HA-408

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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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

and or common Silver Houses Historic District

2. Location

street & number South of Deer Creek on east and west sides of Md. Rt. 161 not for publication

city, town Darlington X vicinity of congressional district 1st

state Maryland code 24 county Harford code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	public	X occupied	X agriculture	museum
building(s)	private	unoccupied	commercial	park
structure	X both	work in progress	educational	X 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 Multiple private owners and State of Maryland

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harford County Courthouse

street & number 20 West Courtland Street

city, town Bel Air state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1982 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

PROPERTY OWNERS:

Mr. Howard N. Moxley (Benjamin Silver House and John A. Silver House Site)
3546 Harmony Church Road
Darlington, MD 21034

Mr. William S. Reese et al. (Jeremiah P. Silver House)
409 Temple Street
New Haven, CT 16512

Mr. & Mrs. George C. Reeves (Silas B. Silver House)
3643 Harmony Church Road
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

Mr. & Mrs. Alvin P. Lehnerd (William F. Silver House)
125 North Madison
Hinsdale, IL 60521

Trustees of Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church
Harmony Church Road
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

State of Maryland
Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Ms. Kathy Reese (Jeremiah P. Silver House)
Route 1
Dover, Arkansas 72837

Ms. Barbara Reese Currie (Jeremiah P. Silver House)
2033 Wroxton
Houston, Texas 77005

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Silver Houses Historic District is a group of mid-19th century farmsteads and a church located near Darlington in rural east central Harford County, Maryland. The district comprises a total of 36 resources, including four stone residences with related agricultural outbuildings, and the site of a fifth stone house (marked by a large frame barn, a frame tenant house, and two outbuildings). The houses were built between 1853 and 1859 by members of the Silver family, and are large vernacular dwellings heavily influenced by the Classical Revival and Italianate styles. Two of the houses were partially designed by a professional architect, William H. Reasin; the other two may have been influenced by the architect's work. These houses display a degree of architectural sophistication which is uncommon for the period in rural areas of the county. All are constructed of locally quarried stone with finished Port Deposit granite sills, lintels, quoins, and exterior steps. The district also includes the Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church, a Gothic-influenced stone building of 1871, designed by John W. Hogg. This church, and the 1837 building it replaced, were erected under the influence and with the support of the Silver family. The historic buildings are widely spaced over the open agricultural landscape of the district, but are united by sight lines from the site of the John Silver House, which was a c. 1844 stone dwelling that burned in 1902. The site is currently marked by a mid-19th century frame barn, which defines the center of the present district as well as the approximate center of the original Silver family property. The district retains considerable integrity; neither the contributing buildings nor their rural agricultural setting have been significantly altered since the Silver family's occupancy. Of the 36 resources included in the district, 32, or 88%, contribute to its significance; the 4 non-contributing elements are minor outbuildings of 20th-century date, and an education building constructed adjacent to the church in 1965.

Number of Resources:

Contributing	Non-contributing	
30	4	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
32	4	Total

Original and historic functions and uses:

agriculture, residential, religious

Number of previously listed National Register properties included in this nomination: 0

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (for SUMMARY and statistics, see Continuation Sheet No. 29)

The Silver Houses Historic District is located on both sides of Darlington Road (Maryland Route 161) south of Deer Creek and extending along Wilkinson Road on the east side of Darlington Road to the intersection of Fox Road and along Harmony Church Road on the west side of Darlington Road in the east central section of Harford County, Maryland.

The general topography of the District is gently rolling hills crossed by small stream beds draining toward the north into Deer Creek, which in turn empties into the Susquehanna River about two miles east of the District. The land within the District is between 150 and 320 feet in elevation and at certain locations commands vistas toward the west and north over the Deer Creek valley. The land use in the District is mostly agricultural, supporting dairy cattle and hay, along with some grain crops in large, open expanses of fields, interspersed with tree lines along streams, around the principal buildings, and along the major roads. The roads are two-lane hard-surfaced thoroughfares which follow clefts between the elevated land areas. Maryland Route 161 (Darlington Road) is below grade near the north boundary of the District.

The principal historic resources in the District are four stone residences with related outbuildings, a stone church, and the site of a fifth stone house, marked by a large frame barn, a tenant house and two other outbuildings. The houses were built by members of the Silver family between 1853 and 1859. The church was built in 1871 to replace an 1837 structure, both buildings being erected under the influence and with the support of the Silver family.

The four extant houses are large vernacular houses heavily influenced by the early 19th century Classical Revival and the mid-19th century Italianate styles. At least two, the Jeremiah Silver house and the Silas Silver House,

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

were partially designed by a professional architect, William H. Reasin. The other two houses, the Benjamin Silver House and the William F. Silver House, may have been influenced by the architect's work. The John A. Silver House, which burned in 1902, was also a stone house, with an original section dating from about 1844 and a large stone addition built about 1870. All of the historic residences have locally quarried stone walls with finished Port Deposit granite lintels, sills, quoins, and exterior steps. The Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian church was built in a simplified Gothic Revival style in 1871 and was designed by John W. Hogg. It also has local stone walls and Port Deposit granite trim. The mid-19th century tenant house near the John Silver House Site is a simple vernacular frame house which has aluminum siding. Similar tenant houses are also located near the Benjamin Silver and William F. Silver houses.

The historic buildings are widely spaced throughout the District, but all are visible from the John Silver House Site, which is the approximate center of the original Silver family property. The open landscape of the District gives the observer a clear vista to the south where the Jeremiah Silver House may be seen and to the west, where the Harmony Church, the Silas Silver, Benjamin Silver, and William F. Silver Houses are visible. Each house has outbuildings nearby, but these do not obscure the sightline from the point at the John Silver House Site. This visual relationship and open character of the landscape has not changed in any drastic way since the houses were built. An Aegis-Intelligencer newspaper series on "Homes on Deer Creek", written by Dr. William Stump Forwood in late 1879 and early 1880 commented extensively on the houses of the Silver family and stated: "Taken altogether, perhaps there

is no family in Maryland, of like numbers, of which all have such a splendid set of buildings; and nearly all in sight of each other . . ." (Jan. 9, 1880). Several family anecdotes and events illustrate the influence of the integrated natural and built environment of the District (see Section 8, Significance). The church, although later in date, replaces an 1837 stone building which stood about twenty yards north of the present church. Earlier Silver family houses also existed at various points, as shown on the 1878 Martenet map of Harford County, particularly south of the John Silver House Site. None of these have survived and nothing is known about their appearance and scale.

The District's general appearance has not greatly changed since the construction of the houses in the mid to late 1850's. The greatest single change was the loss by fire of the John Silver House in 1902. With its two large stone sections and its prominent location, it was apparently the visual anchor of the Silver properties. The frame barn which now dominates the site takes the place of the house in relationship to the other buildings. It was also enlarged, possibly about 1870, and is still reputed to be the largest barn in Harford County.

The District is distinct from the surrounding area by its strong visual relationship combining both architectural and natural features. Adjoining the District on the south along Darlington and Fox Roads is a small development of houses dating from the 1950's to the present. The west side of the District is less defined by a change in architecture as by the topography, which decreases in elevation along Harmony Church Road toward the crossroads village of Glenville. Similarly, the north and east sides of the District slope away toward

Deer Creek and Elbow Branch, with more forest and vegetation as the elevation drops. The open character of the District is in noticeable contrast.

The building types represented in the District are typical of a rural residential/agricultural area: the majority of the buildings are dwellings, with agricultural outbuildings and service buildings such as garages. The exception is the church, which has a 1965 education building adjoining it on the south and a small stone tool shed at the west property line. The original and present use of all major buildings has remained the same, with only minor changes in the agricultural buildings and service structures. All of the houses and the church have had alterations, but in no case do these seriously affect the integrity of the buildings. In the houses, the alterations have been rear and side additions or porch enclosures, the replacement of original porches, and interior alterations. In the Jeremiah Silver House, an interior wall in the main part of the house was removed, but this seems to be the only major interior change in the principal floors of the houses. The church has been the least altered structurally of any of the major buildings. Its interior has been repainted several times, but the stencilled decoration has been reproduced in feeling and location, if not in exact design. No restoration or rehabilitation projects are currently underway or planned in the District.

