NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

ited 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 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 any 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 Buena Vista

other names/site number SM-52

## 2. Location

street Maryland Route 5
not for publication n/a city or town Leonardtown vicinity n/a
state Maryland code MD county St. Mary's code 037 zip code 21756

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide x locally. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

6-26-98

Signature of certifying official Date

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. 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 Keeper Date of Action

## 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

| Contributing | Noncontributing | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | _____ | buildings | (main house, meat house) |
| 1 | _____ | sites | (former kitchen/quarter location) |
| _____ | 1 | structures | (storage shed) |
| _____ | _____ | objects | |
| 3 | 1 | Total | |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in National Register 0
Name of related multiple property listing n/a

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cat: | DOMESTIC | Sub: | single dwelling |
| | DOMESTIC | | secondary structure |

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cat: | DOMESTIC | Sub: | single dwelling |
| | DOMESTIC | | secondary structure |

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof METAL
walls WOOD
other WOOD

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

## 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)

____ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

_x_ 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.)

___ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a 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

Period of Significance c. 1840s-1888

Significant Dates c. 1840s

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
George Combs
Vincent Camalier

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Vincent Camalier

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

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(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
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.61 acres
USGS quadrangle Leonardtown, MD
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 356890 | 4239910 | D | | | |
| B | | | | E | | | |
| C | | | | | | | |

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is indicated as Parcel 97 on St. Mary's County Assessment and Taxation Map 127, Grid 9.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property, 1.61 acres, comprises the remnant of the acreage historically associated with the resource, and epresents its historic landscape setting.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kirk Ranzetta
organization St. Mary's County Planning Department date February 1998
street & number _____ telephone (301) 475-4662
city or town Leonardtown state MD zip code _____

**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 (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state ____ zip code _____

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**Description Summary:**

Constructed in the 1840s, the main block of Buena Vista is a two-and-a-half story, three-bay, side passage, double-parlor plan, frame dwelling with Greek Revival-style architectural elements located in Leonardtown, Maryland. The most prominent, character defining exterior feature is a full width, one story, pedimented portico located on the south elevation. The portico has four, square, Tuscan columns that exhibit a distinctive entasis. The interior is decorated with window and door architraves, mantels embellished by free-standing, rounded Tuscan columns and a banded frieze, molded plaster ceiling medallions, and a stair with a panelled box, heavy scroll sawn brackets, rounded balusters, and a slender newel. Judging from architectural evidence, a two story, three bay, frame, service ell was attached to the main block sometime after the 1840s. Evidence suggests that the ell may predate the main block and was moved from another site to its present location. The interior of the service ell is noticeably less decorated. Smaller door architraves, a plain mantel, and a modest winder stair all signal the ell's secondary importance. The property also contains a braced-frame meat house whose walls are sheathed with random width flush board siding. Outlines of a brick fireplace for a detached kitchen/quarter can also be seen near the meat house in the rear yard of the main dwelling.

## General Description

Buena Vista is located on the north side of Maryland Route 5, 0.2 miles west from the intersection of Route 5 and Washington Avenue in Leonardtown, Maryland. Set back approximately 50 yards from the road, the house is approached via a formal ellipse-shaped drive. The dwelling is situated on a relatively level lot consisting of 1.61 acres. While the parcel is bordered by a hospital to the west and north, a supermarket to the east, and busy, four lane road to the south, the site is adequately buffered and sheltered on all four sides by significantly sized holly, walnut, oak, dogwood, and cedar trees as well as a variety of well trimmed shrubs and bushes. The property also contains a braced frame meathouse and a non-contributing storage shed which are both located to the north of the dwelling.

Constructed ca. 1830-1840, Buena Vista is a two-and-a-half story, three bay, Greek Revival-style frame dwelling with a two story, three bay, frame side-ell. Both sections rest on a brick foundation and are sheathed with clapboard that is attached to the braced-frame with fully formed cut nails. All windows (except one) of both sections are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows. The roof of the main block, covered with raised seam metal, is pierced by two, interior-end brick chimneys. In contrast, the ell has an exterior end brick chimney. The main block of the dwelling is organized in a side-passage, double parlor plan while the ell consists of a stair passage (which also now contains a c. 1958 storage closet and bathroom) and one large room for a kitchen.

The south or primary elevation consists of the three bay main block and three bay side ell with each window and door symmetrically aligned with the bay above it. The main block's first floor is pierced by two, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows and a wide, five-panel door (two vertical panels on the bottom and three horizontal panels above) with a three light transom. Each window features two functional louvered shutters. The first floor bays are shaded by a Tuscan order pedimented portico supported by four entasized square columns. The pediment features a flush board tympanum as well as a three step, rectilinear cornice and

crown molding. These architectural details resemble those found on the Brome-Howard House (SM-33) as well as on White Hall (SM-54) which has been demolished. The second floor of this section features three windows. Two gable dormers with engaged pilasters and corner blocks project from the roof. The side ell also consists of four bays on the first floor and five on the second. The first floor bays consist of two six-over-six windows, a five panel door, and a c. 1958 one-over-one window. These bays are shaded by a shed roof porch supported by four square columns with chamfered corners. The second floor openings consist of three small windows.

The east elevation consists of the gable end of the ell and main block. The main block is pierced by two windows--one near the south corner of the second floor and one centrally located on the attic story. Cornice returns are located on both sides of the main block's gable end. The ell, meanwhile, has one window on the first floor and two windows on the second floor. An exterior end, five-to-one common bond brick chimney extends between the two windows on the second floor and steps back from the gable end wall as it rises.

The north elevation resembles the south elevation in that it features the same number of sash and doors on all floors. This elevation, however, does not exhibit the same degree of decoration. The main block is pierced on the first and second floors by three bays--two windows and a door on the first floor and three windows on the second floor, and two gable dormers on the attic story. Only the door on the main block is sheltered by a markedly less ornate portico over the passage entry. This portico is supported by two square columns with chamfered corners and entasis. The plain pediment features an open bed tympanum composed of flush boards. Immediately, below a first floor window on the this elevation is a bulkhead entry into a partially excavated dirt cellar. The side ell consists of three first and second floor bays--two windows and a door on the first floor and three smaller windows on the second floor. The door on the first floor is sheltered by a c. 1958, screened-in porch. Notably, the window on the second floor closest to the main block has a broad lintel above its header. The other windows on the second floor do not feature similar treatments.

The west elevation features three windows on the first and second floor and a single centrally placed window on the attic floor. The first floor window located near the northwest corner is a false bay. This window bay is situated where the interior stair is located. While the sash exists on the exterior, the window does not light the interior and is always covered over by louvered shutters.

