QA-259

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

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: Cray House

and/or common: Cray House

2. Location

street & number: West side of Cockey's Lane — N/A not for publication

city, town: Stevensville — N/A vicinity of — congressional district: First

state: Maryland — code: 24 — county: Queen Anne's — code: 035

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name: Kent Island Heritage Society

street & number: None

city, town: Stevensville — N/A vicinity of — state: Maryland 21666

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Queen Anne's County Courthouse

street & number:

city, town: Centreville — state: Maryland 21617

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date: 1978 — ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records: Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town: Annapolis — state: Maryland 21401

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
X fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Cray House was constructed in two distinct parts. The original three-bay, 1½ story house was constructed circa 1809-1817 by John Denny using an unusual form of log construction known as "post-and-plank." This system utilizes continuous horizontal sawn log planks mortised into vertical corner posts and stabilized with intermediate posts pegged to the inner face of the log plank wall. This original section, measuring 16 feet by 22 feet, was partitioned to form a hall and chamber plan. The larger hall to the north is heated by a gable end chimney, and a tight winder stair to the right of the chimney rises to two second story chambers. A low door to the left of the chimney at one time opened into a small kitchen wing with a dirt floor. The wing was demolished, probably in the late 19th century. In the 1840s, the original house was enlarged by a frame one-room addition to the south. The steeply pitched roof of the original section was removed and replaced with a roomier gambrel roof that extends the length of the enlarged house. At the same time, the white washed interior finish of the original log plank house was covered with lath and plaster to match the interior of the new addition. The original early 19th century mantel and interior trim survive intact, complementing the Greek Revival trim of the addition.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Cray House is located on the west side of Cockey's Lane, at the western edge of Stevensville. The house was built in two stages. The earlier section, constructed 1809-1817, consists of a three-bay, story-and-a-half house built of an unusual type of post-and-plank construction. In the 1840s a frame, three-bay addition was made to the south end of the house, and the roof of the earlier section removed and replaced with a gambrel roof that extends the full length of the enlarged house.

In overall appearance the resulting house bears much in common with a house type that seems relatively common for the late 18th and early 19th century in Queen Anne's County. The early section remains fairly ordered, with a central door on each facade flanked by six-over-six windows. The north gable end is uninterrupted by door or window openings, and the chimney is "paneled," the brickwork exposed up to the second floor level. Numerous examples of this type of small, gambrel-roofed house remain throughout the county. Also, the modest dimensions of the original house (16' X 22') reflect what was a common size for dwelling houses in the Tidewater well into the 19th century.

What is distinctly unusual about the Cray House is the manner in which the earlier section is constructed. Wide, hand-sawn log planks averaging 14" X 2-3/4" in size have been mortised and tenoned into vertical corner posts, with intermediate posts laid against the interior face of the log walls and secured with pegs driven through the posts and into the log planks. Post and plank construction is quite unusual in Tidewater Maryland, and examples in which the planks run continuously from corner post to corner post, with the intermediate posts only stabilizing the wall, were virtually unknown before this example was uncovered.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The early section of the house is laid out in a hall/chamber plan, with entrance made into the hall through a central door in the east facade. A second exterior door lies directly opposite the front door in the rear facade. The hall is heated by a large fireplace centered on the north gable wall. An enclosed winder stair in the corner to the right of the fireplace rises to the second floor. In the alcove to the left of the fireplace is a beaded door frame of unusually small proportions. This door provided direct access to the small frame wing on the north end of the house and was plastered up when the wing was demolished. A random width, beaded board partition wall opposite the fireplace screens off an unheated chamber.

These two rooms are quite striking, as the corner posts, intermediate posts and top plates are clearly visible on the interior. Recent restoration efforts have removed the plaster which evidently had been applied to the walls and ceiling during renovation work which accompanied the construction of the south addition. The decision to uncover the plank walls, hewn ceiling joists, and undersides of the second-floorboards was based on evidence of whitewash on these surfaces, indicating that they were once exposed. The chairrails and baseboard predate the plaster and are early, if not original. The beaded partition was plastered as well, with machine sawn lathing nailed diagonally directly to both faces of the wall and then plastered, almost burying the flat, beaded chairrail on the hall side.

The second floor duplicates the first floor plan, with the corner stair rising to a nearly square chamber once heated by a stove, and a plastered, stud partition wall screening a smaller unheated chamber.

The addition to the south gable of the earlier plank house is of standard heavy timber frame construction, three bays wide on the east or front facade and two bays on the rear. The south gable wall is uninterrupted by openings, with a paneled chimney similar to that on the north gable. The principal door is centered on the east facade, flanked by six-over-six windows. The rear facade consists of a paneled door in the north bay and a six-over-six window in the south bay.

The interior consists of a single, almost square room on each floor, with a fireplace centered on the gable wall on both floors. The first floor fireplace retains the original mantelpiece, a pilastered surround with plain shelf supported by a complex molding dominated by a quirked ovolo.

To the left of this fireplace is a shallow closet with a random width, beaded batten door. In the alcove to the right of the fireplace is an enclosed winder stair rising to the second floor.

The second floor room is quite plain, and is heated by a small fireplace.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The absence of a suitably large collection of similar post-and-plank buildings makes it difficult to establish a date for the earlier section of the Cray House. The moldings and trim on the interior are typical of the last decade of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century. The use of a fairly sophisticated form of hewn and hand-sawn timber construction suggests that the building should not be later than about 1825. The absence of wrought nails combined with early 19th century moldings would indicate a date of circa 1815 to 1825 for this part of the house.

Both the frame addition and the roof, on the other hand, demonstrate machine technology, and typify the transition to more modern construction that occurred in the second quarter of the 19th century. All of the first floor woodwork was painted and grained in an ochre color, a practice common in the 1840s. This last date coincides with the use of quirked ovolo moldings, and would therefore strongly suggest a date of circa 1845 for the addition. It is clear that the present roof dates to this addition and may have replaced a gable roof on the plank section.

Recent repairs and renovations include the following:

1. The sagging floor joists and sills were reinforced where necessary with brick piers and/or wood timbers to prevent further settling. No original material was removed.
2. Cracks between the logs were chinked with oyster shell mortar and the exterior siding was repaired or replaced where necessary. This siding was not original and was replaced with similar materials.
3. Necessary repairs were made to stabilize the north chimney and the firebox of the demolished kitchen was rebuilt.
4. The exterior was painted using the same paint scheme that has existed for living memory of the house (white siding, green metal roof). Because the siding is not original, historic colors are not known. The original roof was wood shingle, replaced with tin probably in the late 19th or early 20th century.