The District has a total of 36 resources, including all outbuildings and one site. Of these, 32, or 88%, contribute to the significance of the district. Following are brief descriptions of each:

1. John A. Silver House Site (HA-385) - East side of Darlington Road. Five buildings. Location of c. 1844 stone house with major addition of c. 1870; burned in 1902. Remaining outbuildings consist of following: Large frame

bank barn on stone foundation, vertical siding, slate roof with two cupolas, built c. 1844 with later addition c. 1870; late 19th century frame tenant house, 1-1/2 stories, three-bay facade with shed porch, gable roof, aluminum siding, additions at rear; two frame wagon sheds with stone foundations and vertical siding, gable roofs, one altered as garage, both now used for storage; ruined frame tenant house, probably late 19th century, located 300 yards northwest of the other buildings, hipped roof, two stories, vertical siding, formerly had shed porch on three-bay facade.

2. Jeremiah P. Silver House (HA-384), "Lebanon" - 337 Fox Road. Two buildings. 1853 2-1/2 story Classical Revival-influenced stone house with five bay principal facade facing north, modillion cornice and one-story porch with four Tuscan columns, three dormers on north elevation. Original slate roof replaced in early 1950's with asphalt shingles; four interior end chimneys. Datestone inscribed "JPS 1853" in east gable over hemispherical window. Original stone rear wing with frame addition built 1956. Addition does not substantially alter the integrity of the stone portion. Separation between sections is clearly visible from south, but principal facade on north remains essentially as built. Central hall plan with two rooms on each side; wall with sliding doors between west rooms removed possibly in early 20th century. Recessed panels at window openings; polished slate mantels in west wall of enlarged living room; paneled walnut doors. Mahogany stair rail; scroll-sawn closer decoration. 1959 one story stone veneer tenant house southwest of main house.* Other outbuildings located south and west of house are non-contributing and are not included in District boundary (see Boundary Justification).

*non-contributing

3. Benjamin Silver House (HA-398-406) - 3646 Harmony Church Rd. Twelve resources. HA-398: 1856 2-1/2 story Classical Revival-influenced stone house with five-bay principal facade facing south; one-story porch with four Tuscan columns. Plain cornice; slate roof with two dormers in south elevation; interior end chimneys. Entry porch on west elevation with two square columns. Stone rear wing with frame mid-20th century addition on east. Datestone in east gable of main section inscribed "BS 1856". Central hall plan with two rooms on each side. Recessed panel walnut doors and paneling at window openings. Marble mantels in parlor and dining room. Mahogany stair rail with scroll-sawn closer decoration. Ca. 1850 log smokehouse located west of house near fence; gable roof; single door in south elevation; square windows in east and west elevations. Ca. 1860 frame tenant house stands south of barn near Harmony Church Road; one story, five-bay principal facade on south. Slate gable roof extended on east over open porch. Aluminum siding. HA-399: Frame bank barn on stone foundation located 40 yards southeast of main house. Principal entrance on north. Slate roof shows evidence of patching in center, indicating possible original cupola location. Hand-hewn interior structure; vertical wood and red aluminum siding. Concrete block extension on east. Stone wall on south around barnyard. Two modern silos on north side. HA-400: Stone dairy located immediately north of rear wing of main house, one story with frame addition on east elevation. HA-401: Frame slave quarters located immediately northeast of dairy. Two stories; hipped slate roof; vertical red aluminum siding. Altered in mid-20th century for furnace room on ground floor and children's playroom on second floor. HA-402: Stone smokehouse located immediately east of slave quarters.

Square plan; hipped slate roof; single entry on south elevation; diamond pattern brick vent on north elevation. HA-403: Frame icehouse on raised stone foundation located 25 feet east of smokehouse. Hipped roof with cupola and shed addition on east. Vertical red aluminum siding. HA-404: Frame carriage house with gable roof and cupola located 15 feet east of icehouse. Shed addition on east to accommodate alteration for garage. Vertical red aluminum siding. Second frame building, possibly a wagon shed originally, located east of carriage house. Gable roof with wave pattern bargeboard; shed addition on west. Horizontal wood siding on main section; board and batten siding on addition. Open shed attached perpendicularly on east elevation. HA-405: Frame corn crib located east of open shed on HA-404. Corrugated metal gable roof; board and batten siding. HA-406: Calf pen and yard. Three frame sheds and fenced enclosure located north of HA-404 and 405. Vertical wood siding and gable roofs, one slate and two corrugated metal.

4. William F. Silver House (HA-389) - 521 Darlington Road.
Six buildings. Ca. 1857-58 2-1/2 story Italianate-influenced stone house with three-bay principal facade facing south. Hipped slate roof with bracketed cornice and two interior chimneys. One story porch on west elevation with bracketed cornice; screen-enclosed in mid-20th century. South elevation once had one-story porch, configuration unknown; removed prior to 1930's. Two-story stone wing projects north from main section with three-sided bay window on west. Wing extended possibly late 19th century with addition of present kitchen. Bracketed cornice continues on this extension; slight difference in color and finish of stone and clearly visible mortar joint between original wing and

extension. No substantial loss of integrity. Shed porch on east side of wing removed after 1930's. Square windows on top floor; false windows on first and second floors on west elevation over staircase. Side hall plan with parlor on east side of hall. Mahogany stair rail and scroll-sawn closer decoration. Marble mantel and paneled window surrounds in parlor. One large room at rear of main section with marble mantels at east and west walls. Present dining room possibly was original kitchen; off-center fireplace in north wall, plain wood mantel. Bay window on west probably added late 19th century. Present kitchen has fireplace rebuilt in 1970's using stone from ruins of earlier Silver house which formerly stood northwest of present house near Darlington Road. One story stone dairy formerly located immediately north of wing; demolished after c. 1940. Stone slave quarters northeast of wing; one story, slate gable roof; single door and window in south elevation; interior chimney at west gable end. Frame garage northwest of wing with vertical siding; possibly originally used as carriage house or wagon shed. Second frame outbuilding north of garage, also with vertical siding, now used as storage and garage. Frame bank barn on stone foundation located northeast of second frame outbuilding; vertical siding, hand-hewn structure. Conical stone pillars on east elevation ground level; stone-walled enclosure on east side. Frame one-story tenant house located northwest of second garage, apparently early 20th century; weatherboard siding; new composition roof; entry porch on south elevation.

5. Dr. Silas B. Silver House (HA-407), "Silverton" - 3643 Harmony Church Road. Seven buildings. 1859 2-1/2 story Italianate-influenced stone house with five-bay principal elevation facing north. Central gable with arched window flanked

by inscribed stones reading "1859" and "Dr. S & Mrs. S". Central entrance has flat-roofed entry porch, a mid-20th century replacement of original larger porch with open upper level reached via french doors on second floor. Bracketed hood over french doors. Three-sided bay window on first floor west elevation. Bracketed cornice, slate roof with interior chimneys and single dormers facing east and west with paired arched windows and oculi. Mid-1960's enclosed porch on east elevation; mid-1960's screened porch on south elevation. No substantial loss of integrity, although enclosed porch on east is current main entrance and thus most common view of house. Double walnut doors at main entrance. Central hall plan with two rooms on each side. Marble mantel in west parlor is only remaining original in house. All fireplaces closed off except in second parlor or family room. Mahogany stair rail; scroll-sawn closer ornament. Stone combination smokehouse/root cellar with hipped shingle roof and cupola and frame on stone foundation woodshed, also with hipped shingle roof and cupola, both located south of house. Frame henhouse southwest of house, now used for storage. Ca. 1965 concrete block garage east of house.* Frame carriage house east of garage; vertical siding, scalloped bargeboards. Frame bank barn on stone foundation east of carriage house; vertical siding. Frame corn crib south of carriage house; vertical siding.

6. Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church (HA-165) - southwest corner of Harmony Church Road and Darlington Road. Three buildings. 1871 Gothic Revival stone church with bell tower and spire over projecting foyer facing northeast. Slate gable roof; brick chimney projecting from north slope of roof. Plaque located on southeast corner inscribed "Completed in 1871, Dedicated debt-free

*non-contributing

in 1872". Four lancet stained glass windows on each side of rectangular sanctuary; recessed niche behind pulpit on raised platform at southwest wall. Interior walls plastered and stencil bordered; last repainted in 1968. Corner stairway to basement added 1954. Covered walkway on south connects church with two-story stone veneer education building built 1965.* Cemetery located north and west of church; stone hipped roof tool shed built 1958*west of church at edge of 4-foot stone wall bordering church property. Iron gates in wall at front of church. Slate marker in wall north of church indicates location of 1837 church.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the District was based primarily on the visual relationship between the principal historic buildings. The view from the John Silver House Site was used as a pivotal center and the straight boundaries toward the south and west correspond to the lines of sight to the Jeremiah, William, and Benjamin Silver Houses. The northern boundary excludes non-contributing open space and a non-contributing metal building used as an airplane hangar. The boundary around the Silas Silver House includes the 13.70 acres of the present tax parcel to protect the panoramic view to the north. The buildings on the parcel are located toward the southern edge of the property. Since this house is at the highest elevation in the District and the land slopes away from the hill toward the east, the sight line from the John Silver House Site does not require a straight boundary from this point. The southern boundary thus corresponds to the south edge of the right-of-way of Harmony Church Road to the stone wall at the beginning of the Harmony Church property. Continuing along the wall to the

*non-contributing

northeast corner of the property, the boundary follows the eastern right-of-way of Darlington Road south to Wilkinson Road where it follows the north edge of Wilkinson Road, excluding two parcels on the north side of the road on which are two non-contributing mid-20th century houses. These houses are not visible from most of the principal historic buildings. Darlington and Wilkinson Roads follow the general outline of the Silver property during the 19th century. At the junction of Fox and Wilkinson Roads, the boundary meets and follows the boundary of a five-acre proposed parcel including the Jeremiah Silver House and the 1959 stone tenant house. The five-acre parcel excludes several non-contributing agricultural buildings, only one of which, a corn crib, is contemporary with the house. The corn crib has been altered for other use and is flanked on the east and west by attached modern construction. The area thus outlined totals approximately 280 acres and includes a significant portion of the original Silver land between Darlington Road and the eastern District boundary.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

HA-408

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	X OTHER (SPECIFY) local history
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1853-59; 1871 BUILDER/ARCHITECT William H. Reasin, John W. Hogg

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE CRITERIA: A & C

SIGNIFICANCE

The Silver Houses Historic District possesses significance as a distinguishable architectural grouping of four houses and one house site with related agricultural outbuildings built from 1853 to 1859 and a church built in 1871 which are locally significant as examples of the Classical Revival, Italianate, and Gothic Revival styles. The buildings are linked in four main areas: 1) They have a strong visual relationship, all being visible from a central point. 2) All were built by or with the influence of the Silver family within a 20-year period, the majority within a period of six years. 3) The architectural design of the buildings is unusual in Harford County, showing a polish and sophistication not often found in rural areas. Three of the buildings were designed by professional architects and the other principal buildings may have been influenced by their work. 4) The stone materials for the buildings came from quarries in the same vicinity and high quality workmanship in stonemasonry and carpentry is evident in all of the buildings. Based on existing survey records, these connections are unique among other groupings of mid-19th century family houses. The District has a high level of integrity, retaining its rural agricultural land use, and remaining largely in the ownership of the Silver family until the mid-20th century. Alterations to the buildings have been

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

and James, with the strange condition, "but it is expressly understood that they are not to molest or trouble my wife during her natural life".[3] This may suggest the clash of strong wills in a large family. Benjamin also left a share in a plaster mill on the Susquehanna River to David, Amos, and James. The will also mentions a stone quarry: " . . . and there being an Excellent stone quarry on one part of my plantation, my will is that each of my sons David, Amos, and James have free access to the same for the purpose of building of houses or Barns but not for the purpose of building stone fences . . ."[4] The ban on stone fences apparently was heeded by succeeding generations of Silvers, there being stone fences only along a portion of Harmony Church Road west of the Church.

3. Benjamin Silver II: Benjamin Silver II (1782-1847) was the first of the family to achieve local prominence. He entered the fishing business at an early age and eventually extended his fishing operation from the Susquehanna River across the head of Chesapeake Bay, becoming very successful and acquiring great wealth. He had a desire for land and owned several of the small islands in the Susquehanna River just south of the mouth of Deer Creek as bases for his fisheries. The 1878 Martenet map of Harford County (Figure 3) shows the present Robert Island as Silver Island. Benjamin II also bought Snake Island (now Wood Island) in 1805.[5] Living on rented farms or with relatives until 1812, Benjamin finally bought 260 acres of the Mary's Lot tract from John B. Bayless and Platt Whitaker. After serving in the militia in the War of 1812 in which he participated in the defense of Baltimore, Benjamin devoted his time to developing his farm and fisheries and to acquiring more property. At the time of his death in 1847, he owned about 1,352 acres.[6]

few and do not substantially affect the historical character.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

1. Settlement of Silver Family in Harford County: Gershom Silver (1725-1775) and his family moved to the lower Deer Creek valley in what was then Baltimore County from the vicinity of Burlington, New Jersey, in about 1763. This area was only sparsely settled, with occasional farmsteads and mills carved out of a dense forest. Gershom was apparently a tenant farmer until about 1770 when he bought 200 acres of the tract called Mary's Lot from Samuel Chew. In 1772, Gershom acquired another 100 acres from Samuel Bayless.[1] Plats showing Mary's Lot and Gershom Silver's purchases are shown in Figures 1 and 2.[2] There is no information on where Gershom's house was located or what it was like; however, traditionally, residence houses were built near the center of the farm property. Benjamin Silver III's diary for 1851 notes that Gershom's house stood until that year when it blew down during the winter. The center of the three hundred acres was probably near or just southeast of the site of the later John A. Silver House.

2. Benjamin Silver I: (For the purposes of this nomination only, the Benjamin Silvers discussed here are designated I, II, and III for clarity. They were father, son, and grandson, but did not use these numbers in their lifetimes.) Benjamin Silver I (1753-1818) was the oldest of Gershom Silver's ten children. He married Euphemia Smith in 1775 and had nine children of his own. His will gives the first indication of the Silver family's growing wealth and building ambitions. Dated 1813, Benjamin's will gave to Effie his wife 100 acres around their mansion house. He left the 300 acres of his land, apparently all that inherited from his father Gershom, to his sons David, Amos,

Benjamin was interested in improved methods of farming and used fish pickle from his fisheries as a fertilizer. He also used bone meal, guano, and wood ash, experimenting to find the best fertilizer for his wheat, corn, and clover crops and for cattle grazing lands. Benjamin was an advocate of education and actively supported the building of local schoolhouses. The most prominent local school after 1817 was the Prospect School, built as a log school on a hill near the present Darlington Road about one-half mile south of where Harmony Church now stands. Benjamin, Zephaniah Bayless, Amos Silver, and others helped build and support the school. Prior to 1850, the log school was replaced by a hexagonal stone school building which is still extant.

Benjamin was an active supporter, though not a communing member until 1846, of the Churchville Presbyterian Church. In 1837, however, he was one of the eight people who met at the Prospect School to discuss the building of a church and Sunday School nearer the Deer Creek area. Although by the second quarter of the 19th century, the lower Deer Creek valley was becoming increasingly more populated, roads were still rough and travel was often difficult or impossible in bad weather. The group agreeing to build a small church, Benjamin donated the land and apparently much of the building materials. See Paragraph 9.

