

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

## 1. Name

historic The Oaks II

and/or common The Riggs Farm

## 2. Location

street & number 6010 Riggs Road (<sup>old</sup> present address) 5815 Riggs Road not for publication

city, town Claysville Laytonsville X vicinity of congressional district Eighth

state Maryland code 24 county Montgomery code 031

## 3. Classification

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Category</b>                                 | <b>Ownership</b>                           | <b>Status</b>                                  | <b>Present Use</b>                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied              | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> private           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both              | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress      | <input type="checkbox"/> educational       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                  | <b>Accessible</b>                              | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <input type="checkbox"/> in process        | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted       | <input type="checkbox"/> government        |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered  | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted     | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial        |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> no                    | <input type="checkbox"/> military          |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> museum            |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> park              |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> religious         |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific        |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation    |
|   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> other:            |

## 4. Owner of Property

name Montgomery County Government

street & number Montgomery County Office Building

city, town Rockville vicinity of state Maryland 20852

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Rockville state Maryland 20852

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

## 7. Description

M:23-26

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

To be moved 8/80

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Presently situated in an open field on the southeast side of Riggs Road northeast of Claysville, The Oaks II is a 1½-story gambrel-roofed structure with an adjoining 1-story gable-roofed addition to the east. This building and three surrounding outbuildings will be moved to a nearby location by the Montgomery County Government this summer. The new site is a topographically similar 5-acre parcel of land on the northwest side of Riggs Road an eighth of a mile northwest of the present site.

The main block and the addition are both constructed of logs connected with full dove tail notching and chinked with wood chips, mud, and stone. Both sections were originally covered with simpler unadorned weatherboards. In the main section a huge exterior brick chimney with corbel capping is located on the west gambrel wall; a smaller interior brick chimney rises above the east facade. The kitchen wing displays a massive exterior stone based chimney along its east gable wall.

The main block which faces south is four bays wide with a one-story open porch spanning the front. The porch with its standing seam tin roof and porch posts appears to have replaced an earlier porch. Entrances are found in the two central bays. Windows with 6/6 sash flank these doors.

Both the door and window trim are later modifications. Three shallow pedimented gable-roofed dormers pierce the wood-shingled gambrel roof. The west facade is characterized by a single 6/6 sashed window to the north of the chimney. Two smaller 4/2 sashed windows flank the chimney at attic level. Molded rakeboards and shallow cornice returns further define this facade. The rear (north) facade is very plain: a doorway opposite the main facade's west entrance and a small 6/6 sashed window to the east. The steep gambrel roof is also distinguished by three shallow pedimented gable-roofed dormers.

The one story kitchen wing to the east is two bays wide with its primary entrance located in the western bay of the south facade. A 6/6 sashed window is found to the east. A lean-to frame addition extends across the north facade. Unadorned rakeboards outline the east gable end.

### Interior

The main building's floor plan, a double parlor floor plan which features single doors on the southern facade leading into each room, is a first floor plan generally associated with Pennsylvania and northern and western counties in Maryland. The southeast parlor exhibits a very fine paneled mantel wall, complete with six-panel door which leads through a lobby to the mid-nineteenth century one-room addition. The chairrail and trim around the 6/6 windows are original. In the upper sash can be read "Sam Riggs and Buffalo Bill, Decem 1885." A modern pantry closet, which replaced a corner cupboard removed by the Letts family after 1930, has been inserted to the left of the mantel. A modern door leads into the pantry, which is now covered with thin 20th century vertical board paneling. A post 1930s mantel shelf built by Mr. Austin Geisbert now covers the original fireplace.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

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|                   |
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### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

The Oaks II  
Montgomery County  
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET      ITEM NUMBER 7      PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

An original thin vertical board partition wall separates the two parlors. The door separating both rooms appears to be original, complete with six raised panels but later box lock. Later molding, a Victorian four-panel door on the north (rear) facade of the house and a simple mantel replacing the original have altered the character of the room, but much of the original decorative material remains. Here, the chairrail is intact, and a paneled door to a closet below the stairs reveals a number of wrought iron nails with rose heads and flat points (corroborating the pre-1814 construction date). Later but still historically significant names are scratched into the panes of the windows in the western gable and read "Ruxton Ridgely Nov. 27, 1892" and below it "Lousia Lilly Riggs Nov. 27, 1892." A small face is also etched into one pane.

