrangement included four lower rooms off a central passage, and four rooms above. Ancillary structures included a kitchen, store and a "studdy" or office. At least one of the buildings, possibly the house, had a cellar. In 1783 the house was described as "a large old brick dwelling" with six "indifferent" outbuildings. Occupied in 1827, the house was

See Continuation Sheet No. 7

probably abandoned by the Chapmans following construction of the existing house, although an 1844 document suggests that it continued to be occupied. A local member of the Chapman family familiar with the property has stated that the ruins of the house were still in existence in the late 1930s.

12. SITE: This site, noted on USGS maps of the past 50 years and also evident on aerial photographs, appears to have been that of a small complex of buildings that included a modest dwelling and several outbuildings. It is likely that it was the dwelling of Robert Chapman who inherited a portion of the Mt. Aventine property on his father's death in 1877. Robert was living on this land at the time of his death in 1916, at which time the house was described as being in poor repair. If subsequently rehabilitated, it was probably one of the three tenant houses appearing in the 1955 sale advertisement of the property.

13. TOBACCO BARN: This large, early twentieth century, rectangular frame structure is typical of tobacco curing barns built in this locality after about the 1840s and contributes to a sense of historical continuity in the agricultural use of the property.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

A. Small frame shed for stabling horses. Mid-twentieth century.

B. A large, rectangular, frame shed for stabling horses. Mid-twentieth century.

C. A one-story, gable-roofed frame bungalow dating from the early twentieth century. This was probably the farm manager's house mentioned in the 1955 sale advertisement.

D. Riding arena. Built in two stages between 1955 and 1980, this large rectangular structure employs both metal and frame materials in its construction. The terrain and natural vegetation screen this structure from the main house.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8

E. A frame and concrete block shed for stabling horses built against the side of a hill. This structure was designed and built by Ernst Sczchaney, a Hungarian horse trainer who managed the Mt. Aventine farm during its ownership by Margit Bessenyey.

F. This pyramid-roofed frame structure whose design mimics that of the adjacent smokehouse (#2) was probably built c. 1960 when the older building was converted for use as a horse stall, for which purpose this building was also designed and used.

G. This is a wellhouse constructed of both modern and salvaged brick. It is thought to date after 1955 and possibly shelters an older well.

H. A small frame shed for stabling horses. After 1955.

I. A large frame shed for stabling horses. After 1955.

LANDSCAPE:

A field reconnaissance survey of existing landscape features and vegetation at Mt. Aventine demonstrates that a series of changes have been effected on the property during the twentieth century. Historic map and archival data also indicate a sequence of significant landscape changes. Through the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, Mt. Aventine was a typical working plantation. At that time, the property was comprised of extensive fields, probably separated by narrow hedgerows. The only area that retains some significant semblance of the visual character of the historic landscape is the vista of cleared pasture and river front visible from the main house. During the nineteenth century, one road provided land access to the property: the original Chapman's Landing Road. That road proceeded south from the towns of Pomonkey, Benvile, and Marshall Hall. The route reached Mt. Aventine by way of an east-west running segment of road, which is now only visible in the woods as a trace. The road continued to the river along the existing service road to the lower fields and the floodplain. During the nineteenth century, there was no direct road access to the house.

See Continuation Sheet No. 9

Between 1891 and 1913, Chapman's Landing Road was extended south an additional 1.5 miles to the town of Glymont. This extension illustrates a regional shift to ground transportation from water transportation. A small segment of the Glymont road survives as a private road between the contemporary Chapman's Landing Road and Mt. Aventine. During the period, the extensive fields encompassed by the property remained in active cultivation.

This pattern continued through the 1920s. The first evidence of the formal landscaping of the site dates from this decade. Several tulip poplars were allowed to grow bordering the road entering the property from the north. Also, tulip poplars were planted around the house as ornamental shade trees. Diagonal tree lines composed of tulip poplars were established to frame the river vista. It is possible that these poplar rows were an "in kind" replacement; however, no evidence was found to support this possibility.

The biggest changes to the landscape were introduced during the 1930s. Fields were abandoned, marking the end of large scale agricultural production at Mt. Aventine. During this period, the property evolved from a working farm into a "country estate" owned by wealthy part-time residents. Although some level of cultivation continued into the 1950s, the percentage of cultivated land decreased dramatically. In keeping with then popular landscape design, a straight driveway with a circular turn around was added as an approach to the main house. The driveway was landscaped with rows of red cedar. Two female holly trees were planted in the north yard, carefully sited to maintain the river view.

Sometime between 1925 and 1954, the alignment of Chapman's Landing Road was altered. A bypass was added so that the Mt. Aventine property was avoided altogether. As a result, the north property approach was abandoned, and the south approach became a private entrance road. Chapman's Landing Road historically connected Mt. Aventine with nearby towns. Since the change, Chapman's Landing Road has become a main corridor connecting the towns of Pomonkey and Glymont; it no longer passes through the plantation for which it was named.

Although limited areas were kept clear of woods, crop

See Continuation Sheet No. 10

cultivation was replaced by horse farming during the 1950s. The emphasis of this activity changed over the years from an operating farm, engaged in breeding and raising of horses, to boarding horses for absentee owners.

Since the abandonment of the majority of the fields that was initiated during the 1930s, most of the property has developed into a mature forest. The transition from extensive areas of open field to forest has altered dramatically the historic landscape and character of Mt. Aventine. The property, although a seemingly pristine woodland setting, actually comprised extensive open fields as recently as 50 years ago.

See Continuation Sheet No. 11

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Rural Agrarian Intensification, A.D. 1650-1815
Agricultural/Industrial Transition, A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial/Urban Dominance, A.D. 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning
Agriculture
Transportation

Resource Type:

Category: District

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility

Known Design Source: None

See Continuation Sheet No. 14

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

In 1658, the year Charles County was formally chartered and Luke Gardiner received a warrant to resurvey a tract of land then called Grymes Ditch and later Mt. Aventine, northwestern Charles County had yet to witness a measurable influx of colonists migrating outward from St. Mary's City. This was due in large measure to continuing occupation of these lands by native Indians. Regardless of the fact that large land grants had been made in this area during the mid and late seventeenth century, Indians apparently outnumbered white settlers in this locality well into the opening decade of the eighteenth century.

The Chapman family, owners of the Mt. Aventine tract from 1751 until the early twentieth century, maintained extensive landholdings and investments throughout Northern Virginia, including scattered plantations and mills on the Occoquan, town lots and houses in the port city of Alexandria, investment shares in the Ohio Company, ironworks in both Maryland and Virginia and other profitable enterprises. Their use of the Charles County estate was similarly diverse. Mt. Aventine, as it was known by the 1860s, was not only a valued family-occupied plantation cultivated by a large labor force of slaves, but was also the location of a ferry operation established in the latter part of the eighteenth century and a commercial fishery in the nineteenth century. The Chapmans' ferry, which operated from at least the early 1780s through the mid-nineteenth century, was one of several important crossings of the Potomac River connecting Northern Virginia to Maryland. By the 1840s the ferry had been expanded to include a wharf servicing steamboats traveling between Washington, Alexandria, Annapolis and Baltimore. The Chapmans' Point Fishery was one of several similar enterprises that existed along the county's northwest and west shoreline beginning as early as the 1740s. The Chapmans' fishery was one of the largest and most economically viable of these fisheries, competing with the Greenweigh Fishery just north of Pomonkey Creek and the Pyes' Fishery at Glymont immediately to the south.

The opening decades of the nineteenth century represented a period of significant change for Charles County. Before the American Revolution this area occupied farms and leaseholds that

See Continuation Sheet No. 15

rarely exceeded one or two hundred acres. The economy was historically based on the production and export of tobacco, a labor-intensive crop constantly subject to an often wildly fluctuating market. By the 1780s and 1790s more and more local farmers were augmenting their tobacco with grain crops, for profit as well as personal use. In the 1810s an expanding European grain market and improved trade relations fostered increased production of cereal grains for export, resulting in a new era of economic stability and prosperity.

Coincidentally, there occurred a major resurgence of building activity as new homes were built and others extensively remodeled and enlarged. Rebuilding extended to changes in the agricultural landscape as well, as granaries, corncribs and livestock barns began outnumbering the tobacco houses. Most noticeably, cribs and granaries became larger and more sophisticated in design over their eighteenth century predecessors whose usefulness had heretofore extended not much beyond the family farmstead.

By the second and third decades of the nineteenth century improved means of communication and commercial and public transportation effected further measurable change. Particularly relevant in this instance was communication - often in letters published in regional newspapers - between local planters and those living in more prosperous farming areas, and the array of readily available and inexpensive farm journals espousing new developments in agricultural theory, technology and marketing. The founding of the Maryland Agricultural Society and organized county fairs that were primarily agriculturally oriented began to influence local farmers, in the way they cultivated the soil; built their houses and organized their domestic environments; and designed and arranged their domestic dependencies and agricultural buildings. In 1800, the beginnings of these changes were barely noticeable; by the 1840s, however, agricultural reform had manifested itself in one form or another at every level of local society, wealthy or poor, free or slave. The Civil War brought about an abrupt end to whatever forward-thinking, forward-moving steps the county had made. Economic chaos and social malaise, coupled with a sharp decline in the white population, forced Charles County to retreat to its former economic and cultural isolationism, which was to endure for the next half-century.

See Continuation Sheet No. 16

During the early months of 1865, thousands of federal troops remained stationed throughout Charles County, to maintain the same military control they had exercised since October 1861 over a local populace largely sympathetic to the southern cause. Military headquarters were located at Port Tobacco, the then county seat and principal center of commerce. Union soldiers, often aggressively, guarded the public wharves. It was a bleak period in Charles County's history. The war brought about the end of an agricultural system and a social structure largely supported by slave labor, resulting not only in a severely depressed economy, but an apathetic, defeatist attitude among a vast majority of citizens that continued to hamper the county's progress well into this century.

Despite its proximity to the growing urban/industrial centers of Alexandria, Virginia; Washington; and Baltimore, and its accessibility by water and, by the 1880s, rail transportation, Charles County remained relatively isolated, and insulated. Many of those able to do so left the area in the post-Civil War years in search of better opportunities. A large proportion of its once productive, slave-cultivated farmland was abandoned, although agricultural products, augmented by commercial fisheries, remained a chief staple of the local economy. And, it was not until the turn of this century that any measurable building activity was resumed, though this was largely confined to the developing railroad town of LaPlata, which in 1895 replaced Port Tobacco as county seat, and to a lesser degree, the villages of Bel Alton, Waldorf and Indian Head. In the 1930s and early 1940s, when U.S. Route 301 and the Potomac River Bridge made the area more accessible, Charles County began to finally emerge from its years of economic stagnation and social provincialism. Radical changes in the county's population, growth patterns and economic base started taking place in the 1950s, and today its former rural agrarian landscape is being rapidly overtaken by intense residential, commercial and industrial development.

RESOURCE HISTORY:

Due to the historical complexity of this property the Resource History is presented in three parts. First is the Property History, which details the use and development of the property to

See Continuation Sheet No. 17

the present day, with particular emphasis on the period during which it was owned and occupied by the Chapman family (1751-1897,1915). This is followed by separate historical discussions of Chapman's Landing and the Chapman's Point Fishery.

PROPERTY HISTORY:

Mt. Aventine's recorded history begins with a warrant issued to Luke Gardiner in 1658 to resurvey a tract of land under the name Gryme's Ditch.1 It is assumed that the 580 acres specified in the patent Gardiner recorded in 1673 was acquired by assignment, though no proof of this has been found. The 1673 patent of 580 acres included a small island about one-quarter mile from shore, later known variously as "Crane Island" or "Craney Island". An 1805 resurvey of the original patent boundaries showed them to actually encompass 738 acres, exclusive of the island, which other documents state consisted of about 20 acres.2

At the time Gardiner secured his patent this land lay outside the north-northwest boundary of Charles County, which was chartered that same year. Much of the northwest section of the Charles County of today was then Indian-occupied. As late as 1673 six major Indian villages existed in the vicinity of Gryme's Ditch according to Augustine Herrman's map of Maryland and Virginia. Herrman further designated the entire area encompassing Gryme's Ditch as "Pamonkey Indian Land."

According to information contained in the Charles County land and court records, native Indians continued to occupy this area well into the opening decade(s) of the eighteenth century, often entering into land transactions with such prominent local plantation owners as the Stodderts of South Hampton and the Marshalls of Marshall Hall.3 Involvement by native Indians in these land conveyances as late as the 1720s attests to aboriginal occupation of this area extending into the mid-colonial period of Maryland's history.