4. Construction of Stone Houses: John A. Silver House: "Vignon"

Benjamin Silver II had seven sons and two daughters. The two younger sons, John Archer Silver and Jeremiah P. Silver, began building the large stone houses that came to characterize the Silver family properties. John apparently started his house in 1844,[7] prior to his first marriage in 1845. Little is known about the appearance of the original section, but it was said in later

family diaries to have had 10 rooms. It was located near the center of the original Silver land purchase made by Gershom Silver in 1770. The eastern part of the large frame bank barn still standing was probably built at the same time. During the period 1845-1860, the area which makes up the historic district achieved its present character. The succeeding Silver generations usually purchased land adjoining that of relatives and, with the absence of defined boundaries such as stone walls, large tree stands, and major streams, the hilly topography was largely cleared of visual obstacles. The basis of the future visual integrity of the District was thus established. A family anecdote recorded by Francis S. Silver, John's grandson, says that John had a booming voice and, when he wanted to borrow oxen from the neighboring Silver farm (William F. Silver), he would walk out on the hilltop and yell his request.[8]

John's first wife Jane Pannell, one of four Pannell sisters who married four of the Silver brothers, died in 1857, leaving no children. John remained a widower until 1869 when he married Hannah Kennard, a young schoolteacher from Wilmington, Delaware. After a honeymoon trip to Europe, John returned to his farm and made several improvements. A 10-room stone addition was built on the original house. The addition was said to have been walnut panelled throughout and held, among other furnishings, a suit of armor and a complete silver dinner service acquired on the European tour. The barn was apparently enlarged about the same time. According to Francis Silver, the barn had four 100-ton hay mows and one for straw. A large double silo held winter silage. Possibly as a result of the European tour, John's farm was called "Vignon", after Avignon. Several stone outbuildings with hipped roofs and cupolas, reportedly copied from a garden building John admired in Europe, were also

added to the Vignon complex.[9] None of these buildings survive.

The second marriage was not a success and John and Hannah separated soon after the birth of their son William K. Silver (later called William Silver of John). Another family story refers to the physical setting of the Silver property at this time. John was said to have grumbled about Hannah's urging him to build an arbor from Vignon to Harmony Church so she would be shaded from the hot sun as she walked to church.[10]

With the deaths of Hannah Silver in 1875 and John Silver in 1878, Vignon passed to his son William, for whom guardians were appointed until he came of age. The farm was run by Jeremiah P. Silver and his sons for William, but most of the farm implements, stock, furniture, and household goods were sold at auction. In the late 1890's William Silver of John returned with his family to Vignon to take up farming. In 1902, during spring cleaning, paper decorations from winter parties in the front parlors were being burned in the fireplace when the roof caught on fire. The wood shingle roof was being replaced and the slate was stacked near the house, but not installed at the time of the fire. In spite of efforts to save the house, it burned to the ground over a period of several hours. Mrs. Silver ran out on the hill yelling "Fire!" and was said to have been heard on the north side of Deer Creek about 1-1/2 miles away. Most furniture was saved and a few of the polished slate mantels were removed.[11] Two of these are still stored in the barn at the site. The farm continued in operation after the fire, although the family moved to another Silver house north of Darlington. The ruins of the house stood until about the 1940's, when some of the stone was used to build a garage at the Bayless

House (HA-409) south of Harmony Church.[12] The property was sold out of the Silver family in 1948.

5. Jeremiah P. Silver House - "Lebanon": Jeremiah was the youngest son of Benjamin II, but his house apparently set a precedent which other members of the family tried to equal or better.[13] He began his house, which he called "Lebanon", in 1853, about a year after his marriage. Jeremiah's diary provides much detail on the progress of construction. The specifications for the house also survive, giving its measurements as 47-1/2 feet by 33-1/2 feet, the first floor 11 feet in height, the second 9-1/2 feet and the attic 4-1/2 feet. Additional specifications called for walnut doors, mahogany stair rails, and North Carolina yellow pine floorboards. The architect was Mr. Reasin, who agreed to furnish a plan for the house with front and side elevations and front porticos for $25.00.[14] This was probably William H. Reasin, an Aberdeen man who went to Baltimore to study architecture.[15] He and his partner Samuel Wetherald designed the No. 6 Engine House on Gay Street in Baltimore in 1853, the same year that Jeremiah began his house.[16] That Reasin became successful is apparent from his increased fee in 1858 for his exterior design of Silas B. Silver's house. Reasin also had family connections in the Glenville area.

The employment of an architect is a further indication of the increasing wealth and social ambition of the Silvers. Most vernacular houses in the Deer Creek valley were designed by local carpenter-architects, stonemasons, or occasionally by the owners in the tradition of gentlemen architects. This was a deliberate move toward a higher level of sophistication within the family and the geographical area.

The family moved into the house in April 1855. The name "Lebanon" was apparently given at the time the house was occupied. Jeremiah continued to record in his diary the names of workmen and amounts and costs of materials for the main house and outbuildings. James Robinson and Joshua Stephens were named as the principal stonemasons. In 1866, John Bancroft from Baltimore put up a slate mantel in the dining room of the house. Jeremiah ordered an "Egyptian stile" slate mantel, probably from George Stevens and Company in Baltimore during this period, with the intention of ordering two more.[17] These are probably the mantels still in place in the present living room. The dining room fireplace is now closed off and the mantel has been removed. In 1877, he notes the installation of a coal stove in the sitting room.[18] In 1880, a photograph of Lebanon was taken, showing considerably more tree growth near the house, but no essential changes on the principal facade. Photographs taken in the 1930's show considerable deterioration and neglect, but most of the architectural features except window shutters, the exterior stairs on the east elevation and the 1956 rear wing, are unchanged in its present condition. Lebanon remained in the Silver family ownership until 1941.

6. Benjamin Silver III House: Benjamin Silver III (1810-1894) was older than John and Jeremiah, but did not begin his house until 1856. He had built a house and store in Darlington with his brother Philip in 1844-45 where he lived until the present stone house was finished in 1857.[19] Like his father Benjamin II, Benjamin III was known as one of the most active and versatile of the Silver brothers. He was extremely successful as a farmer and retained interests in many of the fisheries acquired by his father. A graduate of Yale,

he was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates in the late 1860's, a surveyor and perhaps an amateur architect, and an elder of the Churchville and Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Churches.

Although there is no information on the design of the stone house, it is probable that Benjamin himself had the most part in its construction and finished appearance. The plan and general exterior are similar to Jeremiah's house, although the cornice is much simpler and a center dormer was not included. The hemispherical window in the west gable suggests this was copied from Lebanon's east elevation.

The Benjamin Silver House has the most complete complex of outbuildings of any of the Silver houses. B. S. Silver, the genealogist of the family, states that Benjamin III was the only slave owner in this generation of the family and his diaries in 1847 and 1848 mention a runaway slave. His miscellaneous account books dated 1846-94 detail the ages of slaves and the projected dates of their manumission.[20] The presumed slave quarters in the complex have been greatly altered and there were undoubtedly other houses on the property where slaves lived which have not survived.

There was a definite political split between the brothers during the Civil War. Benjamin and probably Silas were among the Southern sympathizers, while John and Jeremiah were Unionists. Somehow they managed to keep politics from breaking up the family, although the older and younger members of the family tended to socialize with those nearest their own ages. Francis Silver relates the story that Benjamin and his family, upon hearing of Southern victories, would go out on a hilltop and sing the "Long Meter Doxology".

