OMB No. 10024-0018

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form may also be used for entering properties into the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and the Maryland Register of Historic Properties.

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name THE HERMITAGE

other names/site number CH-47

2. Location

street & number Washington Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town La Plata ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code ____ county Charles code ____ zip code 27601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 6-17-98

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

THE HERMITAGE | CH-47 | Cha[illegible]s Co, Md.

Name of Property | site/inventory number | County and

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
7	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/outbuildings
AGRICULTURE/fields

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/outbuildings
AGRICULTURE/fields

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY
Late Federal

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls asbestos cement shingles
roof tin
other chimneys: brick
trim: wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

PLACE NARRATIVE ON CONTINUATION SHEETS

THE HERMITAGE — Name of Property | CH-47 — site/inventory number | Ch. s Co., MD — County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] **B** removed from its original location.
- [ ] **C** a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] **D** a cemetery.
- [ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] **F** a commemorative property.
- [ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

1847
1870-1948

Significant Dates

1847
1870
1912

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- [x] State Historic Preservation Office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [x] Other

Name of repository:

Southern Md. Studies Center
La Plata, Md.

THE HERMITAGE | CH-47 | Charles Co., MD.
Name of Property | site/inventory number | County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 22.28 acres

UTM References La Plata, MD quadrangle
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	327320	4266930
2	18	327420	4266920
3	18	327410	4266540
4	18	327250	4266480
5	18	327180	4266720

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Richard Rivoire

organization _____ date June 15, 1997

street & number 528 E. Jones Street telephone (919) 821-5992

city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27601

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items Floor plans
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Miss Mary Clare Matthews and Mrs. Miriam Matthews Cappers

street & number Post Office Box 176 telephone (301) 934-8950

city or town La Plata state MD. zip code 20646

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Set amid 22 acres of tree-lined meadows and approached by a long, private, graveled drive, The Hermitage is a prominent and highly visible landmark bordered on the north, east and west sides by major thoroughfares as well as commercial and residential properties, and on the south by the Charles County government complex. A two-story, three-bay frame dwelling with a dormered gable roof and distinguished by a pair of brick, exterior chimneys at one end and a deep wraparound veranda, the house was built about 1847 for Major George W. Matthews, a lawyer and farmer. Although retaining the basic architectural styling, side-passage floor plan and interior finishes of the original structure, extensive improvements were made between 1911 and 1918 by F. Brooke Matthews, a locally prominent businessman and political figure. This work included additions to the west and north sides, the veranda, a one-story bay window between the two chimneys, the dormers and the existing exterior finishes. When the principal portion of the house was built it stood in the near center of a 508-acre farm where the Matthews family raised tobacco, grain crops and cattle. Nearly all of the town of La Plata lying north of Charles Street (Md. Rte. 6) occupies land that was once part of the Matthews' farm. Today, vestiges of the land's original use survive in its open fields where a few head of cattle still graze, a small complex of barns and sheds a short distance north of the house, and a former meat house that is now used for storage. The meat house and at least one of the three barns appear to be contemporary with the house while all of the other buildings date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The lands that once comprised The Hermitage continued to be reduced in size through the 1940s but the house has had no significant changes made to it since about 1918. The house retains many of its original furnishings and continues to be owned and occupied by the Matthews family.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Built on an east-west axis and facing south, the house is a two-story, three-bay frame structure whose most dominant exterior features are its deep, wraparound veranda and paired brick chimneys at one end. The principal portion of the house was built about 1847 and its basic form is not much different from when it was built. Originally, the house was clapboarded and the roof wood shingled, finishes that remain preserved beneath later coverings. The paneled entry door, framed by a transom and sidelights, appears to be contemporary with the building's construction, as do the trim and doublehung sashes of the first-floor, second-floor and gable windows. The building's original side-passage double-parlor plan - a room arrangement repeated on the second-floor and attic levels - remains intact. These spaces retain their original finishes, including plastered walls and ceilings, pine flooring, window and door trim, doors and baseboards. An open-string stair, rising in two flights to the second floor from the northwest corner of the first-floor hall, is also an original feature All of the interior woodwork is machine made and its stylistic simplicity typical of the period in this locality. All of the woodwork, and probabl even the framing timbers, were likely purchased in Baltimore or Washington, shipped by water to a nearby landing and transported by wagon to the site. Equally probable is that the actual construction and finish work was executed by a Baltimore building contractor, as has been proven to have been the case with many of the more distinguished historic houses built in this locality in the two or three decades preceding the Civil War.

From 1852 until 1870 all expenditures relating to the maintenance of the house and land fell under the jurisdiction of the county court, so it is unlikely that any significant changes were made to the property during this period. The historical record also indicates the likelihood that the house received only necessary repairs through the opening decade of the twentiethy century.

In 1918, upon the death of George W. Matthews, Jr., the property passed in ownership to F. Brooke Matthews who by then had been occupying the house for several years and who had already initiated extensive repairs and other improvements. This work included the existing metal shingles of the roof, the two gable-fronted dormers on the south side of the house, and the existing wraparound veranda, the last incorporatin what appears to be a fragment of the roof of a small gable-roofed porch that originally sheltered the front door. A portion of the veranda's west leg was enclosed to provide a small private apartment for George W. Matthews, Jr. Two other additions were also made to the house: the

existing two-story, two-bay rear wing and the bay window between the two end chimneys of the main block. The rear wing, constructed over a full cellar, was built as a kitchen-service wing and undoubtedly replaced what would have been the original detached or semi-detached kitchen. The bay window joining the two east chimneys was built as a private study for Mrs. Matthews; it was later used as a telephone alcove/office. Once all of the external changes were completed the exterior walls of the original structure and its addition were clad in interlocking, diamond patterned, asbestos-cement shingles.

Changes to the interior of the house contemporary with its exterior rehabilitation were not quite so extensive. A door, which probably replaced a former window, was installed in the first-floor hall to give access to the enclosed portion of the veranda at the west end of the house, and another doorway provided in the east wall of the north dining room opens onto the alcove created by the bay window. At the second-floor level, the north bedroom was partitioned to provide a separate passage accessing the second floor of the rear wing from the main stair. It was also about this time that the fireplaces of the four principal rooms were enlarged. The existing mantels appear to be contemporary with this work but may in fact be altered versions of the original mantels, which would have been of a similarly straight-forward design. Brooke Matthews' rehabilitation of the house also included a coal-fired hot water heating system, electricity and interior plumbing, the last confined to the kitchen-service wing.

Beyond up-dating the heating, electrical and plumbing systems and associated fixtures, and enclosing the north portion of the veranda accessed from the first-floor hall, no noteworthy changes have been made to the house since about 1918.

Other buildings on the property include an early but somewhat altered meat house which stands directly off the north end of the rear wing of the house. A clapboarded frame structure with a pyramid roof, this building is at least contemporary with the circa 1847 house, if not older, as suggested by its adzed framing members, joinery and wrought fasteners. Now used for storage, the building has undergone some modifications in recent years but none of them significant enough to alter its overall integrity. An enclosed, lean-to shed on its west side employs many early framing timbers but has been so extensively repaired that its cannot be determined whether or not it is in fact an early appendage. A short distance to the west of this building are two small sheds built as chicken houses. Both date from the mid-1900s. Arranged in an ell-shaped configuration northeast of the house are

two tobacco barns and a former granary, the last enlarged by sheds for storing corn and protecting farm implements and machinery. The granary and its sheds, and the closest of the two tobacco barns, appear to date from the late nineteenth century or very early twentieth century. The other tobacco barn, which sits furthest from the house, is probably contemporary with the circa 1847 portion of the house, as evidenced by its hewn timbers and adzed scantling, joinery and fasteners. Its sheds have been reworked numerous times, but these appear to replace early if not original sheds. Areas of this building have been partitioned to house livestock, which continue in use.

There are no early landscaping features on the property, nor readily discernable features indicative of former building sites or other early man-made features beyond that of traces of old fence lines and hedgerows, and possibly the entrance drive.

