NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

EASEMENT

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations 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 Handsell

other names Webb House, D-127

2. Location

street & number 4835 Vienna Rhodesdale Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Vienna ☒ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Dorchester code 019 zip code 21869

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 2-7-08

State or 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 this property is:
- ☐ entered in the National Register.
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Handsell (D-127)
Name of Property

Dorchester County, MD
County and State

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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial/Georgian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick
roof Metal
other

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 pattern of our history.

☐ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **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.

Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca.1770 – ca. 1820

Significant Dates

ca. 1770

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

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 files (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository:

Handsell (D-127)
Name of Property

Dorchester County, MD
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2 acres Rhodesdale, MD quad

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	429194	4262611	3			
2				4			

☐ 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 Jacquelyn K. Bateman
Organization Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance, Inc. date August 3, 2007
street & number 50 Bay Breeze Drive telephone
city or town Lewes state DE zip code 19958

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 SHPO or FPO)

name
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction 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:

Handsell, also known as the Webb House, is located on Vienna Rhodesdale Road (formerly Indiantown Road), north of the town of Vienna in Dorchester County, Maryland. The late 18th century brick house is located in a rural agricultural area and sits on a two acre parcel surrounded by 1400 acres of farmland which has been placed under an agricultural conservation easement. The property bears the historic name of a 1665 land grant; the original 484 acre land grant has been in the Webb family since 1892. The current owners of the house, David and Carol Lewis, purchased Handsell and the two acres with the intention of preserving it and to study the history of the house and the land.

The house is a fine example of a late 18th century Georgian style manor house. It is a brick structure, one and a half stories over an English basement. The south façade is laid in Flemish bond above a quarter-round molded water table. Handsell is five bays wide and has a central entrance holding a double door flanked by windows; the brickwork in this area projects from the wall surface by about four inches to suggest a pavilion. The windows on the south façade have been reduced in width by about four inches and the original jack arches have been replaced with crude flat arches, the brickwork of which is not as fine as the original. The secondary elevations are laid in common bond, the east gable having a string course. There is an interior chimney in both gables and a single dormer on each side of the "A" roof. The interior retains a fair amount of original fabric including an early fireplace surround which has been removed to a protected site for restoration. The west side of the basement originally housed the kitchen, as evidenced by a cooking fireplace and the remains of a beehive oven, reputedly the only surviving oven of its kind on the Eastern Shore (Stump, 2005). The remainder of the basement was divided into two smaller rooms. A fire in the early 19th century required some exterior rebuilding to the rear and end walls, and the interior woodwork appears to date from the period 1810-20. The house has remained vacant for some seventy years, but despite deterioration and vandalism retains sufficient integrity to inform a comprehensive and accurate restoration.

General Description:

The 40'3" x 20'11" brick house was built on a tall basement, 6'6" from grade to the ovolo-molded water table. Its principal façade, laid in Flemish bond, is five bays wide with the center door and two flanking windows in a pavilion 4" forward of the rest of the façade. Basement windows were located directly beneath the openings of the first floor including the door. A single dormer window centered above the door is the only window on this side of the "A" roof (currently sheathed in corrugated metal). Both gables have two small windows flanking the chimneys. Although the back of the building is five bays long on the first story, there are only three bays below. The rear façade is all on a single plane, laid in common bond without water table. Like the principal façade there is a single dormer penetrating the roof.

The plan of the first and second floors consists of a central stair passage with two flanking rooms. Each of the two rooms on the first story contains a fireplace on the gable wall, one of which retains an original Federal period mantel. Ceilings in the first-floor rooms measure 11' high. On the second story there is a structure in the west room which was a fireplace, but its hearth is approximately two and one-half feet above the floor. The east room chimney rises through the room approximately one foot from the gable wall. The basement contains neither central passage nor stair but only three rooms consisting of a three-bay-long kitchen, a pantry and another smaller room on the east that may have served as a cook's room. Apparently, access to the upper stories was by way of an exterior stair which no longer exists.