7. William F. Silver House: William Finney Silver, a cousin of John, Jeremiah, Benjamin III, and Silas, built his house beginning about 1857-58, although there is no datestone. Most information on this house is taken from diaries of other family members. In 1811, Gershom Silver (grandson of Gershom the settler and brother of Benjamin II) bought 57 acres of Green Spring Forest from Christian Berg and built a stone house on the northern part of the property.[21] This house was too small for William by the mid-1850's and he, following the example of his cousins, built a larger stone house with a much more stylistic plan and exterior. William had taken as his second wife Margaret A. Silver, Gershom's grandaughter and through her acquired the farm.

There is no mention of an architect connected with the house design in any of the extant family diaries. The clearly Italianate-influenced style is more typical of an urban location, suggesting the involvement of a designer familiar with city town houses. Since William H. Reasin had recently provided Lebanon's design for Jeremiah and was active in Baltimore during the 1850's, it is a logical presumption that he may have done the exterior of William's house. The proportions are somewhat awkward in the interior hall, with the door swing barely clearing the foot of the stair and the width of the hall much narrower than in the other Silver houses. This may indicate that a design for the exterior was provided by an architect and rather awkwardly applied by local builders. In any event, the resulting plan and exterior was a distinct departure from the more traditional central hall plans and Classical Revival-influenced exteriors of Jeremiah's and Benjamin's houses.

Photographs taken in the mid-1930's show the marks of a shed porch on the south elevation and a porch on the east side of the wing which no longer exists. Also visible in these photographs is a stone building near the end of the wing which may have been a dairy. This building disappeared at an unknown date after the 1930's. Although there is no mention of slaves owned by William, the small stone house northeast of the wing is of the scale, size and in the usual location of slave housing in other mid-19th century farm groupings. The bank barn has rounded rubble stone pillars on its east elevation, a construction technique that was fairly common in Harford County in the mid-19th century.

William came into wealth through a combination of farming and fishing, as did the other Silver house builders.[22] Following the habits of the family, William was an active supporter of the Harmony Church. After his death, for a short period of the 1890's, his widow provided room and board for the unmarried minister of the church. The farm was sold by the last Silver owner in 1942.

8. Dr. Silas B. Silver House - "Silverton": Silas Benjamin Silver obtained his undergraduate education at Union College in New York and his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1838. Because of a chronic physical ailment, Silas was unable to maintain a full-time medical practice. He looked after most of his relatives and consulted with other physicians on certain cases, but he, like his brothers, devoted much time to farming. Prior to his marriage to one of the Pannell sisters in 1857, Silas began construction on his house, the last of the large stone residences to be erected in the Harmony Church area. He noted in his diary for 1856 that a contract was signed in 1855 with "Chesney", a local builder, to construct a house at Glenville, but the work was unfinished

and a suit brought against him in March 1856 for the balance of the contract. On April 1, 1858, he wrote, " . . . employed Mr. Reasin, the architect, to draw plans for house. B. Silver and I gave him the interior and he was to design the exterior, charged $100."[23]

Silas kept a running commentary on the progress of the house, noting the dates stone was cut and hauled, the installation of a ram to pump water from the spring to the house, the names of the masons and carpenters. The masons were Mr. Bowen and Brother of Towson and the carpenters were Mr. Ware and Son of Cecil County. The overall contractor was Joseph E. Ramsey of Baltimore. In July 1858, Silas wrote that the stone for the house came from "a quarry of Mr. Reasin and about 1/3 from a quarry of William Silver." Mr. Reasin was probably James Franklin Reasin, the brother of William Reasin the architect. J. Frank Reasin lived at Glenville about 1/4 mile west of the building site. William Silver was William F. Silver, whose own house was also under construction at the same time. On September 12, 1858, the doctor and his wife moved into the still-unfinished house and on the next day named it "Silverton".

The plan of Silverton presages the early 20th century in its simplicity. This was the only house among the Silver residences which never had a rear or side wing or extension. The original kitchen was incorporated as one of the main rooms of the first floor. Silas married rather late in life and he and his wife had no children. They apparently had few slaves or servants. Rather than building a large, spacious mansion, Silas built a compact, commodious but efficient house and lavished the exterior with decorative detail. The house was in many ways the culmination of the Silvers' architectural aspirations.

Dr. Forwood's Aegis-Intelligencer article of March 19, 1880 suggests the effect of the house: "'Silverton' stands like a watch-tower on the hill, the sentinel for the entire surrounding country. It occupies a higher location than any dwelling of large proportions in the vicinity . . . The view from Silverton not only comprehends the magnificent Deer Creek valley . . . fine views can be obtained of York and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania; also of Cecil and . . . Kent counties, Maryland." The view was enjoyed from a second floor "observatory" on the roof of the original porch, looking out across "a splendid and spacious lawn, sloping grandly down to the public road . . . (with) evergreen trees in endless variety, planted singly and in groups . . ." Dr. Forwood showed a keen appreciation of the design and its origins: "The heavily hooded dormer windows and the far projecting eaves of the roof . . . are striking, and very effective in the eyes of the beholder, and give the building a more finished and ornamental appearance than that usually found in the construction of stone houses. Every part of the structure has been built with special regard to durability and beauty. The doctor was among the last of his brothers in the building of their houses and in the modelling of his, he appears to have combined all of the good points that they had adopted, and added other improvements, either useful or ornamental, which later experience and observation had suggested."

Ironically, Silverton was the first of the stone houses to be sold out of the Silver family. Silas' widow sold the property in 1884, a year after his death.

9. Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church: In January 1837, Benjamin Silver II, David Silver, Zephaniah Bayless, William F. Bayless, Samuel Harper, William Wilson, Thomas C. Stump, and John Whitelock met at the Prospect School to

discuss the building of a house of public worship and a Sunday School. Most of these people were members of the Churchville Presbyterian Church, but wanted a church building nearer their houses along the south side of Deer Creek to facilitate travel during bad weather. The group built a stone church on land donated by Benjamin Silver, measuring 30 by 40 feet with a gallery at one end and two aisles. Two doors were located near the pulpit and one at the end facing the junction of Darlington Road and the road "leading to Dr. Worthington's" (Glenville) which later came to be called Harmony Church Road. The first services were conducted in October 1837 by Rev. William Finney, pastor of Churchville Presbyterian Church.[24]

Over the years, the church was used as a "chapel of ease" with alternating service by the Churchville minister or seminary students. A Methodist group also used the building, but, although not a formally chartered Presbyterian congregation, it was always considered a Presbyterian establishment. The Silver family supplied much of the building material and money for furnishings as well as labor to build and maintain the church. After many years of intermittent lapses in ministers, the congregation finally applied to the Donegal Presbytery in 1855 to be organized as a separate church. At that time 19 members of the Churchville congregation requested their certificates of membership be transferred to the new Deer Creek Harmony Church. The name Harmony had been used since the first services in the building and "Deer Creek" was added in 1839 in recognition of the link with Churchville, which had first been known as the Deer Creek Presbyterian Congregation. In 1857, the new church requested transfer to the Presbytery of Baltimore.

Under the pastorate of Samuel M. Bayless from 1865 to 1873, it was determined that either extensive repairs to the old church were necessary or a new building would have to be erected. In 1867, the resolution was made to build a new church. A committee composed of the pastor, John F. McJilton, William F. Bayless, Benjamin Silver III, John A. Silver, and James F. Reasin was appointed to procure specifications and plans. In June 1868, a congregational meeting gave the approval to build the new church. A building committee consisting of Benjamin Silver, William F. Silver, John A. Silver, and James F. Reasin was appointed.