The perimeter of the property is lined by trees that for most of the year screen the property from surrounding development. These natural and gently undulating buffers serve to protect the physical and visual integrity of the site.

RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

The property known today as The Hermitage is all that remains of a 508-acre tract of the same name purchased at auction in 1844 by Major George W. Matthews.[1] The land had formerly been part of the dwelling plantation of Nicholas Stonestreet of La Grange (NR) who died intestate in 1837 .[2] Stonestreet, a wealthy and socially prominent attorney, had purchased the land in 1827 from Charles Sewall III and it was he who gave the property the name The Hermitage.[3] The 508 acres of The Hermitage actually consisted of a number of individual contiguous tracts previously known by their patent names. The largest of these parcels, and the one on which George Matthews built the present house, was 300 acres known as Goodrick's Rest. Part of a 600-acre tract patente by George Goodrick, Gent. (?-1676) in 1661, this property became by the 1730s the nucleus of one of the largest and most extensively developed of the county's eighteenth-century plantations.[4] Created by purchases, inheritances and patents, the property was the dwelling plantation of George Goodrick's grandson, Francis Goodrick, Jr., Gent. (? - 1745), who was in turn the great-grandfather of Charles Sewall III.[5] The Goodrick-Sewall plantation included all of the land now occupied by the town and county seat of La Plata, and the 300 acres of Goodrick's Rest, on part of which the present house stands, was continuously occupied by the Goodrick-Sewall family from the 1660s until 1827.[6]

The land called The Hermitage that George Matthews purchased was bounded on three sides by historic roadways: on the south by the old Port Tobacco - Bryantown Road, now known as Maryland Route 6 (and as Charles Street in the town of La Plata); on the east by the Old Piscataw Road (now Kent Avenue); and on the north by a colonial-era trail known today as Maryland Route 225. On the west the land the land was bounded by the estate known as La Grange. The site Matthews chose for his house

was prominently visible and easily accessible from near the junction of the Piscataway and Port Tobacco - Bryantown roads, both of which were among the county's most trafficked thoroughfares, just as they had been during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[7] It is quite likely that the site Matthews chose had also been the site of several generations of dwelling houses the Goodricks and Sewalls are known to have built on this land.[8] In an 1840 appraisal of the lands comprising The Hermitage the property was said to have been improved by "an overseer's house, 36 by 20 feet [and] lately repaired," a corn house, a log meat house, two barns and "three quarters for servants, each about 14 by 22 feet in good order."[9] The house standing in 1840 was probably the former Sewall home, and the existing meat house, which appears to be earlier than the present, ca.1847 dwelling, may have been built to replace the log meat house before Matthews' purchase of the property.

Major George W. Matthews, a local attorney and scion of one of the county's oldest and most historically notable families, was born at Mt. Air (NR) in 1798.[10] He probably continued to live at Mt. Air until his marriage in 1843 to Ann Amanda Davis, and afterward at Port Tobacco (NR) where his law office was located. Shortly after his purchase of The Hermitage was recorded he set about building a new home and making other improvements to the property, and by 1847 was occupying the house.[11] Major Matthews, who appears to have enjoyed the life of farmer over that of lawyer, did not live long enough to implement any long range goals he may have envisioned for The Hermitage, however. He died on New Year's Day, 1852, leaving a relatively young widow, five sons under the age of 8, and a sixth son who was born posthumously.[12] Major Matthews, though highly respected by his colleagues, lived a rather quiet and modest lifestyle compared to all of the other attorneys who practiced in the county at that time. The inventory of his personal estate shows the house to have been comfortably furnished, with many of the same pieces of furniture and accessories itemized in the 1852 inventory remaining in the house to this day. Matthews' estate included 11 slaves who probably occupied the quarters standing on the farm in 1840, farm tools and equipment, and livestock. Tobacco and grains appear to have been the principal crops raised. The total appraised value of Matthews personal estate was just under $7,500., with the value of the slaves constituting nearly two-thirds that amount.[13]

Since George Matthews died intestate his estate was administered by the county Orphan's Court until his sons attained majority. The 1850s, and the decade following the Civil War, during which the county suffered a devastating economic depression and widespread social apathy, must have been exceedingly difficult for George Matthews' widow. The farm continued to be cultivated by the Matthews' slaves until they were emancipated, and after the war by hired laborers and sharecroppers. It is exceedingly unlikely that any significant improvements were made to the house or property during this period, and quite probably the opposite: fields left fallow and gradually overgrown and non-essential farm buildings allowed to go to ruin. However difficult these years were for George Matthews' widow, she did survive, whereas many of her neighbors did not.[14]

By 1870 four of George and Amanda Matthews' sons had attained majority, and in that year the family made their first known sale of part of The Hermitage. This was a right-of-way through the easternmost part of the property to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, who planned to run a rail line through the county, north-to-south, connecting the river landings at Pope's Creek to rail lines running between Baltimore and Washington.[15] The Matthews' land was of particular importance to the railroad for it allowed them convenient public access from the junction of two of the county's principal thoroughfares in the very center of the county. The Matthews' conveyance of the right-of-way and the subsequent opening of the rail line had a tremendous impact on what then was an isolated, economically stagnant and socially provincial region, surpassing any other event in its history and seconded only by construction of Crain Highway/ U. S. 301 and the Harry Nice Memorial Bridge/Potomac River Bridge in this century. A second sale of land by the Matthews family was to have more immediate significance, both on the Matthews family and the fledging crossroads settlement by then known as La Plata. This was the conveyance of an additional parcel of land to the railroad on which the latter built a station house and ancillary supporting structures.[16] The rail station still stands and in recent years was renovated for use as a town museum.

In 1872 the Matthews' second youngest son, William, died.[17] Shortly after this event Amanda Matthews and her five surviving sons entered into an agreement for the division of The Hermitage. Since Major Matthews estate had not been formally settled before William's death, and since William died intestate, unmarried and without issue, whatever share he might have been entitled to reverted to the estate. Before an actual survey of division and legally binding agreement for the division of The Hermitage was filed, Henry Matthews, the youngest of the brothers,

died at age 22 of consumption.[18] Three weeks later, in November 1873, the Matthews had a survey of division made of The Hermitage. Equitable distribution of the farm was complicated by its binding on two major public roads, and direct access to the railroad. Land immediately bordering the Old Piscataway Road and the Port Tobacco - Bryantown Road were divided into lots ranging from less than one-acre to 20 acres, a clear indication that a town in this location was being envisioned, even if its actual existence was to be another decade in the making. These were the most valuable parcels to be considered in the division, necessitating a distribution of outright ownership of some lots and percentage interests in others assigned to each of the heirs. In dividing the estate, Amanda Matthews was awarded the house and about 114 acres as her dower right, with the same to pass to her third eldest son, George W. Matthews, Jr., upon her death. This land was bordered by the Port Tobacco - Bryantown Road to the south, and was intersected by present-day Washington Avenue, the original entrance lane to the house from the Port Tobacco - Bryantown Road. The agreement for division and the actual deeds by which interest rights in the various parcels were relinquished and established were not formally recorded until 1876.[19] In the interim, one additional sale was made by the family of a part of their then jointly held property. This was 2½-acres identified as Railroad Lot #1, to Thomas R. Farrall in 1875. Shortly after his purchase of the land, Farrall moved his mercantile establishment and his residence from Port Tobacco, the county seat and center of local commerce and communication located about three miles southwest, to a new store and detached residence he erected on the lot acquired from the Matthews. Farrall's move of home and business to the La Plata crossroads marked the first significant step in establishing La Plata as a viable alternative to Port Tobacco as county seat.[20]

In 1876 the Matthews agreement for the division of The Hermitage was recorded together with a complex series of deeds and transfers establishing individual ownership rights. The two eldest sons, Thomas and Gerard sold most of their holdings within a few years of settling the estate. The third surviving son, George Matthews, Jr., continued to live at The Hermitage with his mother. He, too, began selling off some of the lots bordering the Piscataway Road, probably to help support what remained of the farm.[21]

