FHR-8-300 (11-78)

S-245

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

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: Nelson Homestead; Elisha Riggin House

and/or common: Nelson Homestead (preferred)

2. Location

street & number: Cash Corner and Hopewell-Bedsworth Roads — n/a not for publication

city, town: Crisfield — X vicinity of — congressional district: First

state: Maryland — code: 24 — county: Somerset — code: 039

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name: Robert E. Ferguson

street & number: R. R. 1, Box 165

city, town: Crisfield — n/a vicinity of — state: Maryland 21817

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Somerset Clerk of Court

street & number: Somerset County Courthouse

city, town: Princess Anne — state: Maryland 21853

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date: 1985 — ___ 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
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date n/a
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

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

Original and historic functions and uses: residential

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Nelson Homestead is a c. 1836 "telescope" style frame house located near Crisfield in Somerset County, Maryland. The three-part building faces south, resting on a brick pier foundation, and is sheathed in narrow weatherboards and covered by a series of asphalt-shingle-clad gable roofs. Unlike most "telescope" houses, the three sections were apparently all built in one period. The south (main) three-bay elevation of the main house is symmetrically arranged with a center, raised six-panel door and flanking six over six sash windows. A single-pane transom tops the door. The door and windows are framed by a narrow ovolo molding. The second floor is lighted by three six over six sash windows. Stretching across the base of the roof is a boxed cornice embellished with carved modillions as well as a gougework row. One of the most distinctive features of the house is the highly unusual endboard design in the shape of an inverted "U." Stretching across the western five bays of the house is a shed porch supported by square posts. The south facade of the center section is a two-bay elevation with a single six-panel door in the west bay and a six over six sash window in the adjacent bay. The second floor is lighted by two six over six sash windows. A boxed cornice is trimmed with a bed and crown molding. The 1½-story south elevation of the third section, the kitchen, is also a two-bay elevation with a centrally located, partially glazed door and six over six sash window. The cornice is the same as the middle section. The east gable end of the kitchen is marked by an exposed, common bond brick fire wall. A pair of two over two sash windows light the attic and flank the internal end chimney stack. The plain bargeboard finishes the gable end. The north elevation of the main house has three six over six sash windows on each floor in addition to the same intricate cornice as the front of the house. Interior finish surfaces have remained largely unaltered with 95% of the fine period woodwork intact. The first floor room of the main block is the most elaborate room with a raised-panel end wall and raised-panel wainscoting. The pine paneling retains a finish of tiger-maple graining. Chair rail molding tops the wainscoting and is embellished with gougework detail. The focal point of the room, however, is the east end wall paneling which frames an unusual mantel and an ogee molded cornice with a bold dentil row. The middle room is also distinguished by intact end wall paneling and wainscoting. However, the wainscoting consists of flush boards topped by a simple early 19th-century chair rail. The hearth is framed by an intricately molded surround that supports a simple board shelf.

See Continuation Sheet No. 1

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY (continued)

The second floor of the main house is divided into three rooms. The primary room was provided with a small hearth, while the other two rooms remained without a direct source of heat. A small very late Federal style mantel surrounds the firebox. The other two rooms are plainly finished. The kitchen retains almost all its early features. In this instance, the east end wall is treated with a Federal period mantel and paneled overmantel. The room is also fitted with plain board wainscoting and a simple chair rail. Overhead the first floor joists are treated with a slight bead. A small gabled frame building accompanies the house. Located at the east side of the property is a family cemetery fenced with Victorian period railing.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Nelson Homestead (also known as the Elisha Riggin House) is a c. 1836 "telescope" style frame house that stands on the northeast plot of ground at the intersection of Cash Corner and Hopewell-Bedsworth roads, near Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The three-part frame house faces south with the gable running on an east/west axis.

The entire house rests on a minimal brick pier foundation and is sheathed with narrow weatherboards (possibly cypress), while it is covered by a medium to steeply pitched series of asphalt shingle roofs. A large brick chimney rises from the east end of the main block and a smaller stack protrudes through the east end of the kitchen wing. Due to consistent construction features found throughout the house it is believed the three parts were built in one period and not in successive stages as commonly thought with all "telescope" style houses.