Buena Vista's interior reflects a deliberate ornamental hierarchy. The side-passage, double-parlor main block is ornately decorated, while the gable end ell features much less decorative attention. The passage of the main block, for instance, provides entry into all spaces of the main block's interior through two doors and an elaborately decorated stair. Each of the door and window surrounds feature wide, curvilinear moldings with corner blocks (also called paterae). The windows also feature panelled bases. The open string stair features a classically shaped newel, a panelled base, and wavy shaped scroll sawn brackets. The scrollwork changes to a "6" shape at the stair's return. The passage also features a circular shaped plaster ceiling molding that resembles the door and window surrounds. Similar medallions, recently replaced, are found in each of the parlors. In order to compensate for the intruding interior end chimneys, the ceiling moldings are not located in the formal center of the rooms, but are instead offset. The pair of swinging five-panel doors that connect the two parlors are also offset. Both parlors feature classically inspired mantels that consist of Doric columns, a horizontally banded frieze, and a thin attenuated mantel shelf. Just below the shelf are a series of stepped torus moldings that gradually project further out as they rise. The main block's second floor contains two bedrooms and a stair passage. Two of the rooms feature fireplace mantels that are modestly decorated with plainly molded pilasters, panelled friezes, and an attenuated shelf--similar to those found in the first floor parlors of "Loretum" (SM-78) which was built in 1844. The door and window moldings here are plainer as well for they consist of two sunk fillets and a bead. A bathroom and box stair to the attic story is also located in the passage. The attic story consists of two bedrooms. These spaces are distinguished by their lack of decoration. Several wooden pegs for hanging clothes are still visible on the walls.

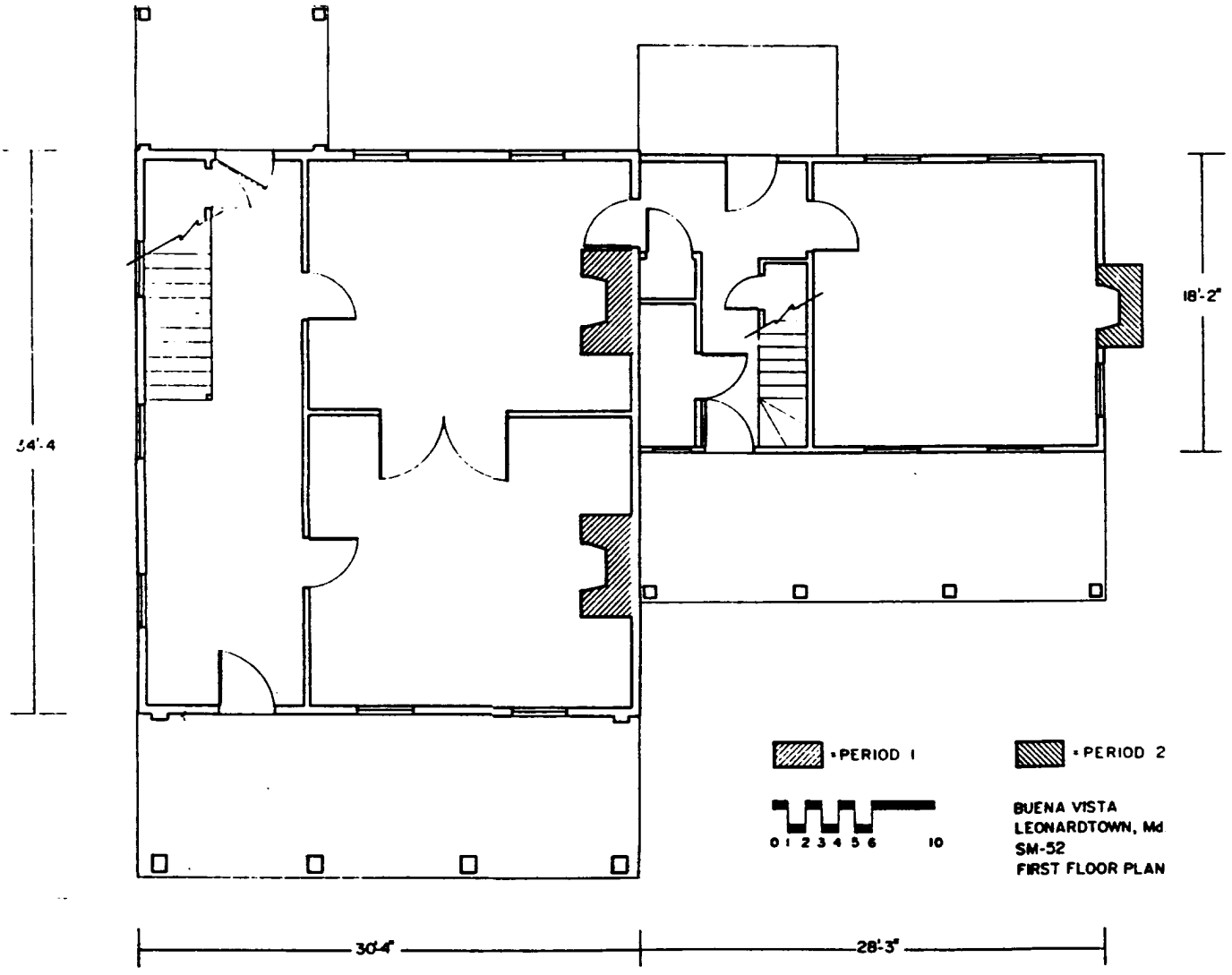
The side ell can be entered through the door in the north parlor of the main block, a door in the second floor bedroom, or through one of two exterior doors that permit entry into the ell's passage. Upon entering the ell, a different decorative scheme is immediately noticed. The moldings and corner blocks around all doors and windows are smaller and less elaborate. The window and door architraves consist of two sunken fillets. The mantelpiece located in the first floor kitchen features a plain frieze, pilasters, and shelf. Just below the shelf, however, are two sets of stepped torus moldings that gradually project further out as they rise. The winder stair, located in the passage, features plain, square banisters and a newel (similar to those found in Eldon, SM-338, and Summerseat, SM-181). The second floor of the side ell consists of a bedroom and passage. The bedroom features a plain mantelpiece that lacks panelling and decoration. Notably, the ell appears to have been constructed before or simultaneous to the main block, but added to the building at a later time. Evidence located at the intersection of the two sections, reveals that the gable end of the main block was originally covered with clapboard. The clapboard was subsequently taken off when the ell was added leaving behind scars visible on the studs of the main block. The ell's earlier date is suggested by the skinned, hewn, and pit-sawn rafter pairs with pegged bridle joints at their peak. The owner, Francis Burch, further noted the ell could have predated the main block and was probably moved to the site after the main block was built. Another indication of this change is revealed in the doorway that joins the two sections together on the first floor. A now enclosed transom on top of this door subsequently has been closed over. There are several considerations, however, that may contradict this contention. An analysis of the shared wall between the main block and ell reveals that it is only six inches thick--the width of the exterior walls of the main block. If the ell was moved to the site and attached, the two walls of the individual structures would together create a twelve inch wall.