A tight winder stair in the southwest corner of this parlor rises to the second floor. Here is found one of the most unusual features of the building. A hallway runs the entire length of the southern facade, leading to a door which opens into a space between the main block and the addition. A ladder leads to the attic (here, early machine cut nails--brads, for securing the attic flooring--were located, also pointing to a very early 19th century date) and through the gable end of the building into a small sleeping quarters above the addition. The hallway is highlighted by contrasting paint colors--cream on the baseboards, door rails and styles, and darker leaf green on the remaining stair balusters and wall surfaces. Three bedrooms of equal size are found in the other side of an original vertical beaded board partition which runs the length of the hall. The first and third doors are original, but with a minor variation. Instead of the top two panels, three panes of glass forming a transom have been built in.

As with the rooms on the first floor, much of the original fabric can be found. In the northwest bedroom the chairrail and baseboards are intact. The mantel has been removed. The central bedroom retains original chairrail and baseboards, and has a window pane reading "S. Riggs Jan 11 1886." The northeast bedroom exhibits original trim, but has also had its fireplace blocked.

#### Outbuildings

Also on the property are several outbuildings which although of later period possess architectural and historical significance.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

The Oaks II  
Montgomery County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE 2

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

An animal shed, located about 25' northeast of the main house, is a nearly square, gable-roofed frame structure of board and batten siding. Corner posts and plates are hand cut square members. Measuring 10'6" x 14' the building appears to be used for storage.

Immediately to the east of this structure is the smokehouse. This building, measuring 14'2" x 14'2" is a board and batten structure. Its gable roof is covered with corrugated iron over its original dark green shingles. The blackened interior shows hand-hewn posts which support similar hand-hewn plates. A shelf running along the western facade appears original.

About 55' west of the animal shed is a curious building now used as a chicken coop but whose original use is unknown. This heavy post and lintel framing system, hand-hewn, suggests that this structure is perhaps the oldest of the group. The construction features include windbracing at the corners, and hand-hewn rafters roof butt-jointed and pegged. It is sheathed with board and batten siding and has a feather-edged shingle roof.

Located about 50' from The Oaks II is a bank barn measuring approximately 61' x 46' and built on a stone foundation. Its post and beam construction is sheathed by vertical boards, punctuated by many wooden ventilator panels.

The water tower, dating from the twentieth century, is built on a concrete base. It is sheathed with board and batten, and supports a pallet which holds a large cistern. This structure, it is believed, is unique in the county.

The remaining outbuildings which date from the twentieth century possess no particular architectural or historical significance: the windmill, the frame outhouse measuring 4'2" x 4'2", a frame storage building measuring 8' x 12', the frame pump house, the gambrel roofed frame barn measuring 84' x 40', the frame dairy barn measuring 30'x74', the two frame double corn cribs, a tractor and machine shed measuring 79'x 22', a chicken coop measuring 12'x20' and three hog sheds. Also of little merit is a 2½ story frame farmhouse which was moved to its present location about 50 years ago by Austin Geisbert. This simple, early twentieth century dwelling is located just east of The Oaks II.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

The Oaks II  
Montgomery County  
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET      ITEM NUMBER 7      PAGE 3

### THE MOVING OF THE OAKS II

The Montgomery County Government recently purchased The Oaks II farm, a 550-acre tract, from the estate of John C. Letts for use as a sanitary landfill. The county, realizing both its need to find a suitable location for this facility and its responsibility to preserve the county and the state's cultural resources, has chosen this site since it appears that this location would affect the least number of known cultural resources. The obvious adverse impact on this architecturally and historically significant complex however has prompted the county government to take the following action. The historic area work permit for the construction of the landfill will be issued contingent upon several conditions. These conditions are:

1. The main building at The Oaks II farmstead and three outbuildings (the animal shed, the smokehouse, and the storage shed) will be moved intact to a new site.
2. The water tower and the pumphouse will be made available to Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning for their use.
3. An archeological survey, performed by The Maryland Historical Trust, will be executed prior to construction of the landfill.
4. A positive easement on the property will be given to The Maryland Historical Trust indicating that the restoration of both the interior and the exterior of the farmhouse would occur. The easement would cover both the exterior and the interior of the farmhouse. The county will make every effort to provide funds for the restoration through either its own channels or outside support.
5. The move of the complex will be fully documented.
6. A professional contractor who specializes in moving historic buildings will be employed by the county.
7. A minimum 5-acre site will be selected for the buildings. This site, located directly across Riggs Road, is similar to the original farm of the Riggs family.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