The south (main) three-bay elevation of the main house is symmetrically arranged with a center, raised six-panel door and flanking six over six sash windows. A single-pane transom tops the door. The door and windows are framed by a narrow ovolo molding. The second floor is lighted by three six over six sash windows. Stretching across the base of the roof is a boxed cornice embellished with carved modillions as well as a gougework row that consists of a repeating series of several short horizontal gouges interrupted by a short vertical gouge. This design is repeated in the parlor chair rail molding. One of the most distinctive features of the house is the highly unusual endboard design in the shape of an inverted "U." Stretching across the western five bays of the house is a shed porch supported by square posts.

The west gable end of the main block is pierced by two six over six sash windows on each floor including the attic. The attic windows are slightly smaller.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

The south facade of the center section is a two-bay elevation with a single six-panel door in the west bay and a six over six sash window in the adjacent bay. The second floor is lighted by two six over six sash windows. A boxed cornice is trimmed with a bed and crown molding.

The 1½-story south elevation of the third section, the kitchen, is also a two-bay elevation with a centrally located, partially galzed door and six over six sash window. The cornice is the same as the middle section.

The east gable end of the kitchen is marked by an exposed bond brick fire wall. A pair of two over two sash windows light the attic and flank the internal end chimney stack. The plain bargeboard finishes the gable end.

The north side of both the kitchen and middle sections is covered by a single-story shed addition. Second floor window and roof details remain consistent with the rest of the house.

The north elevation of the main house has three six over six sash windows on each floor in addition to the same intricate cornice as the front of the house.

Interior finish surfaces have remained largely unaltered with 95% of the fine period woodwork intact. The first floor room of the main block is the most elaborate room with a raised-panel end wall and raised-panel wainscoting. The pine paneling retains a finish of yellow-brown tiger-maple graining. A forest green chair rail molding tops the wainscoting and is embellished with gougework detail. The focal point of the room, however, is the east end wall paneling and an ogee molded cornice with a bold dentil row under the ogee. A partially enclosed stair was formerly located in the northeast corner of the room and is marked by a ghost on the flooring. When the stair was relocated in the middle room the three originally exposed steps were removed and the old stringer was moved against the adjacent wall surface. Two raised panels were made to fill the open space below the stair door. The four-panel stair door was left on its hinges and opens into the remaining steps. A ghost on the adjacent door stile indicates the profile of the now missing handrail. Immediately right of the old stair is a four-panel door that opens into the space below the stair.

The mantel is a curious combination of Federal and Greek Revival elements. Framing the hearth is a molded surround which visually supports a three-part frieze and molded mantel shelf. The frieze is decorated with a variety of reeded and applied ornament. Centered in the frieze is a fan-shaped reeded block, and located to each side are small decorative wooden figures in the shape of crow's fee. The cornice molding is broken out at each end, and the shelf oddly extends out to incorporate flanking turned posts with chevron reeding in the top blocks. Above the mantel the space is marked by four rectangular raised panels. To the

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

right side of the chimney breast the space is similarly paneled, while one panel is a small cupboard door. Immediately south of the chimney breast is a six-panel door that opens into the middle room.

The middle room is also distinguished by intact end wall paneling and wainscoting. However, the wainscoting consists of flush boards topped by a simple early 19th-century chair rail. The west end wall is distinguished by the decorated hearth wall. The hearth is framed by a intricately molded surround that supports a simple board shelf. In contrast to the main room, the overmantel is finished with flat paneling divided by four vertical stiles trimmed with slight inset cavetto strip molding. To the right (north) of the hearth is a divided closet with a nine-pane door on the top and a board door below. The top three panes of the glazed door have arches. The 1933 stair has a square newel post and square balusters that support a simple molded handrail.

The stair provides access to the second floor rooms over the main and middle sections. The second floor of the main house is divided into three rooms. The primary room was provided with a small hearth, while the other two rooms remained without a direct source of heat. A small very late Federal style mantel surrounds the firebox. Plain pilasters support a single-panel frieze, which is topped by a molded mantel shelf. Rising in the southeast corner of the room is an enclosed winder stair that provides access to the attic. The stair is enclosed with beaded boards. The roof consists of a common rafter system with lapped collar beams fastened with cut nails.

The other two rooms are plainly finished. The board and batten doors are framed by beaded surrounds. Each room measures approximately seven feet by seven feet.

The second floor room of the middle section is simply finished without notable details. A board and batten door does provide access into the room above the kitchen.

