Easement

NR

CAR-45

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received
date entered 9

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Potter Hall (Preferred)

and/or common Potters Landing

## 2. Location

street & number Martin Lane N/A not for publication

city, town Williston X vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Caroline code 011

## 3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ district | ___ public | X occupied | ___ agriculture | ___ museum |
| X building(s) | X private | ___ unoccupied | ___ commercial | ___ park |
| ___ structure | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational | X private residence |
| ___ site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ___ entertainment | ___ religious |
| ___ object | ___ in process | ___ yes: restricted | ___ government | ___ scientific |
| | ___ being considered | ___ yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial | ___ transportation |
| | X not applicable | X no | ___ military | ___ other: |

## 4. Owner of Property

name Dr. and Mrs. Monroe Martin

street & number Potter Hall, Route 2, Box 64

city, town Denton ___ vicinity of state Maryland 21629

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Caroline County Courthouse

street & number Market Street

city, town Denton state Maryland 21629

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined elegible? ___ yes X no

date 1976-1977 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Potter Hall is an early 19th century, Federal-influenced dwelling which overlooks the Choptank River near Denton, Caroline County, Maryland. The principal (west) facade faces the Choptank River, and appears in three sections: the northernmost of these is a tall 2½ story Flemish bond brick block, three bays wide by two bays deep, which adjoins a lower 2½ story, two bay wide central section, also of Flemish bond brick. The third (southern) section is of frame construction, one story high and three bays wide, and was added in 1930 to house a modern kitchen. Each of the three sections has a gable roof, with the ridgeline running north-south. The brick sections of the house attained their present form in 1808, when a one-story, two-bay, ca. 1750 building was raised to 2½ stories (incorporated in the central section) and the large northern block, known as the "Mansion", was added. The east (river side) and west (land side) facades of the northern block are identical, with a side entrance and two 12/12 sash windows in jack-arched openings on each story. The entrances feature six-panel doors enframed with fluted pilasters surmounted by semicircular fanlights. Recent porticoes with Chinese trellis balustrades and fluted columns replace the former two-story verandas. Both facades have two gabled dormers, each holding 9/6 sash. The central section has an entrance on its east facade, sheltered by a small gabled porch and flanked by two 9/6 sash, with two similar windows on the second story; the west facade is similar but lacks the entrance. A gabled dormer, added after 1920, appears on either slope of the roof. The juxtaposition of the northern and central sections creates a center-hall plan. The interior retains a great deal of original woodwork, including paneled doors, molded cornices, chair rail, door and window trim, fireplace surrounds, cabinetry, and stairs.

# 7. Description



Condition
X excellent
__ good
__ fair
__ deteriorated
__ ruins
__ unexposed

Check one
__ unaltered
X altered

Check one
X original site
__ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY See Continuation Sheet #7

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The central section, originally a small brick story and a half house apparently built about 1750, was raised to two and one half stories, apparently when the northern section was added in 1808. This is indicated by a comparison of the brick work and outside window sills in the two sections. Glazed headers in Flemish bond, common in the 18th century brick buildings and rectangular outside window sills appear only in the first story of the central section, whereas the bricks and curved outside window-sills in the second story are identical with those used in the 1808 addition. In the main, the bricks are laid in Flemish bond, although at times, particularly in the south wall, courses of English and common bond appear. From evidence in the basement apparently the central section had no basement originally.

The east facade (the land side) has a door and small portico with an "A" roof between two windows. The west facade (the river side) is like the east facade but lacks the outside door. A chimney erected in 1808 rises adjacent to the south gable of the northern 1808 section. The windows on the east and west facades have 9/6 sash and the panes on the second floor are smaller than those on the first. The windows in the south wall and the dormers (added after 1920) have 6/6 sash.

The central section is lower by one step than the 1808 section. The first floor contains a dining room, office, lavatory and stairs leading to the second floor and appears to have been remodeled around 1840-1850, since all the trim dates from that period. There is a fireplace with a cupboard with panelled doors on one side. The mantel, chair rail, and trim around the doors have no carving.