The architect was John W. Hogg of Baltimore and the contractors were Messrs. Carroll and West of Port Deposit. Work was begun in September 1870, the old building being dismantled and some of its stone used in the new foundation. During the construction, services were held at the Darlington M.E. Church and at Benjamin Silver's house. The site was about 20 yards south of the original building. The new building measured 50 by 39 feet with a 91-foot spire. As in the Silver family houses, locally quarried stone was used for the main walls, with finished Port Deposit granite trim and detailing. Finished in the summer of 1871, the entire building with furnishings cost $10,509.93.[25]

The employment of an architect indicates the natural desire of the congregation for a symbol showing the importance of religious faith in their daily lives. Since only the wealthy and important used trained architects, it was seen as evidence of the seriousness with which religious education and public worship was regarded. Little is known about John W. Hogg, but he may be identical with John S. Hogg, who had a contract to build the Lafayette Market in Baltimore in the late 19th century. The experience of the Silvers in dealing with William

H. Reasin may have been influential in Hogg's selection.

The exterior design of the church reveals the hand of a professional designer in the completeness of details. The finials at the corner buttresses, the alternating smooth and rough finish of the trim at the windows and doors, and the belt course corresponding to the floor level provide a polish to the whole effect. The design is not unusual or elaborate, but is a competent rendition of the simplified Gothic Revival style which was very common for rural churches in the second half of the 19th century. Dr. Forwood observed in his newspaper series, "this is without doubt one of the handsomest churches to be found outside of the large cities" (Jan. 9, 1880).

The interior had painted stencil decoration around the chair rail and windows and in a wide band above the windows. There is apparently no mention of the decoration in the church records, but a photograph taken in the late 19th century included in the church history shows this type of decoration. An oil- and later kerosene-fired brass chandelier and wall sconces lit the church until 1935, when electricity was donated by Miss Anna M. Carrere, owner of the neighboring property and the daughter of the New York architect John Carrere. Repairs to the roof were necessitated from time to time, particularly near the brick chimney stack. Some damage to the stenciling was inevitable during periods of heavy leakage. Several repaintings were done during the mid-20th century, the latest in 1968. The stenciling is still in place, but whether it exactly copies the original outline is unknown.

The Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church and Cemetery were designated a Harford County Landmark on June 8, 1982.

NOTES:

1. Our Silver Heritage, B.S. Silver, pp. 1001-1003. (Hereafter cited as OSH.)
2. OSH, pp. 1913-1914.
3. OSH, p. 2001.
4. OSH, p. 2902.
5. OSH, p. 3252.
6. OSH, p. 3204.
7. OSH, p. 3001.
8. A Family Chronicle: William Silver of John and Edith Wistar Stokes, his Wife, p.6.
9. Personal interview with William E. Silver and Mrs. Esther (Silver) Jaeger, Aug. 4, 1983.
10. A Family Chronicle, quoted in OSH, p. 3802.
11. Ibid, pp. 3806-3807.
12. Telephone interview with Lloyd Weaver, August 10, 1983.
13. "Homes on Deer Creek", W. S. Forwood, Aegis-Intelligencer, Jan. 9, 1880.
14. OSH, p. 3901.
15. Portrait and Biographical Record of Harford and Cecil Counties, pp. 252-253.
16. Dorsey and Dilts, Architectural Guide to Baltimore, p. 93.
17. Letter in possession of B.S. Silver.
18. OSH, p. 3905.
19. OSH, p. 3408.
20. OSH, p. 3406.
21. OSH, p. 3001.

22. Forwood, Dec. 22, 1879.

23. OSH, p. 3602.

24. History of Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church 1837-1972, p.3.

25. Ibid, p.8.

9. Major Bibliographical References

HA-408

See separate sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 280

Quadrangle name Aberdeen

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached map at 1 inch = 200 feet
See Section 7 for justification

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

state code county code

tate code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Davis, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning date September 1983

street & number 45 So. Main Street telephone (301) 838-6000, ext. 207

city or town Bel Air state MD 21014

12. 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title 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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Forwood, William S., "Homes on Deer Creek", Aegis-Intelligencer, Dec. 19, 1879 - May 28, 1880

History of Deer Creek Harmony Presbyterian Church 1837-1972. Reprint of A.P. Silver's 1905 history and update to 1972 by B.S. Silver and Mrs. Leonard C. Culpepper, published as one volume, Gatesville Publishing Co., Gatesville, Texas, 1972.

Land Records of Harford County

Personal interviews: William E. Silver and Mrs. Paul Jaeger (Esther Silver Jaeger), Aug. 4, 1983; Lloyd Weaver, Aug. 10, 1983

Portrait and Biographical Record of Harford and Cecil Counties, 1897

Silver, Benjamin Stump, Our Silver Heritage, Gatesville Publishing Co., Gatesville, Texas, 1976 (Historical Society of Harford County; Harford County Library)

Silver, Francis Stokes, A Family Chronicle: William Silver of John and Edith Wistar Stokes, his Wife, 1968 (Harford County Library)