The kitchen retains almost all its early features. In this instance, the east end wall is treated with a Federal period mantel and paneled overmantel. The room is also fitted with plain board wainscoting and a simple chair rail. Overhead the first floor joists are treated with a slight bead. The wall surfaces above the wainscoting are plastered. The large firebox is framed by a similarly molded surround, while supporting a five-part frieze with reeded frieze blocks. The molded shelf is broken in a consistent line with each frieze block. Located to the right (south) of the hearth is a built-in glazed cupboard with two eight-pane doors with arched top panes. An applied molding with rounded ends divides the glazed doors from the two flat panel doors below. Fixed in the northeast corner is an enclosed winder stair with three exposed steps. The balance of the

See Continuation Sheet No. 4

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

stair is behind a flat four panel door. A narrow two-panel door opens into the small space below the stair. As in the middle room, the space above the mantel is paneled and divided, in this case with seven vertical stiles that have a slightly molded edge.

The second floor is divided into two rooms by a plastered stud partition. The molded door surround remains, but the door has been removed. A wooden keeper for a door latch remains on the north door surround, while screw holes for the hinges mark the south surround. The remaining feature is a c. 1933 replacement balustrade with a rectangular newel post and rectangular balusters.

A small gabled frame building accompanies the house, but offers no additional significance. Located at the east side of the property is a Riggin and Wilson family cemetery fenced with Victorian period railing.

8. Significance

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 c. 1836 **Builder/~~Architect~~** Elisha Riggin

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, C
Applicable Exceptions: none
Significance Evaluated: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Nelson Homestead is significant for its architecture, as an outstanding example of a late Federal "telescope" style house. Several buildings of this type and period survive on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, but the Nelson Homestead is distinguished among them by its excellent state of preservation and by its highly unusual decorative detailing, which remains virtually untouched and even retains early paint schemes. The three-part frame house, built ca. 1836, is a finely crafted structure with intricate cornice details and distinctive endboards. Late Federal style mantels, doors, chair rail and cupboards finish interior spaces; the main room features raised panel wainscoting and overmantel paneling that retains an early tiger maple grained finish.

For History and Supporting Documentation, see Continuation Sheet No. 5

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

Elisha Riggin, the attributed owner and possible builder of this house is recorded in Somerset County land records in 1790 as purchasing a part of a land patent known as "Cork" from Jonathan Riggin (I/19). Eight years later Riggin was listed in Little Annemessex as owning, "one tract of Land called Cork, 25 acres on which are one log house, twelve feet square" (1798 Federal Assessment). In 1804, Elisha Riggin, listed as a ship carpenter in the land record, sold to Captain Aaron Sterling his "Cork" lands for £26..16..5 (P/254). Elisha Riggin's whereabouts between 1804 and the mid 1830s are uncertain, but he is listed in Somerset County marriage records with three wives, married to Martha Mister on August 24, 1818; married to Amelia Cullen on January 13, 1820; and finally to Hannah Miles on January 15, 1839. During this period Elisha Riggin evidently amassed a considerable estate in the ship building industry or through inheritance, because in 1836, Elisha Riggin purchased from William Roach Sr. a 145¼-acre tract, "being part of 'Makepeace,''Foreput,' 'Cabin Swamp,' and 'Exchange,' in Little Annemessex being the residue of land formerly belonging to the father of said William Roach Sr." (GH 8/456).

After this transfer, Elisha Riggin made several transactions dated between 1837 and 1842, in a probable desire to pay off building debts incurred in the erection and finishing of his house. Due to construction features, mature cut nails and some Greek Revival influence in part of the woodwork, it is thought the house was built as late as 1836 with paneling traditions and Federal mantel designs common to former decades.

In May 1842, Elisha Riggin transferred legal ownership of his property to Eliza Roach for the sum of $775.00. The deed states:

> "all these lands situate in Little Annemessex upon which the said Elisha Riggin Junior now resides... and the said Elisha Riggin Junior doth hereby recognize the relation of Landlord and Tenant as to said land from this period and doth acknowledge himself as tenant to said Eliza Roach, her heirs, executors, and administrators" (AH/219).

Elisha Riggin evidently reneged on this agreement and Eliza Roach sold the property in 1843 at a sheriff's sale to William Nelson (BH/67. During the following year, Hannah Riggin sold her dower rights in the property to William Nelson (BH/39).