The 1876 division of The Hermitage, and the subdivision of building lots bordering the two public roads to the east and south, coincided with increased public dissatisfaction with the by-then decaying colonial-era county seat of Port Tobacco. Once one of the most important port towns on the eastern seaboard, the river that was once its lifeblood had long

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Hermitage is significant under Criterion A for its association with the development of the town of La Plata, the seat of Charles County. The area was effectively settled in the 1840s by Major George W. Matthews, a farmer and attorney, for whom the house was built ca. 1847; through the subdivision of the original 508-acre parcel associated with the Hermitage, beginning in 1870 and continuing through the 1940s, the Matthews family promoted the founding and development of La Plata and the relocation of the seat of Charles County government from Port Tobacco. The Hermitage also is significant under Criterion C for its architectural character, as a well-preserved example of a traditional building type (the side-passage, double-pile dwelling with paired exterior chimneys) which characterized the domestic architecture of Southern Maryland in the antebellum period; subsequent alterations, reflecting its evolution through the early 20th century, have not significantly affected the integrity of the house. The property gains additional interest through the survival of a variety of secondary structures and the retention of a substantial rural acreage; these elements recall the character of the La Plata area prior to the town's intensive 20th-century growth.

ago silted in, forcing the relocation of its once busy wharves further and further down river. Having been bypassed by the railroad by some three miles to the east, and considered now too remote from the river landings to be practical, Port Tobacco was little more than a ghost of its former self, almost solely dependent on the courthouse for its survival. The issue of relocating the courthouse became a bitterly contested debate that lasted through the 1880s and early 1890s, by which time La Plata had grown to such an extent that it became the most favored alternative. The issue was not settled until 1892 when the Port Tobacco courthouse burned to the ground under "mysterious circumstances," thus effectively removing Port Tobacco's only basis for arguing against relocation of the county seat. In 1894 the state legislature passed a bill granting approval for the relocation of the county seat to La Plata. The site that was selected for the new courthouse and jail was a portion of a 20-acre parcel that was part of the 112 acres allotted to Anne Amanda Matthews as the widow's dower in the division of The Hermitage which she and her son, George Matthews, Jr., sold to local businessman Adrian Posey in 1887.[23] The courthouse and jail were completed in 1897 on a lot bordering the west side of the entrance lane to the Matthews' home. The original, Victorian-style brick courthouse is now totally encased within extensive additions made in the 1950s and 1970s; the adjacent jail remains much the same in appearance as when built.[24]

Ann Amanda Matthews, George Matthews' widow, lived at The Hermitage until her death in 1897.[25] After her death the house and about 94 acres surrounding it passed in ownership to George Matthews, Jr. George continued to farm the land while also occasionally selling off additional building lots, notably those lining the old entrance drive which by the 1910s had become one of the town's main streets, replacing that part of the Old Piscataway Road through town as the principal thoroughfare leadin north toward Washington.[26] Between 1897 and 1912 the town experienced rapid growth. Christ Episcopal Church, which stood adjacent to the former courthouse in Port Tobacco, was dismantled and re-erected immediately next to the new courthouse in 1906, again on land that had formerly been part of the Matthews' farm. In the same year, Adrian Posey built a large brick structure on the east side of the former entrance lane to The Hermitage to house the Southern Maryland National Bank. The church and the bank building still stand, as do many of the private residences that were built on lots that lined both sides of the old entrance to the farm.[27]

George Matthew wrote his will in 1907, devising a life estate in the house and remaining lands to his unmarried elder brother, Thomas. George's will provided that should Thomas marry and have issue the house and land would then pass to Thomas' children in fee simple, but if Thomas should die without issue the same was to pass in fee simple to the child or children of their cousin, Francis Brooke Matthews.[28] By 1910 Thomas was in rapidly declining health, and his death in 1913 "was not unexpected."[29] It was probably a combination of Thomas' age and ill health and his own advancing years that prompted George to convey to his cousin the property that would pass to the latter upon Thomas' death in accordance with George's will.[30] In 1911, F. Brooke Matthews initiated extensive repairs and additions to the house, including the existing siding, new roofing, the wrap-around veranda, the rear wing, front dormers and the bay window between the chimneys. The north end of the west leg of the veranda was enclosed to provide a small, private apartment for George. The Brooke Matthews family moved to The Hermitage in 1912, sharing meals and family activities with their cousin until his death in 1918 "of advanced age."[31]

In 1912, when F. Brooke Matthews moved with his wife and children to The Hermitage, he was already a well established and successful La Plata businessman and a rising figure in local politics. He had begun a mercantile establishment in the nearby communities of Lothair (now Faulkner) and at Brentland in 1890. In 1903 he was elected Register of Wills for Charles County, an office he held for six years. In 1905 he moved to the new and rapidly growing town of La Plata where he opened a farm implement store located on the north side of present-day Charles Street on one of the lots that had formerly been part of The Hermitage. Five years later, he entered into partnership with local businessman Bernard Howard and moved the establishment to a new and larger building in the center of town opposite the Southern Maryland National Bank Building. Trading as the Matthews-Howard Implement Company, the firm expanded its sales inventory to include household supplies and furnishings, stoves and hardware, as well as farm implements and machinery, buggies, carriages and harness. The same year the Matthews-Howard Implement Company was established, F. Brooke Matthews was elected treasurer of Charles County. In 1911, the year preceding his move to The Hermitage, he served as President of Town Commissioners and was instrumental in providing new and much needed services to the community.[32]

When F. Brooke Matthews moved his family to The Hermitage the household included his wife and seven of the ten children they would eventually have, as well as their cousin, George Matthews, Jr. The farm was cultivated by tenants, with corn and tobacco the principal crops. Live- was also raised, as well as chickens and vegetables for the family's use.[33] Over the next few years the landscape of what remained of the farm changed by sales of lots and construction of houses along Washington Avenue. At first widely scattered, the houses began taking on a more cohesive order, and soon the old lane leading to The Hermitage assumed the characteristics of a village street, in this instance lined by the town's more up-to-date versions of early twentieth-century vernacular and pattern-book architecture.[34]

In 1916 the Matthews-Howard Implement Company further expanded to include automobile sales and services, for which they constructed a three-story masonry block structure equipped with a platform life for raising both automobiles and farm machinery to service facilities located on the second and third floors. This was by far the largest and most modern structure built in La Plata in the first two decades of the twentieth century and contributed measurably to the town's status as the hub for commerce for the entire county.[35]

It was also in 1916 that Matthews attained a higher profile in county politics with his appointment as Clerk of the Circuit Court. The following year he volunteered for service on the local board of the Selective Service System, serving until 1919. In 1924 he was one of the principal organizers of the Charles County Fair, Inc., successor to the Charles County Agricultural Society, was elected the board's first president and director, and continued to be elected to that position for ten consecutive one-year terms. In 1927 he was appointed State Tobacco Inspector, serving four two-year terms, and in 1937 was named Charles County Roads Commissioner, a position he held for eight years. It was during Matthews' term as Roads Commissioner that Crain Highway became U. S. 301 and the Harry Nice Memorial Bridge built across the Potomac. Matthews maintained an active involvement in the local Democratic Central Committee and for many years was a director of the La Plata branch of the County Trust Company of Maryland. In 1936 the Matthews-Howard Implement Company closed, and for the last ten years of his life Matthews involved himself in the real estate business.[36]

Throughout his long and extraordinarily active life in business and politics, Matthews remained committed to his Catholic faith, the affairs of the Catholic Church, and the local Catholic community, just as had all of those who had lived on the land historically known as Goodrick's Rest and later as The Hermitage since 1661. Although the family had traditionally attended mass at St. Thomas Manor - St. Ignatius Church (NR) since its founding in 1667, Brooke Matthews played a prominent role in establishing the first Catholic Church in La Plata - Sacred Heart on St. Mary's Avenue - of which his brother, Rev. James Brent Matthews, S.J., was the first rector.[37]