Immediately to the north of the dwelling is a braced frame meat house. The structure rests on a low brick foundation and is clad in flush, horizontal, chestnut boards. At the intersection of the exterior walls and

corrugated metal covered roof is a box cornice. The exterior is pierced on the south elevation by a single door attached to the frame with modern strap hinges. The interior exhibits an exposed frame covered with black soot--evidence of its use as a smokehouse and curing shed for hams. The braced frame consists of down braces that are side-mortised and tenoned to the corner posts and the sill. It also features several ties that extend across the top of the smokehouse. These ties were used to hang hams from. Francis Burch confirmed that the building served as a meat house.

Just to the southwest of the meat house was a well (now filled in) and roughly square raised pad that marks the probable location of a detached kitchen/quarter--apparently abandoned and/or demolished soon after the addition of the present ell. This feature is situated to the southwest of the meat house and just north of the main block. During one dry summer in 1992, Francis Burch measured the outlines of the kitchen/quarter. The frame building was approximately sixteen feet by 23 feet and probably had a brick chimney.

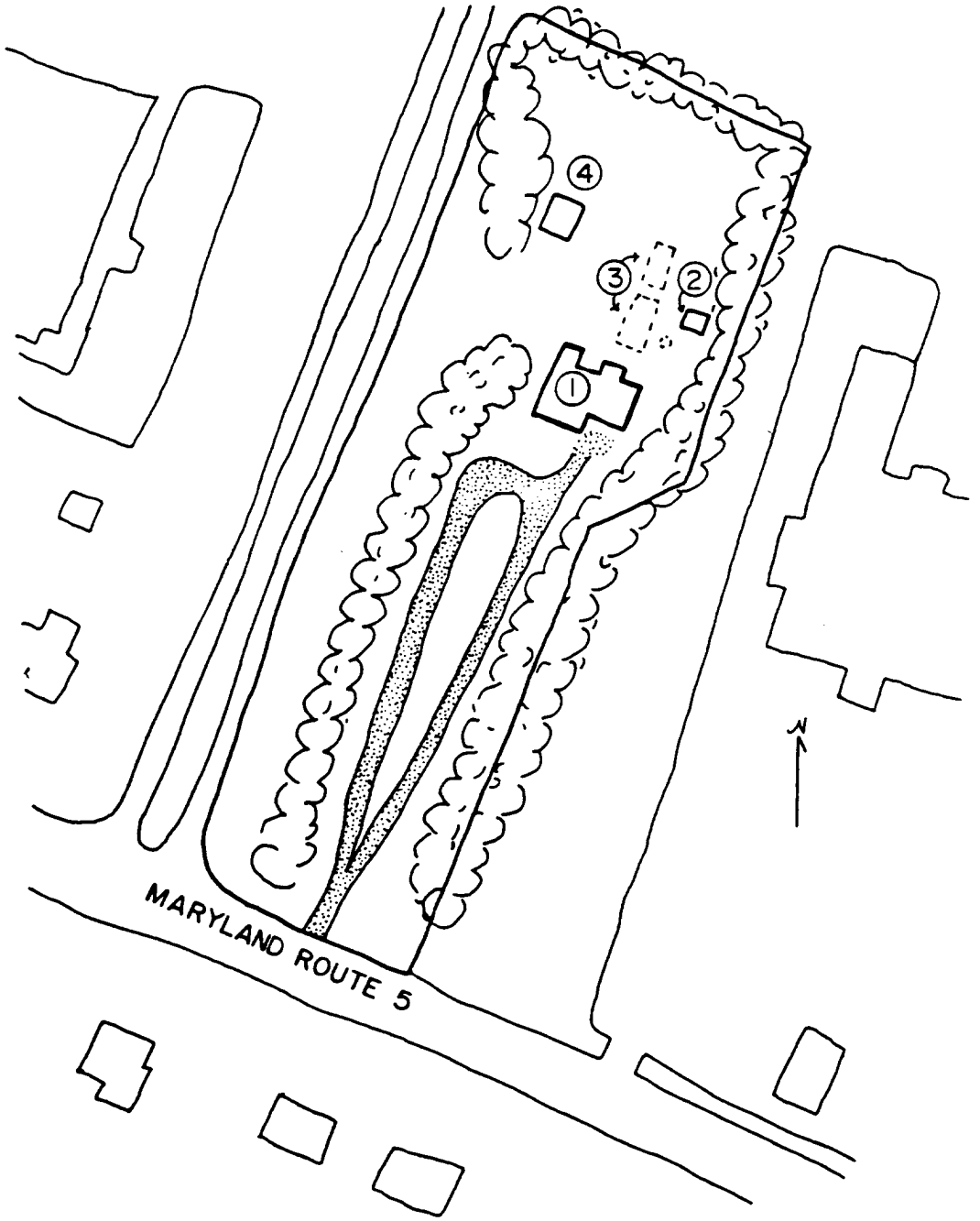
First Floor Plan



Site Plan

BUENA VISTA
SM-52
LEONARDTOWN, Md.
SITE PLAN

① - MAIN HOUSE
② - MEAT HOUSE
③ - SITE OF OUT-KITCHEN/QUARTERS
④ - STORAGE SHED



**Significance Summary**

"Buena Vista" is significant under National Register Criteria B and C because of its association with George Combs and Vincent Camalier, as well as its architectural merit as an excellent example of the Greek Revival-style in Southern Maryland. Commissioned in the 1840s by George and Mary Catherine Coad Combs, the two-and-a-half story, side-passage dwelling was constructed by Vincent Camalier, an architect/master carpenter who came to St. Mary's County in the early 1830s from Washington, D.C. Camalier, especially known for his use of colonnaded porticos and piazzas on other buildings in the area, emphasized the exterior of Buena Vista by using a one story, pedimented portico supported by four squarish, Tuscan columns. The interior was decorated with window and door architraves, mantels embellished by free-standing, rounded Tuscan columns and a banded frieze, and a stair with a panelled box, wavy scroll sawn brackets, rounded balusters, and a slender newel. Sometime after its initial construction, a pre-1840s, two story service ell was attached to its east gable end. The dwelling's stylish architectural treatments and organization were extensions of George Combs' prestige and success as a dedicated government servant and wheat farmer. Beginning in the 1830s, Combs worked in the office of Joseph Harris, Clerk of the Circuit Court. Combs went on to serve on the St. Mary's County Levy Court in 1834 and 1835 and was eventually appointed by Maryland Governor James Thomas to be Register of Wills from 1835-1857. Upon his death on June 19, 1888, a obituary in the St. Mary's Beacon described him as a "strict Catholic and a model man. To know him was to respect and admire him." The period of significance, c. 1840s-1888, corresponds to the period of Combs' occupation of the property.

==========

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):
Agricultural/Industrial Transition: A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial-Urban Dominance: A.D. 1870-1930

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

Resource Type:
Category: Building(s)
Historic Environment: Rural
Historic Function(s) and Use(s):
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Known Design Source:
Vincent Camalier, architect/builder

## RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

By the 1830s, the town of Leonardtown in St. Mary's County was quickly becoming a social, economic, and governmental center that had failed to develop in St. Mary's County since the removal of Maryland's first state capital at St. Mary's City to Annapolis in 1694-1695. With the construction of a new courthouse building by noted Baltimore architect William Small in 1831-1832, the town ushered in an era of economic, as well as architectural, improvement. This improvement was echoed by a series of new dwellings that were erected by lawyers, judges, clerks, and merchants in and around town. "Buena Vista" represented one such house.