William Nelson and his wife, Ellen Riggin, lived on the property until their deaths in 1881. The property passed to their son, Edward L. Nelson, in 1881 and to his only heir, Margaret E. Horsey, in 1925. No appreciable alterations were made to the house until 1933 when Margie Horsey relocated the stair. Margie Horsey retained ownership of the house until her death. Trustees sold the property in 1962 to Arthur and Bonnie Ochletree (GJB211/504). Four years later, the present owners acquired the house and 5.52 acres (235/72).

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See Continuation Sheet No. 6

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 5.52 acres

Quadrangle name Crisfield, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	427510	4120150
B	18	427490	4120140
C	18	427210	4120148
D	18	427260	4120150
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

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

state	code	county	code
n/a			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Paul Touart, Architectural Historian		
organization	Somerset County Historical Trust	date	1/11/85
street & number	424 N. Somerset Avenue	telephone	651-0077
city or town	Princess Anne	state	Maryland 21853

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 8-12-85

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

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1798 Federal Assessment - Little Annemessex Hundred - Elisha Riggin

Somerset County Land Record, various volumes, Somerset County Courthouse.

Somerset County Register of Wills, Somerset County Courthouse.

Woodrow T. Wilson, Thirty-Four Families of Old Somerset County, Maryland. Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1974.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Boundary Description:

All that lot or parcel of land situate in Lawsons Election District, Somerset County, Maryland, on the east side of but not adjacent to Maryland 667 leading from Crisfield to Hopewell, and on the north side of and not adjacent to the county road from the aforesaid road to Cash Corner, bounded on the North by the lands owned or formerly owned by Julia and Jessie Evans, and which said concrete post lies South 71 degrees 25 minutes East a distance of 343.70 feet from the center line of the 14-foot paving of the aforesaid Maryland Route 667, and which said concrete post is indicated by the letter "A" on the plat; thence (1) by and with the Evans land North 19 degrees 34 minutes East 132.5 feet to an iron pipe; thence (2) North 66 degrees 40 minutes West 21 feet to an iron pipe; thence (3) North 17 degrees 26 minutes East 287.35 feet to a point; thence (4) South 69 degrees 59 minutes East a distance of 590 feet to a point; thence (5) South 15 degrees 00 minutes West 31 feet to a point thence (6) South 63 degrees 30 minutes East 275 feet to a point, thence (7) South 71 degrees 00 minutes West 330 feet to a concrete post; thence (8) North 5 degrees 00 minutes East 70 feet to a concrete post; thence (9) North 74 degrees 30 minutes West 139 feet to a point; thence (10) South 18 degrees 48 minutes West a distance of 165 feet to a concrete post; thence (11) South 75 degrees 48 minutes west 31 feet to a point; thence (12) North 81 degrees 45 minutes West 32 feet to a point; thence (13) North 75 degrees 15 minutes West 138 feet to a point; thence (14) North 71 degrees 25 minutes West 231 feet to the first mentioned concrete post and place of beginning, containing 5.52 acres.

Boundary Justification:

The 5.52 acres accompanying this nomination comprises the present acreage of the property. The described boundary follows the established lines and includes the house, one outbuilding and the Riggin-Nelson cemetery within their immediate setting.