There are no outbuildings on this property. The location of one well has been identified.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates ca. 1809-1817 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicable Criterion: C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Cray House is significant as a dated and documented example of a rare form of log construction known as "post-and-plank." It is the largest and most sophisticated surviving example of this form of construction in the tidewater region. Other known examples include a slave house at Sotterly (SM-7A), a kitchen wing on Kent Island (QA-10), and approximately two dozen small domestic and agricultural outbuildings throughout the Tidewater region. The Cray House is particularly significant because it is large enough to demonstrate important differences between the Tidewater expression of this building tradition and a similar form found in German settled parts of Pennsylvania. The continuous log planks, individually mortised corner posts, and interior intermediate posts are not features of the more widely known German post-and-plank wall system. The Cray House can be dated to circa 1809-1817. It is therefore one of the earliest known examples of post-and-plank construction in the Tidewater region, the only one with a documented date of construction, making it an important benchmark for architectural historians. Locally it is the earliest known building in the town of Stevensville. In the German system, wall sections are not comprised of single continuous planks which span the full width of the bay, but are made up of shorter plank segments tenoned into intermediate posts. These posts necessarily become flush with the exterior wall surface, whereas their counterparts in the Tidewater system rest against the interior surface of the planks and are secured by pegs. The two traditions are not readily distinguished in smaller buildings, where intermediate posts are not a structural necessity. An additional diagnostic feature appears in the corner posts in the Tidewater system, an individual mortise receives the tenon of each plank, whereas the German tradition employs a continuous slot or trough.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

When first discovered, the Cray House was thought to be a unique survival of an unusual type of post-and-plank construction. Subsequent investigations have shown that a number of these buildings remain, scattered throughout Tidewater Maryland. Unfortunately, almost all of these are in threatened condition. The majority of the known examples are either small farm buildings or have been adapted as kitchen wings for larger houses. The Cray house and two buildings in Southern Maryland are the only examples of which have remained relatively intact as dwelling houses.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

The Cray house is located on a lot that was once part of Stevens' Adventure, a large tract of land on Kent Island surveyed for Francis Stevens on January 3, 1694.[1] This tract remained in the Stevens family throughout the 18th century. In 1790 James Stevens left Stevens' Adventure to his son, John.[2]

In 1809 John Stevens sold two lots of land to John Denny, also of Kent Island. One lot was one and one-half acres, the other approximately one acre. The purchase price for both was forty-three dollars.[3]

In 1817 John Denny resurveyed the larger of these lots and sold one-half acre to William Patterson for four hundred dollars. The deed specifically refers to "...all the houses on the north end of the lot when he the said John Denny purchased of John Stevens in the year 1809...." Any question of ambiguity in the wording of the deed should be clarified by the change in the purchase price during the intervening eight years. Denny was able to sell one-fifth of the land he purchased for almost ten times the total purchase price.[4]

It is interesting to note that the deed refers to "houses" rather than one house. The plural may have been used in the general sense, including a minor building associated with the Cray house or, more likely, Denny was referring to a second house just to the south of the Cray House. The Cray House stands on the original half-acre lot, which was subsequently subdivided, and in 1914 passed into separate hands.

According to an 1839 deed, William Patterson purchased the property in 1817 "for the benefit of Nancy Goodhand," and after Patterson's death, his divisees sold the land for one dollar to William H. Calvert of Wilmington, Delaware; James B. Goodhand of Baltimore; and James F. Brown of Cecil County, all descendants of Nancy Goodhand.[5] One of these men is listed on the 1841 Tax Assessment of Kent Island:

James B. Goodhand, Balt.
House and Lot near Denny's Store $200.

Although the location of Denny's Store is not known, it seems probable it was sited on one of the lots remaining from his purchase of 1809, placing it somewhere in the immediate vicinity of Cray House.

In 1842 William Calvert, et.al., sold the parcel to Mary E. C. Legg for $175.[6] This transaction also suggests that the frame addition had not yet been made. The decline in value from $400 in 1817 to $175 in 1841 may be indicative of the aging of the house and the declining status of a log house as the 19th century progressed. It is presumed that the frame addition on the south gable was made in the years following Mary Legg's acquisition of the property.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

In 1866 Joseph F. Cook inherited the property from Mary Legg,[7] and in 1871 Cook left it to his wife, Lucy. Lucy remarried, to John Stelle (or Stehl), and after her death the property was devised to Stelle's cousin, Anne R. C. Carville.[8]

In 1914, following the death of Anne Carville, the property was sold to Nora D. Cray, who divided the property into two parcels and conveyed Parcel #1, with a store and dwelling, to Charles Legg. Nora Cray retained Parcel #2, a lot on Downes Lane (now Cockey's Lane) 54 feet wide by 220 feet deep, "improved by a frame dwelling house."[9]

The property remained in the Cray family until 1976, when the heirs of Katie C. Ewing (nee Cray) deeded the house to the Kent Island Heritage Society.[10]

The restored house is now operated as a historic house museum by the Heritage Society.

Notes

[1]Hall of Records, Patents: Liber C No. 3, folio 142.

[2]Wills: Liber SC No. 7, folio 241. April 13, 1790.

[3]Deeds: Liber STW No. 10. folio 323. June 3, 1809.

[4]Deeds: Liber JT No. 3, folio 92-93. November 8, 1817. (Recorded May 30, 1840)

[5]Deeds: Liber JT No. 3, folio 93-94. December 20, 1829.

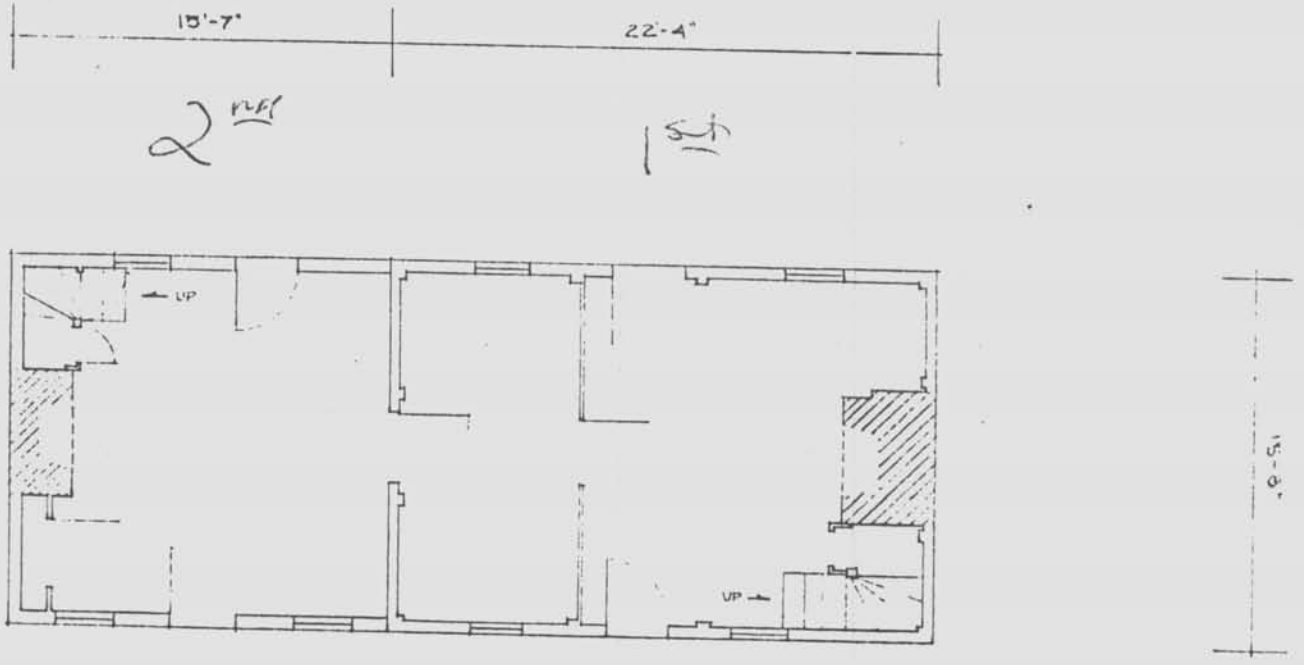
[6]Deeds: Liber JT No. 3, folio 615. June 13, 1842.