On November 8, 1831, William J. and Ellen Edelin purchased a 96 acre tract called "part of America Felix Secundus" from Henry Greenfield Sothoron Key and his wife Henrietta (owners of significant land holdings in and around Leonardtown) for $1,440.[1] Located on the road from Chaptico to Leonardtown, the relatively flat property surrounded a two-acre lot reserved for a Methodist Meeting House called Wesley Chapel. Only one-half mile from the center of town, the tract was an ideal location for an employee of the court or owner of one of the community's many mercantile businesses. It remains unclear whether the Edelin family improved the property but in August 9, 1837, George Combs purchased the tract for $2,000 and soon after erected a large two-and-a-half story, side-passage plan, Greek Revival-style dwelling calling it "Buena Vista."[2]

The Combs Family at Buena Vista: 1837-1891

Born on June 19, 1799, George Combs came from a background of public service.[3] His father Enoch Combs, for instance, served as the county sheriff as well as a trustee of the poor in the early-nineteenth century.[4] Unfortunately, much of George Combs' life as a youth remains obscure due to a lack of family papers. Marriage records reveal that he married Mary Catherine Coad on January 27, 1829 and census records reveal that the pair had three children; Elizabeth, Ann (Nanna), and Charlotte.[5] By the 1830s, however, George Combs had obviously distinguished himself in a variety of capacities. Prior to 1834, Combs worked in the office of Colonel Joseph Harris, Clerk of the Circuit Court.[6] Between 1834 and 1835 Combs was

appointed to the seven member St. Mary's County Levy Court--a local legislative body.[7] He would only serve two years in this post, for by 1835 he was appointed by Governor James Thomas to be the St. Mary's County Register of Wills.

It was soon after his appointment, in 1837, that he and his wife Mary Catherine Coad purchased the 97 acre tract and erected Buena Vista. According to oral tradition and architectural evidence, the Combs family most likely constructed the main block of the dwelling, as well as a detached kitchen and meathouse in the 1840s by contracting with the noted local architect/master carpenter Vincent Camalier.[8] Decorated in the then fashionable Greek-Revival style, the house rose prominently in the largely rural agricultural landscape unmistakably signalling the couple's new status and confirming their connection to the local elite.

From 1835 until 1857, Combs distinguished himself as the County's Register of Wills. Described as "painstaking and exact, careful to do his duty in every particular...a model man" Combs was well liked in the community and played a critical role in developing a number of key institutions.[9] In 1845-1846, Combs served on the building committee that chose Vincent Camalier to erect a new St. Aloysius Church in Leonardtown.[10] In 1852, he was a founding member of the St. Mary's County Reading Room and Debating Society, a group dedicated to the intellectual advancement of its wealthy, educated, and locally prominent members.[11] He also served as a director for the State of Maryland Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Baltimore in 1873.[12] While maintaining these diverse interests, Combs was also a prolific and highly successful wheat farmer.

In her dissertation Economics and Society in a Staple Plantation System: St. Mary's County, Maryland 1790-1840, Bayly Ellen Marks noted that towards the early to mid-nineteenth century, the staple crop of St. Mary's County had made a significant shift from tobacco towards wheat production.[13] George Combs illustrated how successful an intensive yet diverse agricultural operation based upon wheat, oat, and corn production could be. From 1850-1860, for instance, the total cash value of the farm surrounding Buena Vista increased from $5,000 to $12,000.[14] Total improved acres increased as well going from 72 acres in 1850 to 97 acres in 1860. While modest gains were made in winter wheat production and Indian corn remained constant, oat production ballooned from 10 lbs in 1850 to 200 lbs

in 1860. The Combs' also produced a crop of peas, Irish potatoes, and sweet potatoes, increased butter production, and raised more domestic farm animals especially sheep, swine, and "other cattle" in 1860. While yields and farm value decreased in 1870 and again in 1880, due to the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, Combs was undoubtedly an active participant in the operation of his farm--diversifying his interests and intensifying his land use on a relatively small farm that never contained more than 100 improved acres. The value of his farm, despite its lack of improved acreage, still placed Combs in the top 10% of landowners. In contrast, the owner of Cross Manor (SM-3) Caleb Jones, owned 230 acres of improved acreage that contained significant amounts of tobacco, Indian corn, as well as wheat. The value of the farm, however, could only muster a value of $10,000 from the census takers.[15]

Undoubtedly related to the Combs family success at farming was their ownership of slaves. Census schedules for slaves from 1850 note that Combs owned nine slaves, in 1860 only three slaves were listed, but in 1864 he was listed as owning eighteen slaves.[16] Even after the Civil War, Combs was able to retain the services of at least eight African-American servants and farm laborers in 1870 and six in 1880. The houses of the slaves and servants on the Combs' farm can only be speculated. As originally built, Buena Vista featured a separate kitchen building that was located just east and north of the main house near a meat house. It was probably here that most of the house servants worked and slept. Field hands, however, were probably housed in separate structures closer to the fields and away from the house. Sometime between 1840-1860, a two story wing was attached, thereby integrating domestic service into the main house. This addition could have also accommodated house servants in the upstairs bedrooms. The addition's limited decoration, namely its window and door surrounds that consisted of two fillets and unadorned corner blocks, signalled its secondary importance when compared to the elaborate mantels and stair case, as well as the curvi-linear door and window surrounds of the main house.

While the spatial realities of slave and servant life at Buena Vista remain difficult to recreate, some general facts about the individual slaves that lived there are revealed through a close examination of the census records. The slave statistics taken in 1864 reveal that eighteen

slaves with the surnames of Craton, Tarleton, Thompson, Taney, Smith, Butler, Barnes, and Gunn were owned by the Combs family. The 1870 census reveals that all but one, 50 year old Philis Cray (aka Craton), had left, probably migrating north or resettling somewhere else in the county. In the aftermath of the Civil War, servants could certainly opt for a different employer. Forty-year-old Statia Parr, for instance, was employed as a servant by George Combs in 1870, but in 1880 the fifty year old was working in the household of prominent Leonardtown lawyer Robert C. Combs, the owner of Eldon (SM-338). Despite the uncertainty created by the abolition of slavery and the subsequent increase in labor costs, Combs was largely able to maintain his agricultural interests and his status in the community.

The day-to-day life of the Combs family is similarly obscure and can only be seen through occasional newspaper references, census records, as well as marriage and death records. Married on January 27, 1829, George and his wife Mary Catherine Coad Combs had three daughters. Their first daughter Elizabeth Combs was born c. 1830. Sometime between 1850 and 1854, however, she "embraced a religious life and became a nun at the monastery of the visitation" at the corner of Park and Centre Streets in Baltimore and never married.[17] The will of George Combs stipulated that Elizabeth would inherit $2,000 upon his death.[18] It is unclear when Elizabeth Combs died.