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NELSON
HOMESTEAD

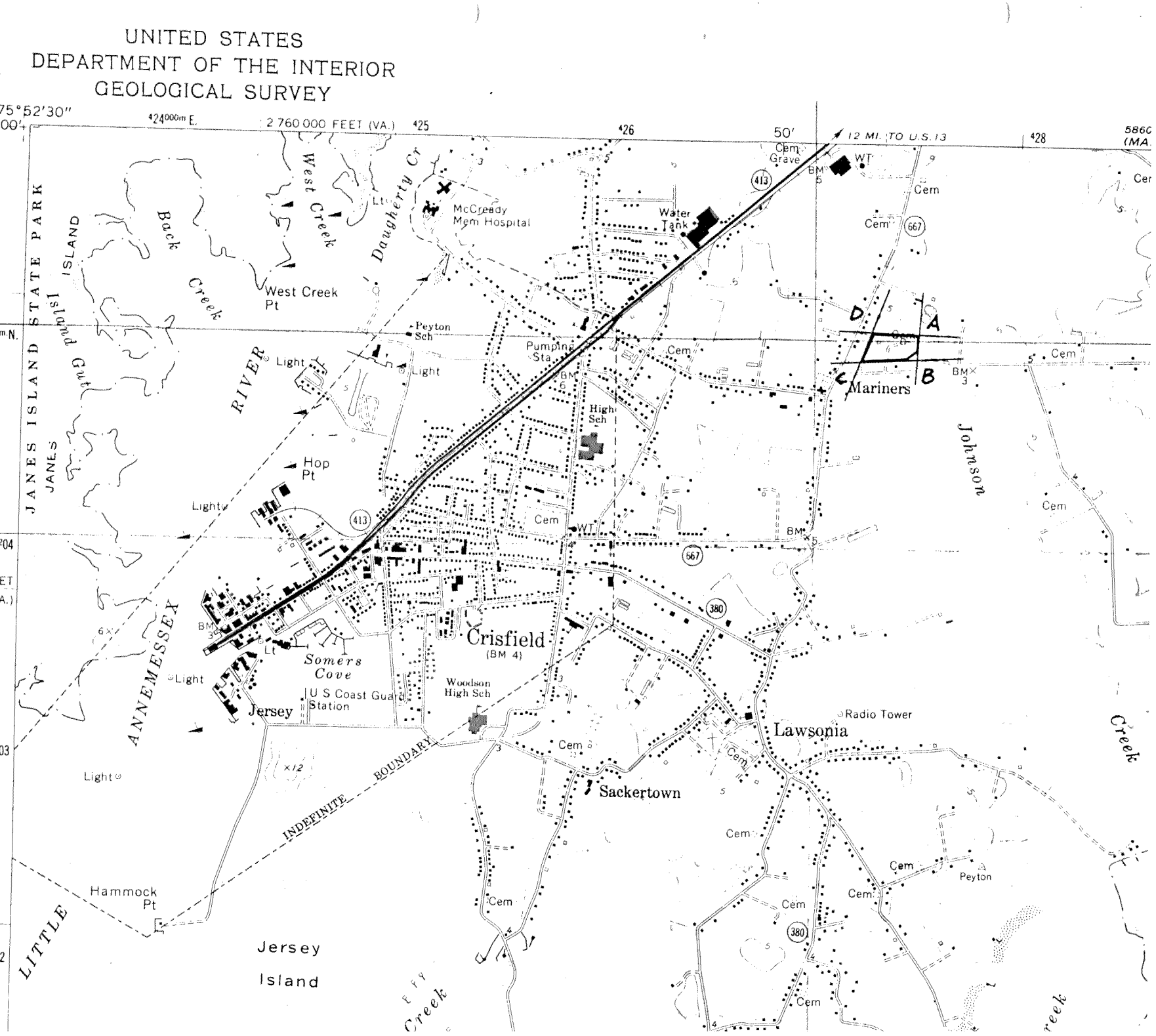
SOMERSET
COUNTY,
MARYLAND

A: 18-427510-
4205030

B: 18-427490-
4204910

C: 18-427220-
4204880

D: 18-427260-
4205040



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Old Nelson Homestead
Bedsworth, Somerset County
Southwest Elevation
1/85 Paul Touart Photographer
Neg./Maryland Historical Trust

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William Nelson Homestead S-245
Crisfield vicinity, Somerset Co., MD.
Parlor Paneling
2/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./MD. Hist. Trust

Old Nelson Homestead S-245
Bedsworth, Somerset County
Parlor mantel detail
1/85 Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./Maryland Historical Trust

Old Nelson Homestead
Bedsworth, Somerset County
Living room hearth wall
1/85 Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./Maryland Historical Trust

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Old Nelson Homestead S-245
Near Bedsworth, Somerset County
Grained Wainscoting
2/85, Photographer, Paul Touart
Neg./MD. Historical Trust

Old Nelson Homestead S-245
Bedsworth, Somerset County
Kitchen hearth wall
1/85 Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./Maryland Historical Trust

William Nelson Homestead S-245
Crisfield vicinity, Somerset Co., Md.
Mantel Detail
2/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./MD. Hist. Trust

Old Nelson Homestead S-245
Bedsworth, Somerset County
Parlor Paneling and Mantel
2/84 Orlando Ridout V
Neg./MD Historical Trust

William Nelson Homestead S-245
Crisfield, Somerset County, Md.
Eave Detail
1/85 Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./Md. Hist. Trust