A small one-story shed was built adjoining the east gable early in the 20th century to house the office of the farm overseer. There was no communication between it and the main block. It did not contribute to the significance of the site and has since been removed.

Summary Statement of Significance:

Handsell is significant under Criterion C for its architecture, as an example of a substantial manor house of the late 18th century. Its form, 1-1/2 stories over a raised basement, is unusual in the region. The house retains evidence of a kitchen in the basement which apparently did not communicate directly with the upper story, a rare plan feature; the remnant of a beehive oven is also noteworthy. Some rebuilding of exterior walls, and interior finishes dating from ca. 1810-1820, reflect the effects of a fire in the early 19th century. Despite deterioration and vandalism, the house retains sufficient historic fabric to inform a comprehensive and accurate restoration.

Resource History and Historic Context:

The land surrounding Handsell is historically linked to the early Native Americans of the Nanticoke and Chicone tribes. Located on the Nanticoke River and Chicone Creek north of Vienna, Dorchester County, the land was the site of a Chicone village. This site was established as an Indian reservation by the state of Maryland in 1720, but in 1768 the Maryland legislature passed a bill authorizing the purchase of all remaining rights to Chicone Indian lands from the Nanticoke Indians. (Rountree and Davidson, 159). The house called Handsell was most likely built between 1770 and 1782 by Henry Steele. Today the house stands alone in the middle of 1,400 acres of farmland recently placed in an agricultural conservation easement.

A 1678 proclamation by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland formally acknowledged the Eastern Shore "Indian towns" including Chicone on the Nanticoke River. Chicone, one of the largest Native American villages, already contained some land patented by the English and held by men who had no interest in displacing the native people who lived there.

The property derives its name from a patent awarded in 1665 to Thomas Taylor, a licensed "Indian trader" and later a high ranking military officer. On July 13, 1665 he received a land grant called Handsell for 700 acres which encompassed the main Native American residential sites within the Chicone Indian town lands. It is likely these were friendly patents held by Taylor to protect the Indian towns from other Englishmen. During the late 17th century, Taylor was an influential county justice who often served Maryland's provincial government as an envoy to the Nanticokes and was also the nominal landlord of the Nanticoke paramount chief since he was the owner of record for the land grant that included the site of the Nanticoke Fort at Chicone. (Rountree and Davidson, 146). Taylor served in many capacities including sheriff of Dorchester County 1665-1668.

In 1693 ownership of Handsell was transferred to a Christopher Nutter, an "Indian trader" who had served since 1670 as the interpreter for the region. In 1721 a serious conflict arose between the colonists and the Native Americans after Nutter's heirs sold their land to a John Rider, who almost immediately tried to seize the 700

acres of Handsell, including the site of the Nanticoke Fort. The Maryland government sided with the Native Americans and ordered John Rider off the reservation. By 1742 only a few Nanticokes remained on their land.

In 1753 Chicone was made a proprietary manor, making the reservation the property of Lord Baltimore. By 1768 the Maryland legislature passed a bill authorizing the purchase of all remaining rights to the Chicone lands from the Nanticokes. In 1770 the land was deeded back to the heirs of John Rider, by then deceased. Henry Steele and his wife Ann Billings, a step-granddaughter of John Rider, were deeded 484 acres of the southern half of the Handsell tract, the portion bordered by the Chicone Creek and Nanticoke River, the site of the Native American village. According to Dorchester County history, Henry Steele built a "large and pretentious home" on this property. The Steele family continued to distinguish itself with descendants such as Isaac Nevitt Steele, who was among the most distinguished lawyers in the history of the Maryland bar and became Deputy Attorney General.