The plan of the second floor duplicates that of the first, with two bedrooms replacing the dining room and office. Original window trim of the 1808 period is present, a further indication that the second floor was added in 1808. Stairs lead to an attic bedroom with wide floor boards.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

With the exception of these wide floor boards, the floors in the central section are the same as those in the northern section which were laid down in 1808. Little of the original hardware, with the possible exception of a few plate latches, remains. Ceilings are low on both floors. They are eight feet high.

The Northern Section

The east and west facades of the "Mansion", the tallest portion of the building, are identical, with side entrance and two windows on each story. The mansion added a wide hall connecting the entrances in the two facades and two rooms on each floor and an attic. For many years two story verandas stood before the river and land sides, but these were removed sometime before 1930. and replaced by small porticoes, which in turn were replaced in 1959 by the present porticoes with Chinese trellis balustrades and fluted columns.

The two facades and north gable are laid in Flemish bond without water table or belt course. Jack arches have been installed in the two principal facades above the 12/12 sash windows of both storys. Original jack arches exist on the north gable, which also has two windows on each story. They are asymmetrical on the first and second stories because of the difference in room size and use. Although windows on both stories have the same number of panes, those on the second story are smaller than the first story. Both sides of the "A" roof have two dormers with "A" roofs and 9/6 sash. The attic window in the north gable has 4/4 panes and two original chimneys rise in this gable. The south gable has one window with 6/6 sash.

On the first story entrances the architraves have fluted pilasters with semicircular trim with three keystones. At the top of the fluted pilasters is a course of reeding. The semi-circular fanlight is divided into seven segments with swag-like muntins. The second story doors have the same keystone trim but differ slightly in that they have herringbone reeding above the fluted pilasters and an elliptical arch in the fanlight.

The entrance hall on the first floor has a molded cornice and a chair rail with herringbone reeding in its fascia, both of which are original to the mansion. The doors and jambs have raised panels except the top panels, which are recessed. The exterior doors have vertical boards with beaded edges inside and six panels outside. Beneath the single flight of stairs is a closet enclosed by a wall with raised panels and a four panel door. The stair has turned newels and two rectangular balusters per step with bold rail. A very delicate fretwork vine motif is applied to the step ends and "there is a shadow-rail ascending along the wall with herringbone reeded pilasters.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

North of the entrance hall on the first floor are two rooms, the west room being larger than the east. The east room or study has a fireplace on its north wall with mantel and flanking cabinets built as a single visual unit. The course of reeding above the fluted pilasters of the mantel carries across the wall and separates the lower cabinet doors with raised panels from the upper cabinet doors with recessed panels. The fascia of the mantel shelf has fine gouge and drill work typical of the finer Federal dwellings. A well defined rope molding frames the fireplace. The three piece chair rail, window and door trim and the six panel doors are original to the mansion.

The west room or living room has two windows flanking the chimney breast. Its mantel has herringbone reeding in the pilasters and a course of reeding above the pilasters. Rope molding is below the shelf and frames the fireplace. Original trim exists in the room around the windows and doors, and a chair rail with reeding in its fascia encircles the room as does a molded cornice.

On the second floor the hall and rooms have the same arrangement as on the first, except to gain a bath and large closet, the master bedroom, which lies above the living room, has been reduced in size. The smaller room on the east duplicates the study below, except that the fireplace and mantel are smaller and lack the rope molding and the gouge and drill work.

In the master bedroom the fireplace and mantel are also smaller than those in the living room below. Instead of a course of reeding above the pilasters a delicate band of fretwork crosses the mantel. Three plinths with reeding support the shelf. A molded cornice encircles the room, as does a chair rail with small squares of reeding in its fascia.

The hall on the second floor duplicates the one in the floor below, except that the stairs rising to the attic are steeper and the closet underneath them has a four panel door with recessed panels and the fascia of the chair rails have no reeding.

The mansion retains its original floors of heart pine and much of the hardware. Most of the large box locks with brass knobs and key hole escutcheons are original to the mansion. Ceilings are higher in the mansion than in the earlier section. They are ten and one half feet high on the first floor and twelve and one half feet high on the second.