The couple's second child Ann Maria (Nannie) Combs was born on August 2, 1831.[19] According to newspaper accounts, she was active in organizing the Southern Relief Fair in the aftermath of the Civil War, coordinated entertainment at Clifton Factory in 1879, and was exceptionally active in the St. Aloysius Church choir.[20] In 1889 at the age of 58, she married George Washington Hill and eventually moved to Washington, D.C. When she died on February 16, 1922, however, she was interred at the Our Lady's Chapel cemetery at nearby Medley's Neck, Maryland.[21]

The third daughter, Charlotte Coad Combs was born c. 1848. In 1865 she was the maid- of-honor for Ruth Ford, daughter of Circuit Court Judge Robert Ford, who married lawyer Robert C. Combs of Eldon (SM-338).[22] Sometime between 1870 and 1880, she married Lieutenant William Kilty McSherry (USMC).[23] By 1880, however, Charlotte was listed in the census as widowed or divorced. She eventually remarried General Frank Armstrong, CSA

sometime after 1891. Charlotte died after an extended illness on June 23, 1910.[24] Overall, the children of George and Mary Catherine Coad Combs reflected the couple's devotion to the Catholic religion and confirmed their place in and connections to the county's wealthy elite.

The Combs family's occupation of Buena Vista ended in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Mary Catherine Coad Combs died on March 9, 1887 and was followed a year later on June 19, 1888 by George Combs whose health "had been failing for sometime past and his death was not unexpected."[25] Two of his daughters, Charlotte and Anne were left to settle his estate. Rather than stay at Buena Vista they immediately chose to dispose of the property for by June 28, 1888 an advertisement in the St. Mary's Beacon noted that Buena Vista was for sale.[26] By December 20, 1888, Nannie Combs had left to live in Washington, D.C.[27] It took three years, however, before the Combs sisters transferred the property to Mary E. Mattingly wife of T. Lee Mattingly for $4,000 on May 20, 1891.[28] The property remained in the Mattingly family until 1942 when it was sold to J. Allan and Clara C. Coad.[29] The Coad's sold Buena Vista only a year later to Elizabeth G. Mattingly in 1943, but only after shrinking the formerly 97 acre farm to the 1.63 acres that immediately surrounded the house.[30] In 1944, Elizabeth Mattingly transferred the property to Genevieve M. Greenwell.[31] She owned the property until 1958, when she conveyed it to T. Joseph Burch, Frances G. Burch and G. Hope Greenwell.[32] Soon after they purchased the property, the Burchs renovated the house by reinforcing the floor joists, adding bathrooms and closet spaces, and making other necessary repairs to the porches.

It was after the Burch family renovated the house that Leonardtown grew considerably. As a result of this growth, much of the property surrounding the house along the Maryland Route 5 corridor became prime sites for commercial and institutional uses. Immediately to the east of the house, a supermarket was constructed and to the north the St. Mary's Hospital was erected. Today, the property remains adequately buffered by rows of trees and bushes. The long drive from Route 5 to the house remains preserved and the house is in good repair, but still threatened by the surrounding changes in land use. Today, Buena Vista remains in the ownership of the Burch family.

Vincent Camalier: His work at Buena Vista in Context

During his tenure as an architect/builder operating in Leonardtown from 1831-1862, Vincent Camalier came to epitomize the multi-faceted nature of craftsmen during the mid-nineteenth century. His work, especially at Buena Vista, reflected the gradual technological as well as stylistic changes that influenced the work of a rural house builder as well as the architecture in the region. His use of prefabricated architectural components from Baltimore, bold Greek Revival detailing, and the formal floor plans that segregated domestic service are just some of the ways Camalier was able to satisfy the desires of his clients and execute a successful business.

Vincent Camalier was born c. 1785 in France. As a result of the French Revolution, however, his family became political refugees and fled to Genoa, Italy. By 1797, Camalier and his older brother had emigrated to the United States and lived in Washington, D.C. During the War of 1812 he became a private in the infantry under a number of different officers including Captain Ambrose White and Captain Harvey Biston, whose units were unspecified. His term of service expired on October 8, 1814. In 1820, he married Katherine Kail and the couple raised five children.[33] By 1824, he received a diploma from the Master Carpenter's Society of Washington, D.C. and afterwards supposedly submitted bids for several large public projects in the infant capital city including for the United States Capital and the Washington Monument.[34] In 1830, however, Katherine Kail died tragically near the Washington Navy Yard from an unknown cause.[35] In 1831, Vincent Camalier moved his family to St. Mary's County. Camalier, however, never purchased property in the county and it is unclear where in Leonadtown he and his family stayed.

From 1831 until his death in 1862, Camalier was "marked for the possession of very superior qualifications in his business, connected with an energy of character scarcely ever equalled."[36] His skill and prestige as a builder/architect was reflected in the clientele he garnered. From 1840-1859, for instance, Camalier was chosen to execute several public projects including a covered bridge (c. 1840-1846) over McIntosh Run just north of Leonardtown, St. Aloysius Church (c. 1846-1847) also in

Leonardtown, and a school house (c. 1859) at an unknown location. Camalier also "restored" Ellenborough (SM-68, c. 1857) for Benjamin Gwinn Harris, a United States Congressman who lived two miles south of Leonardtown, built a store (c. 1855) for local merchant George C. Morgan, and restored a dwelling at "Jutland" (c. 1857) for local lawyer and large landowner Henry Greenfield Sothoron Key.[37]

Given his rapport with Leonardtown's elite legislators, lawyers, and merchants it seems logical that he also constructed Buena Vista for the Combs family. George Combs and Camalier were obviously familiar with each other. George Combs, for instance, served on the committee that oversaw the construction of a new St. Aloysius Church in Leonardtown in 1846-1847.[38] The committee eventually chose Camalier for the project. Both Camalier and Combs were also members of the St. Mary's Reading Room and Debating Society as well as the St. Mary's Savings Institution.[39] Besides these connections, however, it is architectural evidence that provides the best context for explaining Camalier's influence in the construction of Buena Vista.

The fashionable Greek Revival-style of Buena Vista was popular with architects and carpenters, as well as clients from 1830 to 1850. Inspiration from classical Greek forms, sympathy aroused by a Greek war of independence (1821-1830), and a push away from British forms in the aftermath of the War of 1812, generated this distinctively American architectural style.[40] Many of its architectural components such as moldings, mantels, stair brackets, newels, as well as floor plans, were popularized in carpenters' guides and pattern books such as Asher Benjamin's The Practical House Carpenter; The Builder's Guide as well as Minard Lafever's The Modern Builder's Guide; The Beauties of Modern Architecture.[41] Having received a formal diploma from the Master Carpenter's Society in Washington, D.C., Camalier probably was familiar with these and other books. While the architectural details found in Buena Vista were not necessarily extracted directly from these guides, many of the building's architectural components probably were prefabricated by urban millwork shops. The scroll-sawn stair brackets, bulbous stair newel, and mantels as well as the cut nails and circular-sawn lath all probably were purchased in Baltimore. Most of the building materials probably were

procured and tooled locally as the structural members (i.e. floor joists, posts, studs, rafters) were either hewn or pit sawn.