In 1779-1780 British privateers raided and robbed homes along the waters of the Chesapeake Bay including the Nanticoke River. Raids continued on the River through 1781. Again in 1812-1814 the British raided and burned homes along the Nanticoke including "Weston", the home of Governor John Henry in the town of Vienna. A record of an 1856 interview with a local citizen, Henry Winder, mentions a fire at a "property north of Vienna where the large brick house and other structures burned in the fall of 1804-06" (Dorchester County Library, Rider family files). Located just north of Vienna, Handsell which stands today exhibits signs of a fire and a partial collapse. Today it retains a brick façade and east wall that date from the 18th century, however, the roof, chimney tops and interior woodwork date from the 1810-1820 period, indicating it was rebuilt to a smaller scale after the fire.

Handsell remained in the Steele family until 1837 when it was sold to John Sheehee. In 1849 the trustee of Sheehee's estate sold it to Jacob Wilson, who owned it until 1859 when it was sold to the Thompson family. In 1892 the Thompsons sold Handsell to the Webb family, who have held the large farm in various family partnerships, and have continously farmed approximately 1400 acres of land surrounding the Handsell house since that date.

The house at Handsell with two acres and a right-of-way to the Chicone Creek were recently purchased by David and Carol Lewis. The Webb family has also placed the entire 1400 acres under an agricultural conservation easement. The Lewises have expressed their willingness to sell Handsell to the newly formed Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving Handsell for future generations to study and explore the rich history of the land, the river and the people of this place.

Considerable archeological investigations have taken place at the Chicone Site (e. g. Busby 2000) in the vicinity of Handsell. The present nomination is limited to the two-acre parcel immediately surrounding the house. The surrounding property has not yet been fully evaluated for possible significance under Criterion D.

Major Bibliographical References:

Bourne, Michael Handsell Analysis 2006

Busby, Virginia R. Report of Archaeological Investigations at Site 18DO11 (The Chicone Site #1), Dorchester County, Maryland. 2000. Ms., Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, MD.

Dorchester County Land Records, Courthouse, Cambridge, MD

Forman, H. Chandlee Early Buildings and Historic Artifacts in Tidewater Maryland The Eastern Shore Easton, MD: Eastern Shore Publishers' Associates, 1989, pp. 308-311, figs. 208-209.

Hatcher, Patricia Law Abstract of Graves of Revolutionary Patriots Dallas, TX Pioneer Heritage Press, 1987.

Henry, J. Winfield Letters and Papers of Gov. John Henry Baltimore: George W. King Printing Co., 1904, p. 126.

Maryland State Archives, Survey of Papers (Division of Plats) MSA A 65-135.

Roundtree, Helen C. and Davidson, Thomas E. Eastern Shore Indians of Maryland and Virginia Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997, pp. 108, 113, 146-150, 154-155.

Semmes, Raphael Captains and Mariners Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, pp. 362, 399-400.

Shomette, Donald G. Pirates of the Chesapeake Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1985, p. 274.

Stump, Brice Heritage Style Section, Salisbury Daily Times 2005 Gannett Press

Jones, Elias Revised History of Dorchester County Baltimore: Read-Taylor Press, 1925. pp. 158-167, 400.

