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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Ridgeton Farm

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Bay Shore Road, .5 miles southwest of
Taylor Island Town

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

VICINITY OF

CODE
24

COUNTY

Dorchester

CODE

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES, RESTRICTED
- YES, UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. J. Stapleforte Neild

STREET & NUMBER

Taylor's Island

CITY, TOWN

Taylor's Island

STATE

Maryland 21669

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dorchester County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Maryland 21613

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ridgeton Farm is located on the east side of Bay Shore Road, one-half mile southwest of Taylor Island Town, on Taylor's Island, Dorchester County, Maryland.

The house is an Italianate style, frame mansion of two stories raised about four feet above grade and resting on a brick foundation. It is three bays long and three bays deep and has a hipped roof with a center gable, a widow's walk and two huge chimneys.

The facade has a one story screened porch with pairs of square columns supporting the roof. Its cornice is composed of shaped brackets with drop finials. The main cornice is slightly heavier and the brackets are pierced. Double windows of the facade have four-over-four pane sash and louvered shutters. The central window of the second story is composed of three parts with a cornice above. Shutters are lacking on the latter as well as the small window in the gable. Remaining windows have 6/6 sash. The huge chimneys which flank the widow's walk are remarkable in that they have a set-back, as well as a recessed panel in each face, and decorative cap.

The floor plan of both stories is composed of a central stair hall with two rooms on each side. The same plan exists on the second story. The hall and parlor ceilings have some elegant pierced plaster work along the border as well as a medallion in the center of the ceilings. The door and window architecture resembles the work of the Greek Revival period. Mantels around each of the eight fireplaces are wood and of the simple design of that period.

From the front of the second floor hall an enclosed stair ascends to the attic. The attic houses a large octagonal king post to which the rafters are fastened by spike and nails. The rafters are hewn and pit sawn, and the flooring bears marks of a circular saw.

A flight of steps ascends to a hatch which opens onto the widow's walk. From the latter one can view the surrounding farm lands and marshes as well as the Chesapeake Bay and across twelve miles to Calvert County.

There is a one and one-half story wing to the rear and a one story wing, the former reputedly an earlier structure.

*Also on property, complex of 14th C. ruins - 5/25/77
(1/77)*

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1857-1860 BUILDER/ARCHITECT _____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

During the second half of the nineteenth century, this imposing Victorian mansion was the seat of one of the most influential men in the county and the center of a prosperous farm. Today, in spite of its succession of owners, Ridgeton wears its 120 years with grace and dignity, and is one of the most important Victorian-style dwellings in Maryland.

Ridgeton was constructed between 1857 and 1860 by Levi D. Travers, Jr., on land that had been in the possession of the Travers family for at least half a century. Travers was descended from Henry Travers, a schoolteacher who emigrated from England before 1750, became a Justice for Dorchester County, and served in the colonial legislature. The family increased and amassed extensive landholdings on Taylor's Island; in the Tax Assessment of 1783, eight members of the Travers family accounted for the ownership of nearly 1,200 acres of land on the island. John C. Travers, the grandfather of the builder of Ridgeton, combined farming and shipbuilding with mercantile activities. The story is told of his wife, Mary Dove Travers, who boarded the flagship of the British fleet during the War of 1812 and successfully negotiated the surrender of one of her husband's captured merchant vessels. Legend also claims that, as a member of the local militia, John C. Travers took part in the capture of a British vessel in Tobacco Stick, now Madison Bay, but his name does not appear on a list of those authorized by Congress in 1817 to receive a bounty for their participation in the action.

Levi D. Travers, the son of John C. Travers, expanded his father's agricultural and mercantile interests. On the last day of 1834, he obtained a patent for a tract of land on Taylor's Island to be known as "Traverse Conclusion", the product of a resurvey of five contiguous properties that Travers had inherited. The 300½-acre tract included over one-half of Taylor's Folly", together with parts of "Hazzard", "Intent", "Traverse Adventure", and Robsons Folly". Upon his death in 1844, Traver's son, Levi D. Travers, Jr., inherited "Traverse Conclusion" which was by then commonly known as the Ridge Farm or Farms.