Luke Gardiner, who did not occupy the land, died in 1674, leaving a will by which he devised several tracts of land including "Grimditch" to his son Luke.4 Sometime before 1701 the younger Gardiner agreed to a sale of Gryme's Ditch to Robert Mason but

See Continuation Sheet No. 18

Mason died before the deed of sale was ratified.5 Nevertheless, Mason's will devised the same land to his son John, whose right of ownership and inheritance was confirmed by the will of Luke Gardiner, Jr. in 1705.6

There is no evidence that any of the four descending owners--Luke Gardiner, Sr. and Jr., and Robert and John Mason--ever occupied the Gryme's Ditch tract. All were residents of St. Mary's County, where John Mason was still living when he conveyed the land in 1732 to Edward Neale, Gent., of Charles County.7

Neale, like the Gardiners and Masons, did not occupy the Gryme's Ditch tract, although he may have been the first owner to actually cultivate the land, perhaps using his own numerous slaves or under a lease arrangement with a tenant. Neale's dwelling plantation was "Acquinsicke," located about three miles from Gryme's Ditch and by the 1730s connected to the latter by a public road of which present-day Billingsley and Chapman's Landing roads are surviving remnants. Neale is known to have been living at Acquinsicke in 1732, and there is evidence that he had occupied this plantation since the death of his father in 1723. In establishing a new boundary between Prince George's and Charles counties in 1748, Acquinsicke was referred to as "the late dwelling plantation of Mr. Edward Neale."9 By that year Neale had moved to Queen's Town on Maryland's Eastern Shore.lo

In 1751 Edward Neale sold the 580 acres of Gryme's Ditch together with the island to Nathaniel Chapman of Stafford County, Virginia, for 200 pounds sterling and 500 pistoles. Chapman was a prosperous merchant-planter who owned several large plantations in Virginia opposite the Potomac River from Gryme's Ditch. In the 1751 deed Neale was specific in stating that the conveyance included all his rights to any and all adjacent lands he might have a "right, title or concern " in, suggesting that a dispute existed regarding the actual boundaries of Gryme's Ditch and contiguous properties. This is confirmed by a letter Neale wrote to Chapman in 1754, in which he disputed ownership of certain lands claimed by neighboring property owners.12 Although the boundary points of Gryme's Ditch had been established by several resurveys subsequent to its patent, the dispute involving overlapping boundaries (including a contiguous plantation held by William Eilbeck whose daughter Ann

See Continuation Sheet No. 19

was the wife of George Mason of Gunston Hall) was not settled until 1812. Neale's letter, which was later copied into the county's land commission records, was addressed to Mr. Nathaniel Chapman on Potomac River," confirming that Chapman was occupying the Gryme's Ditch tract by that date.

The inventory of Nathaniel Chapman's personalty, filed in 1761, is one of the most intriguing documents existing among the county's remarkably complete eighteenth-century probate records.13 Not only does the inventory itemize household furnishings under specific room designations--passage, parlor, bedroom--it also identifies the predominant color. Chapman's "Household Furniture" was detailed under the following headings: "In the Parlour and Beaufett," "In the Passage," "In the Green Room," "In the Back Room," "In the Bedd Room," "In the Bleu Room," "In the Yellow Room," "In the Parlour Chamber," "In the Garret." The "Parlour and Beaufett" (the latter possibly a small, unheated dining alcove) contained some unusually fine pieces, including a dozen black walnut chairs, one large and several small tables of wild cherry, two large mirrors, an 8-day clock and a spinnet, two silver mounted tea chests, "1 Dozen perspective Sea pieces in Gilt Frames" and a "Map of the World," as well as an extraordinary amount of silver weighing just under 250 ounces. Together with fine chinas and other items the value of the contents of this room alone--192.11.6 pounds sterling--exceeded that of the entire estates of more than half the county's citizens at that time.14 The "Passage" contained a couch, a dozen chairs, a mirror, four large and 2 small framed maps, a large black walnut table, a spyglass and "a Black walnut Case with 21 Bottles," all of which indicates that the passage was spacious and while not as formal as the adjacent "Parlour and Beaufett," probably functioned as a reception area.

The "Green Room" was undoubtedly used as both a bedroom and family sitting and dining room inasmuch as it contained a large curtained bed, assorted tables and chairs, a tea table and equipage, as well as other items suggesting multiple use. The heated "Back Room" was evidently used as both a bedroom and office or study. It contained a curtained bed as well as chairs, a bookcase and a secretary desk.

The most valuable beds in the house were upstairs, all of

See Continuation Sheet No. 20

which were fitted with curtains. Bed and other furniture as well as accessories were fairly small in number compared with the furnishings of the lower rooms, suggesting more compact spaces. Possibly, the house had a longitudinal passage extending end to end such as at Gunston Hall, the c.1765 La Grange in Charles County, and other mid-eighteenth century Maryland and Virginia houses.

The identification of these living spaces according to color is thought to be unique among Charles County inventories. These designations may have included paint colors, but clearly it was the color coordination of bed and window hangings that influenced the appraiser. In the "Green Room" for instance, the bed and three windows were curtained with green arrateen. The "Blue Room" had a bed and one window curtained with blue damask. The bedroom whose contents received the highest valuation of all rooms containing sleeping furniture--32.17.6 pounds--was "The Yellow Room". Its bed and two of its three windows were draped with yellow arrateen. A third window was hung with "Callicoe Curtains" valued at 11 pounds, 3 pounds short of the combined value of the hangings of the other windows, the bed and bed curtains.

The existence of this inventory obviously considerably enhances any archeological investigation of the house site and the interpretation of any physical remains. For example, the inventory suggests that the building had a five-bay facade while the rear elevation had only two windows at each floor level. The house had at least two end chimneys servicing six fireplaces, four of which were fitted with "cast iron backs." The fact that the site of the house, which historical evidence indicates was located close to the Chapman cemetery, has not been disturbed beyond that resulting from normal agricultural use indicates a high probability of significant archeological remains below existing grade. This, and the existence of a detailed inventory taken within a decade or less of its construction, establishes the house site as one of considerable importance.

The 1761 inventory is of further interest from an architectural and archeological perspective in that it also lists "Sundry" items contained in the "Store, Kitchen, Studdy, etc." Interestingly, the most valuable bed listed in the inventory follows this general heading. It is described as being curtained

See Continuation Sheet No. 21

with red damask, and evidently stood in a room with three windows with red silk drapes. The bed and draperies received a valuation of 45 pounds sterling. Other contained spaces referenced in the inventory included a "cellar" and a kitchen "closet." The inventory is also of interest in regard to the Chapman's Landing site inasmuch as the listing included an "old boat & grappling" as well as a "new sail for the boat." Also itemized were "6 barrells of tarr," which may have been used for waterproofing the boat as well as buildings on the property.

That Chapman's home might have been newly built and that other major development on the property was then underway is suggested by the appraiser's listing of 3,500 shingles, 5,000 lath, paint and 6 barrels of tar. Named among Chapman's 30 slaves was Port, aged about 45, "a Founder and forgeman," and Anthony, also about 45, "a Carpenter and Cooper." George Mason of Gunston Hall was named one of Chapman's principal creditors.

Since Chapman died intestate, ownership of his considerable estates in Maryland and Virginia descended to his eldest surviving son, Nathaniel Chapman, Jr. The younger Nathaniel did not live long enough to make a measurable--or at least documented--impact on the development of the Gryme's Ditch plantation. He drowned when attempting to ford a river in New York in 1766. He was 26, and his death was as untimely and unexpected as that of his father, who historical evidence suggests was murdered by highwaymen.15 Nathaniel, Jr. died unmarried and without a will so the estates inherited on his father's death, including Gryme's Ditch, passed by law of primogeniture to his eldest brother, Pearson Chapman.16

Pearson Chapman took up residence at Gryme's Ditch following his brother's death. In 1774 he was named a member of a Charles County committee of leading citizens to vote for representatives to the Continental Congress.17 On May 31, 1781 George Mason wrote Pearson Chapman a letter stating that he intended to move his family into Charles County as a precaution against the threat of British warships. "The rapid march of the enemy obliges me to send as many of my effects as I can readily remove [from Gunston Hall] to Maryland and I expect to follow immediately with Mrs. Mason and my daughters. I must therefore beg the favour of you to permit all the things I send to be put in your dwelling house for safety until

See Continuation Sheet No. 22

I can carry them up to my son William's house at the head of Mattawoman which I shall do with all possible expedition." 18 Mason's son William was then living at Araby, located about two miles southeast of the Chapmans.

The 1783 Charles County tax assessments names Pearson Chapman as the owner of Gryme's Ditch, containing 700 acres improved by "a large old brick house and 6 other indifferent houses." The land was described as "mostly cleared". That the dwelling house was described as "old" suggests that it was probably beginning to deteriorate. That it was noted as "large" infers that it was probably of two-story height (though possibly, like Marshall Hall, just upriver, one and three-quarters stories high). The fact that no mention was made of a stone structure, and that all of the ancillary buildings were noted as "indifferent" convincingly argues against a pre-1783 construction date for the stone wing of the existing house. Despite the fact that the improvements were described as "old" and "indifferent" the property was assessed for significantly more than other plantations of similar size and extent of improvement. This may be attributable, however, to the amount of cleared land, soil quality, and the existence of an important ferry landing here.

Pearson Chapman died in 1784. His will, written in 1771, devised "..the tract of land and plantation whereon I now live at Pamonkey in Maryland.." to his son Nathaniel after the decease of Nathaniel's mother. In addition to the home plantation, Pearson's real estate holdings included properties in Fairfax, Fauquier, Prince William and Stafford counties, Virginia, a lot in the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, lands along the Rappahanock River (Virginia), a mill seat in Prince William County, property in New England "as heir of John Chapman," and inherited shares in the Ohio Company.20

The inventory of Pearson Chapman's personalty, dated 17 March 1785, lists many of the same household items that appeared in the 1761 inventory of the estate of Nathaniel Chapman, though a high percentage of these same furnishings were noted as now being "old" or "broken" and consequently received considerably lower valuations than they did in 1761. There was still a large amount of silver, but the most valuable of the household contents were "12 family

See Continuation Sheet No. 23

portraits."21 This inventory also provides the earliest known reference to the Chapman's ferry, for among the items listed were a "Yawl boat" worth 35 pounds and a "Ferry boat" worth 20 pounds current money.22

In the 1790 Charles County census Pearson Chapman's widow, Susanna, is named as the head of a household that included 5 white males over the age of 16 and the owner of 33 slaves. Susanna Chapman also appears as the owner of the Gryme's Ditch plantation in the county's 1798 federal direct tax lists. In this document the Gryme's Ditch property was reported as consisting of 704 acres. The improvements included a dwelling house and five ancillary structures worth $960.00. The number of slaves occupying the property had increased to 38 individuals.24

Although the Gryme's Ditch plantation continued to be occupied by Pearson's widow, the estate had passed in ownership to their eldest son, Nathaniel. On Nathaniel's death intestate ownership then passed by right of primogeniture to his next eldest brother, George.25 It does not appear that George occupied the land after attaining majority, preferring instead to maintain his seat at the family's ancestral Virginia plantation, "Thoroughfare".

In 1802 Pearson Chapman's sons, George and John, petitioned the Charles County court to resurvey and establish the boundaries of Gryme's Ditch. In 1803 a commission was appointed and in 1805 the property was surveyed. In validating certain boundary points depositions were taken from neighboring property owners. Of considerable interest was the deposition of Gen. John Dent, then 71, who referred to a survey made about twenty years earlier (c. 1783) in which a point in the property's south line, paralleling present-day Chapman's Landing Road, was "observed [by Benjamin Garner] at the time that there was formerly an old Indian Town..." The survey established that Gryme's Ditch tract, exclusive of the island, contained 738 acres.26

George Chapman died in 1829, leaving a will in which he styled himself "George Chapman of The Thoroughfare, Prince William County, Virginia". Written in 1827 and probated in Prince William County in November 1829, the will divided Chapman's considerable landholdings among his various children. His first bequest was to

See Continuation Sheet No. 24

his son Pearson, to whom he devised the Gryme's Ditch plantation, stating that it had been his brother Nathaniel's desire that "my oldest son should inherit his Pomonkey tract of land patented for 580 acres but containing upwards of 800 acres..." Excluded from the bequest was one-quarter acre near the foot of the garden where my parents, brothers and sisters now lie buried at as a family burying ground, for any of my children who may choose to be buried there, or to any of their family, which place I wish enclosed for this purpose." At the end of the will Chapman requested "that neither my sons or daughters will sell, dispose or mortgage any of the foregoing tracts or lots left them in this will, part of them have remained long in the possession of the family, and as I devise, so I wish them to do so, to their posterity."27

In 1833 Pearson Chapman, nephew of Pearson Chapman (d. 1785) and eldest son of George Chapman, and who was the next descending owner of this property, wrote a letter to his friend and relative, John Grant Chapman. In this letter, headed "Pomonkey, Nov. 13, 1833", Chapman discusses with considerable humor and at considerable length an inherited servant woman named Charity. In discussing her long-term association with the farm he states that "I moved here in 1824...."28 Thus, Pearson was occupying the land for more than ten years previous to his actual inheritance. This fact is considered critical to the interpretation of Mt. Aventine's physical development inasmuch as it was this member of the Chapman family who had the most measurable impact on shaping and developing the property and creating what today is considered a valuable historic resource.