[7]Wills: Liber STH No. 1. April 16, 1866.

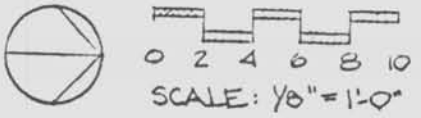
[8]Wills: Liber WAJ, folio 32. 1871.

[9]Chancery Case #2027, February 12, 1914.

[10]Deed of Gift: Liber CWC No. 109, folio 130. August 5, 1976.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



QA-259

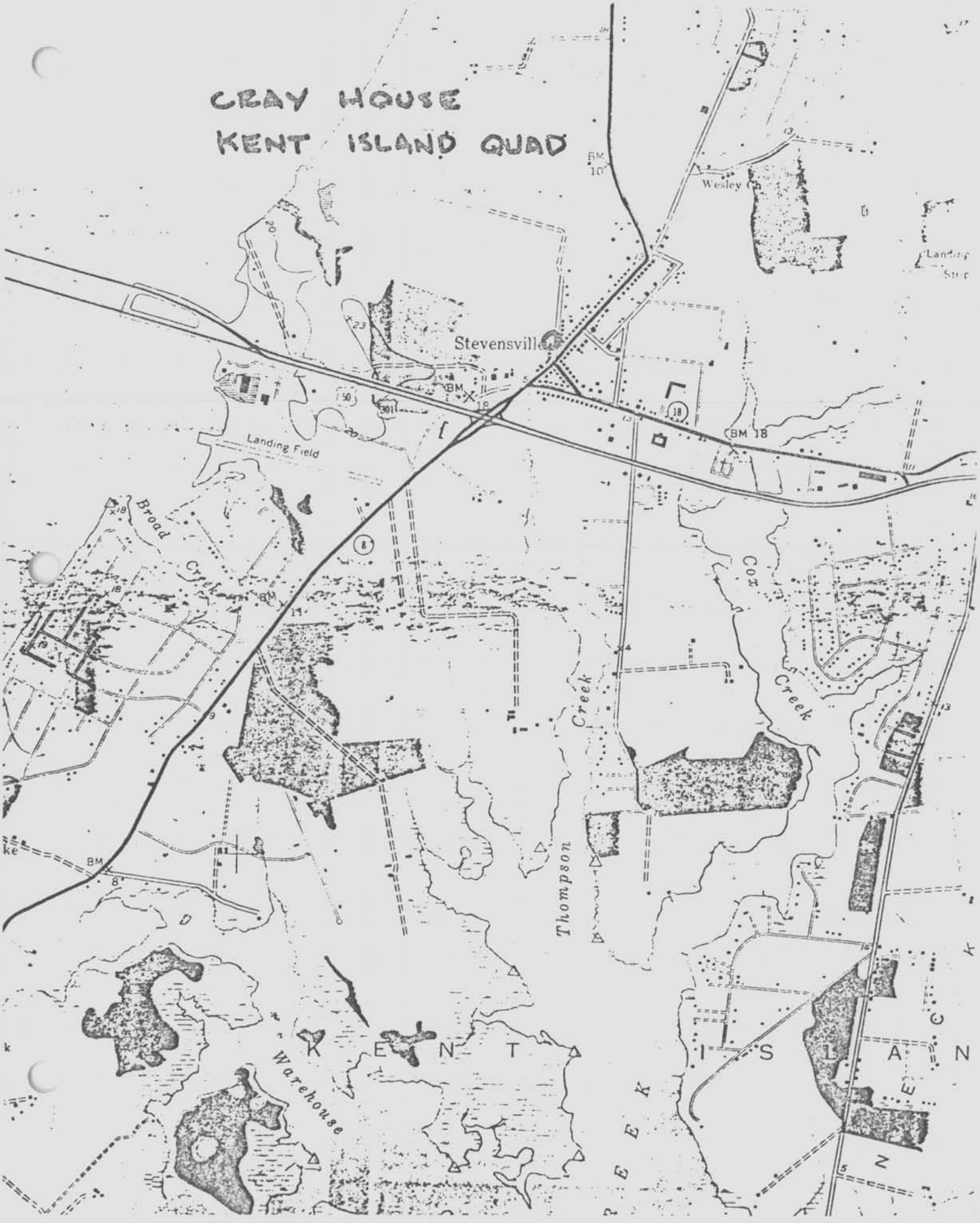
THE CRAY HOUSE
STEVENSVILLE, MARYLAND

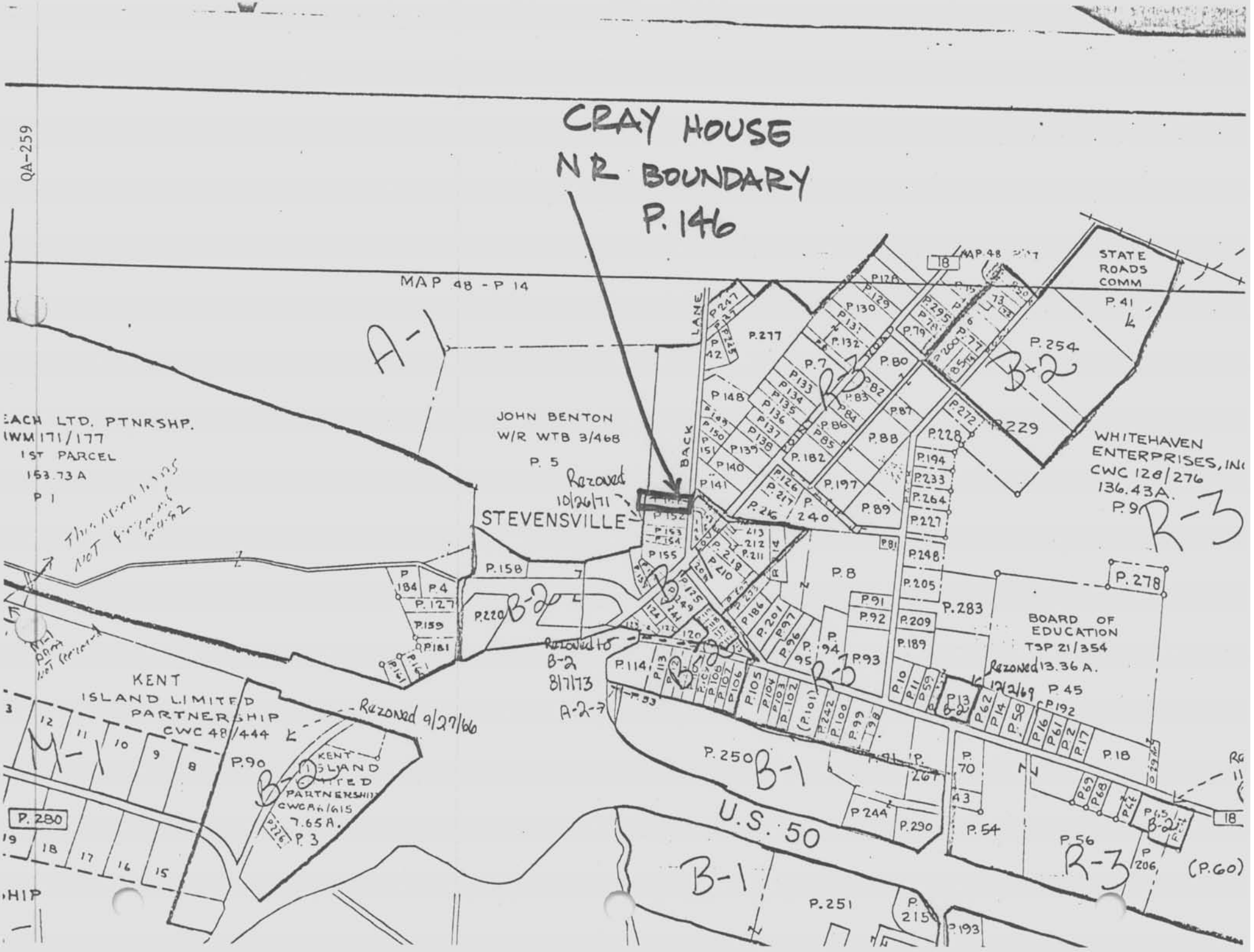
JANUARY 14, 1978.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

QA-259
CRAY HOUSE
QUEEN ANNE'S
COUNTY, MD.

18-386040-
4315340


GRAY HOUSE
KENT ISLAND QUAD
Stevensville
Wesley Ch
Landing Field
Broad Creek
Cox Creek
Thompson Creek
Warehouse
K E N T I S L A N D
BM 18
BM


CRAY HOUSE
NR BOUNDARY
P. 146
QA-259
MAP 48 - P 14
A-1
JOHN BENTON
W/R WTB 3/468
P. 5
Rezoned 10/26/71
STEVENSVILLE
BACK LANE
STATE ROADS COMM
P. 41
P. 254
B-2
P. 229
WHITEHAVEN ENTERPRISES, INC
CWC 128/276
136.43A.
P. 9
R-3
EACH LTD. PTNRSHP.
IWM 171/177
1ST PARCEL
153.73 A
P 1
KENT ISLAND LIMITED PARTNERSHIP
CWC 48/444
Rezoned 9/27/66
P. 90
KENT ISLAND LIMITED PARTNERSHIP
CWC 46/615
7.65 A.
P. 3
P. 280
Rezoned to B-2 8/7/73
A-2-7
P. 250
B-1
U.S. 50
P. 251
BOARD OF EDUCATION
TSP 21/354
Rezoned 13.36 A.
12/2/69
P. 45
P. 278
P. 283
P. 54
P. 56
(P. 60)
P. 206
P. 215
P. 193
P. 244
P. 290
P. 261
P. 18
P. 220
P. 158
P. 184
P. 4
P. 127
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P. 79
P. 295
P. 200
P. 77
P. 73
P. 6
P. 85
P. 178
P. 280
18
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9
8
HIP

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Land and Probate Records of Queen Anne's County (Title search by Mrs. Mildred Schoch, Chester, Maryland).

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Kent Island, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	386040	4315340
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Verbal Boundary Description: Boundaries are indicated on the attached plat.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property includes a single town lot, 54' wide by 220' deep.

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 Orlando Ridout, V, Historic Sites Survey Coordinator

organization Maryland Historical Trust date May 1, 1978 (revised January 1983)