The Southern Section (circa 1930)

This section was built on the site of an old log wing used as a kitchen at the time the mansion was built. It contains a modern kitchen.

# 8. Significance



**Period**
___ prehistoric
___ 1400–1499
___ 1500–1599
___ 1600–1699
___ 1700–1799
X 1800–1899
___ 1900–

**Areas of Significance—Check and justify below**
___ archeology-prehistoric
___ archeology-historic
___ agriculture
X architecture
___ art
X commerce
___ communications
___ community planning
___ conservation
___ economics
___ education
___ engineering
___ exploration/settlement
___ industry
___ invention
___ landscape architecture
___ law
___ literature
___ military
___ music
___ philosophy
X politics/government
___ religion
___ science
___ sculpture
___ social/humanitarian
___ theater
___ transportation
___ other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1808 **Builder/Architect** unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Applicable criteria: B and C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Potter Hall derives significance from two sources. Architecturally, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Federal style as expressed in the region of Maryland's Eastern Shore. In the context of Caroline County's historic architecture, Potter Hall is one of six surviving large brick plantation houses dating from the late 18th-early 19th century. Its abundant woodwork presents the best example in the county of the delicacy of design and execution which characterizes early Federal ornament. Especially notable are the mantel and cabinets in the ground floor east room or study, where an unusual molding course unites the entire wall in a single composition; the paneled spandrel beneath the stair and delicate vine-motif fretwork applied to the step ends; and the herringbone pattern which is featured in the decoration of the mantel in the ground floor west room, entrance hall chair rail, and second story exterior doors. The second-story entrances, which originally served broad porches, and unique in Caroline County. Potter Hall is also significant for its association with the Potter family, prominent in local and state affairs. Zabdiel Potter, a sea captain from Rhode Island, settled on the site in the mid-eighteenth century and built a wharf and the small brick house which was incorporated into the central section of the present structure. Zabdiel developed Potter's Landing into a key early port for the shipping of tobacco to Baltimore. His oldest son, Nathaniel, figured prominently in the Revolutionary War; he held the rank of major and served as purchasing agent for provisions for the American troops. His nephew, Nathaniel II, who also lived on the site before moving to Baltimore in 1797, was one of the first American-trained physicians and a founder of the University of Maryland Medical School. Nathaniel II's younger brother, William, stayed at Potter's Landing. It was William who added the "Mansion" to the original small dwelling in 1808, and the present form of Potter Hall reflects the period of his occupation. A successful merchant, mill operator, and a director of the Farmer's Bank of Annapolis, William Potter became Brigadier General of the Maryland Militia in the War of 1812 and was subsequently elected to the state legislature and served on the Governor's Council. During his lifetime Potter's Landing was the leading shipping port in Caroline County.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Starting with a small brick house built sometime around the middle of the eighteenth century, which over the years evolved to the present structure, Potter Hall is, according to Michael Bourne, architecturally of importance because it is one of six large brick plantation houses dating from the early days of Caroline County's history. Like the Daffin House (CAR-1) Potter Hall started as a small brick house which was enlarged in 1808 and again in 1930. The later addition created a telescopic structure, making it similar to Castle Hall (CAR-4). Without the third section, its form and floor plan were very similar

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

to Winfield (Thomas House) in Queen Annes County. Willow Grove (CAR-3) and Potter Hall both have entrances with semicircular transoms above wide paneled doors flanked by flutted pilasters. None of the existing large houses of Caroline has second story exterior doors like Potter Hall. Other great houses of Caroline County have good woodwork but none exemplifies the delicacy typical of the early 19th century work as well as Potter Hall. Notable features include the paneled spandrel beneath the stair and the delicate vine motif fretwork applied to the step ends. Reeding is found in the shadow pilasters of the stairs, the chair rail and the four principal mantels. The fireplace wall in the study has an unusual course, like the chair rail, but higher, which forms the capitals of the mantel pilasters and continues across the flanking cabinets, separating the top and bottom doors (photograph 6). This course unites the entire wall. The living room of Potter Hall has the same relationship of fireplace to windows as Willow Grove and Fraziers Flats, i.e., the fireplace is located on the narrower wall and is flanked by two windows. Two other windows on the long wall are located on the left of the fireplace.