In 1827 Pearson Chapman's wife Sigismunda wrote from Pomonkey (as the property was then called) to her father-in-law thanking him for his "very acceptable present of flour and wine." Sigismunda added to this a postscript saying "I have to regret that Mr. [Pearson] Chapman's heavy load of Mill Timbers deprived me of the promised spinning wheel, I have in expectation of that delayed spinning a thread for the Negro's winter clothing".29 This statement suggests that the Chapmans' ferry operation included the transportation of building materials. Thus, it is conceivable, if not likely, that the bricks, timbers and stones used in the construction of the existing house originated from Virginia. Another letter, written by Pearson Chapman in 1833, confirms that

See Continuation Sheet No. 25

the Chapman's Point Fishery was well-established by that date.30

By the 1840s the Chapmans had expanded their ferry between this place and Hallowing Point, Virginia, to include a public steamboat landing. For at least one prominent Charles County family who lived near Port Tobacco some miles to the south, it provided the most convenient and direct route of travel between Port Tobacco and Annapolis.31 It is thought significant that this development in the Chapman's Landing site coincides with the initial construction and subsequent enlargement of the existing historic house.

Based on available historical information,supported by architectural evidence, the original, c.1840 portion of the present house had been enlarged to its basic present form by about 1860. It was also during this same period that the Chapmans' fishery was expanded and the steamboat wharf built. Clearly, all three of these "events" are interrelated, illustrating the fact that Pearson Chapman approached his inheritance with the intention of maximizing its potential.

By 1862 the Chapmans' Charles County estate had attained a certain stature among those who lived along, worked on and traversed upon this section of the Potomac River.

Much of the woodland that today covers the Mt. Aventine property is of relatively modern growth. In view of this, it is not unreasonable to assume that the appearance of the property in 1862 was vastly different from what presently exists and that the house was once visible from a much broader stretch of river.

An 1862 U. S. Coast Survey by Charles Hosmer of part of the Potomac River between Indian Head and Fox Ferry (Va.) locates the existing Mt. Aventine house, a "Fish House" at Chapman's Point, a building and roadway at Chapman's Landing, as well as Craney Island and Hallowing Point.32 The Mt. Aventine house was identified as "Chapman Ho. (Cupola)." A house was also identified on Craney Island, which continued to be part of the Mt. Aventine estate. This map was supplemented by a report giving computations of distances, positions and ranges of the various military signal stations along the lower Potomac.33 This document references the

See Continuation Sheet No. 26

"east chimney" and the house on Craney Island, as well as the "Chapman House, Cupola". Numerous listings of fish houses are also given, but not identified by owners' names. The "Pye's Wharf" and the "Signal Board on Mt. Vernon Wharf" are both referenced but the Chapmans' wharf is not, suggesting that it may no longer have existed. Apparently, there also exists an additional report describing the physical features of each of the military stations, including the Chapman house and other structures, but this document has not yet been examined.

By the mid-nineteenth century the Mt. Aventine Chapmans, once so closely aligned socially and economically with Virginia, had established equally close ties to Charles County by intermarriage with various cousins from a different branch of the Chapman family, notable among them John Grant Chapman (1798-1856), and Andrew Grant Chapman, (1839-1892) both of whom attained prominence in local, state and national politics.34 The Chapmans of Mt. Aventine also began to increasingly involve themselves in county affairs. In 1848 Pearson Chapman served on the"Committee for Fields and Enclosures" of the newly formed Charles County Agricultural Society. In 1852 he was elected the society's vice-president.35 Pearson was also an active member of the Whig Party, being elected vice president of the Whig County Convention of 1848 and president of its 1853 convention.36

The Civil War had a devastating economic and social impact on Charles County. The Chapmans were among very few local families who managed to retain possession of their land and maintain a sense of normalcy at home and in the community in the decades following the war. A series of letters written between 1866 and 1869 by Mary Parr of Baltimore to her former schoolmate, Helen Chapman, Nathaniel's daughter, contains numerous references to the Chapman's home, by then known as Mt. Aventine. Two of these letters indicate that by the fall of 1868 the house was being extensively refurbished. In one, written in September of that year, Mary inquires as to whether "Dunning has finished painting your house yet? or has his fair Desdemona drawn his attention elsewhere than to Mt. Aventine? I would like to see it when it is finished, but as that is impossible just now, draw me a picture of it, as glowing [a] description as you gave of your mocking bird."37 In another letter, written the following month, Mary admonishes her friend to

See Continuation Sheet No. 27

spend less time travelling, "for you will not appreciate your beautiful home if you stay away so much".38

Pearson Chapman died at Mt. Aventine in 1877. To his son John S. Chapman, Pearson bequeathed "the whole waterfront of my farm with all its privileges and water rights necessary to the operation of the fishery, also all houses, seine boats, and other fishing apparel pertaining to the Point fishery." To another son, Robert, Pearson left a portion of Mt. Aventine on which he requested that, in the event he (Pearson) died before he could raise the necessary funds, a house be built for Robert from profits realized from the fishery.

Inasmuch as Pearson had disposed of all his personal estate by gifts to his sons prior to his death no inventory was filed. Pearson's will thus becomes all the more important in documenting the manner in which the farm was utilized in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the improvements that existed at that time. For example, while Pearson's will specifically referenced "farming stock and implements," it is abundantly clear the fishery was of paramount importance. In respect to this period in the property's physical development the will's mention of shore erosion, alternate rights-of-way to the fishery, and associated buildings are of particular importance.

Pearson Chapman's will is also relevant to the interpretation of the house and its history of use, particularly in regard to the stone wing. Pearson directed that should he die before being able to build Robert a suitable dwelling, his son Nathaniel, to whom he bequeathed that part of the Mt. Aventine farm on which the house stood, allow Robert "the exclusive use of the kitchen, the kitchen closet, the two rooms over the kitchen, in fact all the wing save the preserve closet, to have and enjoy until a sufficient sum has been raised [to build Robert a house].." Both Nathaniel ("Nate") and Robert were to "use the back stair way [in the kitchen] common" during their joint occupancy of the house.

Of importance in establishing a long-term historical link between the Chapmans' Charles County plantation and Gunston Hall is the fact that Pearson bequeathed his other son, Thomas, "my landed estate situated" in Mason's Neck," which Thomas was then

See Continuation Sheet No. 28

occupying.39

Nathaniel Chapman, the next descending heir to that part of the Mt. Aventine estate embracing its most historically significant features, was a physician who is said to have practiced from Mt. Aventine but later moved to Harford County at or about the time of his father's death in 1877.40 John S. Chapman predeceased his father by two years; presumably, his rights to the fishery passed to his brother Nathaniel. In 1892 Dr. Nathaniel Chapman conveyed 209 acres of Mt. Aventine encompassing the house to his cousin and sister-in-law, Emma B. Culver.41 Robert Chapman, identified in 1892 as a farmer, died in 1916 while living on that part of Mt. Aventine he inherited from his father.42 In his will Robert Chapman devised Crane Island to his nephew, Thomas Chapman, and his part of the Mt. Aventine tract to the vestry of St. John's Parish. A valuation of Chapman's real estate described his part of Mt. Aventine as including 200 acres "improved by a dwelling house in poor condition". The island, said to contain 20 acres according to an 1853 survey, was unimproved and worth $500.00.43

Beginning in 1908 the various parts of Mt. Aventine were reassembled by L. E. Smoot, who in 1916 conveyed these lands to his Smoot Sand and Gravel Corporation.44 In 1920 the corporation sold the 716 acres it owned to Frank Anson.45 Anson defaulted on his mortgage and the property was purchased at public auction by local attorney Walter J. Mitchell. In 1925 Mitchell conveyed the 716 acres "recently called Mt. Aventine" back to Lewis E. Smoot, who immediately sold the same to F. King Wainwright.46 By 1938 the property was owned by Philemon Dickenson who that year deeded Mt. Aventine, "also called Chapman's Landing or Chapman's Fishing Landing," to wealthy Boston stockbroker Gorham Hubbard.47

Mt. Aventine was one of a number of important historic properties in Charles County purchased in the late 1920s and the 1930s by well-to-do individuals who migrated here from Washington, New York and Boston. Prior to purchasing Mt. Aventine, Hubbard had owned Oak Grove, which he extensively rehabilitated. Hubbard maintained Mt. Aventine as a part-time residence and hunting preserve while also continuing to farm the land. It appears that it was during Hubbard's ownership that the brick garage and brick kitchen extension were added and certain interior changes made to

See Continuation Sheet No. 29

the Mt. Aventine house.

Apparently, by the 1940s many of the older agricultural buildings and other structures contemporary with the Chapmans' ownership had disappeared or were in ruinous condition, and the fishery long abandoned. Between 1938 and 1954 Hubbard sold off various parts of the tract, including lands bordering Chapman's Landing Road at the southwest corner of the original tract, and lands formerly held by Robert Chapman to the northeast.

In 1954 Gorham Hubbard advertised the Mt. Aventine property for sale, introducing it as a "Potomac River Estate" containing 500 acres with 7,000 feet of riverfront. The house was described as "Early American brick and stone, 3-story and basement asbestos shingle roof dwelling on a high knoll with magnificent view over Potomac River and Virginia shore. In excellent condition. Wide center halls, charming stairwell, 11 spacious rooms, 9 fireplaces, 3 baths, numerous closets and storage rooms." Other buildings included a farm manager's house, two 5-room tenant houses, 2 tobacco barns, a stable, a kennel, and a"ducking house on shore." The farm was said to have "excellent soil, producing high-grade cigarette tobacco and grain; considerable mercantile timber." Shortly after this advertisement appeared the estate was sold to Margit Sigray, a noted horse breeder.49 Like Hubbard, she maintained the property as a part-time residence. During her ownership most of the formerly cultivated fields were converted to pasture land, and numerous stables and loafing sheds built throughout the farm. As Margit Sigray and later as Margit S. Bessenyey she purchased parts of the original Mt. Aventine tract previously sold by Gorham Hubbard, as well as additional contiguous lands to the west and south. In the early 1970s Mrs. Bessenyey established Mt. Aventine as a nature preserve and erected a high, chain link fence along the estate's south boundary.

In 1987, following Mrs. Bessenyey's death, Mt. Aventine was sold and became the focus of a controversial mixed-use development proposal involving several thousand acres. The 510-acre Bessenyey estate, as well as two original parts of the tract sold by Hubbard in 1954, were subsequently acquired by the present owners.50

See Continuation Sheet No. 30

CHAPMAN'S LANDING:

The earliest known firm documentation of the Chapman's Landing Hallowing Point ferry is found in the 1785 inventory of Pearson Chapman, which lists a "Yawl boat" and a "Ferry boat". 51 The 1781 letter from George Mason to Pearson Chapman quoted in the Property History implies that the ferry was in operation at that time, as is also true of George Washington's diary entry of 1786: "...it was too rough to cross here to Widow Chapman's Landing."52 That at least a private landing place was in existence not long after the Chapmans acquired the property in 1751 is evidenced by the listing of an "old boat & grappling" and a "new sail for the boat" in the inventory of Nathaniel Chapman's estate.53 Attempts to establish from local and state archives in Maryland whether or not the ferry was operated for private as well as public benefit in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century have so far been unsuccessful. However, because the Chapmans were much more prominently identified with Virginia, it is possible that this information exists in that state's archives. Inasmuch as George Mason owned the Hallowing Point site and maintained a Quarter there as part of his vast Gunston Hall plantation by the time of his death in 1792, further important information might be found among his papers or those associated with the history of the Gunston Hall property. It is not inconceivable that the ferry operation was a joint endeavor between the Chapmans and Masons inasmuch as Mason held extensive landholdings in Charles County both inherited and purchased.54

The prominent designation of "Chapman's Landing" on regional maps begins to appear regularly in the early nineteenth century, continuing to the present day. Historical works on the Potomac River, notably those published by architect/historian Frederick Tilp, consistently state that Chapman's Landing was an important public ferry during the colonial period and into the first half of the nineteenth century.55 A 1932 commemorative map of "Routes Travelled by George Washington in Maryland" includes this site. An accompanying caption reads: "Widow Chapman's". The old house at this ferry is located in Charles County, Maryland, opposite Gunston Hall, the home of George Mason in Virginia. In 1786 Washington attempted to cross here but could not on account of the roughness of the river.56 This landing, and Posey's Ferry at Marshall Hall

See Continuation Sheet No. 31

just upriver, connected with Laidler's Ferry at the southern end of Charles County, providing the most direct route between Northern Virginia and Virginia's colonial capital at Williamsburg.