street & number 21 State Circle telephone 301-269-2438

city or town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

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 3-24-83

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

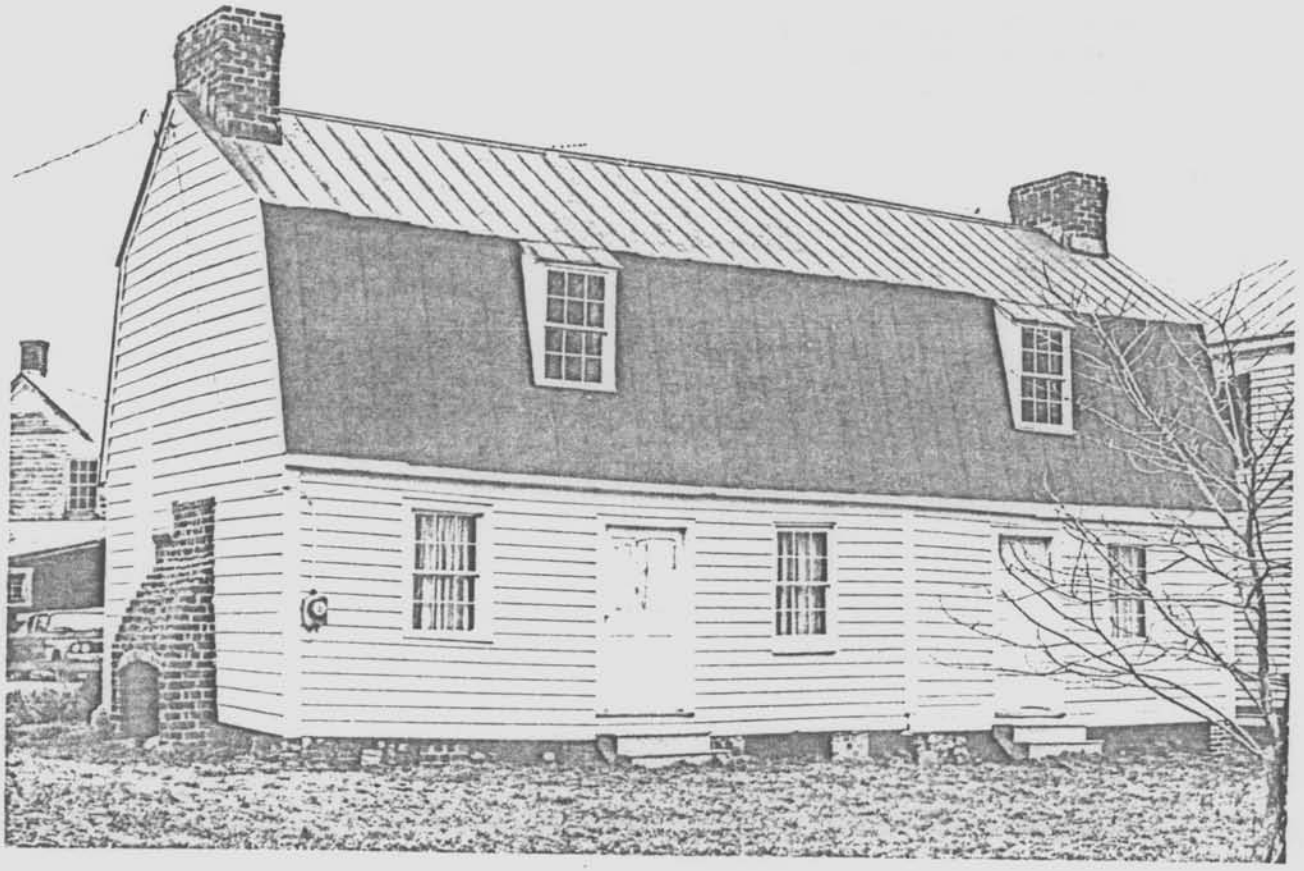
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration



Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

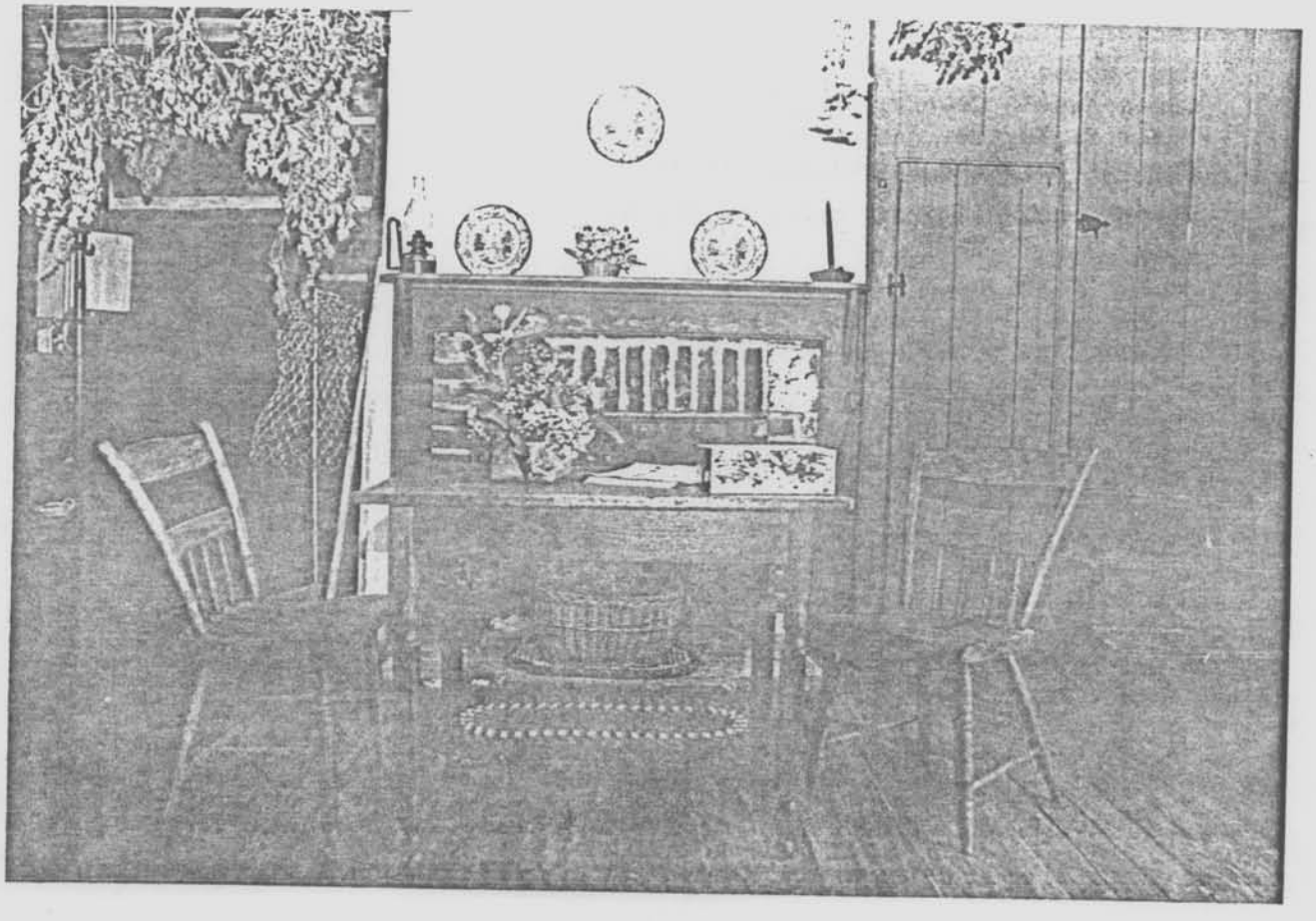
East facade from NE

1/10

Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

West facade from NW

2/10



Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

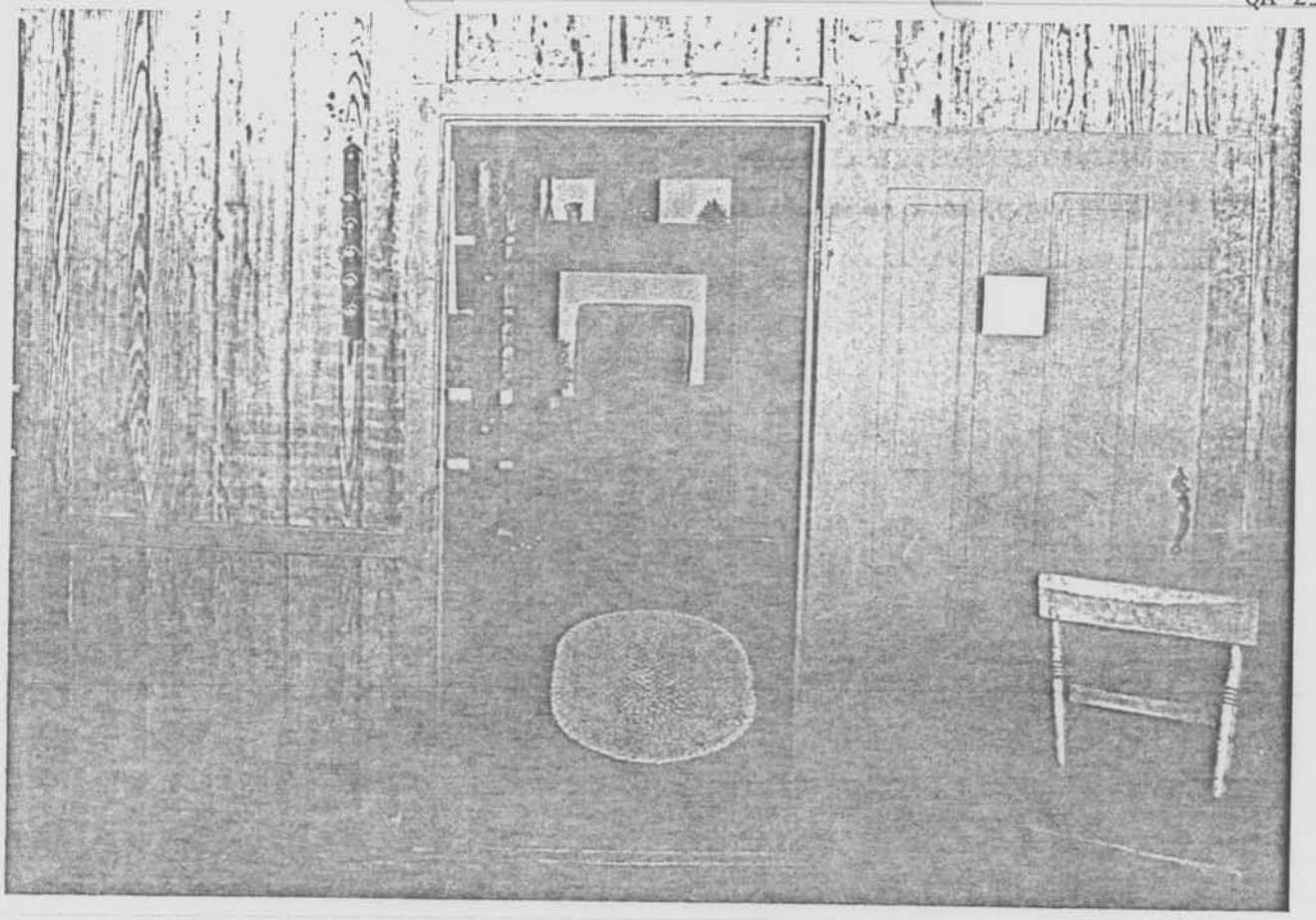
West facade from SW

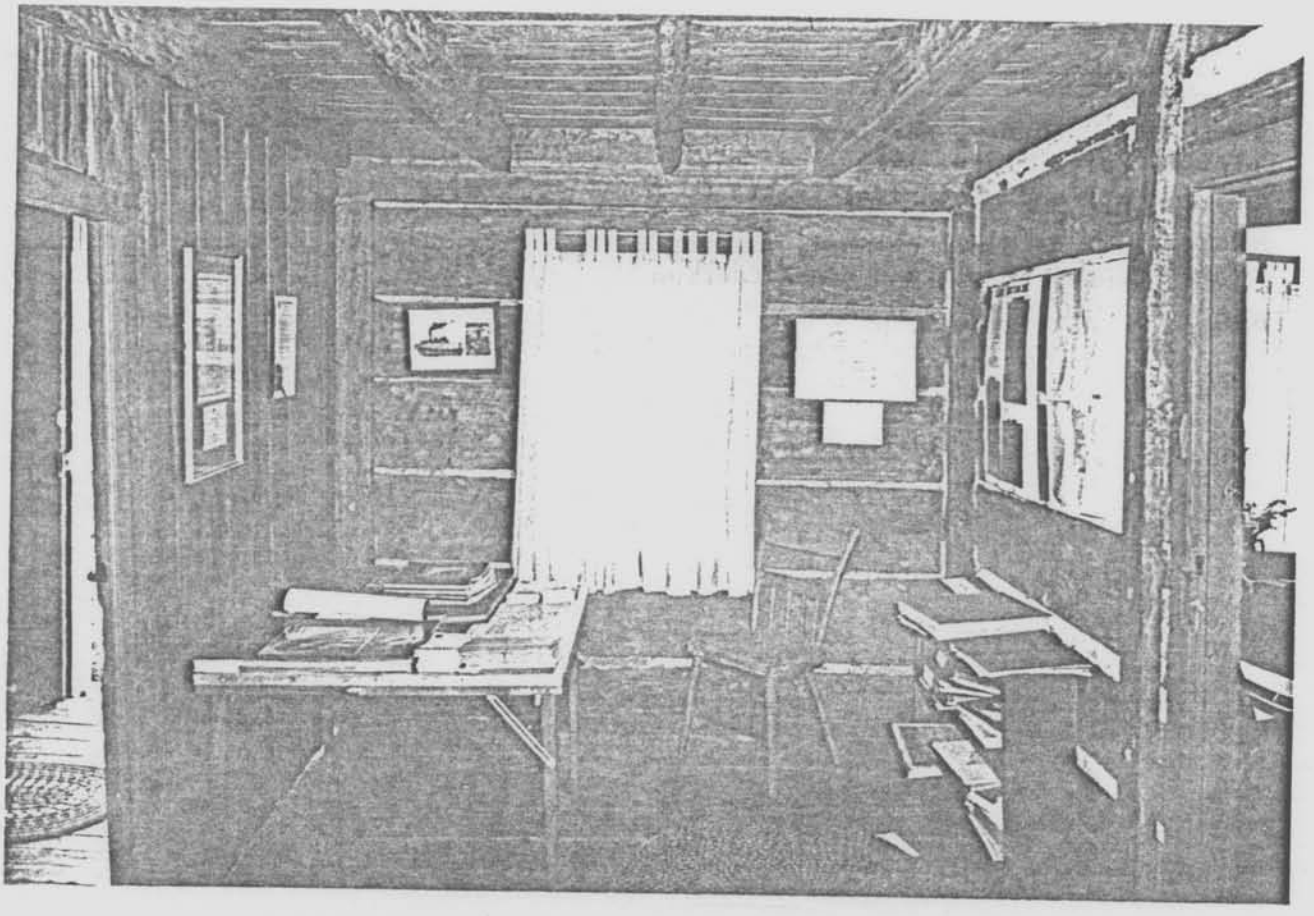
3/10

Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

North room, original hall, facing N.