The Oaks II  
Montgomery County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

8. The Historic Preservation Commission of Montgomery County will work with the Laytonsville community in attempts to establish plans for the adaptive re-use of the buildings.
9. The Oaks II complex will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to these conditions, the county will, if possible, make available to the community the buildings not approved for preservation.

While there appears to be no feasible alternative for the preservation of The Oaks II at its present site, the Montgomery County Government has made great efforts to properly relocate the complex.

The new setting and the general environment of the proposed site is topographically similar to the original site. Located not more than an eighth of a mile northwest of the present site, this parcel of land was also used as grazing fields by the previous owner of The Oaks II. More importantly, it was part of the original tract of land farmed by the Riggs family. This open field, bordered to the south by a small cluster of oak trees and to the north by an intermittent stream, perhaps more sympathetically evokes the original setting of The Oaks II. Its present site has been compromised by the intrusion of several twentieth century structures and by the loss of many of its shade trees.

In its present condition, the property's architectural integrity has also been challenged. Used as a storage shelter by its previous owner, the main building has been abandoned for many years. The three outbuildings have received minimal maintenance. While these buildings have escaped severe structural damage and have retained a surprising amount of their original fabric, they are in need of preservation attention. The county has committed themselves not only to moving but also to restoring these structures, thus saving and preserving a group of buildings of great architectural significance.

Although it is doubtful that this complex will continue to function as a farm on its new location, the county has planned for its adaptive reuse. Two alternatives include returning the property to private ownership or making it available to the neighboring town, Laytonsville, as a community center. The first proposal would not affect the integrity of the complex since it would only be returning to its original use, that of a private residence. The second suggestion would not dramatically alter the historical integrity of The Oaks II since the Riggs family has played an

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #5.

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The Oaks II  
Montgomery County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

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PAGE

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(DESCRIPTION, continued)

active role in the civic and agricultural affairs of the community.

The Oaks II complex represents an important architectural and historical resource of the county and the state. In its effort to preserve this property, The Montgomery County Government has sought to maintain its architectural and historical integrity and reestablish its immediate setting and general environment.

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <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/<br>humanitarian                     |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)<br>local history |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

Specific dates 1794-1814 Builder/Architect Reuben Riggs

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

The Oaks II, built between 1797-1814, is significant for its 133-year association with the Riggs family, a prominent Montgomery County family active in civic and agricultural affairs of both the county and the state. The house is a well-preserved, rare example for Montgomery County of a 1½-story, gambrel-roofed building of log construction. In addition, much of its original interior fabric remains intact. Although the Montgomery County government, who recently purchased the 550-acre tract for the construction of a sanitary landfill, plans to move the main house and three significant outbuildings to a nearby parcel of land, this new site is part of the original Riggs tract of land. The use of this land itself holds historical importance having been farmed continuously from the 18th century and having survived intact in Montgomery County where intensive development has been the norm since World War II. The continuous use of the property as a farm residence since the 18th century indicates that archeological deposits documenting changing artifact patterns through time should be present. The county therefore will conduct an archeological survey to insure that these resources will be fully investigated.

HISTORY

In 1797 Samuel Riggs acquired two parcels of land from Isaac and Hannah Briggs.<sup>1</sup> When Riggs died in 1814 he left to his son, Reuben, 222½ acres "where he now lives." An additional note in his will (probated in Montgomery County 7/15/1814) states that this land was the property Reuben's father acquired from the Briggs' on December 9, 1797. County tax records of 1804 also list Reuben Riggs owning a 222½-acre farm in this vicinity. This information suggests that the house, The Oaks II, was erected between 1797 and 1814 and probably between 1797 and 1804 by Reuben Riggs. In analyzing the building's fabric, a construction date within this time period appears plausible.