Washington's aborted attempt to cross the river at this location was apparently a not-uncommon occurrence. An essay on the Potomac River ferry system discusses the fact that "gusts and squalls so characteristic of the Potomac region made ferrying dangerous," and resulted in many deaths by drowning. "This happened many times, especially at the Potomac crossing at Chapman's Landing, which is exposed to violent northwest winds."57

By the 1840s Chapman's Landing serviced steamboats traveling between Washington and Baltimore. The existence of a wharf in this location by 1844 is found in the letters of William Briscoe Stone, a prominent Charles County planter-attorney. In letters written between 1843 and 1846 Stone frequently refers to embarking or disembarking the steamboat at Chapman's Landing, and keeping a horse or a carriage there in advance of his arrival, usually from Annapolis, or that of his two daughters, then at school in Baltimore.58

The most descriptive and important of these letters was written in December 1844 while Stone was attending court in Annapolis and contains this passage:

..."It is uncertain when the Court will adj.[,] perhaps on Friday evening next, if so I go to Washington either on Friday or Saturday - if on Friday I shall probably go in the steam boat & be landed at Chapmans early on Saturday morning, if I go on Saturday to Washington then I shall not reach Chapmans till Sunday morning - so that to the [?] of a conveyance home yr mother then had better send on horse back for me on Saturday & also on Sunday morning very early as the boat lands now at Chapmans about day break - if I [am bringing?] my trunk[,] which is not certain[,] I can leave it with the old woman on the shore & send for it at convenient leisure, Thomas & Mary I suppose will get home next Thursday or Friday, so that sending for me will not interfere with them - if I do not come to Chapman's Landing neither Saturday or Sunday morning I shall be in the stage [arriving at Port Tobacco] on Monday - I hope to hear again from home before I leave this city..."59

See Continuation Sheet No. 32

Another letter among the Stone family papers relates "...waiting on the wharf for [?] and Mr. P[earson] Chapman where they said they had been on the lookout for us every day for a week."60

Evidently, the Chapman's wharf remained in existence through the 1850s. However, no reference to it has been found after 1860. By 1868 the landing had apparently been succeeded by the new public steamboat wharf just downriver at Glymont.

CHAPMAN'S POINT FISHERY:

It is not known when the Chapmans first began to develop their waterfront for harvesting seafoods as an adjunct to crop production. Presumably, based on the historical evidence, it occurred early in the nineteenth century. However, it is known that fisheries had been established along the county's shoreline a century or more earlier.

The first known reference to the existence of a fishery at Mt. Aventine appears in a letter written by Pearson Chapman on September 17, 1834, in which he states that "I have called on Messrs. [Thomas D.] Clagett & Robert Brawner to set a value on my fishery..."61 That the fishery was by that time a fairly important part of the property's use is further suggested in several releases Pearson secured from representatives and heirs of his father's estate, in all of which the property is described as "Gryme's Ditch commonly called Pomonkey with the Fishery thereunto attached.'62 These releases were necessary due to legal problems associated with the settlement of Pearson's father's estate. In each of the releases it is made clear that the fishery was in existence prior to 1827, when the property was owned by George Chapman but then occupied by Pearson.

The location of the fishery at Chapman's Point is documented by an 1852 notice advertising the Pyes' farm and fishing shore for rent, which bordered Mt. Aventine to the southwest. The Pye property was described as "adjacent Mt. P. Chapman's [fishing shore]."63 The 1862 Hosmer map also identified a "Fish House" standing in this same location.

See Continuation Sheet No. 33

A small collection of Chapman family papers recently donated to the Southern Maryland Studies Center includes an 1867 receipt for "2,500 to 3,000 herring and 50 shad" ordered from Pearson Chapman and directed to be sent by wagon to George P. Jenkins near Port Tobacco.64

The Chapmans' fishery was apparently a well developed enterprise by the 1870s according to the 1877 will of Pearson Chapman previously discussed in the Property History. Pearson bequeathed his fishing shore and fishery to his son John S. Chapman, then living near Alexandria. Immediately after his father's death John Chapman mortgaged "the fishing shore in Charles County, Maryland, known as Chapman's Point together with all the privileges and appurtenances thereunto appertaining and belonging, also all houses, boats, capstans, seines and other fishing apparatus used in operating the fishery.65

In April 1885 a brief article appeared in a local newspaper describing the Chapmans' fishery as one of only two known to be operating that year in Charles County. The fishery was then being managed by Wallace Mitchell, a Chapman relative, "who will fish about 250 fathoms of seine and will employ about 30 men," making it the second largest of all commercial fisheries on the Maryland shore of the river operating in 1885.66

By 1897, the commercial fisheries on the Potomac had become the largest of any river on the east coast, with an estimated 10 hatcheries supported by sub-stations, one of which was located at Mt. Aventine.67

The Chapmans' fishery appears to have been abandoned after about 1900-1910, although rights to the fishing shore continued to be specified in all conveyances involving this property through the 1950s.

See Continuation Sheet No. 34

RESOURCE HISTORY: ENDNOTES

1. Patents, 11:577 and 15:159 (Annapolis).
2. Court Proceedings, 1812-1817:28, etc. (La Plata). The property was resurveyed on numerous occasions before this date and again in 1853.
3. Extensive references to these and other land transactions in this locality involving native Indians are found in the compiler's architectural research files, Southern Maryland Studies Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata. (Collection #850088).
4. Abstracts of Gardiner wills, Harry Wright Newman Collection, Southern Maryland Studies Center (SMSC), Charles County Community College, La Plata. See also Edward C. Papenfuse, et al., A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789 2 Vols. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, 1985), 1:344, 34~.
5. Newman Collection: Mason Family (SMSC); Papenfuse, et al., 2:580.
6. Newman: Gardiner family.
7. Deeds, Z#2: 474 (La Plata).
8. Wills, AB#3:166 (La Plata).
9. Archives of Maryland, XLVI:142.
10. Court Proceedings, 1812-1817:28 etc.; Harry Wright Newman, Maryland
Smoots and Kindred Families (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1956), p. 290.
11. Deeds, Z#2:474.
12. Court Proceedings, 1812-1817:28, etc.
13. Inventories, 78:2 (Annapolis).
14. See J. Richard Rivoire, Homeplaces Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland (La Plata, Maryland: Southern Maryland Studies Center, 1990), pp. 6-11.
15. See Sigismunda Chapman, Alexander, Brown, Chapman and Associated Families (Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Printing Company, 1946), pp. 110, 227, etc.; Wesley E. Pippenger, John Alexander, A Northern Neck Proprietor, His Family, Friends and Kin (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1990), p. 161, etc.
16. Ibid.
17. Margaret Brown Klapthor and Paul Dennis Brown, History of Charles County, Maryland (La Plata, Maryland: Charles County Tercentenary Commission, 1958), p. 53.

See Continuation Sheet No. 35

18. Ibid.

It is traditionally believed that George Mason named his Gunston Hall seat after his maternal grandmother's home, Gunston, in the southern part of Charles County. Mason also owned a large plantation, Stump Neck, in the western part of the county binding on the Potomac River.

A relationship between George Mason and the Chapmans of Mt. Aventine (Gryme's Ditch) can be traced back to at least 1749 when Nathaniel Chapman (d. 1760) and George Mason were members of the Ohio Company. In 1750 Mason, Chapman and other prominent citizens of Virginia were named directors of a lottery to raise funds for the building of Pohick Church in Fairfax County.

The Chapmans also had established ties with the family of George Washington and Mt. Vernon. In 1743 Nathaniel was named an executor of the will of Washington's father, Augustine, as well as that of Augustine's eldest son, Lawrence. Also, one of Nathaniel's daughters married a son of Augustine Washington. The Chapmans were linked as well to the founding of the city of Alexandria through Susanna Pearson Alexander, wife of George Chapman of "Thoroughfare" and mother of the builder of the existing Mt. Aventine house.

19. 1783 Charles County Tax Assessments, District 5, Land (Annapolis).
20. Wills, B#1:418 (La Plata).
E
21. Inventories/Wills, AH#9:184 (La Plata).
22. Ibid.
23. Klapthor and Brown, p. 63.
24. 1798 Federal Tax Lists, Charles County, Parts 1, 2, 3 (Annapolis).
25. Chapman and Pippenger (see #14 above).
26. Court Proceedings, 1812-1817:28, etc.
27. Wills, WDM#15:362 (La Plata).
28. Louise Stone Matthews Collection (#850120-1-269), SMSC.
29. Chapman:267.
30. Louise Stone Matthews Collection (850120-1-265).
31. Contemporary accounts indicate that the most common practice before regular coach routes were established was to travel overland

See Continuation Sheet No. 36

from Annapolis to the Potomac at Piscataway and then travel downriver. Present day Bumpy Oak and Rose Hill roads, with which Chapman's Landing Road connects, was established early in the eighteenth century and led directly to the port town and then county seat of Port Tobacco. In early documents this route was frequently referred to as "the road from Port Tobacco to Alexandria."

32. "U. S. Coast Survey, Part of Potomac River from Indian Head to Fox Ferry, VA. ~ MD., Surveyed by Chas. Hosmer," August 1862 (from Maryland Historical Trust files);"Description of Stations on the Potomac River, 1862," Fairman Rogers, (National Archives).
33. Ibid.
34. Chapman Family Papers, gift of C. M. Clagett; Chapman; Pippinger.
35. Abstracts from the Port Tobacco Times And Charles County Advertiser, Vol. 1: 1844-1954, Roberta J. Wearmouth, ed., (Bowle, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1990), pp. 42, 117.
36. Ibid., pp. 5, 45, 143.
37. Chapman Family Papers.
38. Ibid.
39. Wills, MF#18:66 (La Plata).
40. Pippinger: 169.
41. Deeds, JST#5:210 (La Plata).
42. Wills, CND#20:32 (La Plata).
43. Ibid.
44. Deeds, HCC#29:443 (La Plata).
45. Ibid., WMA#37:154.
46. Ibid.:40:444 and 42:184.
47. Ibid.:67:493.
48. Historic Sites File, "Chapman's Landing," SMSC.
49. Deeds, 112:94 (La Plata). At the time of her death Mrs. Bessenyey's "Mt. Aventine" estate included about 669 acres, not all of which land were associated with the original Grymes Ditch/Mt. Aventine tract.
50. Deeds, 1242:75; 1362:162 (La Plata).
51. Inventories, AH#9:184 (La Plata).
52. Frederick Tilp, This Was Potomac River (Alexandria, Virginia: privately published, 1978), p. 313.
53. Inventories, 78:2 (Annapolis).

See Continuation Sheet No. 37

54. Wills, AK#11:316 (La Plata).
55. Tilp, pp. 17, 19, 313.
56. A copy of this map is in the collection of the SMSC.
57. Jack Brown, et al., Charles Count~, Maryland, A History (La Plata, Maryland: Charles County Bicentennial Commission, 1976. Pp. 13, 19, 21, 22.
58. William Briscoe Stone Collection, Perkins Library, Duke University. Microfilm copies, SMSC. (Not indexed.)
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Louise Stone Matthews Collection.
62. Deeds, WM#1:306, 308 RHM#1:124 (La Plata).
63. Wearmouth Abstracts, p. 114.
64. Chapman Family Papers.
65. Deeds, BGS#2:129 (La Plata).
66. John M. Wearmouth Collection, SMSC. Photocopies of a scrapbook of articles from the Maryland Independent in the files of the Charles County Public Library, La Plata.
67. Tilp, pp. 17, 19.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS:

Prominent among this property's surviving historic structures is the Mt. Aventine house. In Charles County the four decades between 1810 and 1850 marked a period of considerable change wrought by increased economic prosperity and improved means of transportation. Today, these improved circumstances are particularly evident in its historic architecture. Two-thirds of the county's surviving pre-Civil War houses date from the first half of the nineteenth century. A majority of these houses are of a two-story, side passage plan identical to the oldest portion of the existing Mt. Aventine house. While the side passage plan would seem to ideally accommodate expansion to a central passage, four-room plan, Mt. Aventine is the county's only extant example of such an architectural evolution. There are a few two-story, side passage houses with wings off the passage end, such as Dent's Palace (CH-40), West Hatton (CH-39) and Friendship Farm (CH-101), but with the exception of Mt. Aventine these are all shallower and lower than the main block. If additions were made to such houses they normally occurred off the chimney end or rear elevation. In nearly all local examples, the addition, when not an older dwelling

See Continuation Sheet No. 38

to which the larger block was added, was built to provide kitchens and other domestic work areas rather than formal living spaces or reception rooms. Furthering Mt. Aventine's interest in this regard is the fact that there are remarkably few pre-Civil War houses in this county of a five-bay, two-room deep, central passage plan. Just as importantly, it is the county's only surviving historic house known to have had a cupola. These locally distinctive elements of Mount Aventine's design are enhanced by its generally good state of preservation, the alterations made in the early twentieth century being of little consequence when compared to the value of the whole.

Mount Aventine's architectural significance is obviously considerably strengthened by its stone wing. Quarried stone, or even common fieldstone, was rarely used as a building material in this locality except as an underpinning. Mount Aventine's kitchen wing and Christ Church, La Plata (CH-62), are the only buildings in Charles County constructed entirely of stone, and of the two only this structure stands on its original site and retains its historic architectural integrity.

In an historic architectural context, the interest of the site of the ca. 1760 Chapman house located near the river is comparable to that of the existing nineteenth-century house. Large, central passage dwellings, such as this one apparently was, were surprisingly rare in this locality prior to the American Revolution according to the historical record. That the design of this house was probably fairly sophisticated is suggested as much by the highly descriptive and unusually informative 1761 inventory of the personal estate of its presumed builder, Nathaniel Chapman, as it is by Chapman's affluence and social position among the Virginia elite. Documentary and oral historical information places the location of the building within a tightly defined area proximate to the historic Chapman family cemetery. That an archaeological study of the house site has the potential to reveal important information is suggested by the fact that it has remained undisturbed beyond possible cultivation of the covering ground.