While some of the architectural elements were from pattern books, the dwelling's most distinctive feature, the portico, was more influenced by Camalier's own idiosyncratic design. The Tuscan portico on the south elevation of the house was composed of four square columns that exhibited a slight entasis. These columns supported a closed bed pediment with a tympanum of flush boards. This combination of elements, most notably the entasized columns, is a distinctively localized interpretation of Greek classicism that Camalier employed. Other buildings associated with Camalier, such as White Hall (SM-54), the Union Hotel (SM-545), and the Brome-Howard House (SM-33), featured unmistakably similar columns and/or porticos. These buildings also represent some of the few known examples of the Greek Revival style in St. Mary's County that have been attributed to Camalier. Along with his fashionable exterior design, however, Camalier was attentive to more traditional modes of living at Buena Vista, as well as White Hall and the Brome-Howard House, for all of these dwellings had a much more conventional interior organization. The side passage plan represented a traditional floor plan that had been popular in the county since c. 1775. The arrangement of spaces effectively segregated movement around the house for servant, owner, and visitor alike and easily permitted cross ventilation. So while the exterior of Buena Vista presented a fashionable appearance, the interior revealed an adherence to traditional domestic considerations.

As an architect/builder, Camalier epitomized the versatile nature of mid-nineteenth century building craftsmen. Interchangeably referred to as an architect, builder, mechanic, joiner, and master carpenter in newspapers, the census, and in advertisements, Camalier represented a jack-of-all-trades. In this multi-faceted role, Camalier could merge the relationship between architect and contractor and conduct a wide variety of projects such as building a bridge, store, church, school, dwellings, as well as execute extensive renovations. This is precisely the image that Camalier promoted when he advertised in 1857 offering "his services to the public in the capacity of Architect and Builder and will at short notice prepare plans, drawings, specifications, and estimates of cost of buildings, materials &c &c of wood, stone, or brick, charges moderate."[42]

Camalier knew that he was competing with Baltimore builders and realized that many public clients, such as churches and colleges, often opted to have an architect submit designs and then have contractors competitively bid for the project.[43] As a well respected local builder, Camalier could compete in price with these urban firms, but because of his limited resources his design work as well as his contracting business did not always prevail. An example would be the modifications to St. Aloysius Church which were first advertised in 1860. An advertisement in the St. Mary's Beacon asked for proposals for the "erection of a TOWER, BELFRY, SPIRE, and other additions." It further noted that plans and specifications "could be seen at the office of THOS & J. M. DIXON" in Baltimore or at the "Store of E. LEO SPALDING, in Leonardtown."[44]

While Camalier did not always competitively prevail, he was still an esteemed citizen of Leonardtown. Curiously, Camalier did not own his own house as he is listed in census records as a boarder in the Union Hotel and not living in a private residence during the 1850s and 1860s.[45] After a long illness, Vincent Camalier died on January 16, 1862. In his obituary, the writer noted that "Although his health had been precarious for several years past, he continued his favorite employment up to the moment of his death. He enjoyed in a high degree the respect and confidence of our entire community."[46] Buena Vista represents a chronicle of his abilities as a designer and builder. His unique interpretations of Greek Classicism, his ability to negotiate the tensions between tradition and fashion, as well as his ability to compete with urban contractors made Vincent Camalier a successful local craftsman and significant local figure.

Notes

1 St. Mary's County Land Records, St. Mary's County Courthouse, Leonardtown, Maryland, Liber JH 9, Folio 157.

2 St. Mary's County Land Records, St. Mary's County Courthouse, Leonardtown, Maryland, JH 11, Folio 156.

3 St. Mary's Beacon, v 48: 392, p 3, c 1, 21 June 1888.

4 Regina Combs Hammett, History of St. Mary's county, Maryland 1634-1990 (Ridge, Md: N.p., 1994), 432, 513.

5 Margaret Fresco. Marriages and Deaths in St. Mary's County, 1634-1900. (Ridge, Md: N.p., 1992), 64. United States Census, Manuscript Population Schedules, St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

6 SMB, v 48: 393, p 2, c 3, 28 June 1888.

7 Hammett, p 502.

8 T. Edward Stokel, the great grandson of Vincent Camalier and Leonardtown historian, notes that he was always told that Buena Vista was designed and built by Vincent Camalier as were several other buildings around town including the Union Hotel, White Hall, as well as the Brome-Howard House near St. Mary's City.

9 SMB, v 48: 392, p 3, c 1, 21 June 1888.

10 Charles Fenwick, "Dedication of St. Aloysius Church, Leonardtown Maryland, March 18, 1962" (Pamphlet), p 31.

11 Al Gough, "St. Mary's County Reading Room and Debating Society," St. Mary's Chronicles, v 140, # 4, Winter 1992, p 188.

12 SMB, v 10: 35, p 2, c 7, 26 June 1873.

13 Bayly Ellen Marks, "Economics and Society in a Staple Plantation System: St. Mary's County, Maryland 1790-1840" (Dissertation, University of Maryland), 52, 200.

14 United States Census, Manuscript Agricultural Schedules, St. Mary's County, Maryland 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, Maryland Hall of Records.

5 Ruth Ann Overbeck, et al, "Cross Manor, SM-3" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, August , 1988.

16 U. S. Census, Slave Schedules, 1850, 1860, St. Mary's County Historical Society, Leonardtown, Maryland. Agnes Kane Callum (transcriber), Slave Statistics of St. Mary's County, Md, 1864, Commissioner George B. Dent (Mullac Publishing, Baltimore, Maryland, 1993).

17 St. Mary's County Register of Wills, St. Mary's County Courthouse, Leonardtown, Maryland, Liber JBA 1, Folio 161.

18 Ibid, Liber JBA 1, Folio 161.

19 Janet Tice, et al. Burials from Tombstones, Grave Markers, and Church Registers of St. Mary's County, Maryland (1634-1994) (Leonardtown, Md: St. Mary's County Historical Society, 1996.), p 125.

20 SMB, v 3: 34, p 2, c 3, 23 August 1866, v 17: 3, p 2, c 2, 11 September 1879, v 49: 418, p 3, c 4, 20 December 1888.

21 Tice, p 125.

22 Fresco, 65.

23 SMB, 23 June 1910.

24 Ibid.

25 SMB, v 48: 392, p 3, c 1, 21 June 1888.

26 SMB, v 48: 393, p 2, c 3, 28 June 1888.

27 SMB, v 49: 418, p 3, c 4, 20 December 1888.

28 Land Records, Liber JFF 12, Folio 577.

29 Land Records, Liber CBG 13, Folio 401.

30 Land Records, Liber CBG 15, Folio 374.

31 Land Records, Liber CBG 16, Folio 12.

32 Land Records, Liber CBG 78, Folio 246.

33 Fenwick, 31.

34 SMB, v 18: 4, p 2, c 2, 23 January 1862. While local historians have related Camalier's bids on the Washington Monument and the United States Capitol, no primary documentation has been located to substantiate this.