F. Brooke Matthews, arguably the one individual who had the most impact on La Plata in its first fifty years of growth, died at The Hermitage in 1948 at age 81, survived by his wife, Anne C. Matthews, and all but one of their ten children.[38] Anne Causin (Jones) Matthews continued to live at The Hermitage until her death in 1966, upon which the house and land passed in ownership to the surviving children of F. Brooke Matthews under the terms of the 1907 will of George Matthews, Jr.[39] A subsequent division and settlement of the estate left the house and 22 acres in the ownership of two of F. Brooke and Anne Matthews' daughters, Miss Mary Clare Matthews and Mrs. Miriam (Matthews) Cappers, who continue to occupy the property.[40]

ENDNOTES:

1. Charles County Equity Proceedings, WM#1, 1842-1850:483, etc.

   This history of The Hermitage culls salient facts from a broader, in-depth study of this property from the 1650s through to the present. The historical study, which was carried out over several years by the author of this nomination, shows this property to have had a most exceptional history of ownership, development and use, far more so than any single, privately owned historic site in the county heretofore accepted for listing in the National Register. The seventeenth and eighteenth century history of the land is only briefly summarized here since it is of only peripheral relevance to the present house and the events that occurred subsequent to its construction, and since no physical evidence survives that could be used to tangibly link this site to an earlier period. A copy of the narrative portion of this study will be filed with the Maryland Historical Trust. The complete report, including supporting documentation, is in the author's research collection at the Southern

Maryland Studies Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, (Mss 850088, Series IV: The Hermitage). The report is frequently cited in the following Endnotes as "Rivoire, pp. ."

2. Charles County Land Records (hereafter Deeds), IB#17:327.
3. The first reference to this land by the name The Hermitage appears in an 1840 survey of division of Stonestreet's estate. Similarly, before his purchase of the La Grange portion of his plantation that land had been known as Strawberry Hill. See Rivoire, p. 64, and J. Richard Rivoire, Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland (La Plata, Md.: Southern Maryland Studies Center, 1990), pp. 78-85.
4. Patents, 4:571, Annapolis. For a discussion of the Goodricks' plantation see Rivoire, pp. 18-27.
5. Ibid., Fig. 3.
6. Ibid., particularly pp. i-vii and 31-60.
7. The Piscataway Road was established by the Charles County Court to provide direct public access from the northern and southern parts of the county to the county courthouse, built in 1674 on a site about one-quarter mile from the southern boundary of Goodrick's Rest. The road has been realigned numerous times over the centuries, but traces of the original route still survive. The courthouse remained in use until 1727 when the county seat was moved to Port Tobacco. The Port Tobacco - Bryantown Road was a former Indian path that was later used to connect various properties in the immediate area, including parts of the Goodricks' original plantation. It became a public road after the 1740s. The road on the north side of the property was known in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as "Dodson's Path." The Piscataway and Port Tobacco - Bryantown roads played major roles throughout the history of this property and are extensively discussed and illustrated in the historical study cited above.
8. Rivoire, particularly pp. 15-16, 18, 24-27, 34, 45-46, 51 and 60.
9. Charles County Guardian Accounts, 1835-1847:387-388.
10. Matthews family papers, The Hermitage; 1850 Charles County Census.
11. The Matthews' third son, George, Jr., was born at The Hermitage in 1847 according to his 1918 obituary.
12. Port Tobacco Times, January 7 and March 3, 1852, and Matthews papers.
13. Charles County Inventories, 1852-1854:95-99.
14. For a broader discussion of this period see Rivoire, pp. 74-75; Homeplaces, p.28; Margaret Brown Klapthor, History of Charles County, Maryland (La Plata, Md.: Charles County Tercentenary, 1958), p. 136.

15. Deeds, BGS#1:336. For discussions of the history of the railroad see Klapthor, pp. 137-140 and John M. Wearmouth, La Plata, Maryland: 1888-1988 (La Plata, Md.: Town of La Plata, 1988), pp. 1-3.
16. Deeds, GAH#3:556.
17. Matthews family papers. William was living in Galveston, Texas, when he died.
18. Times, August 29, 1873.
19. Deeds, BGS#1: 294, 296-97, 336, etc.
20. Ibid., GAH#4:483; Times, February 19, 1875; Wearmouth, p. 3.
21. See Note 19 and Rivoire, pp.78-79.
22. See Klapthor, pp. 141-143; Wearmouth, pp. 3-7; J. Richard Rivoire, "Port Tobacco Historic District," National Register nomination form.
23. Deeds, JST#1:344.
24. Wearmouth, p. 7, 9.
25. Matthews family papers. See also Note 19.
26. Rivoire, pp. 79-93.
27. Ibid. See also Wearmouth, pp. 24-25, etc.
28. Charles County Wills, CND#20:104.
29. Matthews family papers.
30. This conveyance was probably more an agreement between the parties and not known to have been formally recorded. The terms of George Matthews' 1907 will remained in effect until his death.
31. Rivoire, pp. 80, 88; Times-Crescent, August 9, 1918.
32. Biographical material on F. Brooke Matthews supplied by the Matthews family. See also, Wearmouth, pp. 20, 23, 49, and Rivoire, pp. 85-90.
33. In 1986 three of F. Brooke Matthews' surviving daughters recorded their recollections of their childhood at The Hermitage (Oral History Project, Southern Maryland Studies Center).
34. Rivoire, p. 88.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., pp. 87-89.
37. Ibid., p. 89.
38. Times-Crescent, January 23, 1948.
39. Rivoire, p. 89.
40. Ibid.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING DATA

Geographic Organization:

Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Periods:

Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme:

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural
Village

Historic Functions and Uses: Domestic/Single Dwelling
Domestic/Secondary Structures
Agriculture/Outbuildings
Agriculture/Fields

Known Design Source: None

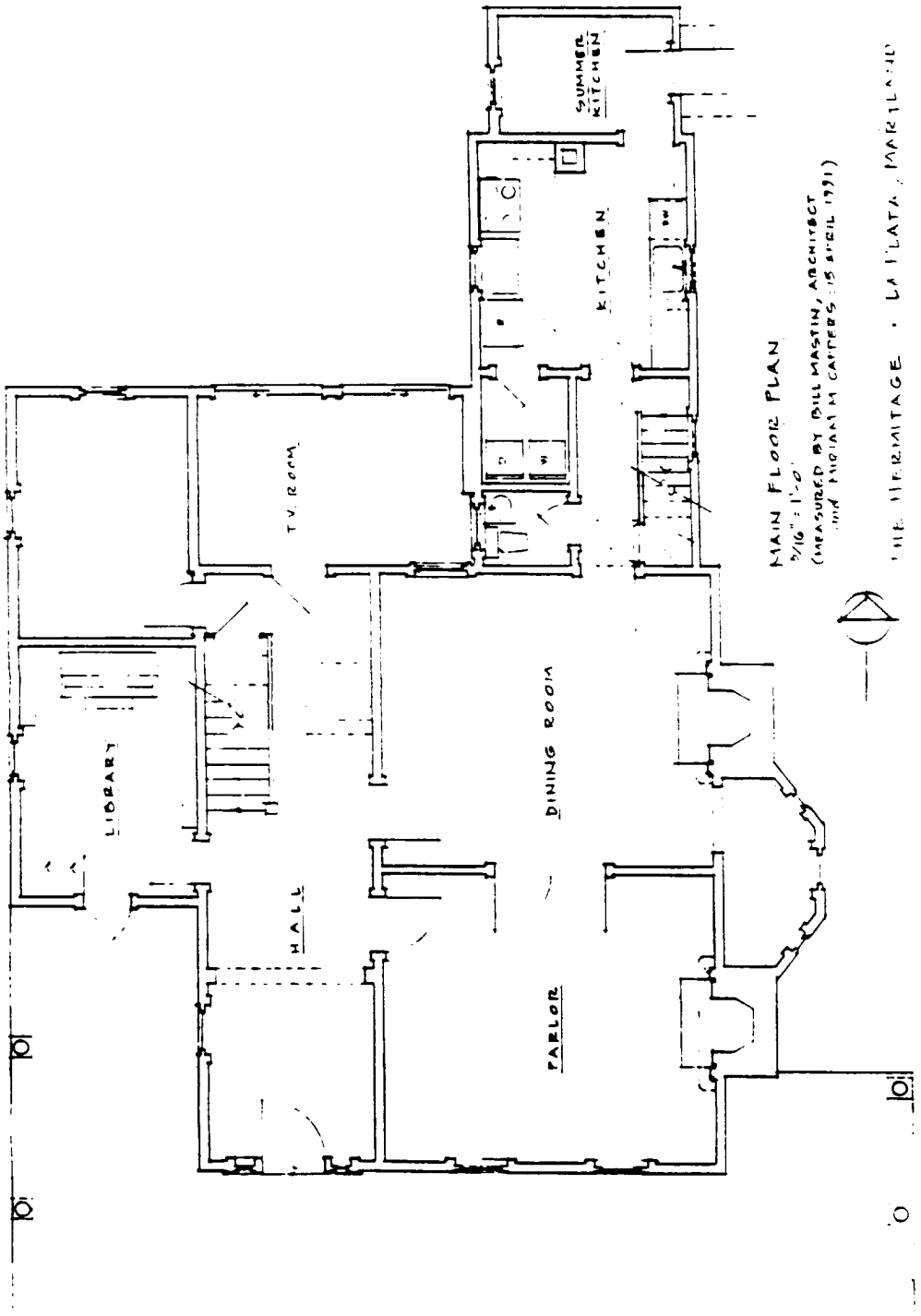
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the nominated property are recorded in Liber 444, folio 17 and Liber 475, folio 225 of the Charles County Land Records, Office of the Clerk of Court, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland, and are shown as Parcel 244 on Sheet 33-B, Charles County Tax Maps, Tax Assessor's Office, La Plata, Maryland.