Two other similarly important historic archaeological sites encompassed by the Mount Aventine property are those of the Chapmans' ferry and steamboat landing and the Chapman's Point

See Continuation Sheet No. 39

fishery.

Currently available information suggests that the Chapmans' ferry, crossing the Potomac River between this property and Hallowing Point, Virginia, was initially established for private purposes, linking the Chapmans' extensive Northern Virginia plantations and other holdings to their Charles County estate rather than as a solely commercial enterprise. Nevertheless, and assuming this theory to be true, the Chapmans clearly made the ferry available for public use as well as implied by George Mason's letter to Pearson Chapman in 1781 and George Washington's 1786 diary entry. The papers of Judge William Briscoe Stone of Habre de Venture (CH-5;NR;NHL;NPS-Thomas Stone National Historic Site) near Port Tobacco (NR) clearly show that by the 1840s there also existed here a steamboat wharf and ancillary support structures. The fact that nineteenth and twentieth century maps consistently and prominently identify this location as Chapman's Landing, and the fact that the public road bordering Mt. Aventine to the southeast was historically and continues to be known as Chapman's Landing Road, attests to the fact that the landing/wharf was well known throughout the region. That this ferry crossing likely played an important role in the development of early transportation routes in Charles County as well as between Maryland and Virginia is a logical conclusion. Early maps, particularly the Hosmer map of 1862, show that there has been surprisingly little change to Mt. Aventine's shoreline, thus making it extremely likely that significant archeological remains exist both below grade and submerged offshore.

Immediately downriver from the landing is the site of the Chapmans' fishery, a commercially motivated and apparently profitable venture that continued in operation from at least the 1830s (and very probably much earlier) to about 1900. This site promises similar archeological potential. Although the property's entire shoreline was used in conjunction with the fishery, structural and other associated facilities were evidently concentrated in this location. This site is considered extremely important in the context of this region's and this county's nineteenth century economic and agricultural history. By the 1800s the commercial harvesting of sturgeon, shad and other marketable seafoods began to assume an increasingly important role in the

See Continuation Sheet No. 40

area's economy; by the 1870s the harvesting and export of seafoods constituted a major share of the county's agricultural production. This alternative to traditional agricultural practices and products was as much influenced as dictated by the ending of slavery on which the cultivation and export of such labor intensive crops as tobacco was so dependent and the inability of most major landowners/planters to continue farming in the economically depressed climate that followed the Civil War. This change in the region's economic and agricultural history has yet to be fully explored by modern historians. Further study of the extensive documentary materials relating to the Chapmans' fishery, especially in view of the integrity of the site and other aspects of Mt. Aventine's history, could contribute substantially to our understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural development of the lower Potomac River region during the nineteenth century, particularly during the critical decades following the Civil War.

See Continuation Sheet No. 41

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE DESCENDING CHAPMAN HEIRS TO GRYME'S DITCH/MOUNT AVENTINE, 1750-1916

1. NATHANIEL CHAPMAN, (1709-1760):

Nathaniel was the son of Jonathan Chapman (a.k.a. "John Chapman") and Jane Taylor. Jonathan Chapman was an ironmaster by trade, and amassed considerable landholdings in Virginia. He also lived at various times in Maryland and Pennsylvania. A 1749 document refers to him as having been a "mason, of Baltimore County, Maryland." Jonathan died intestate at his dwelling plantation, later known as "Summer Hill," and now the site of Washington National Airport.

Nathaniel Chapman was probably born in Virginia. He was the second son of Jonathan Chapman's five known children and the eldest male heir to his father's estates. Like his father, Nathaniel was an ironmaster by profession and until his death was actively involved in the Principio Iron Company ironworks in Cecil and Baltimore counties, Maryland, and ironworks on Augustine Washington's Accokeek plantation in Virginia. In addition to landholdings both inherited and purchased, Nathaniel owned a lime mill on the Occoquan adjacent to his "Thoroughfare" plantation. The mill, originally built by Jonathan Chapman, still stands.

In about 1732 Chapman married his cousin, Constantia Pearson, (1714-1791), by whom he is known to have had three sons and three daughters. By the early 1740s he figured prominently among the Virginia elite, particularly those who settled along "Four Mile Run," which lay between Occoquan Bay and Mount Vernon.

In 1743 Nathaniel was named an executor of the estate of Augustine Washington, father of Gen. George Washington. In 1749 Chapman joined Laurence Washington (George Washington's half-brother), George Mason, and seventeen other leading citizens to form the Ohio Company. Chapman was named the Company's first treasurer but several months later requested that George Mason succeed him in that position. In 1750 a lottery was formed under the direction of Nathaniel Chapman, George Mason, Col. William Fairfax, Col. William Fitzhugh, and Laurence and Augustine

See Continuation Sheet No. 42

Washington to raise funds to build a church (Pohick) and marketplace at Bellhaven, Fairfax County. In 1752 Chapman was named executor of the will of Laurence Washington.

In 1750 Nathaniel Chapman purchased Gryme's Ditch in Charles County from Edward Neale and by 1754 had made this property his principal dwelling plantation. Chapman died suddenly on a business trip to the Principio ironworks in Baltimore County. Since Chapman died before making a will, his extensive estates in Virginia and his home plantation, Gryme's Ditch, passed to his eldest surviving son, Nathaniel Jr., subject to dower rights held by Constantia.

2. CONSTANTIA (PEARSON) CHAPMAN, (1714-1791):

The daughter of Captain Simon Pearson, a well-to-do Northern Virginia landowner, Constantia inherited considerable real and personal property on the death of the her father in 1733, by which time she was married to Nathaniel Chapman.

Constantia, who maintained close personal relationships with the Mason and Washington families throughout her life, continued to reside at the Gryme's Ditch plantation for several years following her husband's death. In 1766 two of the "slaves of Mrs. Constantia Chapman" of Charles County were charged with the murder of a neighbor, William Garner, for which crime "Negro Jack" was condemned to death and executed. By about 1770 Constantia had moved from Gryme's Ditch to the family's "Summer Hill" plantation above Alexandria, Virginia, where she remained until her death.

Following the accidental death in 1762 of her eldest son, Nathaniel Jr., Constantia and her two surviving sons, Pearson and George, became embroiled in a legal dispute involving disposition of the extensive landholdings of Nathaniel, Sr., and those Constantia held in her own right. This case was not fully settled until 1876.

3. NATHANIEL CHAPMAN, JR., (1740-1762):

Presumably, Nathaniel Jr. lived at Gryme's Ditch with his parents. As the eldest surviving son, Nathaniel fell heir to his father's estate on the latter's death intestate in 1760.

See Continuation Sheet No. 43

Very little is presently known about Nathaniel, Jr. It is said in one Chapman family history that he was "University of Pennsylvania educated." He died intestate in a boating accident in New York Harbor.

4. PEARSON CHAPMAN, (1745-1784):

On the death intestate of Nathaniel Jr., Pearson inherited under law of primogeniture the Gryme's Ditch plantation and the Virginia estates of his late father. Following his inheritance of these lands Pearson entered into a verbal agreement with his mother, Constantia, to accommodate her desire that Pearson's younger brother George receive an equitable portion of their father's estate. This Pearson agreed to do on the promise that he receive half of Constantia's own estate. With her assurance that this would be done, deeds were recorded conveying to George Fairfax County land and city lots in Alexandria. Pearson later destroyed a third deed, for lands in Fauquier County, on learning that his mother had broken her promise by conveying all of her estate to George. This precipitated the property ownership dispute within the family that was not finally resolved until 1876.

Pearson Chapman maintained his home at Gryme's Ditch, residing in the house built by his father c. 1754. It is Pearson who is believed to have initiated operation of a ferry linking Gryme's Ditch to the Gunston Hall plantation of the family's longtime friend George Mason. It was to Pearson that Mason appealed to assist in transporting furnishings and papers from Gunston Hall to Mason's son's home, Araby, as a safeguard against British raiders advancing up the Potomac.

Pearson died at Gryme's Ditch in 1784, leaving a will in which he bequeathed the home plantation to his eldest son, Nathaniel, subject to a life estate vested in Nathaniel's mother, Susannah Pearson (Alexander) Chapman. Pearson's widow continued to reside at the Gryme's Ditch plantation until her death in 1815.

At the time of his death, Pearson Chapman owned lands throughout Virginia, as well as land in New England that had

See Continuation Sheet No. 44

evidently descended to him from his grandfather, Jonathan Chapman. Pearson also continued to hold shares in the Ohio Company. His inventory, in addition to including a "yawl" and a "ferry boat," lists "12 family portraits." Nearly all of these portraits remain in the possession of descendants.

5. NATHANIEL CHAPMAN (c. 1767- ?) :

Little is presently known about Nathaniel Chapman, son of Pearson (1745-1784). He evidently died intestate not long after his father, most certainly before the resurvey of Gryme's Ditch in 1804-1805. Boundary stone "B" of the Gryme's Ditch tract bears the initials "N.C." and the date "1800" suggesting that Nathaniel was still living at the time that stone was cut. By 1802, however, the lands bequeathed to Nathaniel by his father had devolved to George Chapman, Pearson's second eldest son.

6. GEORGE CHAPMAN (1749- 1829) :

According to family tradition, George Chapman lived at Gryme's Ditch until about 1800 when he removed to the family's Virginia plantation "Thoroughfare." In 1794 George Chapman "of Charles County" purchased the 121 acres of the Wheelers Purchase tract that overlay the original patent boundaries of Gryme's Ditch. In 1802 George Chapman and his brother John petitioned the Charles County Court for a resurvey of Gryme's Ditch to establish its correct patent boundaries, the result of which concluded a dispute regarding the actual boundaries of Gryme's Ditch that had begun with Edward Neale's purchase of the land in 1732.

It is not clear from historical records who might have occupied the Gryme's Ditch tract after George's move to "Thoroughfare." According to George's will, probated in 1829, both of his parents were buried at Gryme's Ditch, so it is assumed that his mother remained at that place until her death in 1815. Possibly, George's brother John lived there with his mother and managed the farm on his brother's behalf. It appears that it was George Chapman who developed the Chapmans Point fishery into a full-scale commercial operation. The "Chapman Fish Books," containing detailed accounts of the operation of the fishery from 1814 to 1827, are said to have been maintained by George Chapman.

See Continuation Sheet No. 45

It is likely that further study of these records would reveal important information concerning the use of the rest of the Gryme's Ditch tract as well as provide identities of those who occupied the land.

In 1808, George and John Chapman executed an agreement in which a division was made of the slaves then occupying the Gryme's Ditch property. This document records that there were 49 slaves at Gryme's Ditch that year, 26 of whom were over the age of 16. The division was to become effective on the death of Susannah P. A. Chapman.

George Chapman died at his "Thoroughfare" plantation in 1829. His will, written in 1827, devised the Gryme's Ditch plantation to his eldest son, Pearson, stating in his bequest that it had been the desire of his (George's) brother Nathaniel that he do so. George's will is notable for the extent of the family's landholdings and investments, much of which had descended from Jonathan and Nathaniel Chapman, and for his admonitions that his children properly care for the numerous slaves whose lives and personal well-being he had entrusted to them.

7. PEARSON CHAPMAN (1803- 1877) :

The eldest son of George Chapman and Susan Pearson Alexander, Pearson was probably born at Thoroughfare. According to a letter Pearson wrote in 1833 to his brother-in-law, Gen. John Grant Chapman, he moved to Gryme's Ditch in 1824. This date coincides with the last detailed accountings in the Chapman Fish Books said to have been kept by his father. A letter written by Pearson in 1834 discusses at length his attempts to "set a value on my fishery . . . as well as the farm." The ongoing litigation involving the settlement of Pearson's father's estate surely made such an evaluation necessary. It was during Pearson Chapman's ownership and occupation of Gryme's Ditch (then known as "Pomonkey") that other income-producing activities were initiated, apparently including the harvesting of timber and possibly a saw mill.

It was Pearson Chapman who built the existing house,c.1840 and who at about that time gave the property the "Mount Aventine" name. A slave-owning planter and businessman, Pearson Chapman was

See Continuation Sheet No. 46

actively involved in the agricultural reform movement in Charles County during the 1840s and early 1850s according to contemporary newspaper accounts. He was politically active, serving one term as Vice President of the Whig County Convention of 1848 and President of the 1853 convention. At least three of Pearson's sons joined the Confederate Army. In 1862 the Mount Aventine house and a building on Crain Island were designated federal signal stations. Throughout the conflict Charles County was considered occupied territory by the federal government. Large companies of federal troops are known to have passed through this immediate area; at least one battalion bivouacked at "Pomonkey." It is extremely likely that federal troops may have been landed at Chapman Landing and/or camped on the property.