Paralleling the evolution of Potter Hall itself, is the increasing importance of its builders, the Potters, in the life of the county, state and nation, which we trace in the following paragraphs.

Patented to Th. Phillips planter on May 17, 1675 by "Cecilius absolute Lord Proprietory of the province of Avalon, Lord Baltimore" as Phillips Range, the land on which Potter Hall stands passed through a succession of owners until 1754 when it came into the possession of Captain Zabdiel Potter, a sea captain from Rhode Island. Although he is reputed to have built a small brick house on the site about 1730, this date is probably too early, since he did not come into possession of the land on which the house stands until 1754. Since Captain Zabdiel Potter was lost at sea and his will was probated in 1761, the house was probably constructed sometime in the period 1754-1761. He built a wharf on the river, and the settlement became the leading shipping point on the upper Choptank, eventually in his honor becoming known as Potters Landing. It remained in use for generations. Seagoing vessels came constantly to load tobacco for English ports and Captain Potter himself commanded one of the vessels, building up an already substantial fortune. Returning, the ships brought supplies to colonists of the vicinity.

Captain Zabdiel Potter had two sons, Nathaniel and Zabdiel. Nathaniel Potter became a prominent figure serving in the Maryland conventions of 1774 and 1776 and as Justice of the Orphans Court. He also served as first major of the militia and as purchasing agent for the Continental Army in Caroline County during the American Revolution. He inherited the home plantation in 1761, and on his death in 1780 his will gave the property to his wife Jane, and by the terms of his will, the home plantation came into the possession of his brother Dr. Zabdiel Potter in 1781 when Jane remarried.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

Dr. Zabdiel Potter was a practicing physician at the outbreak of the Revolution and was commissioned Captain of the First Caroline Company of the flying camp, but resigned to become a surgeon's mate. He prospered greatly and at the time of his death held over 1300 acres of land including the home plantation. He had two sons, Nathaniel and William.

Nathaniel Potter, the elder by a year, was born in 1770 and was eleven years old at the time his father, Dr. Zabdiel Potter, inherited the home plantation, and twenty three years old when his father died, leaving him over 600 acres of land on the Choptank river south of Mill Creek which he sold in 1796, the same year he received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. A year later in 1797, the year the city's charter was obtained, he moved to Baltimore and began practice there; and in 1807 joined with Dr. John Beale Davidge to found a medical school which was the beginning of the University of Maryland. Through the vicissitudes of the school, which became the nucleus of the University of Maryland, chartered by the legislature in 1812, Dr. Nathaniel Potter stood firm. To quote Dr. Clewell Howell "Nothing shook him, and as far as I can judge, to him more than any other man the University owes its existance today." He also did research on the causes and control of yellow fever.

William Potter, the younger son was born in 1771 and in 1773 inherited the home plantation and over 500 acres of land along the Choptank river north of Mill Creek. He became a successful merchant in Denton and was active in banking, milling and trade. In 1806 he became a director of the Farmers Bank of Annapolis. He rebuilt an old mill near Potters Landing on Mill Creek including the building of a heavy dam (now the state road) and the providing of a ship canal up to the mill. During his life Potters Landing was the leading shipping port of Caroline County and lines of sailing vessels plied between it and Baltimore. In 1808 he added the "Mansion" to the original small dwelling on the site, so that Potter Hall owes its present appearance mainly to him. During the war of 1812 he became Brigadier General of the Maryland Militia, subsequently was elected to the legislature and served on the Governor's Council. In the years 1816 and 1831, being the first named, he was next to the governor in state administration.