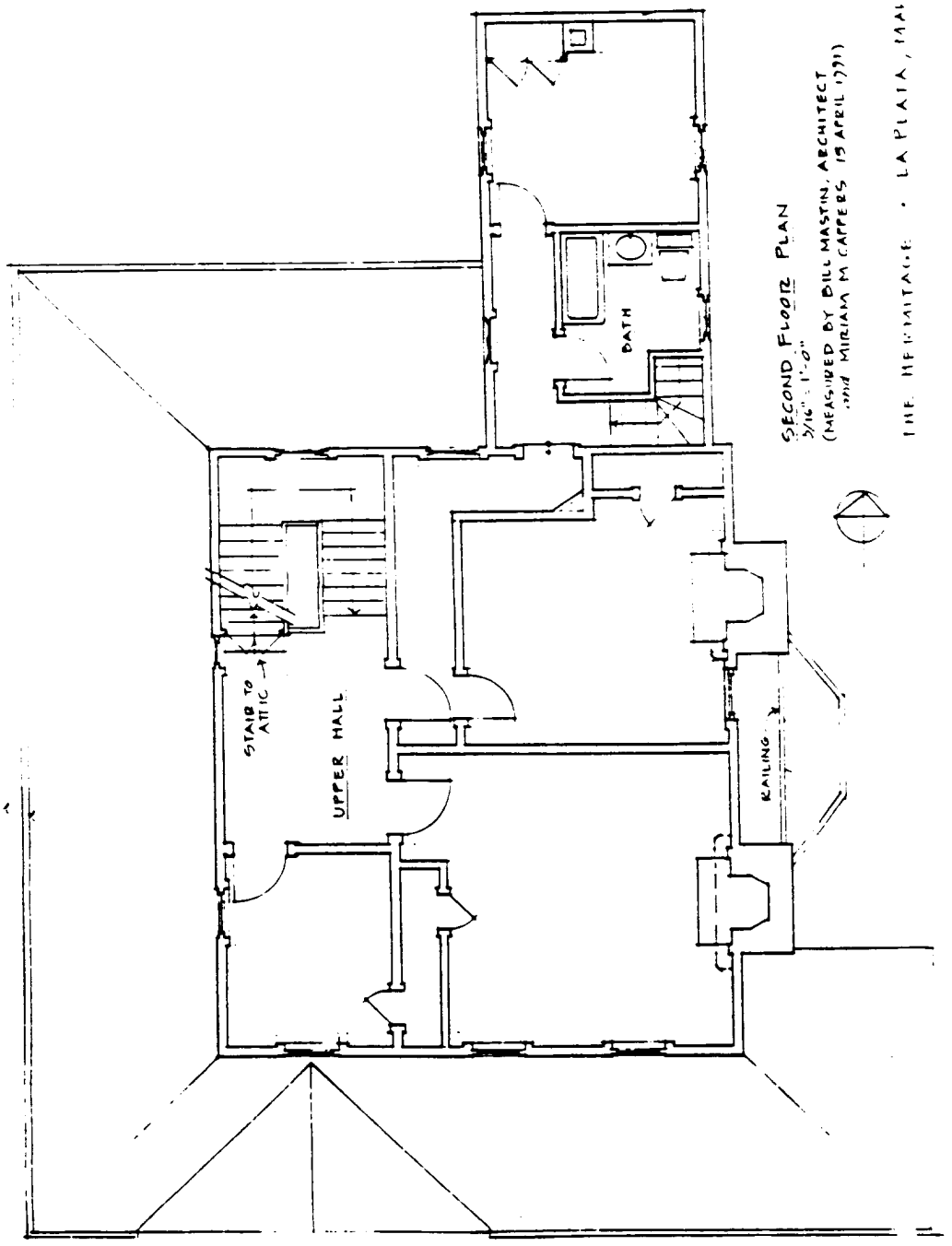
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property, 22.28 acres, comprises the house and other contributing elements within the remnant of the acreage historically associated with the resource. The property retains a high degree of integrity to the period of significance, and continues to reflect its historically rural character. The area outside these boundaries is characterized by mid- to late 20th century infrastructure improvements and residential, commercial, and institutional development.