Pearson Chapman died at Mount Aventine in 1877 "of paralysis." His will devised the Mount Aventine estate to his sons Nathaniel and Robert. To his son John he bequeathed rights to the fishery and fishing shore. Since Pearson had disposed of all of his personal property prior to his death no inventory was filed.

8. JOHN CHAPMAN (1835 - 1880) :

John S. Chapman had evidently managed the Chapman's Point fishery for some years prior to his father's death, although he had settled in Alexandria, Virginia after the Civil War and was still living there at the time of his death. John evidently died intestate and without issue. His rights to the fishery and fishing shore at Mount Aventine then passed to his brother Nathaniel.

9. DR. NATHANIEL CHAPMAN (1842 - 1898) :

Dr. Chapman was educated at Charlotte Hall in St. Mary's County, Maryland, and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania. Like two of his brothers, he joined the Confederate Army. He served with distinction in several important campaigns. After the war he settled in Fairfax County, Virginia, before entering the University of Maryland Medical School from which he graduated in 1872. He then returned to Charles County and practiced medicine from Mount Aventine until 1892 when he relocated to Washington, D.C.

See Continuation Sheet No. 47

Under the terms of his father's will Nathaniel inherited that portion of the Mount Aventine tract embracing the existing home. On the death of his brother John in 1880 he inherited John's rights to the fishery and fishing shore. In 1892 Nathaniel sold 209 acres of the Mount Aventine tract to his sister-in-law, Emma Boykin.

10. ROBERT CHAPMAN (1845 - 1916) :

Pearson Chapman's 1877 will specified that a house be built for his son Robert from proceeds derived from the fishery. In the interim Nathaniel was to provide his brother dwelling space in the family home. It is believed that the house identified as Site 14 in the National Register nomination was the house built for Robert.

Robert Chapman is identified as a farmer in the 1892 Charles County census. He died at his home at Mount Aventine early in 1916. Robert Chapman's will devised his part of Mount Aventine to the vestry of St. John's Parish, and Crain Island to his nephew, Thomas Chapman. A valuation of Robert's real estate made following his death notes that his former dwelling house was at that time "in poor condition."

See Continuation Sheet No. 48

HISTORICAL REFERENCES LINKING THE CHAPMANS OF GRYME'S DITCH/MOUNT AVENTINE TO THE MASONS OF GUNSTON HALL AND THE WASHINGTONS OF MOUNT VERNON

THE MASON CONNECTION

1. Nathaniel Chapman, (1709-1760), lived in Fairfax County, Virginia, prior to purchasing the Gryme's Ditch tract in 1750 and building a house there c. 1754. It is quite possible that prior to 1750 Chapman occupied property located near Gunston Hall, which land George Mason moved to in 1746. It is clearly apparent that Chapman and Mason had an established relationship prior to 1747, the year the two men became Charter members of the Ohio Company. Nathaniel Chapman's social stature, and that of his father and his wife's family, make it extremely likely that the two families were well acquainted long before George Mason established his seat at Gunston Hall.

2. In 1750, the year Nathaniel Chapman acquired Gryme's Ditch, George Mason married Ann Eilbeck of Charles County. Ann's father, William Eilbeck, was a prominent merchant-planter, whose principal dwelling plantation was located less than two miles south of Gryme's Ditch. Further, William Eilbeck held land bordering Gryme's Ditch which was inherited by his wife in 1736. Eilbeck referred to this land as his "Pomonkey Quarter" in his 1767 will.

3. The Chapman's Gryme's Ditch plantation lay directly opposite the Potomac River from the Gunston Hall estate of George Mason. An early map shows a roadway leading directly from the Mason home to Hallowing Point on Mason's Neck (which George Mason called "Dogue's Neck"). A road led south from the Chapmans' landing at Gryme's Ditch to the home of Ann Mason's parents, later owned and occupied by their son William. Records relating to the estate of Nathaniel Chapman following his death in 1760 name George Mason as Chapman's principal creditor.

4. William Eilbeck, George Mason's father-in-law, died in 1767. He named as his principal heir his grandson William Mason. Eilbeck, and later his wife Sarah, were interred on the land bordering Gryme's Ditch which Eilbeck held in right of his wife. This land remained in the ownership of the Mason family well into

See Continuation Sheet No. 49

the 19th century.

5. Constantia (Pearson) Chapman, widow of Nathaniel, wrote a will in 1768 in which she bequeathed "unto my friend Mrs. Ann Mason a mourning ring to be set around with diamond sparks, the said ring to be the value of three guineas and a half, and be inscribed with my age and the time of my death."

6. In 1781, George Mason wrote to Pearson Chapman (1745-1784) requesting that Chapman temporarily store some of Mason's personal belongings at Gryme's Ditch until they could be moved to his son William's home. Mason's possessions, including papers and furnishings from his Gunston Hall home, were undoubtedly sent across the river on the ferry operating between Gryme's Ditch and Mason's Hallowing Point Quarter.

7. The Chapmans' continued friendship with the Masons after George Mason's death is reflected in Sigismunda Chapman's 1827 letter to her father-in-law, George Chapman, in which she says "Our good neighbor, Mrs. Mason, is very well and never fails to enquire very particularly after your health."

THE WASHINGTON CONNECTION

1. In 1741, Nathaniel Chapman (1709-1760) patented a tract of land immediately adjacent to Augustine Washington's Accokeek plantation in Stafford County, Virginia. As ironmaster, Nathaniel Chapman was employed by or otherwise associated with Augustine Washington's ironworks on the latter's Accokeek plantation. Augustine Washington's will, probated in 1743, named Nathaniel Chapman one of the executors of his estate.

2. In his will probated in 1752, Laurence Washington, Augustine Washington's eldest son and George Washington's half-brother, names "the Honourable William Fairfax and George Fairfax Esqrs., my said Brothers Augustine and George Washington, and my Esteemed Friends Mr. Nathaniel Chapman and Major John Carlyle Executors of this my last will and testament." (It was by this will that George Washington came into possession of the Mount Vernon estate.) In 1752, Louisa Chapman, (b. 1743), a daughter of Nathaniel and Constantia Chapman, married George Washington's brother, Samuel.

See Continuation Sheet No. 50

3. In 1774, Constantia Chapman wrote a new will. She had been predeceased by her friend Ann Mason, to whom Constantia had bequeathed a mourning ring in her will dated 1768. In her new will Constantia bequeathed a mourning ring to Sally Harrison, daughter of Robert Hanson Harrison, George Washington's military secretary. In 1786, George Washington recorded in his diaries his attempt to cross the Potomac River to "the widow Chapman's" landing in order to reach the home of Col. Mason (Araby).

See Continuation Sheet No. 51

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated on the USGS maps which accompany this nomination.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundaries were selected on the basis of the presence and absence of known and tangible historic resources. These are concentrated within a parcel comprising approximately 185 acres, located at the core of the Mount Aventine property.

The nominated property, approximately 185 acres, encompasses the concentration of historic resources--including standing buildings and structures, and sites whose locations are clearly identifiable either by existing physical evidence or by specific documentary or oral historical sources--within that portion of the landscape which retains integrity and which provides a visual setting to convey an understanding of the significance of Mount Aventine (see Resource Sketch Map). Actual boundaries were drawn along the north and south sides utilizing changes in elevation as indicated on the USGS maps which accompany this documentation. These topographical features, in combination with the tree lines that also generally conform to them, help to visually distinguish and screen the nominated acreage from the surrounding property. The eastern border follows a historic road bed, and is drawn 50 feet from the eastern edge of the road bed. The Potomac River forms the western border.

The areas surrounding the approximately 185-acre nominated property lack known or specifically-identifiable cultural resources; the outlying landscape, which is generally overgrown with trees, does not retain integrity to the period of significance and does not contribute to the visual setting of the known resources. These surrounding areas simply represent undeveloped land.

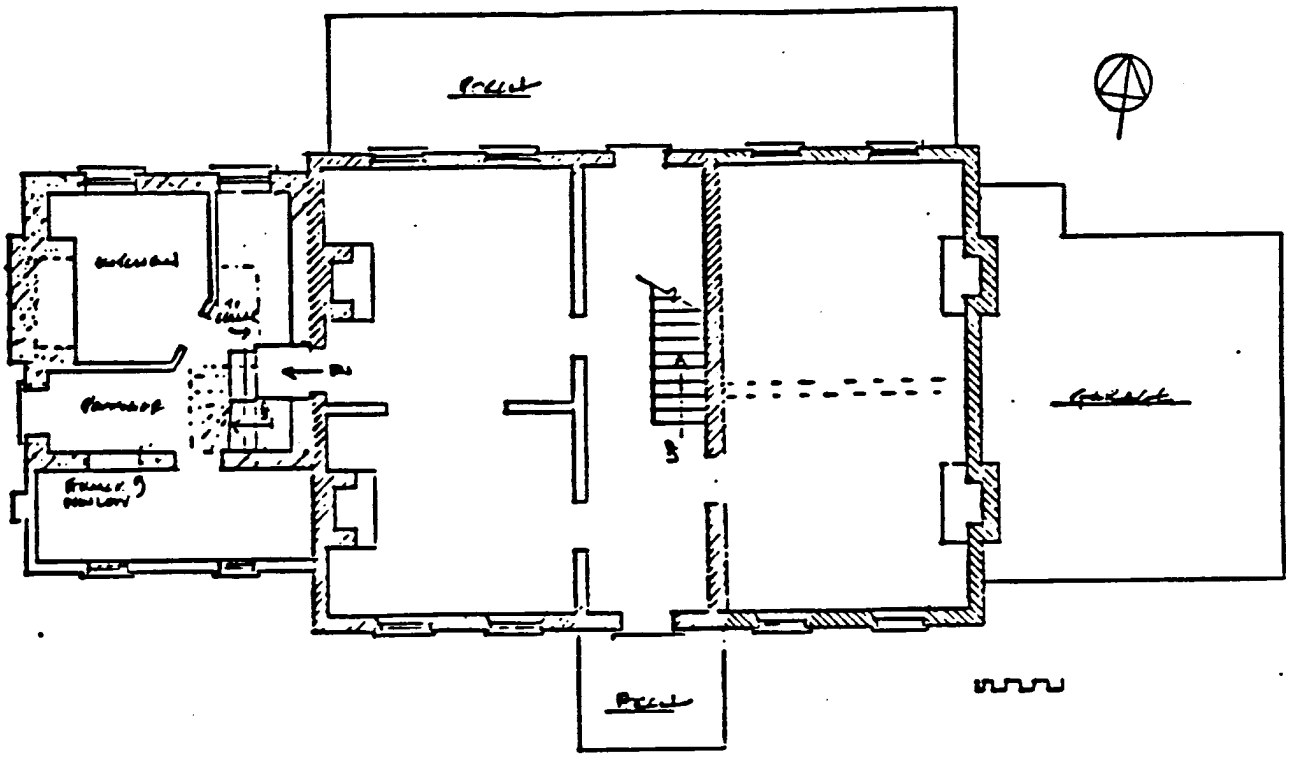
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MOUNT AVENTINE
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 10

main house, first floor



See Continuation Sheet No. 11

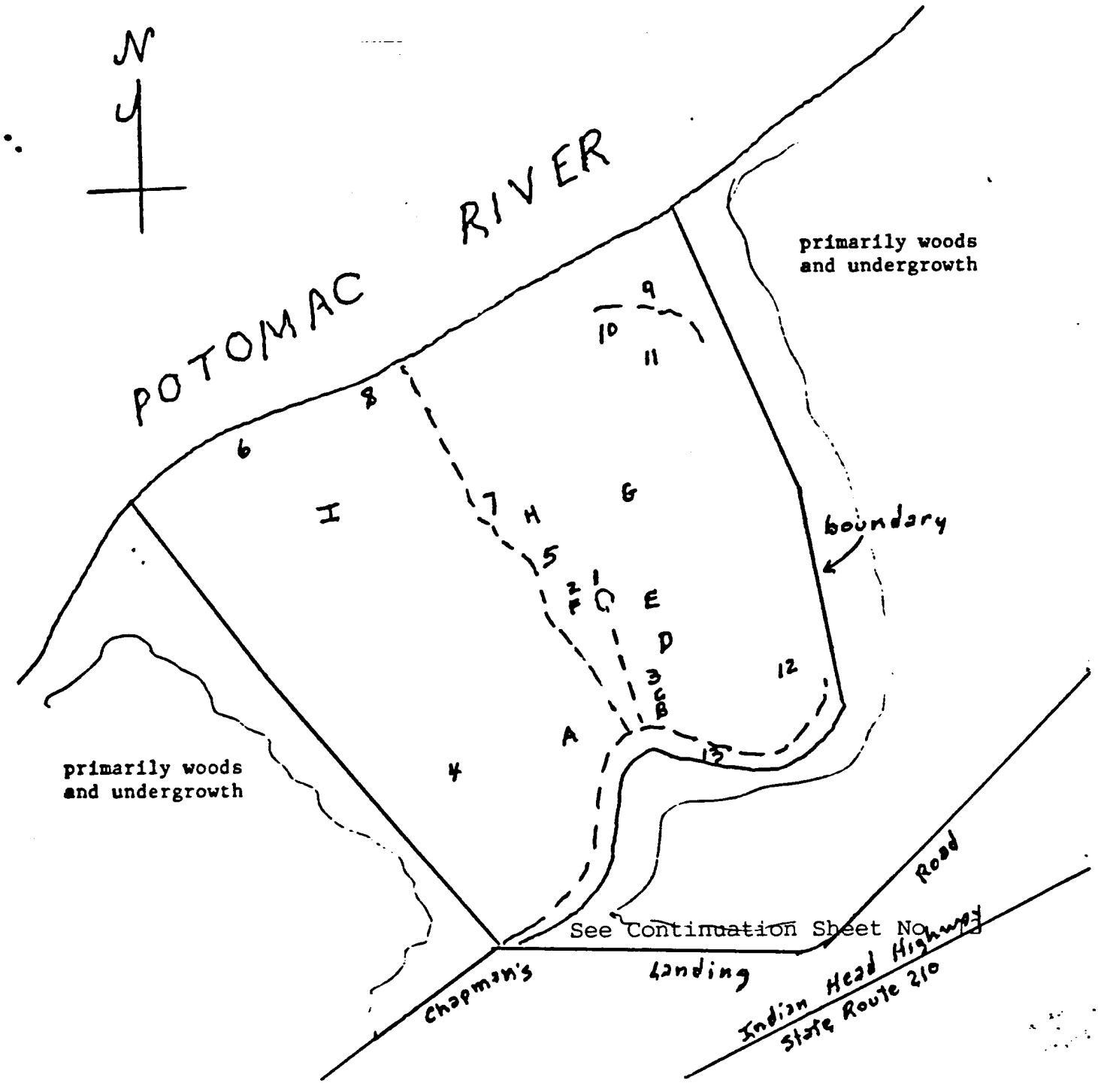
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MOUNT AVENTINE
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 11