Reuben Riggs, born May 25, 1775, married in February 1805 Mary Willson Thomas also from a prominent Montgomery County family. As a prosperous gentleman farmer,<sup>2</sup> Riggs continued to expand his estate. At one time he owned 800 acres. After his death in 1829, his widow Mary and unmarried son Hezekiah remained at The Oaks II. Reuben's oldest son Samuel of R received a nearby tract of land totaling 282½ acres where he and his wife Milcah Griffith renovated The Oaks I.<sup>3</sup> This house was probably built by Samuel of R's grandfather, Samuel. After the death of Hezekiah in 1851 The Oaks II farm was also acquired by Samuel of R.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

The Oaks II  
Montgomery County  
Maryland

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

Samuel of R continued to purchase<sup>4</sup> property, owning at one time almost 1,000 acres of rich farmland. He also pursued a political career serving as county commissioner from 1856-1861 and as delegate in the State House from 1867-1874. Under his ownership The Oaks II was no longer occupied by members of the Riggs family but tenanted by a farm manager, Henry Crockett, who supervised the extensive farm operations for Samuel of R.

Samuel of R's son, Reuben, inherited the farm after his father's death in 1882. It appears that The Oaks II continued to function as housing for the farm employees. After Rueben's death in 1910 his sons ran the farm. Samuel Haines and his family rented The Oaks II from Sam Riggs III.

After more than one hundred years of Riggs ownership the farm was sold to John C. Letts in 1930.<sup>5</sup> Before this final transfer of title the family graveyard was moved to St. John's cemetery in Olney. Letts, who farmed the land to grow feed for his dairy cattle at Ayrlawn on Old Georgetown Road, continued to lease the property. Austin Geisbert, using a frame house which had been moved to the farm as his residence, converted The Oaks II into a storage shelter. The Geisberts are widely known throughout the state for their farming as well as for the accomplishments achieved by their children in 4-H and State Agricultural Competitions.

Architecturally, the house is an unusually intact survival of a very early nineteenth century log building in Montgomery County, with much of its original architectural detail intact. From a construction standpoint, the house is also important as it shows a regional variation in framing. At the doorway opening logs appear to be fitted into slotted verticle posts, but with their leading edge also fitting in front of the post. As one of two historic gambrel-roofed houses left in the county, these factors add up to make The Oaks II truly significant.

Although archeological investigations have not been conducted, the continuous utilization of this property as a farm residence since the last quarter of the eighteenth century should have produced distribution patterns of artifacts around the residence and outbuildings which will prove of value in documenting the changes in Southern Maryland's rural society since the Revolutionary War period.

<sup>1</sup>Montgomery County Land Records, Montgomery County Courthouse, Rockville, Maryland. G/161; H/82.

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The Oaks II  
Montgomery County  
Maryland

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

<sup>2</sup> Roger B. Farquhar, History of Montgomery County, Maryland: Old Homes and History. Monumental Printing Co., Baltimore, Md., 1952. p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County Land Records. BS 7/283-5.

<sup>4</sup> Farquhar, op.cit. p. 310

<sup>5</sup> Montgomery County Land Records. 512/407.

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The Oaks II  
Montgomery County  
Maryland

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Farquhar, Roger B., History of Montgomery County, Maryland: Old Homes and History Monumental Printing Co., Baltimore, 1952.

Land Records of Montgomery County, Montgomery County Courthouse, Rockville, Maryland.

MacMaster and Hiebert, A Grateful Remembrance, Montgomery County and Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976.