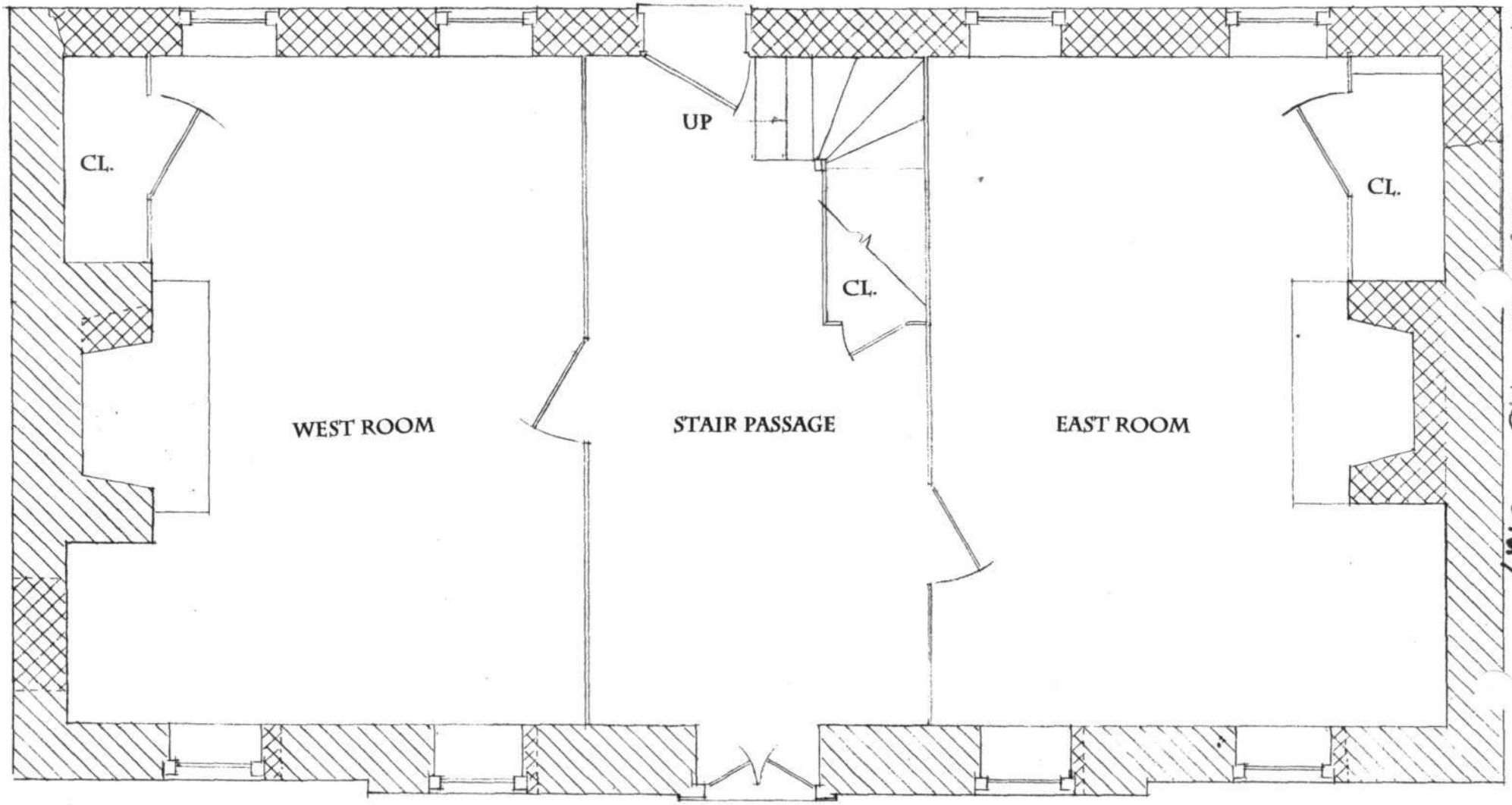
Weeks, Christopher Between the Nanticoke and the Choptank Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 115.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described among the Land Records of Dorchester County, Maryland, Liber MLB 567, Folio 407.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property, two acres, comprises the remnant of the property historically associated with the resource.