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP See Section 7. Description
numbers = contributing letters = non-contributing

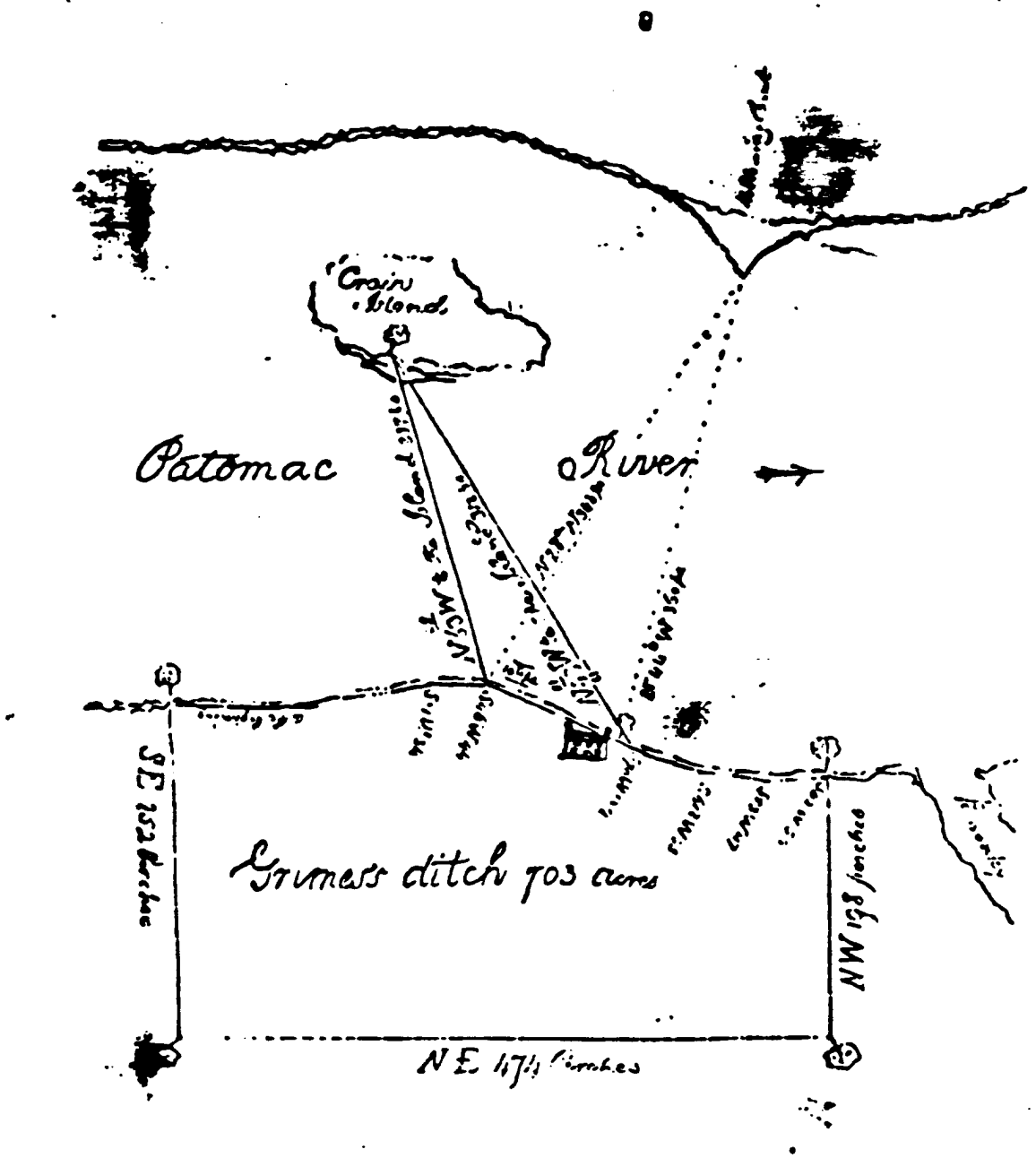


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

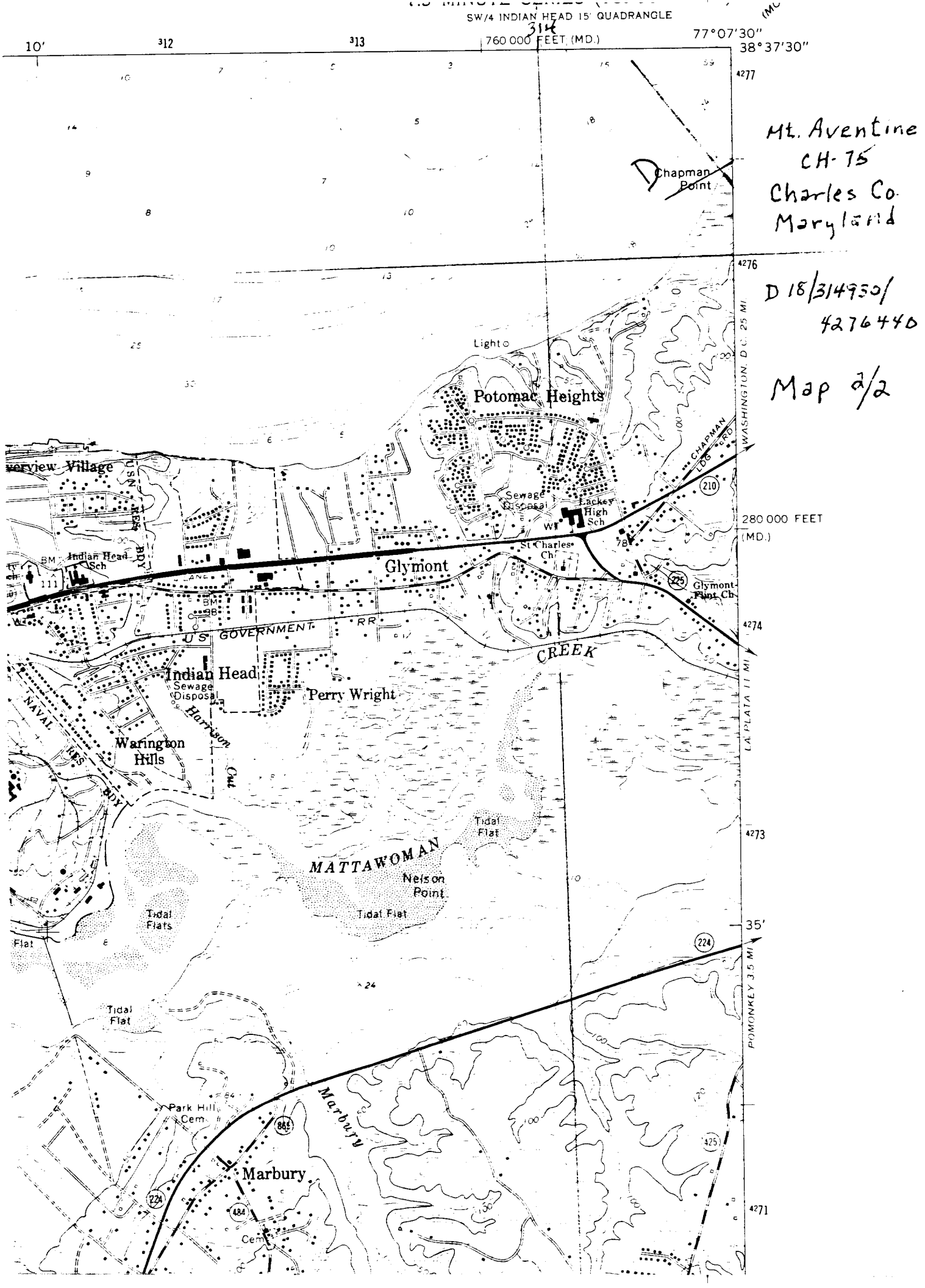
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MOUNT AVENTINE
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 51



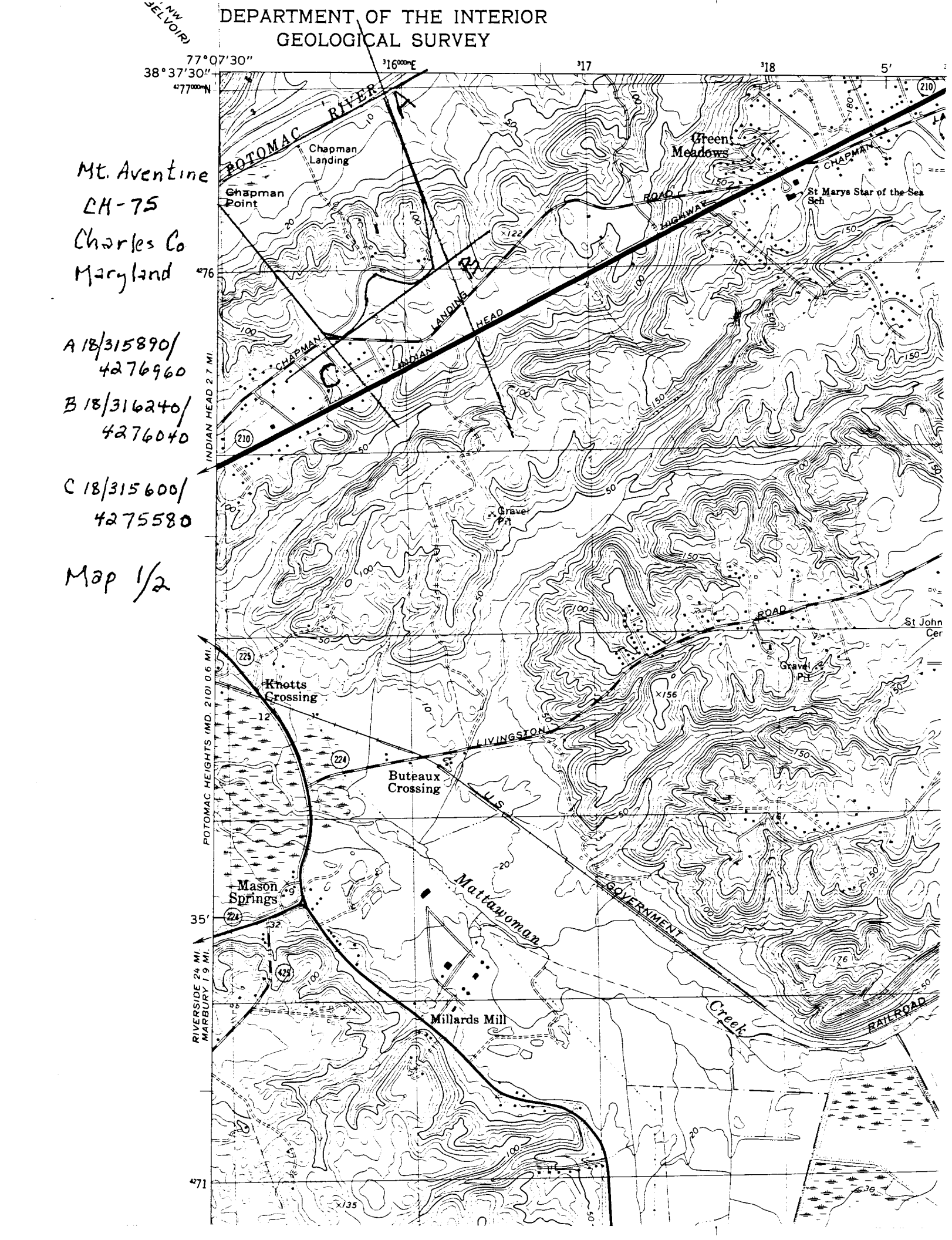
an eighteenth century plat showing the approximate location of the first house