4/10





Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

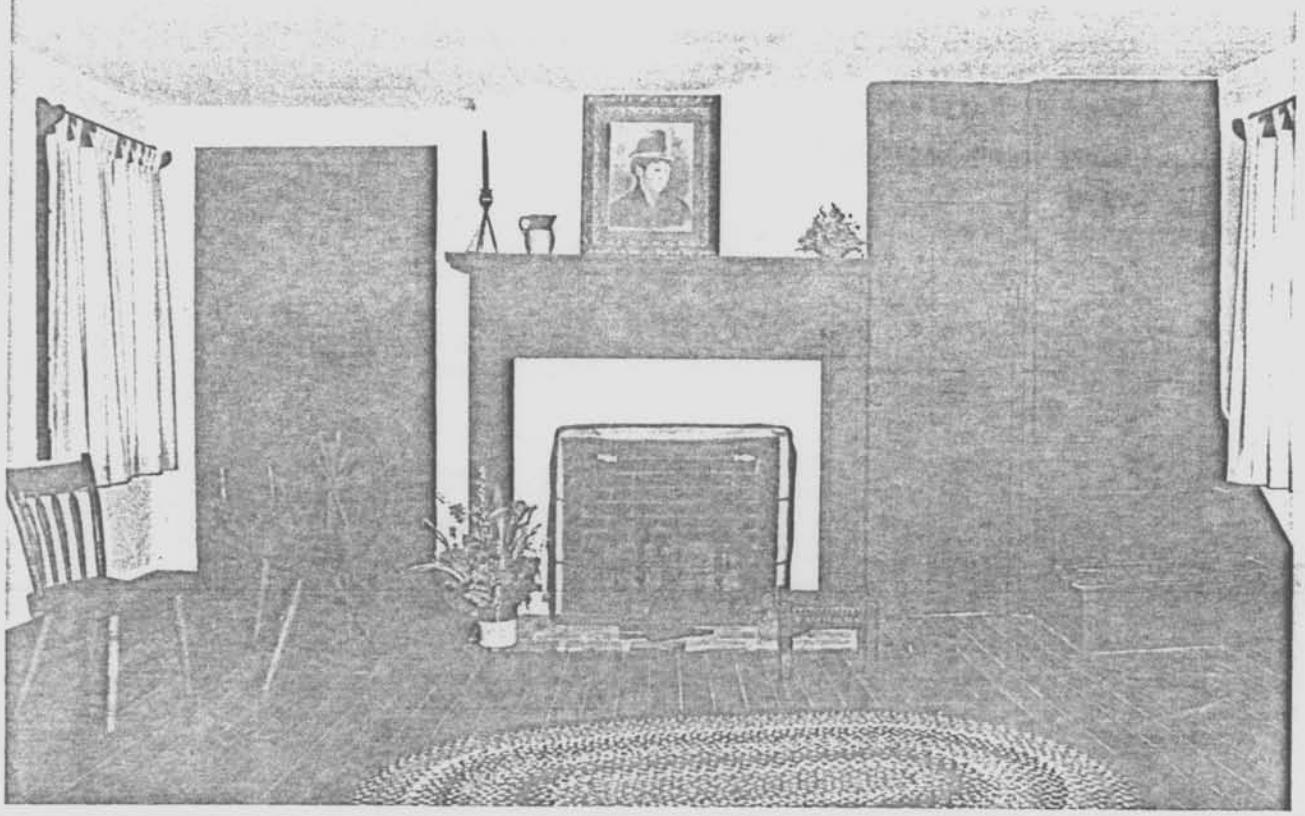
Board partition, North room, facing S.