His wife, Ann Webb Richardson,was the daughter of Colonel William Richardson, one of the patriots of the American Revolution. General Andrew Jackson was entertained frequently at Potter Hall and at the Daffin House nearby before he became President of the United States. On October 17, 1819 Ambrose Marechal, third Archbishop of Baltimore, was an overnight guest and in his diary notes that Potter Hall was a "noble house situated on the Choptank River." Occasions such as these form part of the county tradition attached to the house.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #5

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

Although General William Potter was a slaveholder, it is evident from his will that he eventually came to have strong feelings against the institution. His will stated that his slaves were to be freed at his death and reads "In case any of my children make any legal objections to any of my negroes attaining their freedom as stated in this will, I do hereby declare and direct such child or children shall forfeit all and every devise and bequest made to him, her or them in this will and any such bequest be null and void."

When General Potter died in 1847 his land holdings along the Choptank included the home plantation, amounted to over 1600 acres. Two marble slabs bearing the names of Anne W. Potter and General William Potter now rest in the Denton cemetery. Shortly after his death Potter Hall was purchased by Colonel John Arthur Willis, for whom Williston is named, and remained in his family until early in this century. Subsequently, Potter Hall passed through a number of hands until it was purchased by the present owners in 1953.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on Martin Lane about fifty feet south of its intersection with Williston Road, proceed south 307 feet along Martin Lane. Then proceed west 476 feet to the Choptank River. Follow the riverbank northerly for 360 feet and then proceed east 577 feet to the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These 3¼ acres more or less, all that is left of the many acres attached to Potter Hall when General William Potter died in 1847, are nominated for two reasons. First, the acreage and boundaries correspond to the deed of the property as recorded in Liber 119, Folio 116 in the Land Records of the Caroline County Courthouse in Denton, Maryland. Second, to preserve the setting around Potter Hall and forestall undesireable encroachment.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #6

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3¼ acres more or less

Quadrangle name Hobbs

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 425918 10 | 4129181810 |
| B | | | |
| C | | | |
| D | | | |
| E | | | |
| F | | | |
| G | | | |
| H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

For verbal boundary description, see Continuation Sheet #5

For boundary justification, see Continuation Sheet #5

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| state | N/A | code | county | | code |
| state | | code | county | | code |

## 11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| name/title | Dr. and Mrs. Monroe Martin | | |
| organization | | date | 2 February 1982 |
| street & number | Potter Hall, Rt. 2, Box 64 | telephone | 301-479-0595 |
| city or town | Denton | state | Maryland 21629 |

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature J Mistle 10-22-82

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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2. Earle, Swepson, The Chesapeake Bay Country, Baltimore, Remington Putman, 1938, 381-383.

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5. Weeks, Christopher, editor, Inventory of Historic Sites in Caroline County, based on the historic site survey conducted by Michael Bourne, Annapolis, Maryland Historical Trust, 1980, 35, 54, 23, 27, 45.

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16. Millea, Gerald, F. The Growth of a Church and Community, A sesquicentennial publication of Saint Elizabeth's Church, based on the historical research of the Reverend Edward B. Carley, Historian, Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, Denton, Maryland, 1981, 10.