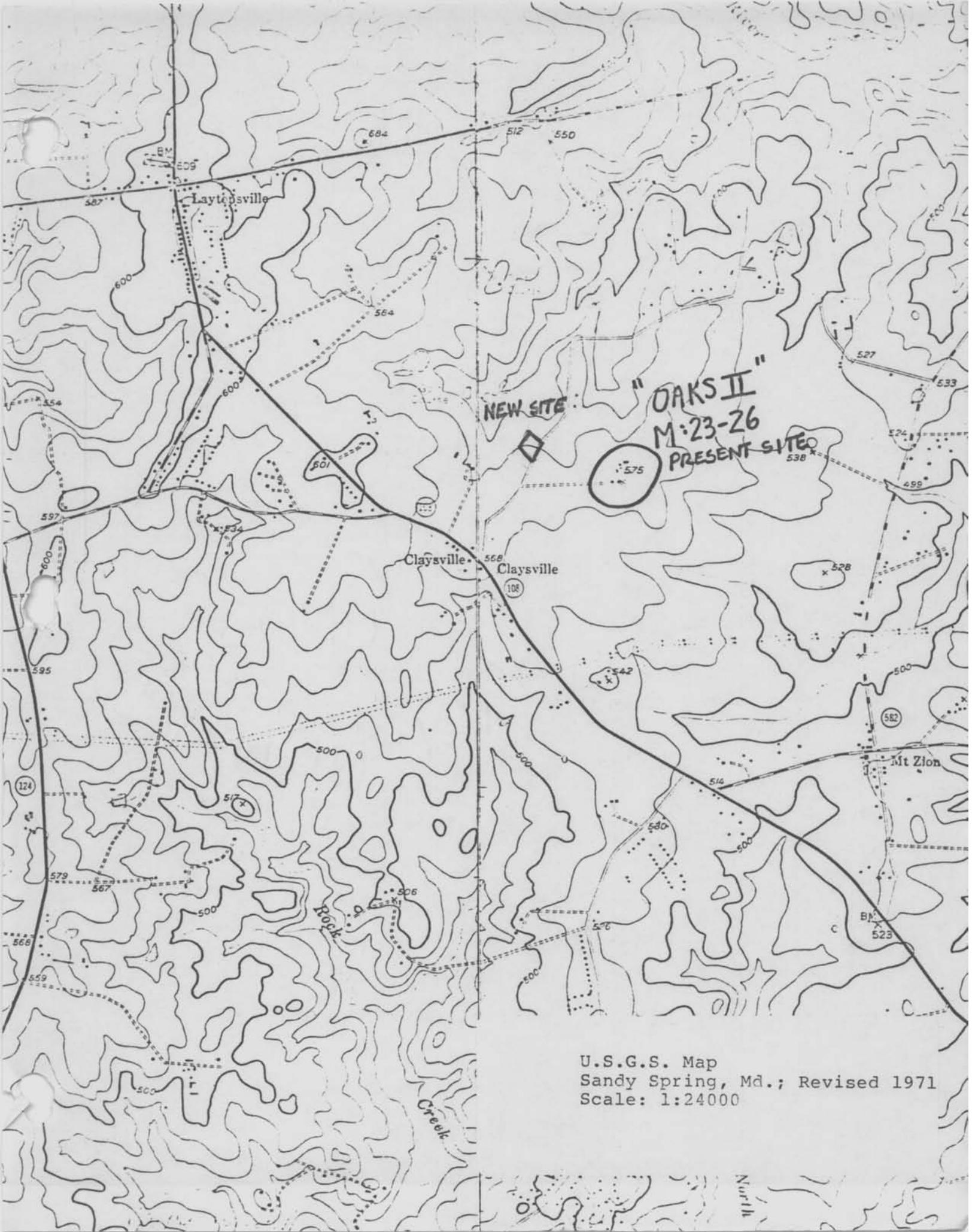
Malloy, et al, Abstracts of Wills in Montgomery County, Maryland 1776-1825, 1977.

Riggs, Riggs Family of Maryland, 1939.

Tax Records of Montgomery County, 1804-1810, Montgomery County Historical Society, Rockville, Maryland.

U.S. Census for Montgomery County, Maryland: 1850. 1860.

Interviews: Mrs. Cuyler Dwyer Duvall  
Mr. Austin Geisbert  
Mrs. Austin Geisbert  
Mrs. Joyce Hawkins  
Mrs. Maude Bell Riggs  
Mrs. Dorothy White Tessier