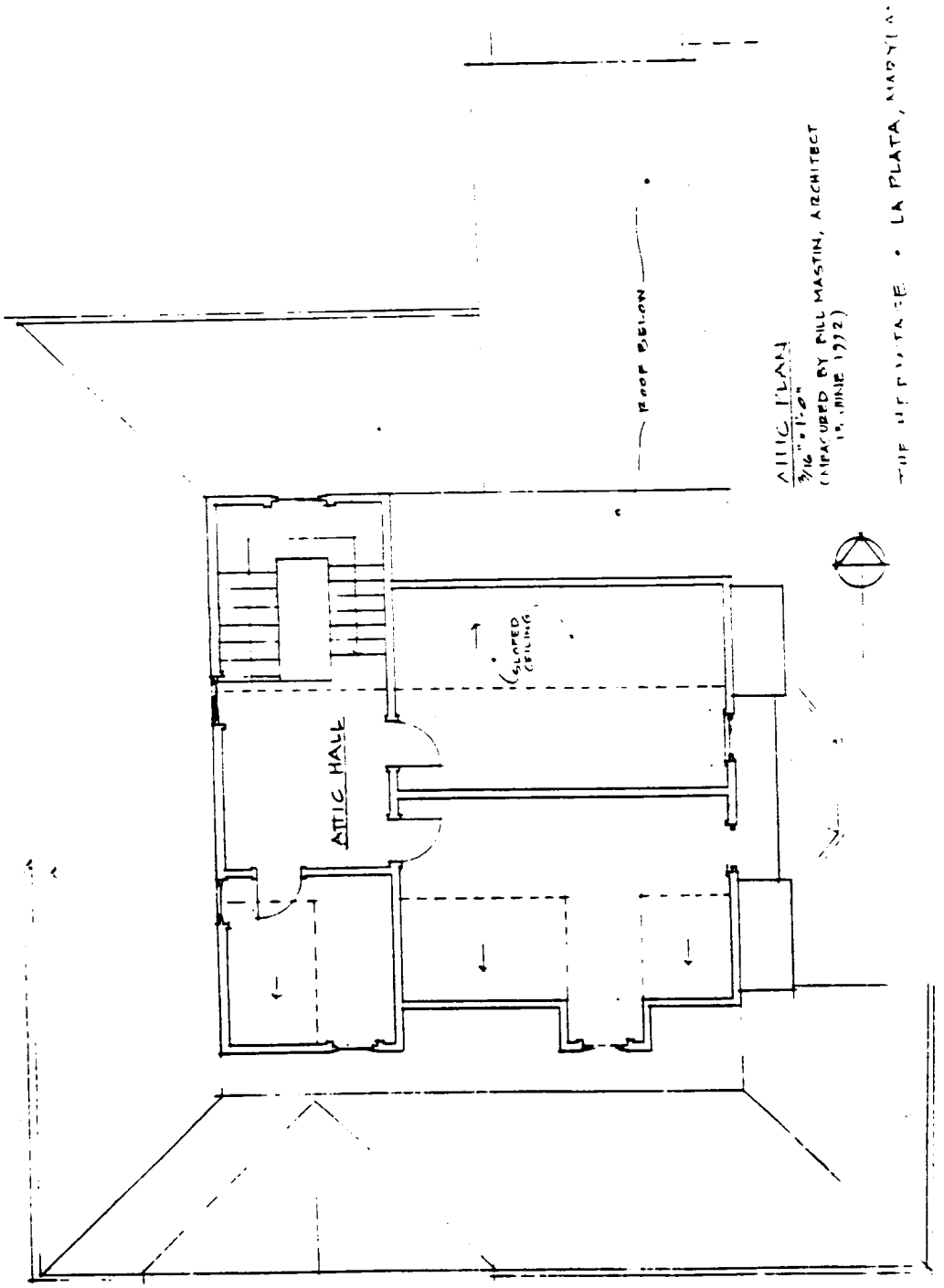
FIRST- FLOOR PLAN



SECOND-FLOOR PLAN



ATTIC PLAN


ROOF BELOW
ATTIC PLAN
3/16" = 1'-0"
(MEASURED BY BILL MASTIN, ARCHITECT
JUNE 1972)
SLOPED CEILING
ATTIC HALL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Registration Form: include in this title block the property name, county, and site/inventory number

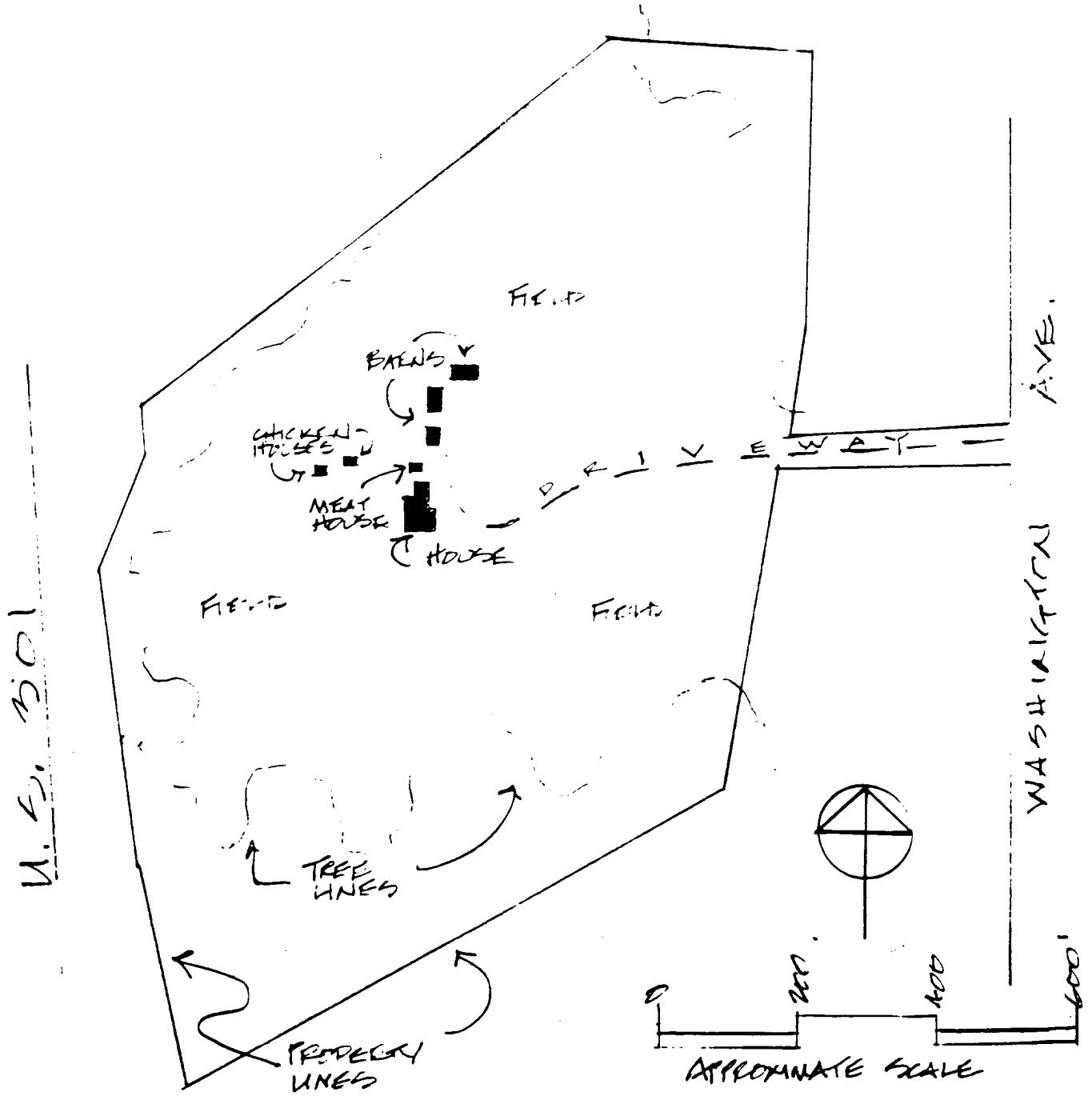
Multiple Property Documentation Form: include the name of the multiple property listing