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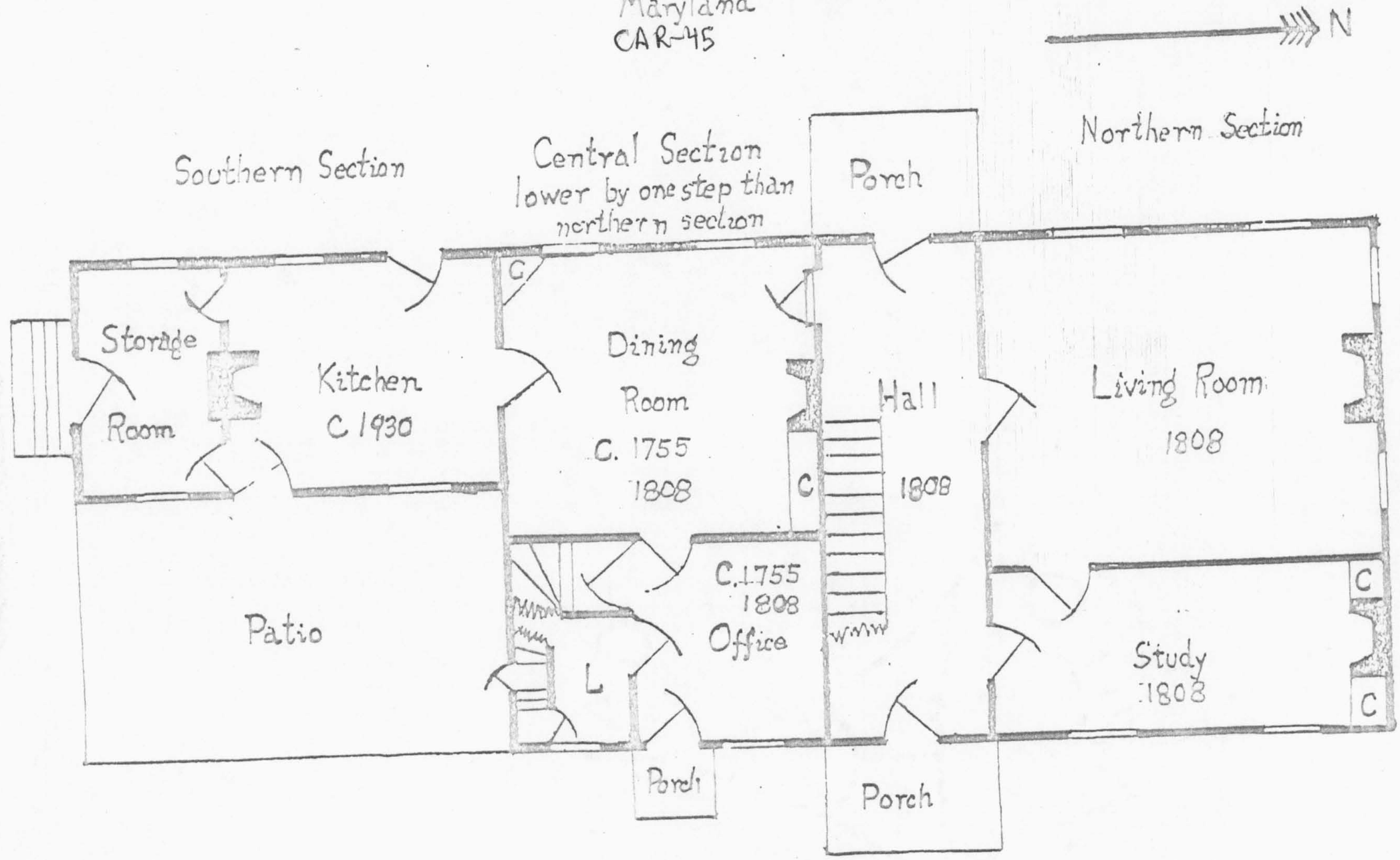
# POTTER HALL
Williston, Caroline County
Maryland
CAR-45