NEW SITE

"OAKS II"  
M:23-26

PRESENT SITE

Laytonsville

Claysville

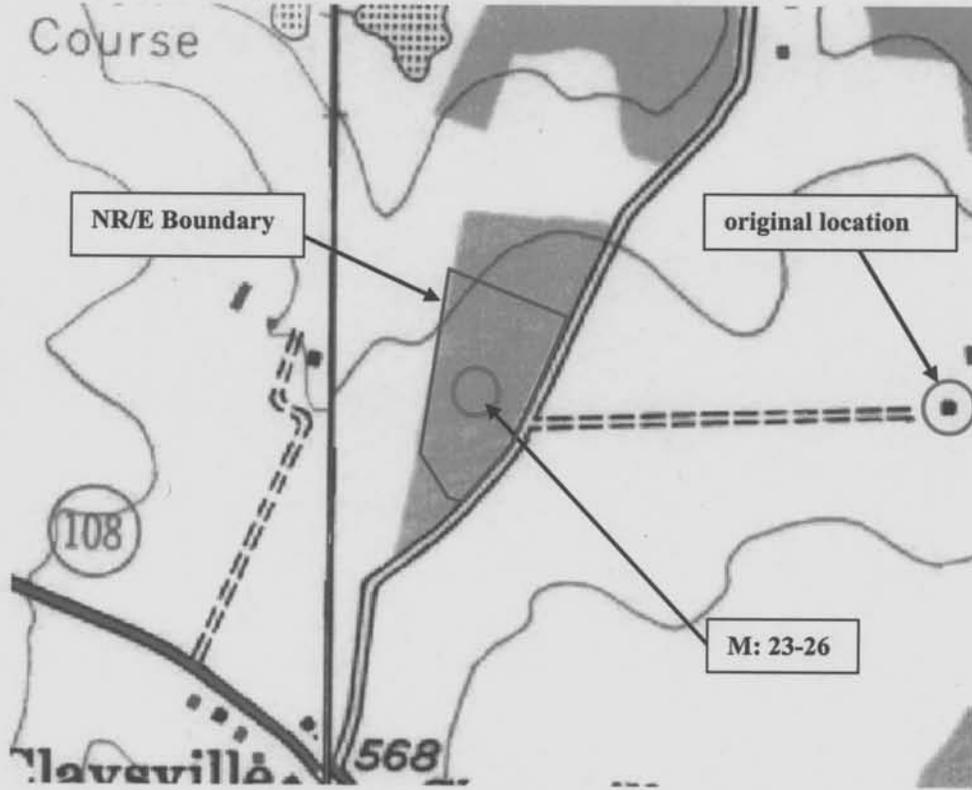
Mt Zion

Rock  
Creek

U.S.G.S. Map  
Sandy Spring, Md.; Revised 1971  
Scale: 1:24000

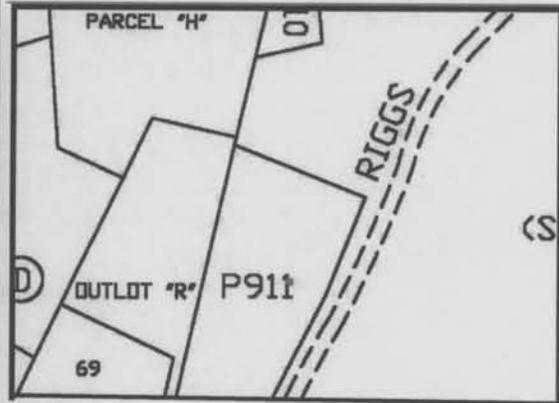
North

M: 23-26  
The Oaks II (Riggs Farm) (moved 1980)  
5815 Riggs Road, Laytonsville  
Sandy Spring Quadrangle