Born on November 21, 1828, Levi D. Travers, Jr. was only sixteen years old when he came into possession of nearly 400 acres of land

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CONTINUATION SHEET Ridgeton Farm
Taylor's Island, ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1
Maryland

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

and his father's business enterprises. After a period of study for the Methodist ministry at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, Travers decided to return to Taylor's Island to administer his properties. Here he made his home for the rest of his life, becoming deeply involved in the political affairs of the county and the state. Travers was twice elected judge of the orphan's court and was appointed by Governor Thomas King Carroll to fill a vacancy in the office of the chief justice; thus, even though he received no formal training in the law, Travers was known in the community as "Judge Travers". During his career, Travers served on the Dorchester County school board, and as both member and chaplain of the Maryland Senate. He was at one time president of one insurance company in the county and a director of another; Travers also preached to Methodist congregations in the area, and was secretary of nearby Bethlehem Methodist Church (D-24).

The site on which Ridgeton was constructed appears to have been occupied by farm buildings and a dwelling house before 1857. In an 1858 journal entry, Travers mentioned having "moved dwelling house and stables at Ridge". The two-story main house, measuring forty feet square and embellished with rich Victorian detailing, is adjoined by a smaller, one-and-a-half-story wing which has always served as a kitchen. This kitchen wing appears to have predated the main structure, and may have been moved from elsewhere on the farm to the building site. In 1860, however, Travers recorded in his journal the total cost of erecting and furnishing his new home; he included in these calculations a "back building, 22 ft. by 15 with 1 story 10 ft. pitch with cistern attached". The most likely explanation for this seeming contradiction is that Travers had to carry out an extensive remodeling of the existing dwelling in order to adapt it for its intended use.

Travers began work on Ridgeton early in 1857, when he had lumber cut from his own property to be seasoned. During the next three years, work proceeded simultaneously on the main house, the "back building", two barns, a cattle shed, granary, corn crib and stable. The Judge made frequent trips to Baltimore to purchase materials that could not be had locally--walnut balusters and metal locks and hardware, for instance--and imported craftsmen from outside the

See continuation sheet #1

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Taylor's Island
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

area to do the more specialized plastering and masonry. It is clear from his journal entries that Travers spared no expense for his new residence. In 1860 he estimated the cost of building Ridgeton to have reached \$5,000., with another \$1,500. having been spent on furnishings.

Travers occupied Ridgeton until his death in May 1907, at which time his estate was in danger of forced sale to settle debts. He managed to leave Ridgeton to his daughter Augusta, wife of Daniel B. Prettyman, as well as making other bequests to his son, Levi Dickinson Travers, and daughter, Manie Travers Noble. Clause 15 of Travers' will stipulated that in the event of her death, Ridgeton should pass from Augusta Prettyman to her son, Levi D. Travers Prettyman; this, in fact, occurred, although the younger Prettyman bequeathed the property to his father in 1919. At this point ownership of Ridgeton passed from the direct descendants of Levi D. Travers; in 1956 the house and farm were purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Stapleforte Neild, the present owners and residents of Ridgeton.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

D-22

See attached sheet #3

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 15 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	3,8,6	04,0	4,2	5,7	70,0	B	1,8	3,8,6	1,4,0	4,2	5,7	5,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C	1,8	3,8,5	9,4,0	4,2	5,7	4,0,0	D	1,8	3,8,5	8,2,0	4,2	5,7	5,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point 600 feet S.W. of Hooper Neck Road on the driveway running behind Ridgeton Farm, then S.W. on that driveway 800 feet to its intersection with another dirt road, then S.E. 500 feet, then N.E. 900 feet, then N.W. 600 feet to the point of the beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Michael Bourne, Architectural Consultant/Randolph M. Cornell

bjn

Summer Intern

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust

DATE
8/76

STREET & NUMBER

21 State Circle

TELEPHONE
267-1212

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

STATE
Maryland 21401

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

John M. Pearce

DATE

4/21/77

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
- INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Taylor's Island,
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Stapleforte Neild, owners.