Handsell Dorchester MD D-127

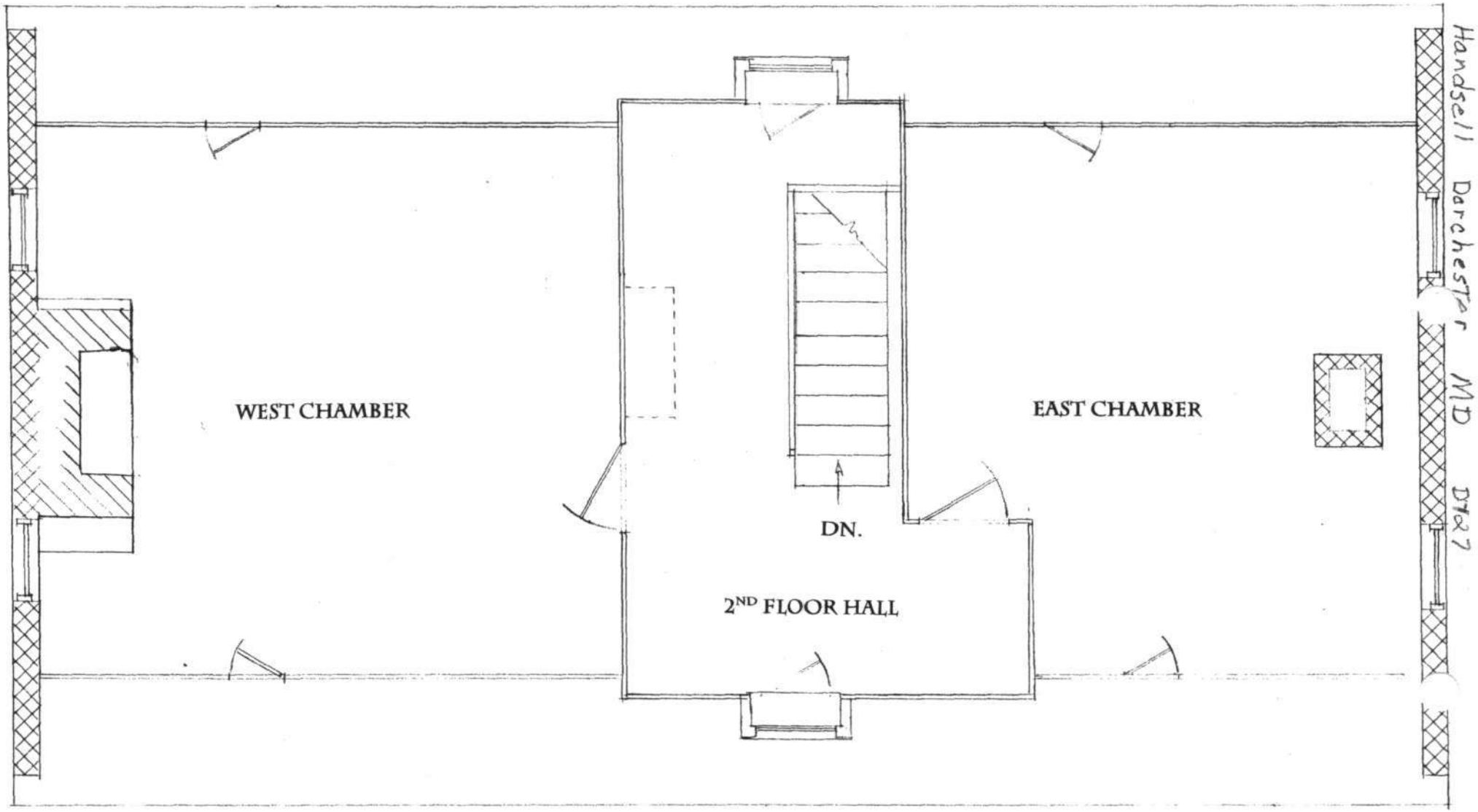
LEGEND
PERIOD 1
PERIOD II

HANDSELL - FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE · ¼" = 1'-0" - AUGUST, 2006 - M. BOURNE

40' 3" X 20' 11"