1993-94 Aerial Photo

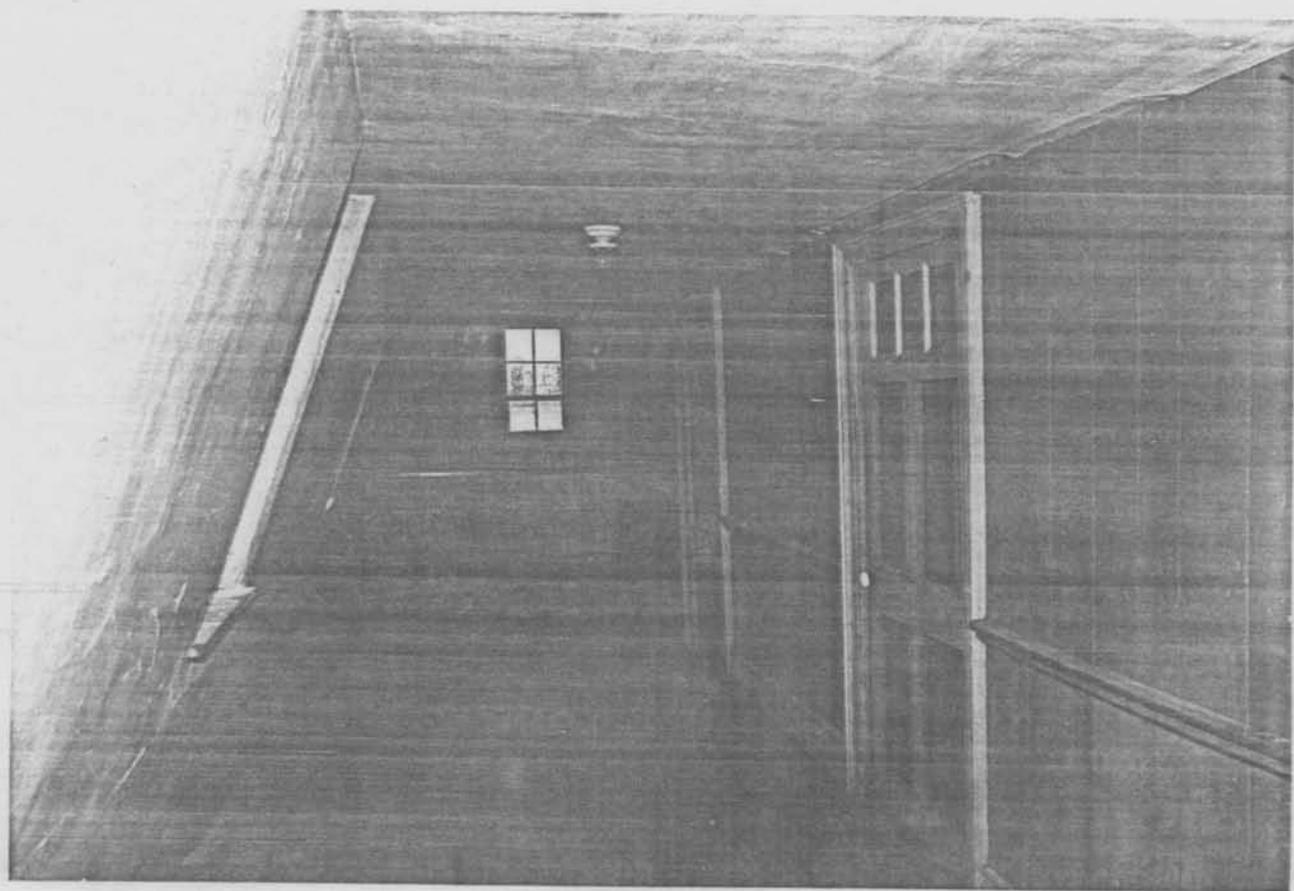
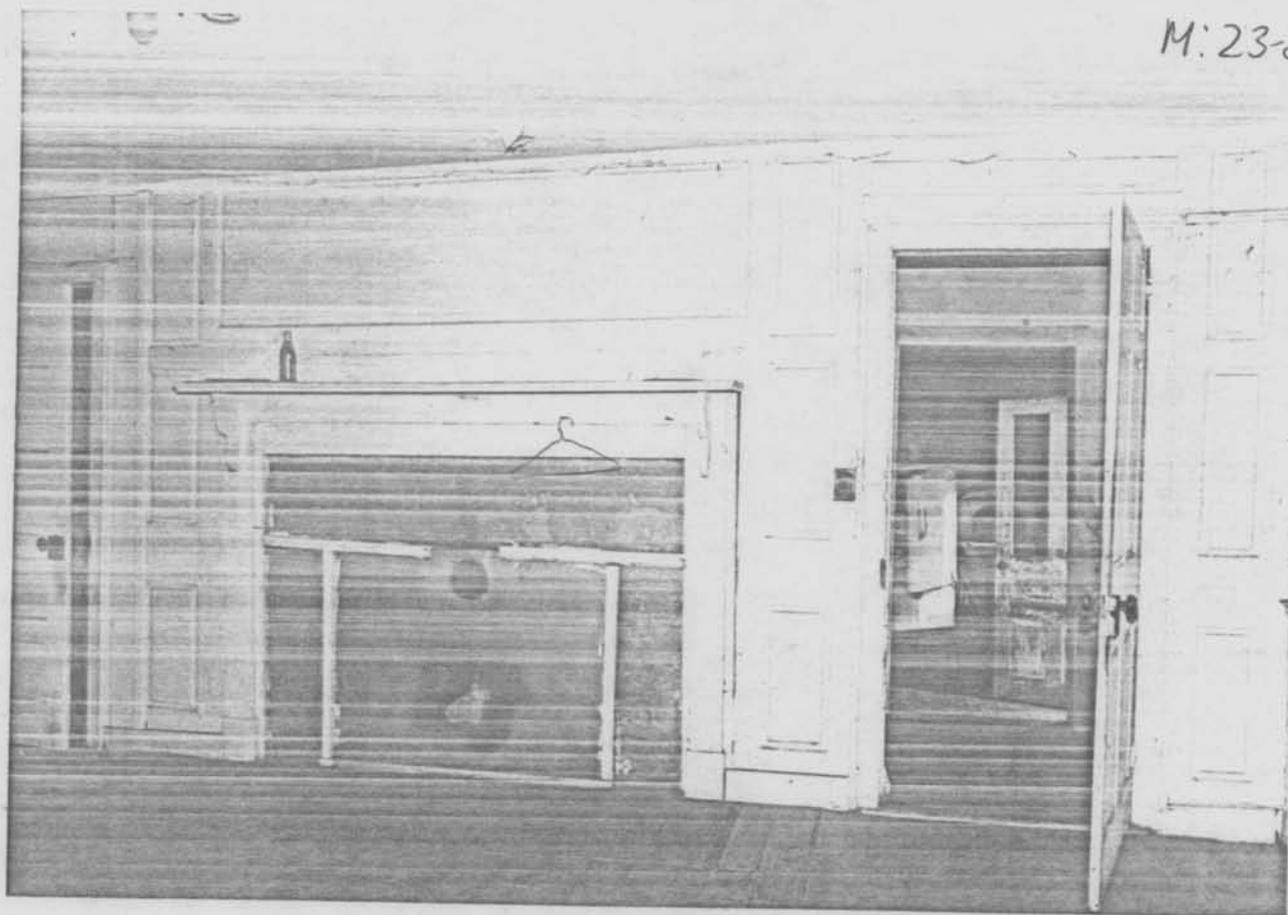
Tax Map GV61