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Hermitage
Charles
CH-47

Section number 7 Page 8

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP



CH-47
THE HERMITAGE
CHARLES CO., MD

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4266930

:18-327420-
4266920

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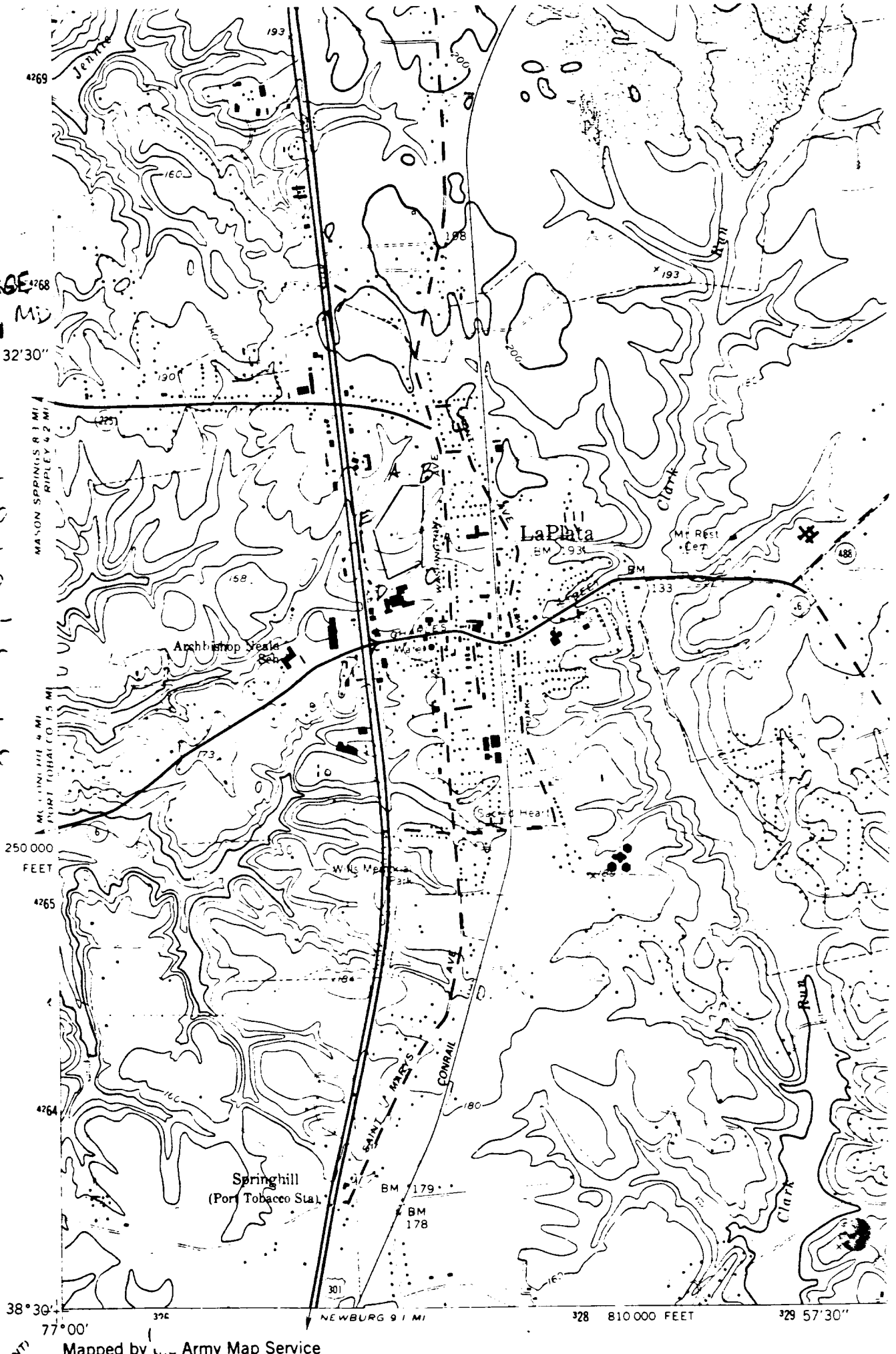
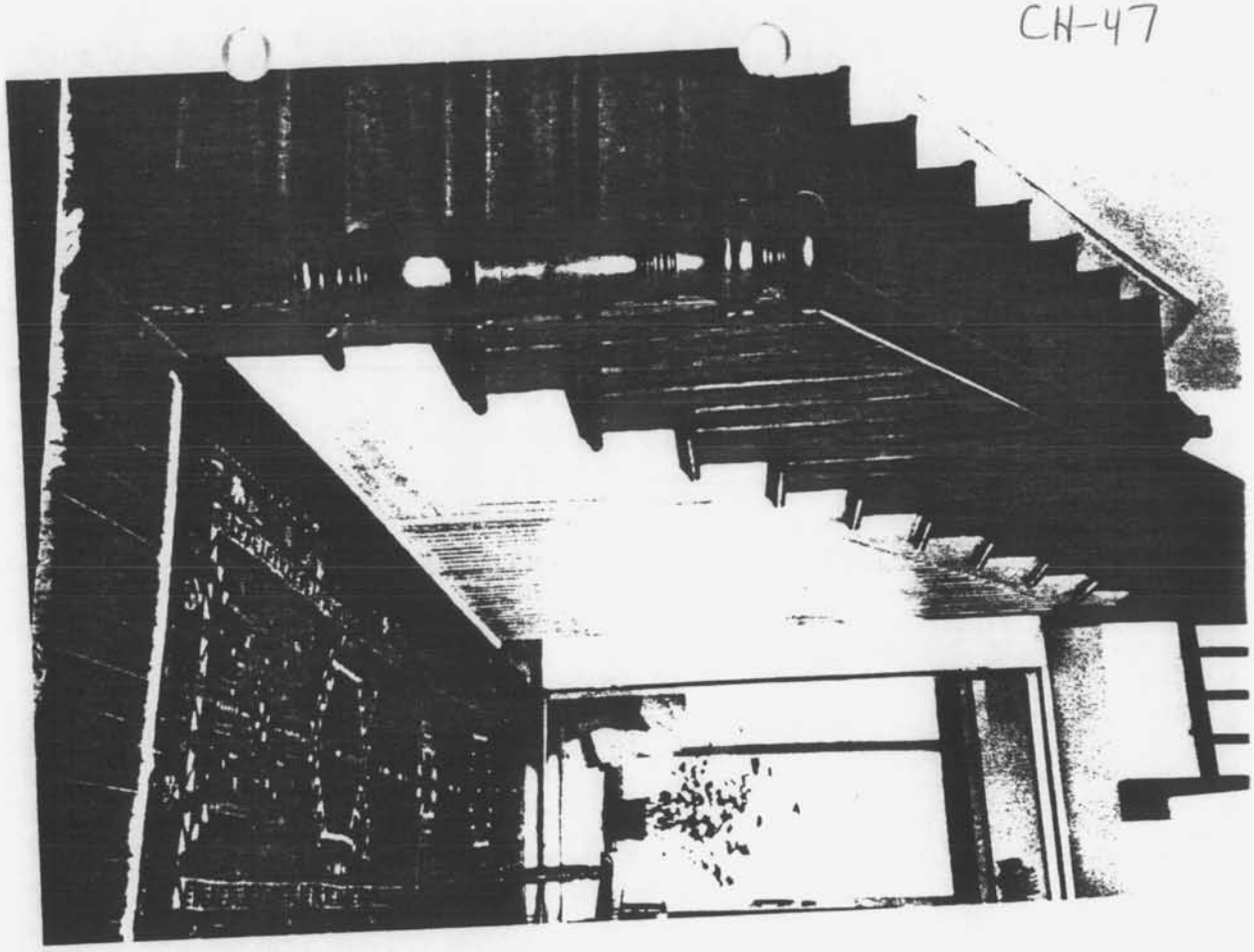
[illegible]540