D-127



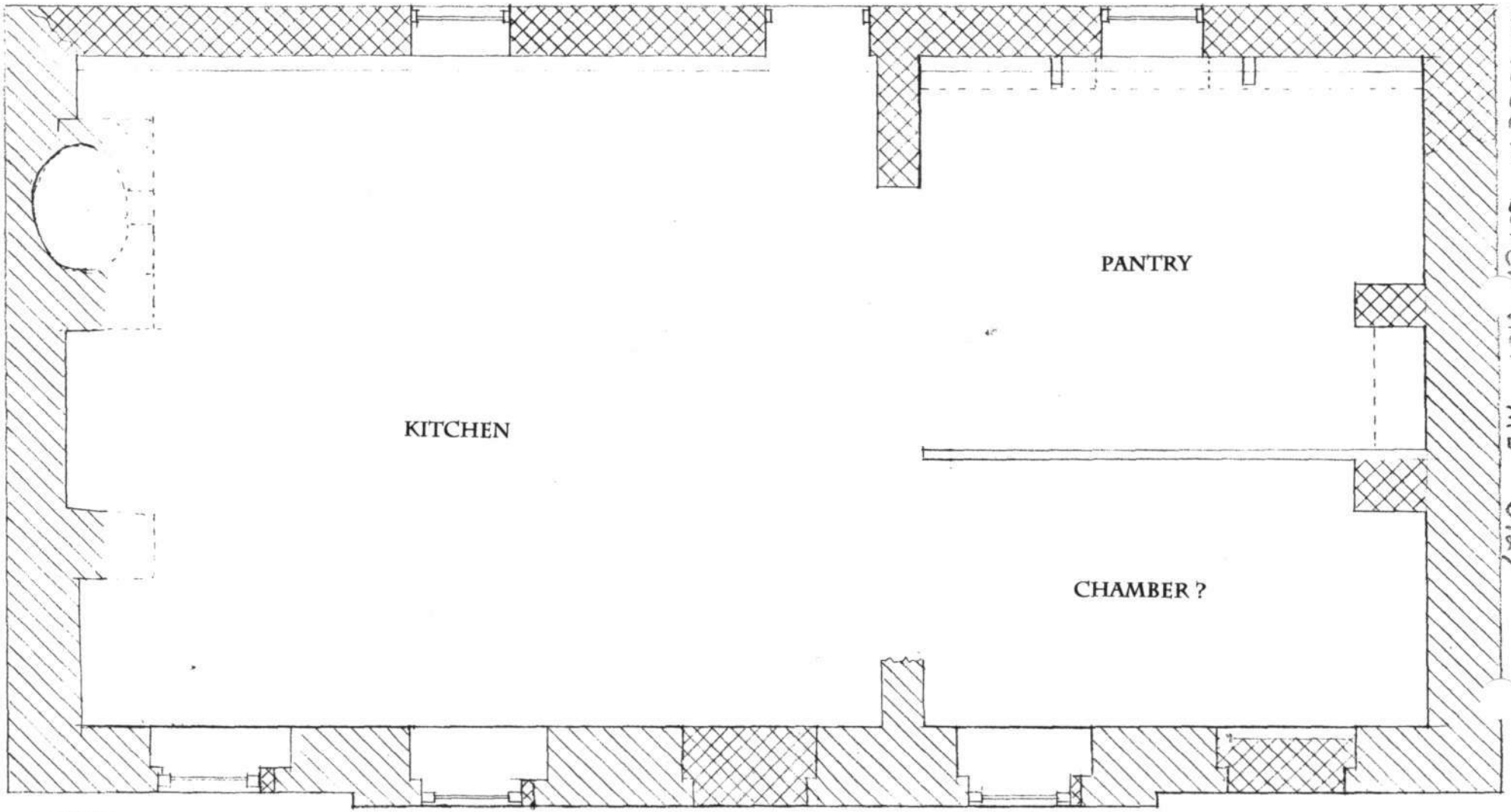
LEGEND
PERIOD I
PERIOD II

HANDSELL - SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE · ¼" = 1'-0" - AUGUST, 2006 - M. BOURNE

40' 3" x 20' 11"