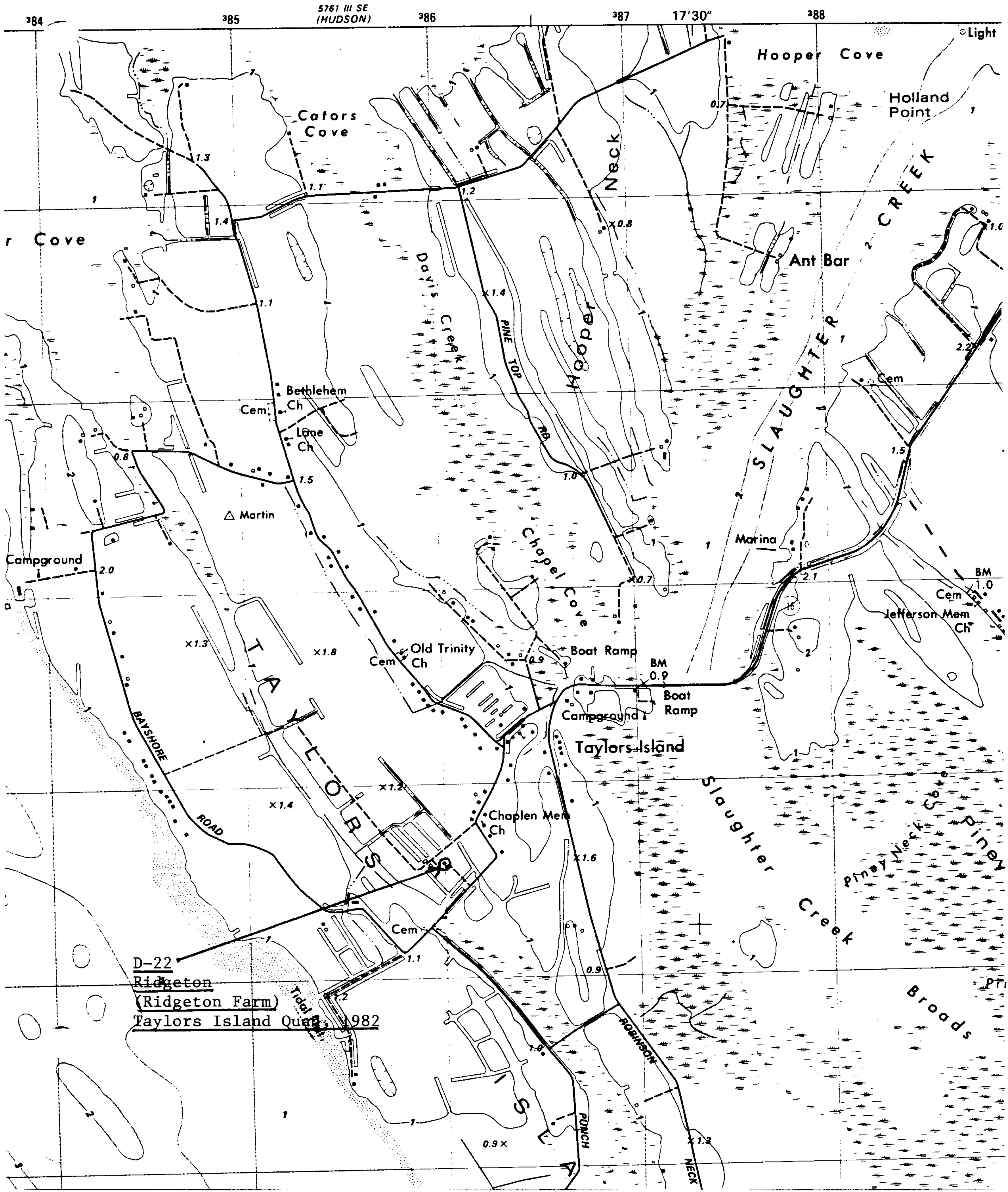
Interview with Mrs. Jean Noble Chaffinch, great-granddaughter of Levi D. Travers, Jr., and owner of his journals and count books.

Maryland Hall of Records, Land and Probate Records of Dorchester County and Tax Assessment of 1783.

Jones, Elias. New Revised History of Dorchester County, Maryland. Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1966.

Richardson, Hester Dorsey. Side-Lights on Maryland History. Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1967.

Hon. Levi D. Travers", in Portrait and Biographical Record of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. New York: Chapman Publishing Company, 1898.



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 Ridgeton
 (Ridgeton Farm)
 Taylor's Island Quar., 1982

.13 X 1.63 75% D-22



RIDGETON FARM
Taylor's Island
Dorchester County, Md.
Photographed by Michael Bourne
1975
Exterior, from S.E.

M. Bourne March 1975