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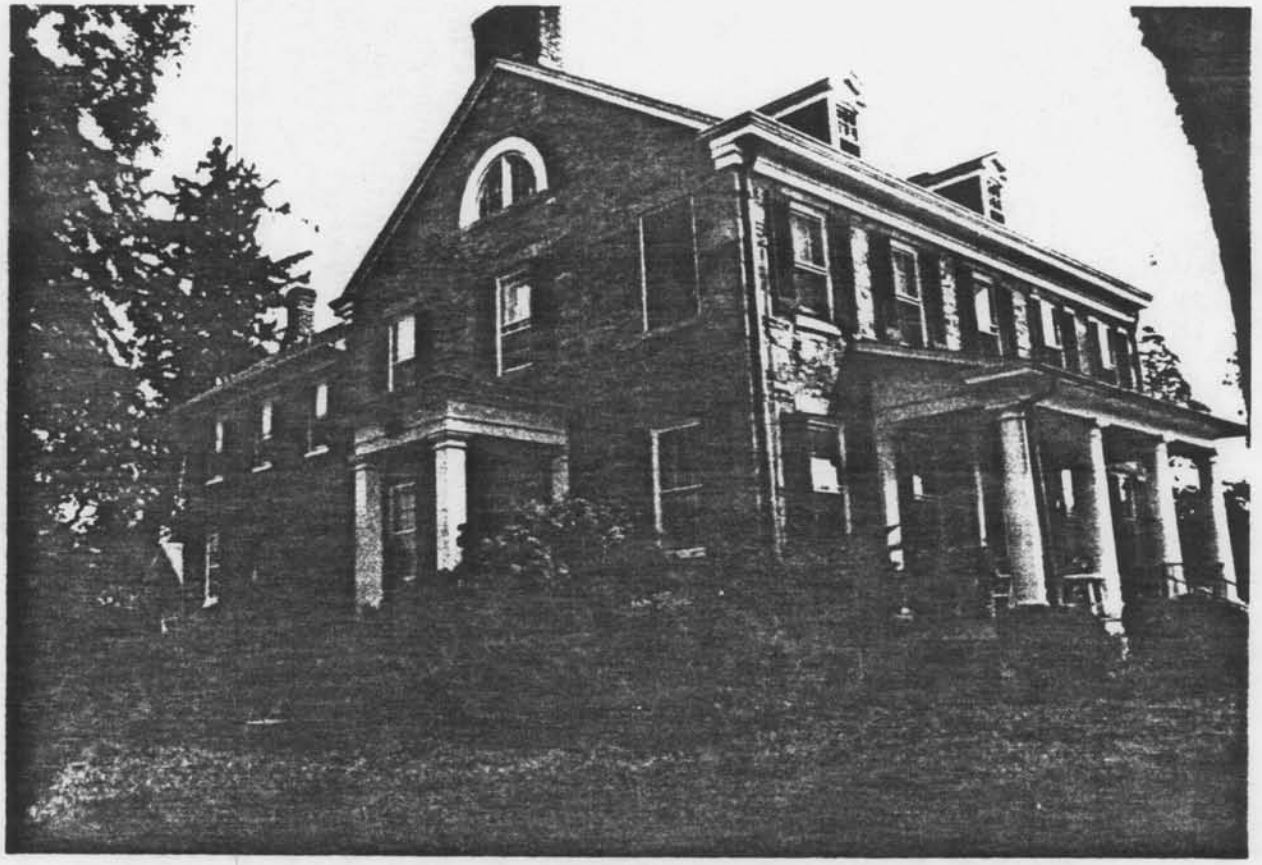
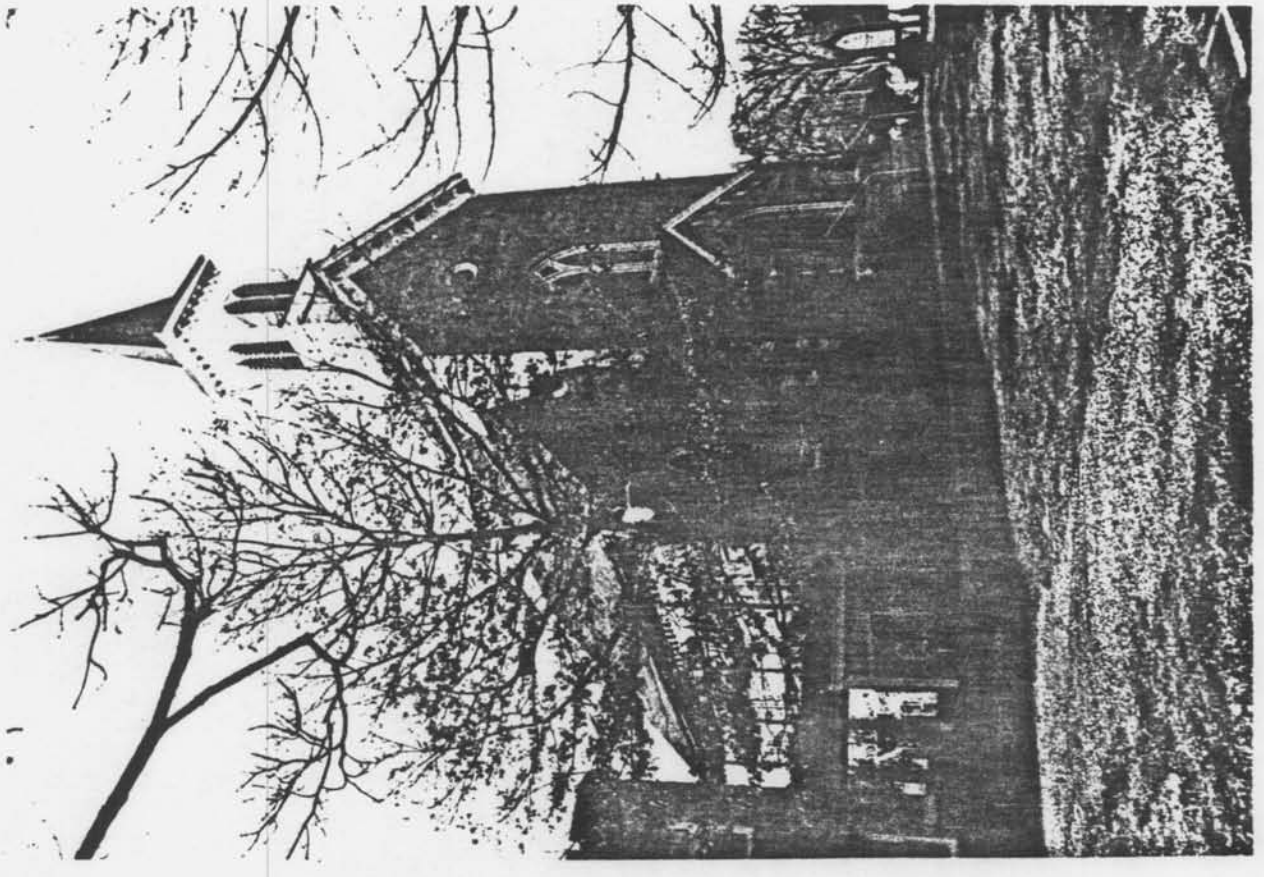