35 Fresco, 350.

36 Ibid.

37 SMB, v 66: 430, p 3, c 1, 7 December 1905. St. Mary's City Architectural Research Center Vertical Files, Ellenborough, SM-68, Correspondence between Charles Fenwick and Mrs. Alice Behrendt, undated.

38 Fenwick, 31.

39 Gough, Al, "St. Mary's County Reading Room & Debating Society," Chronicles of St. Mary's, v 140: 4, Winter 1992, 188.

40 Virginia & Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 182-183.

41 McAlester, 183. See also Gabrielle M. Lanier & Bernard L. Herman, Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic: Looking at Buildings and Landscapes (Baltimore,Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 138-139 and Catherine W. Bishir, Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 149-153.

42 SMB, v 12: 14, p 2, c 6, 16 April 1857.

43 Another advertisement placed by Camalier in the St. Mary's Beacon, notes that he could complete projects at "BALTIMORE PRICES" certainly suggesting that most high end dwellings and buildings were being bid on by Baltimore craftsmen. See SMB, v 16: 6, p 3, c 1, 9 February 1860.

44 SMB, v 16: 20, p 3, c 2, 17 May 1860.

45 U.S. Census, Schedule of Population, St. Mary's County, 1850, 1860. Microfilm copies at the Maryland Hall of Records.

46 SMB, v 18: 4, p 2, c 2, 23 January 1862.

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

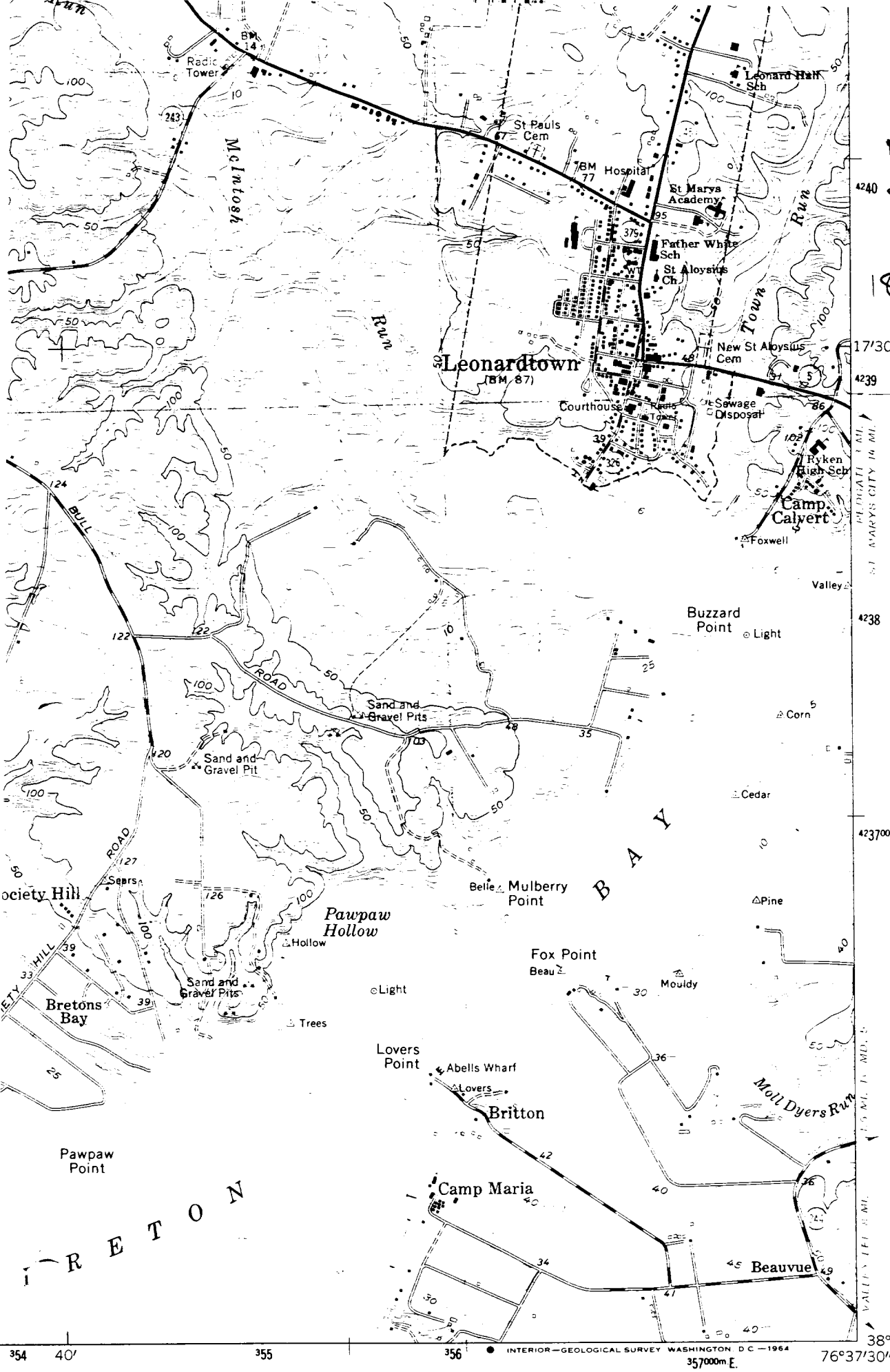
See notes to Section 8

==========

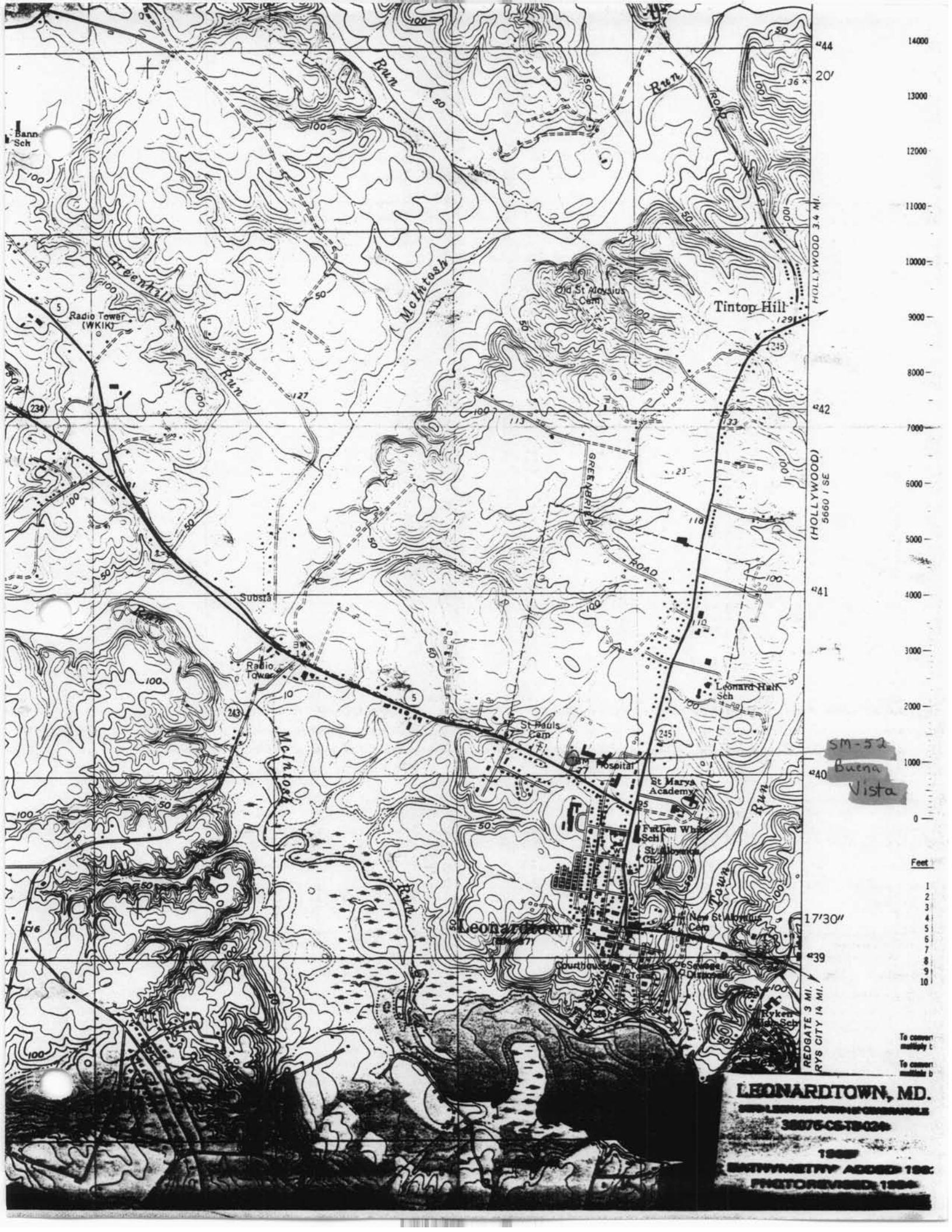
**GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

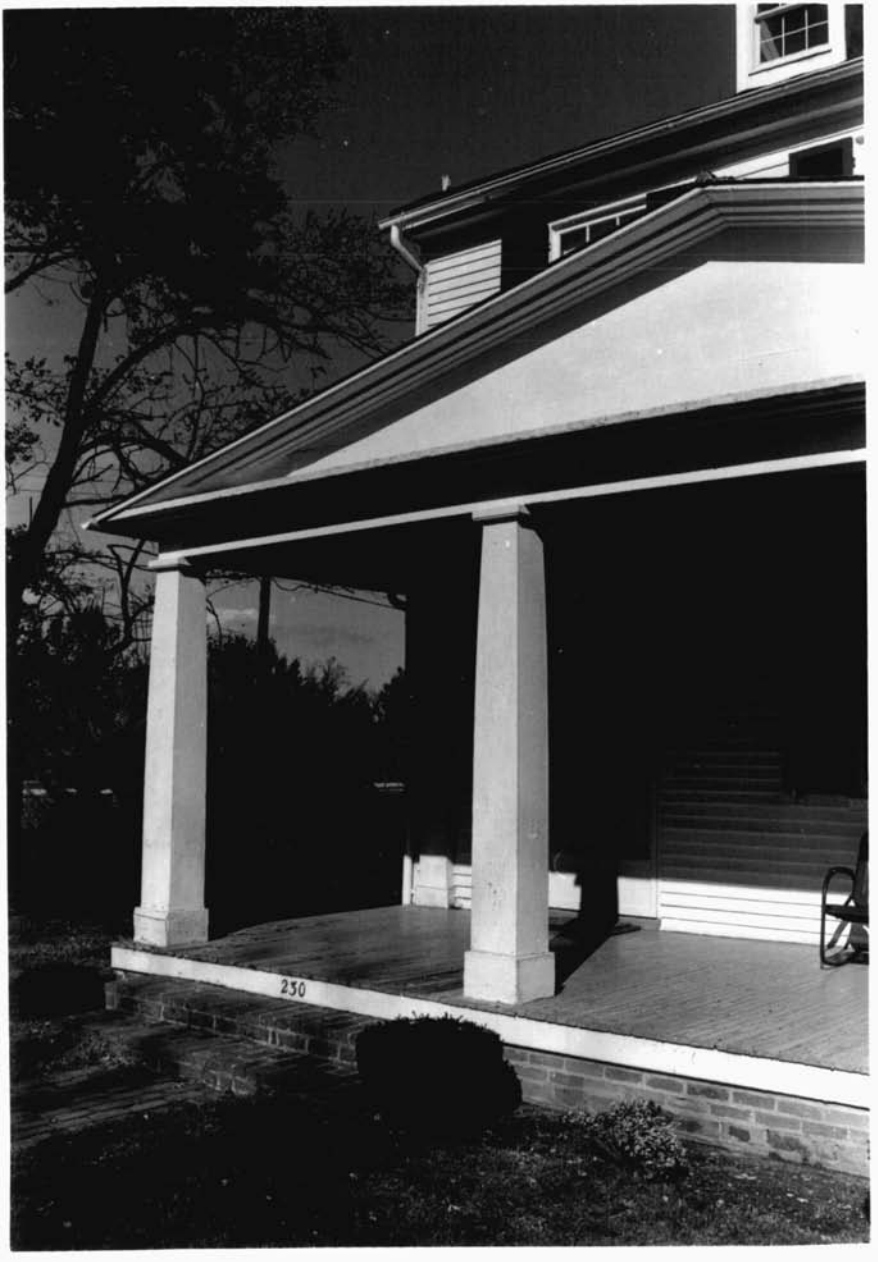
Verbal Boundary Description:

Boundary Justification:




SM-52
BUENA VISTA
ST. MARY'S CO.
MARYLAND
18-356890
4239910


Greenhill Run
McIntosh Run
Radio Tower (WKIK)
Old St Aloysius Cem
Tintop Hill
HOLLYWOOD 3.4 MI.
(HOLLYWOOD) 5660 I SE
GREENBRIAR ROAD
Substa
Radio Tower
St Pauls Cem
Hospital
St Marys Academy
Father White Sch
St Aloysius Ch
Leonard Hall Sch
New St Aloysius Cem
Courthouse
Sewage Disposal
Ryken High Sch
Town Run
Leonardtown
REDGATE 3 MI.
RYS CITY 14 MI.
SM-52
Buena Vista
Feet
LEONARDTOWN, MD.


230