D-127



Handsell Dorchester MD D-127

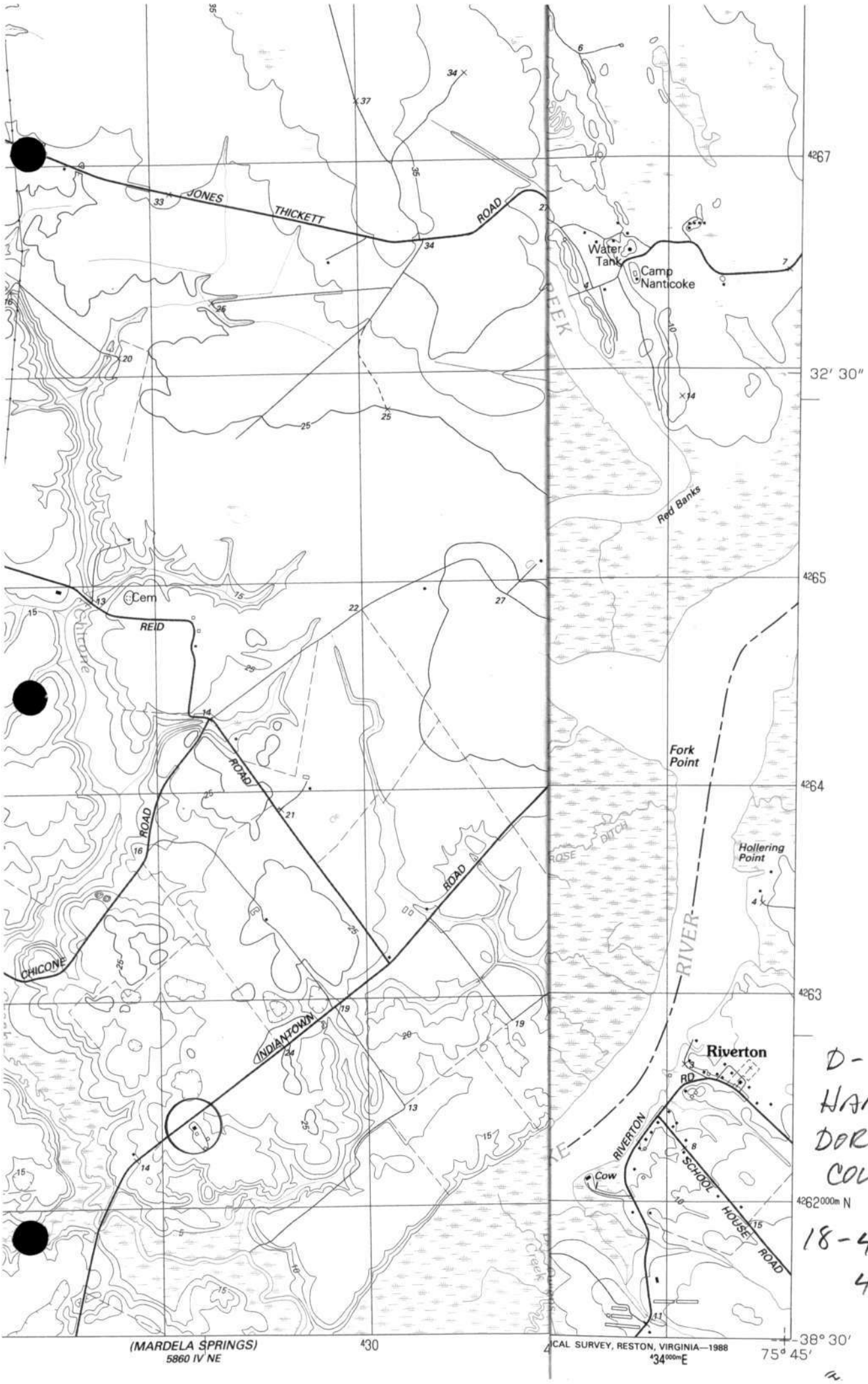
LEGEND
PERIOD I
PERIOD II

HANDSELL - GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE · ¼" = 1'-0" - AUGUST, 2006 - M. BOURNE

40'3" x 20'11"

D-127



D-127
HANDSELL
DORCHESTER
COUNTY, MD

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