Mt. Aventine
CH-75
Charles Co.
Maryland

D 18/3149501/
4276440

Map 2/2



Mt. Aventine
LH-75
Charles Co
Maryland

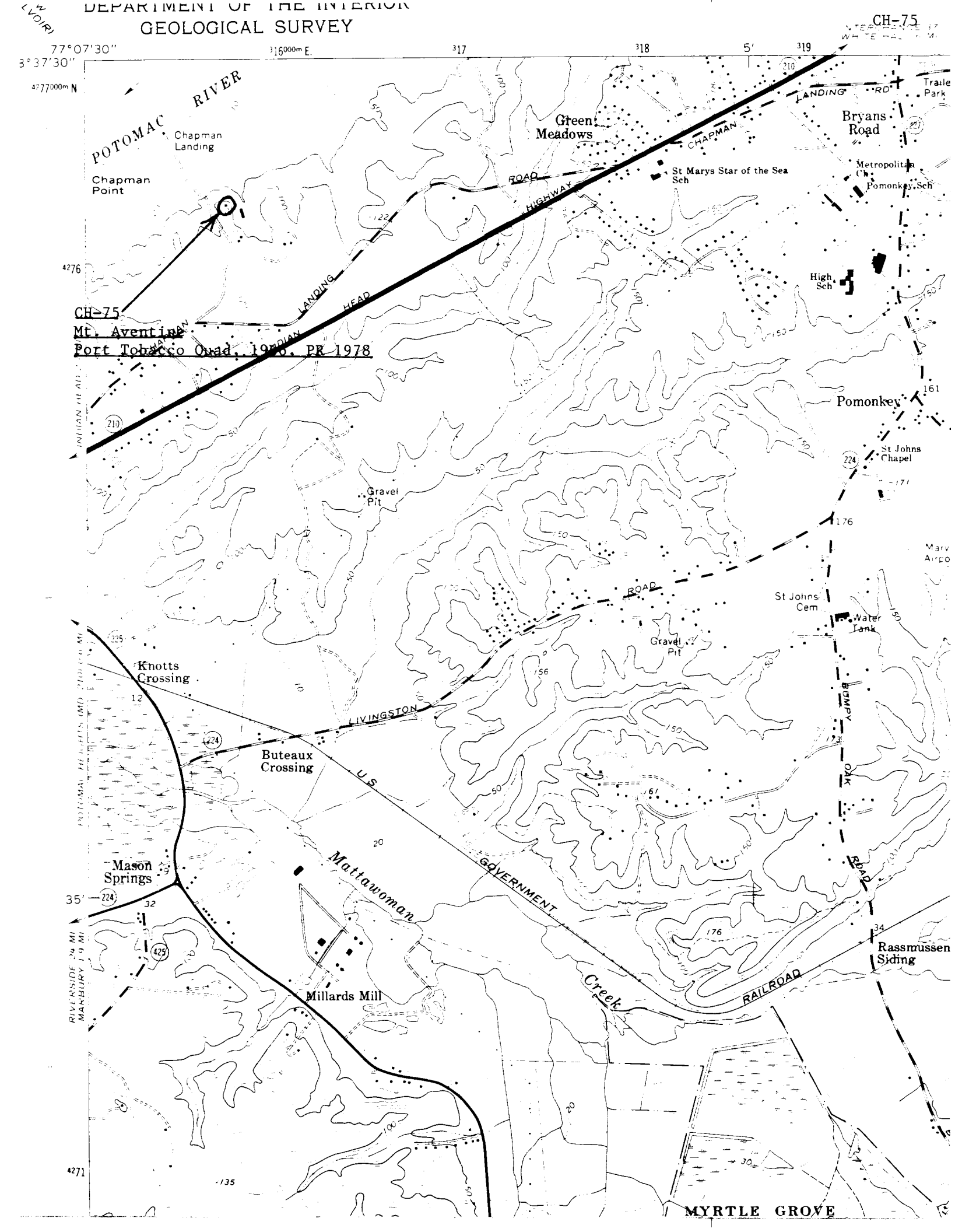
A 18/315890/
4276960

B 18/316240/
4276040

C 18/315600/
4275580

Map 1/2

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



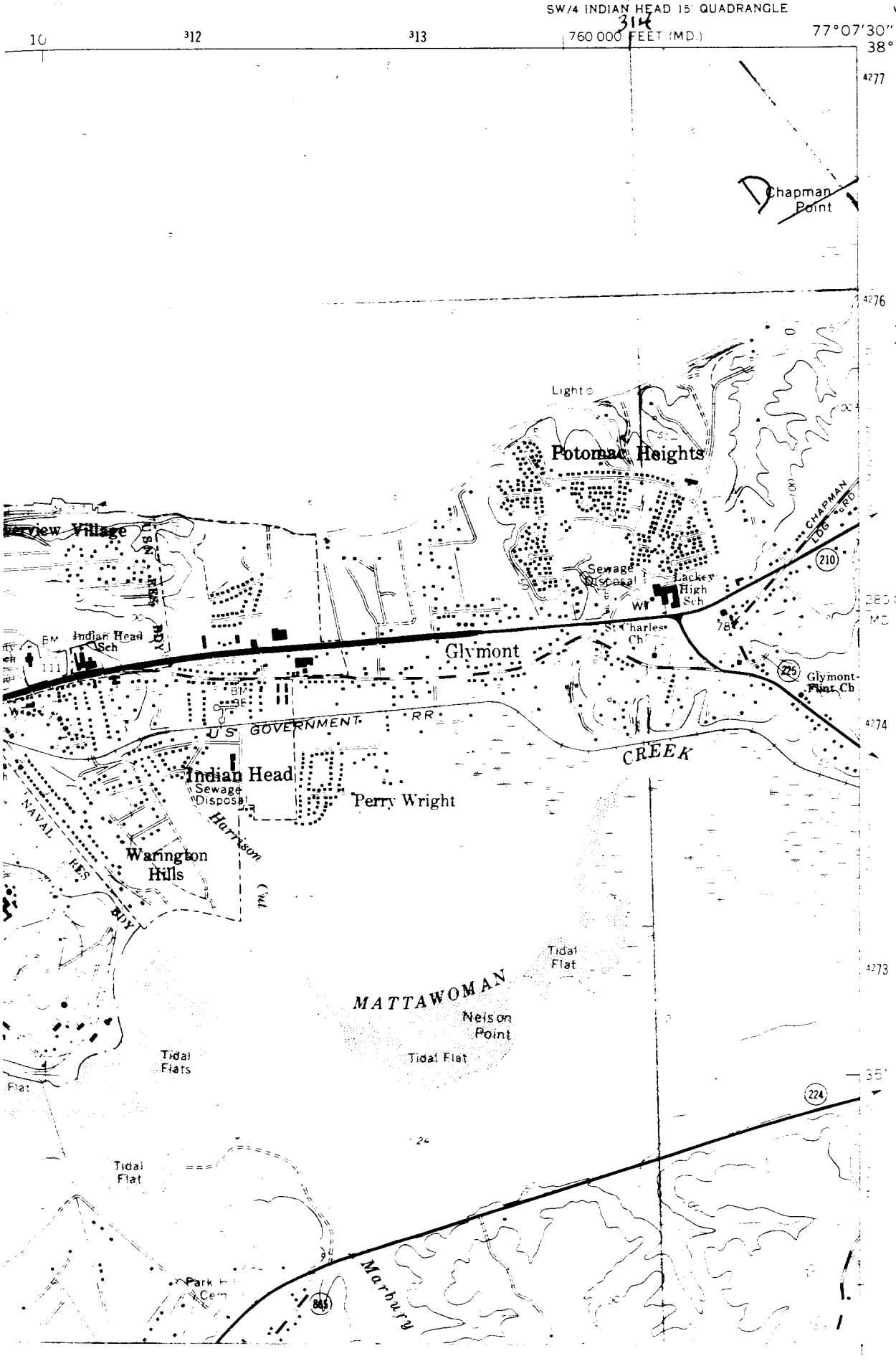
INDIAN HEAD QUADRANGLE
MARYLAND—VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SW/4 INDIAN HEAD 15' QUADRANGLE

556' II NE (MOUNT VERNON)

Mt. Aventine
CH-75
Charles Co
Maryland

D 18/314:50/
4276440

Map 9/2



Port Tobacco

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5561 II NW
(FORT BELVOIR)

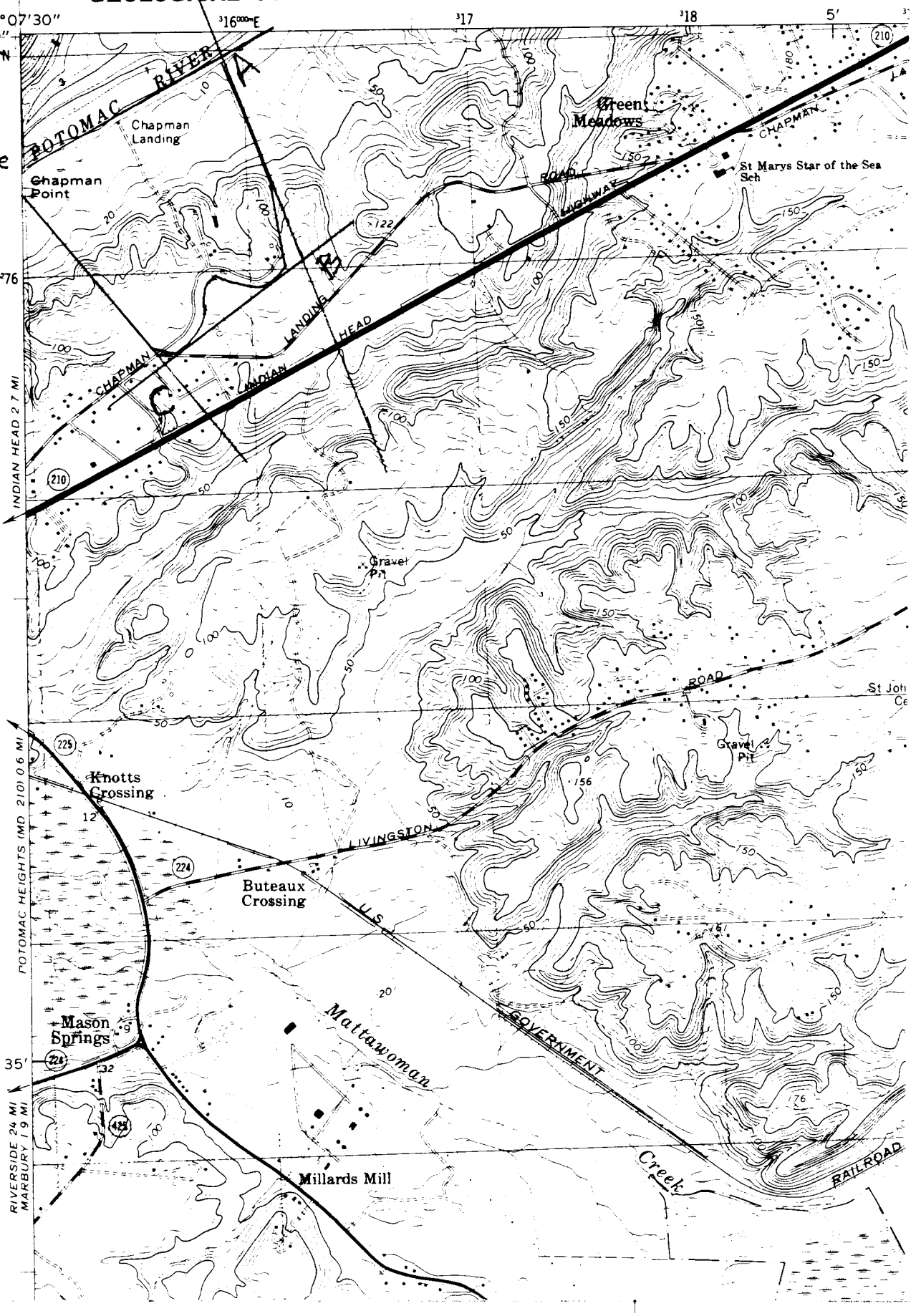
Mt. Aventine
CH-75
Charles Co
Maryland

A 18/315890/
4276960

B 18/316240/
4276040

C 18/315600/
4275580

Map 1/2



NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

CH-75

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 94001328 Date Listed: 4/18/96

Mt. Aventine — Charles — MD
Property Name: — County: — State:

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Carol D. Shull
Signature of the Keeper

4-18-96
Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

The nomination form justifies adding National Register Criterion A and settlement as an area of significance based upon the property's long association with the prominent Chapman family. The form is officially amended to add Criterion A and settlement as an area of significance.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)