BENJAMIN SILVER HOUSE

AA-408

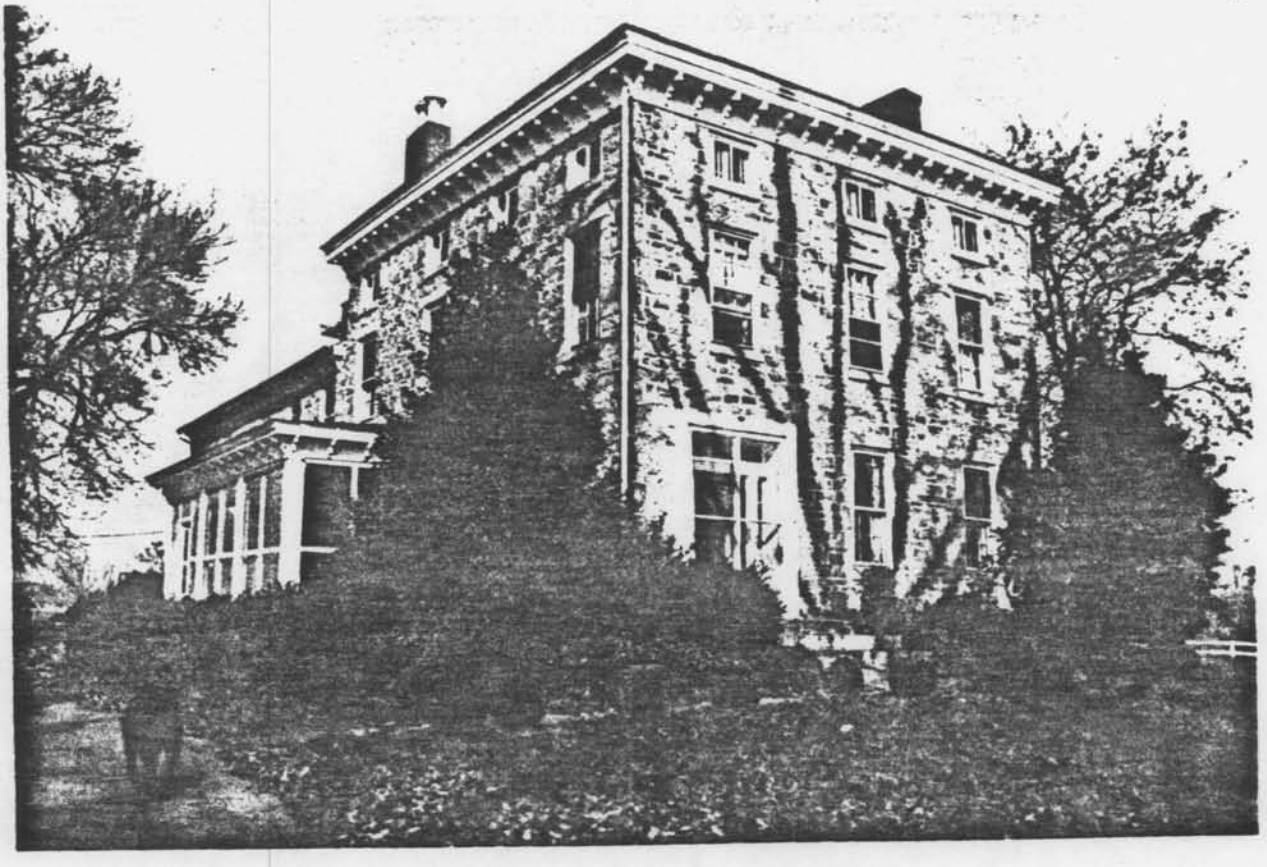
SILAS B. SILVER HOUSE



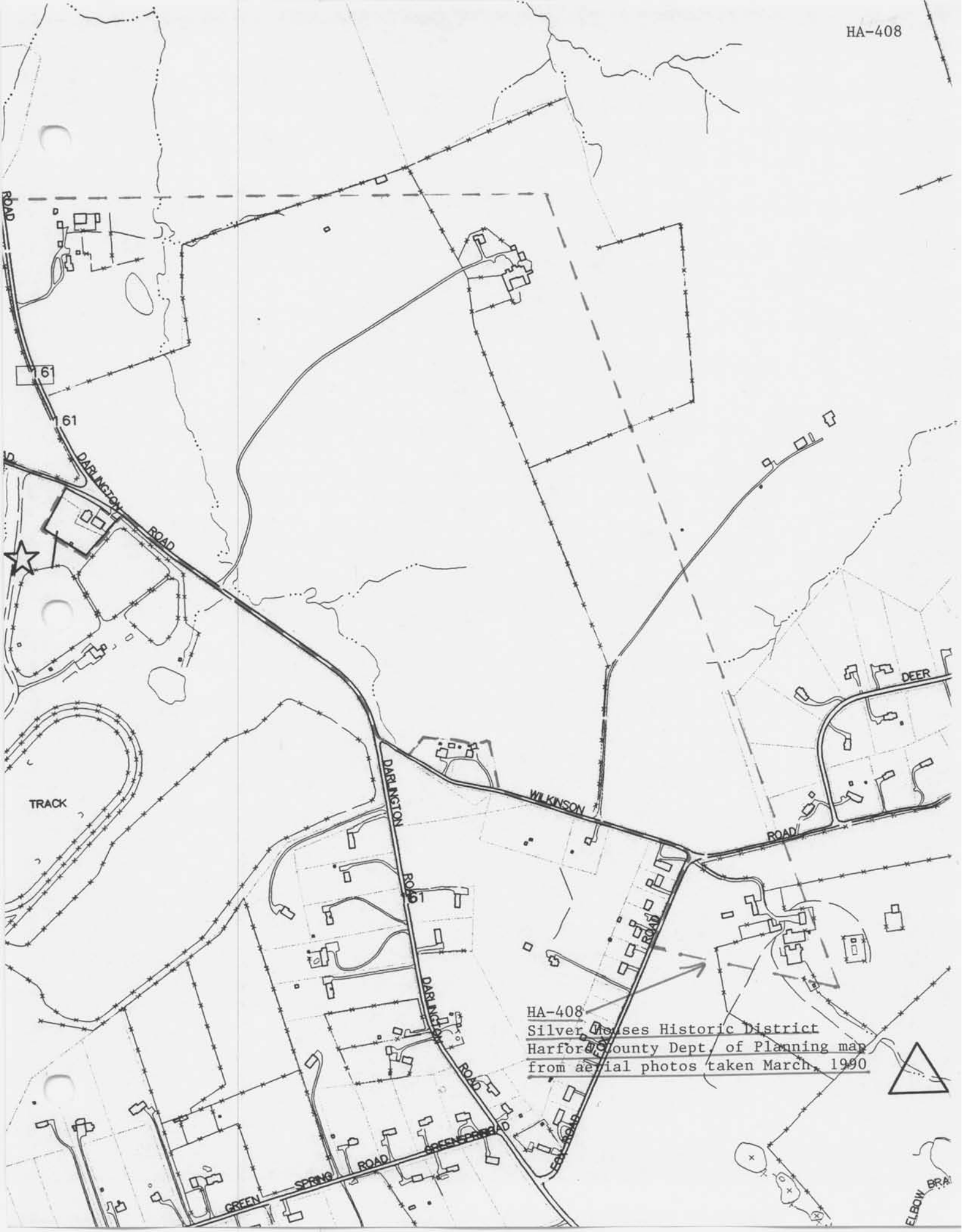
DEER CREEK HARMONY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JEREMIAH P. SILVER HOUSE

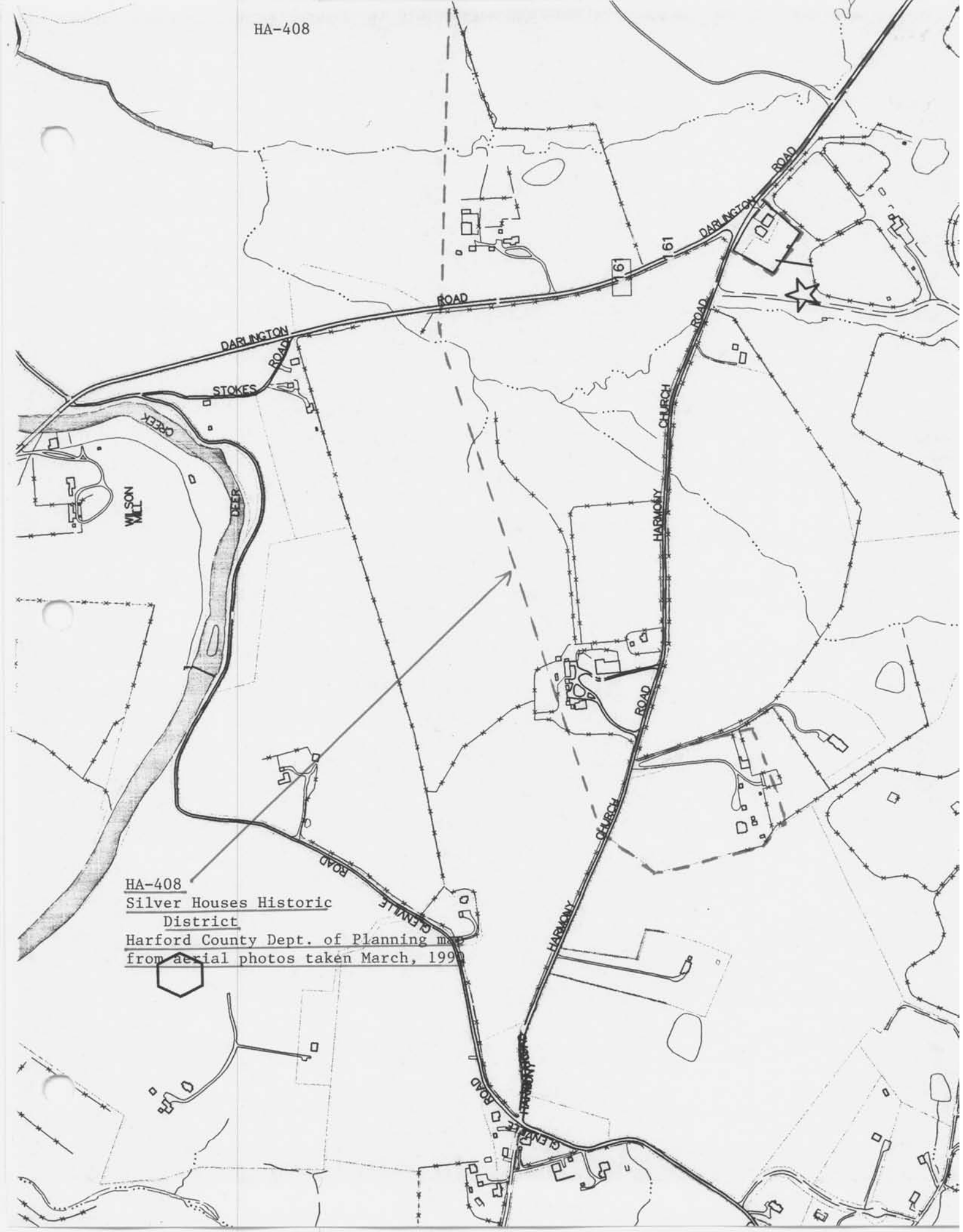
HA-408



WILLIAM F. SILVER HOUSE



HA-408
Silver Houses Historic District
Harford County Dept. of Planning map
from aerial photos taken March, 1990


DARLINGTON ROAD
61
DARLINGTON ROAD
STOKES ROAD
DEER CREEK
WILSON MILL
HARMONY CHURCH ROAD
GLENVILLE ROAD
HA-408
Silver Houses Historic District
Harford County Dept. of Planning map from aerial photos taken March, 1990