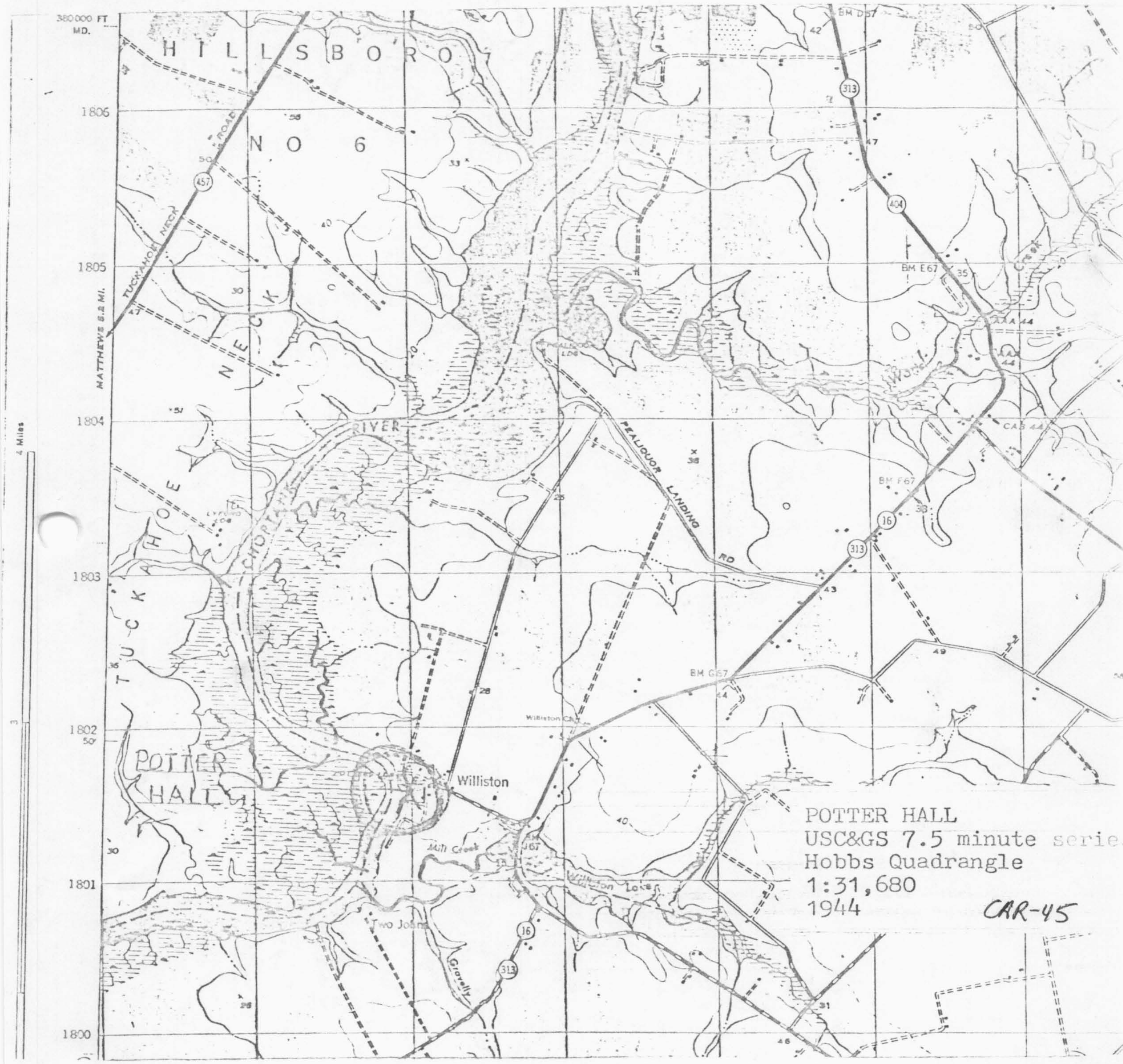



First Floor Plan
6/29/81 MHM & VPM
not drawn to scale

C = Closet
L = Lavatory

#10 Geographical Data Continued

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY




POTTER HALL
USC&GS 7.5 minute series