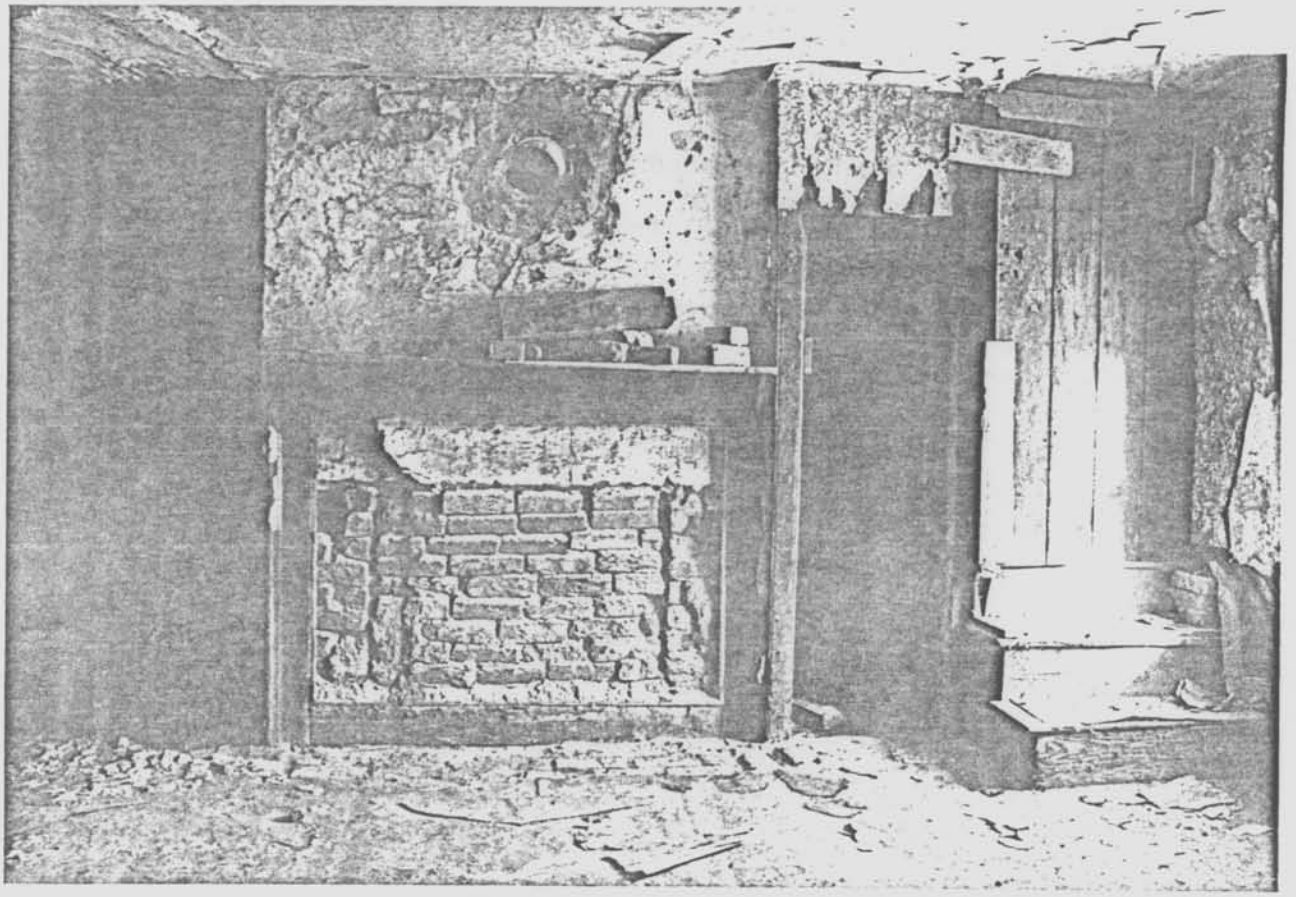
5/10

Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

Middle room, original chamber, facing E
showing post-and- plank construction

6/10





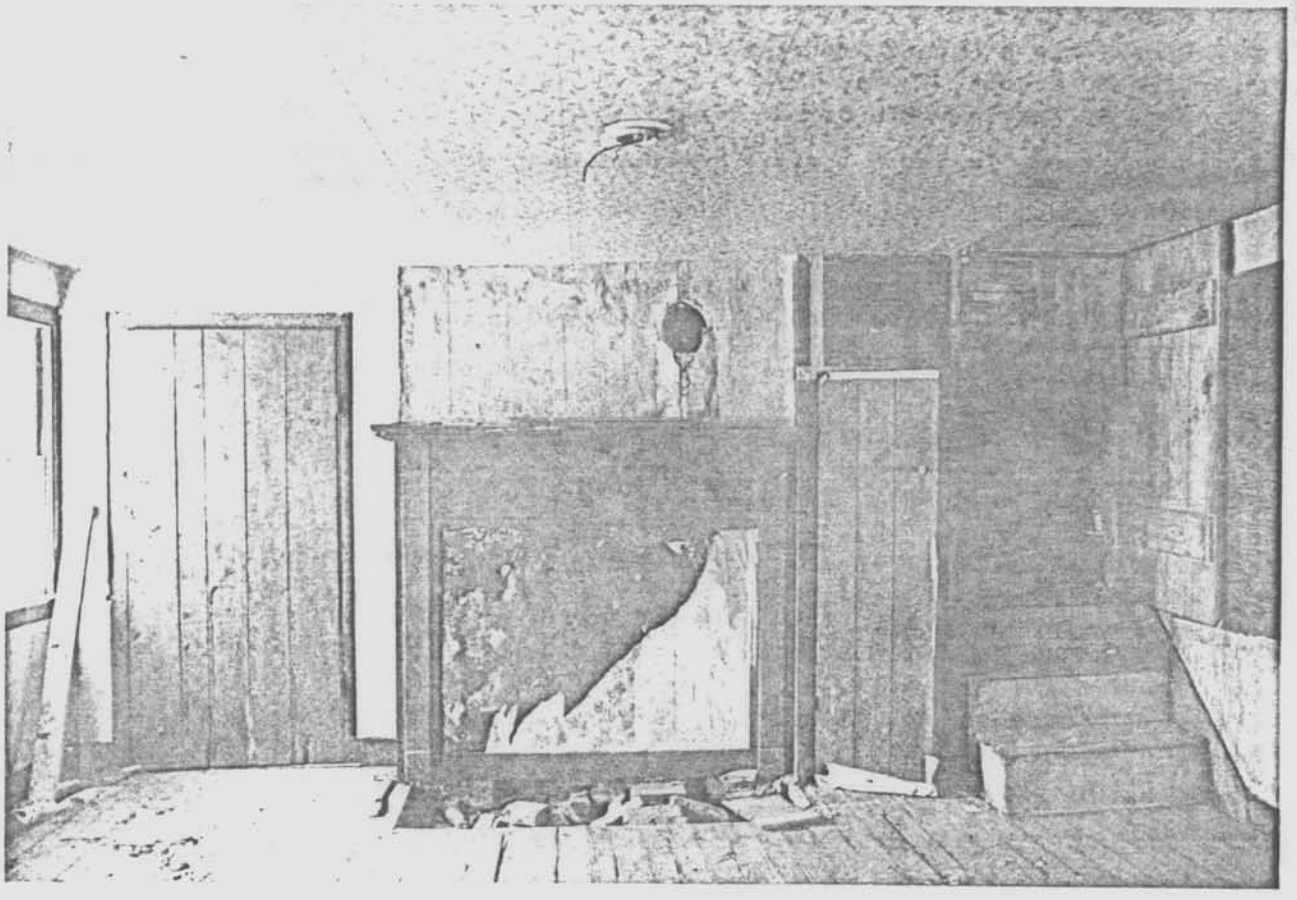
Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Peter E. Kurtze, Jan. 1983
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust

South room facing S

7/10

Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Orlando Ridout, V, May 1978
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust
North room (original hall) facing N
mantel and stair before restoration
8/10

QA-259
Cray House
Sudlersville, Md.
ORV 1978
north room mantel & stair



Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Orlando Ridout, V, May 1978
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust
North room, facing NW before restoration
Note blocked door in NW corner (to demolished kitchen wing); corner posts & top plates visible
9/10

QA-259
Cray House
Stevensville, Md
OR V 1978
note blocked door in corner
to demolished kitchen wing

Cray House QA-259
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Orlando Ridout, V, May 1978
Neg. at Maryland Historical Trust
South room, facing S, before restoration
10/10

QA-259
Cray House
Stevensville, Md
OR V 1978
South room, circa 1845

QA-259
Cray House
Stevensville

circa 1809-1817
circa 1845

The Cray House is one of the finest surviving examples of an unusual framing system known as post-and-plank construction, in which hewn and pit-sawn horizontal planks are mortised into hewn corner posts, reinforced with light intermediate stabilizing posts. This type of construction was evidently used throughout the Tidewater region, but only scattered examples have been identified. Of these, the Cray House is one of the few examples of post-and-plank used in a dwelling house. The original 2 room section of the house was probably built by John Denny between 1809 and 1817. A single room addition was made to the south gable of the house circa 1845, and at that time the original steeply pitched gable roof was replaced with the present gambrel. The outline of an early frame kitchen, now demolished, can be seen in the north gable of the main house.