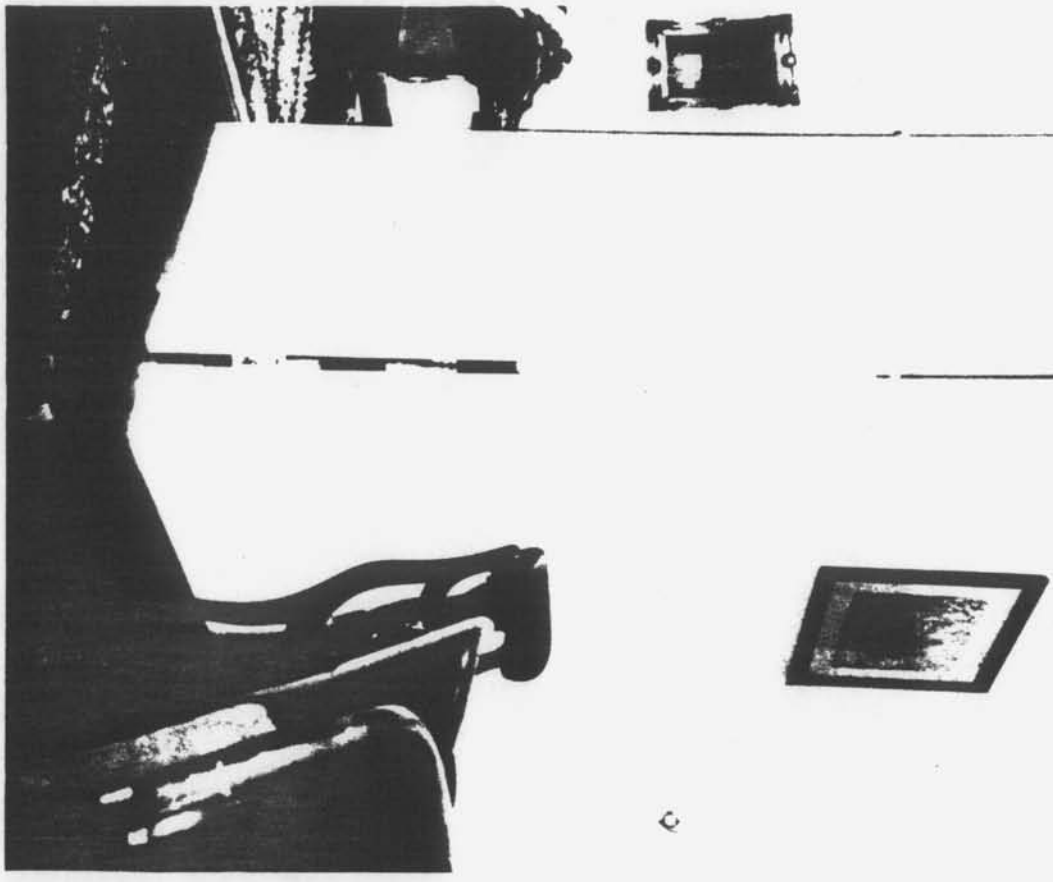
:18-3[illegible]1250-
[illegible]

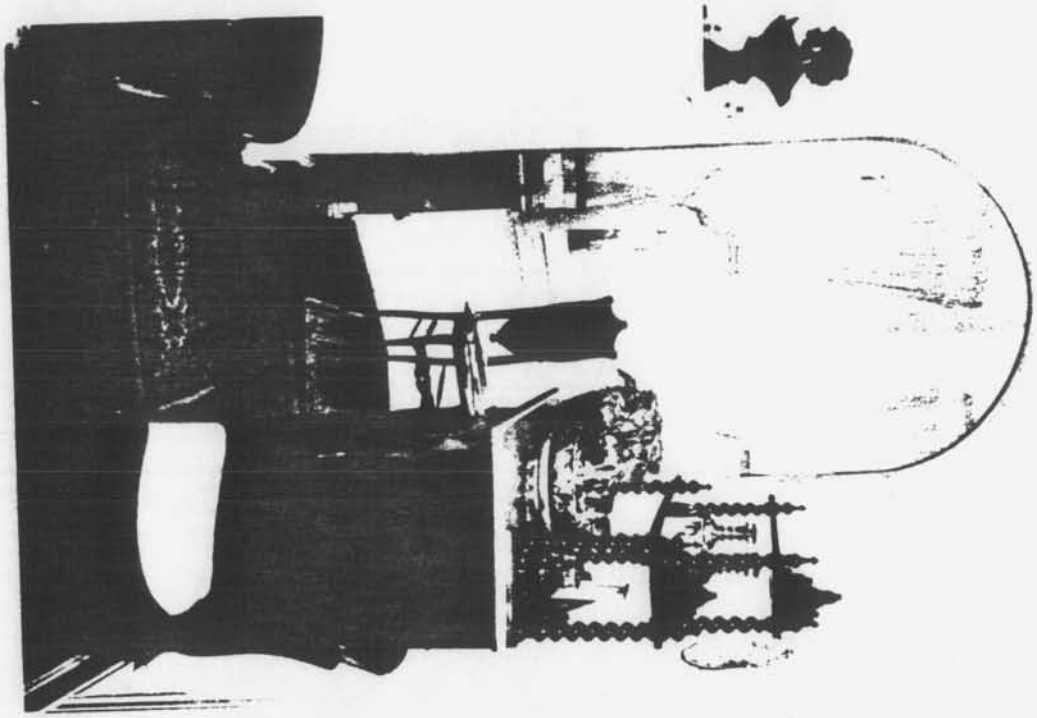
:18-3[illegible]180-
4[illegible]720

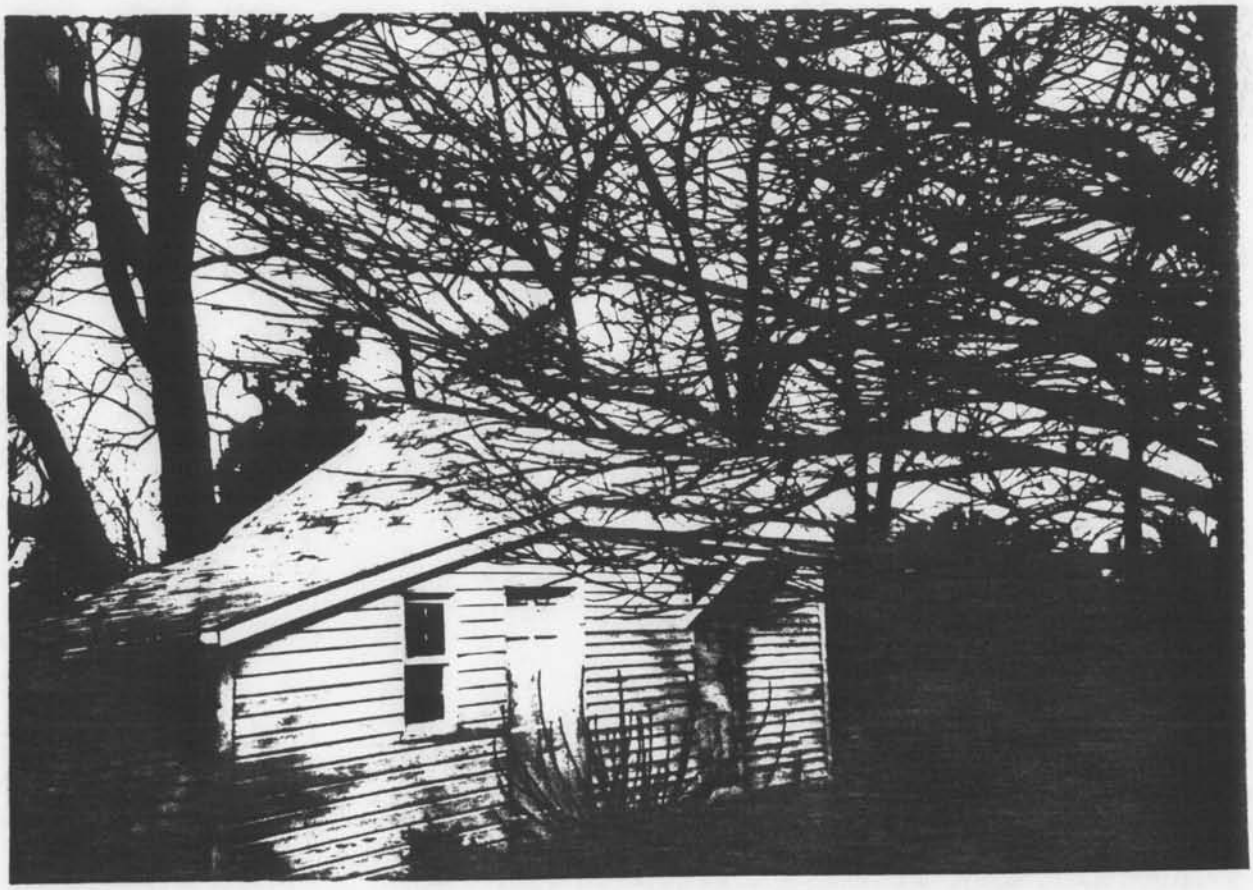


Mapped by the Army Map Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey









CH-47

Ch-47 R-44 P.68 63%

CHAS-47
THE HERMITAGE
View From S.E. J.R.Rivoire,'78

CHAS-47
THE HERMITAGE
View From S.W. J.R.Rivoire,'78