Hobbs Quadrangle
1:31,680
1944

CAR-45

CAR-45

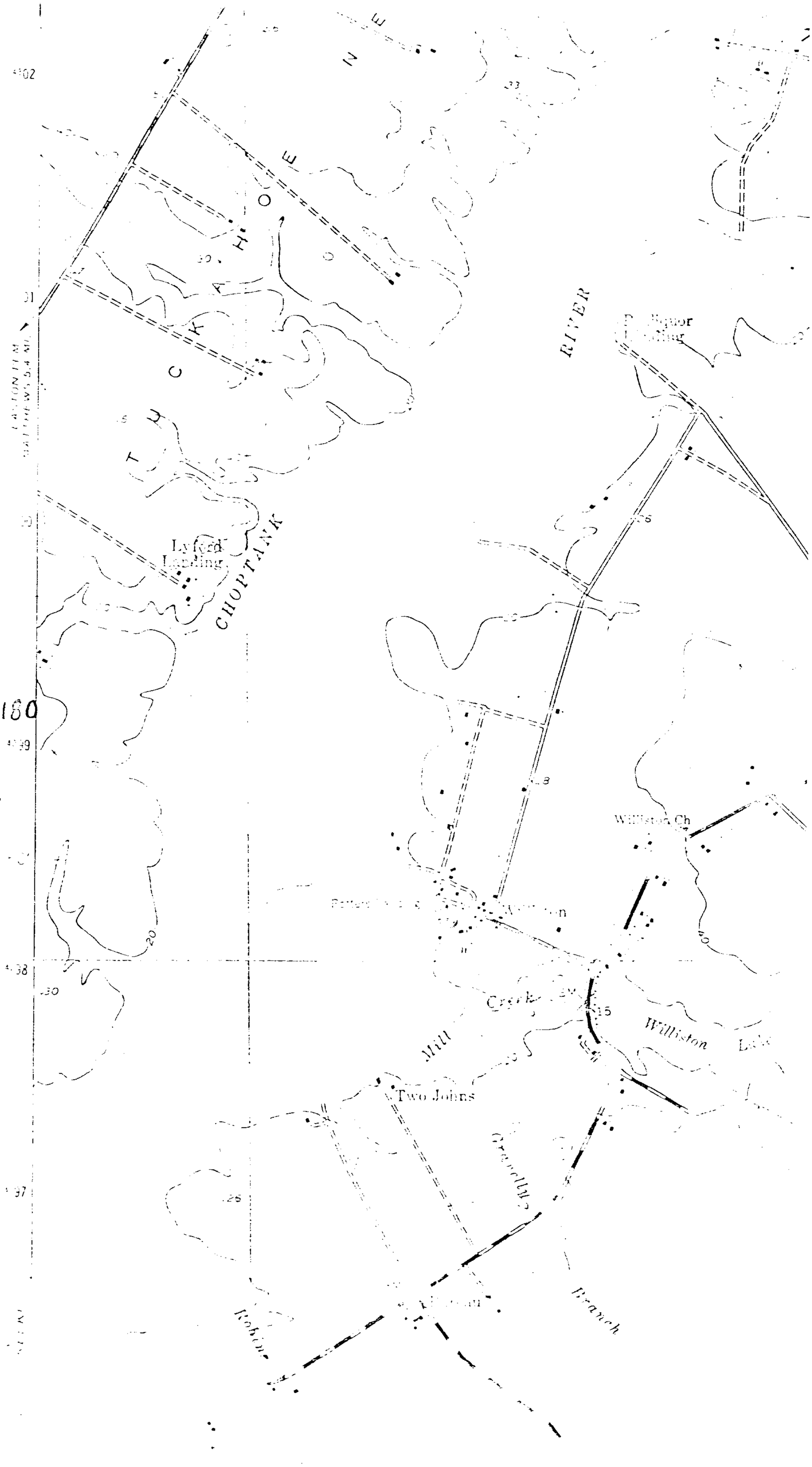
ITER-HALL-

1958?0--4298180

DORCHESTER CO., MD.

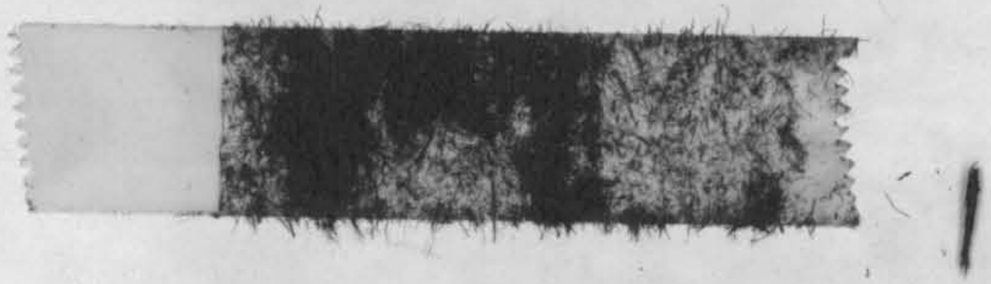
HOBBS

DOT



Potter Hall

CAR-45



M. Bourne

5/70