M:23-26



M:23-26





M: 23-26 OAKS II

House circa 1930. Photograph from George Bell Collection, original housed with Michael Dwyer, Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission.



M:23-26

The Oaks II

5815 Riggs Road, Laytonsville

**Jennifer K. Cosham**

**March 7, 2004**

**Digital color photo on file at MHT**



M:23-26  
The Oaks II  
5815 Riggs Road, Laytonsville

**Jennifer K. Cosham**  
**March 7, 2004**  
**Digital color photo on file at MHT**



M:23-26

The Oaks II outbuildings  
5815 Riggs Road, Lexingtonville

**Jennifer K. Cosham**

**March 7, 2004**

**Digital color photo on file at MHT**



M:23-76

the OAKS II barn  
5815 Riggs Road, Laytonsville

**Jennifer K. Cosham**  
**March 7, 2004**  
**Digital color photo on file at MHT**

The Oaks II (Riggs House)



Front view of Oaks II - August 1978



Austin Geisbert and rear of Oaks II - August 1978



Cellar entrance - August 1978



Chimney on west side - August 1978



East side of Oaks II showing added on lean-to - August 1978



East side of Oaks II showing old chimney in kitchen - August 1978



OAKS II

M: 23-26

house circa 1930

(from George Bell Collection,  
original housed with Michael  
Dwyer, MNPPC)



Michael F. Dwyer  
M. N. C. P. P. C.  
Park Historian



Michael F. Dwyer  
M. N. C. P. P. C.  
**Park Historian**

NAME *THE OAKS (RIGGS HOUSE)*

LOCATION *Rt. 108 + RIGGS Rd, LAYTONSVILLE, Md*

FACADE *SW*

PHOTO TAKEN *3/8/79*

*M:23-26*



Old wind driven water pump  
August 1978



Water pump on property  
August 1978



Near entrance to kitchen  
August 1978



S. Riggs scratched on window  
with diamond ring in 1885 is  
faintly visible - August 1978



M: 23-26 OAKS II

Laytonsville, Montgomery County, Md.

Ellen Coxe January, 1980

Negative located at Md. Historical Trust  
Board and batten smokehouse