

**QA-601**  
**Watkins House**  
**1439 Cox Neck Road**  
**Chester vicinity Queen Anne's County**

**Constructed ca. 1860s; moved and renovated 1920s**  
**Private**

Located approximately one mile south of Chester on the east side of Cox Neck Road, the house at 1439 Cox Neck is set in a small, rural, African-American community. The true one-and-one-half-story, three-bay, front-gable house is in fair condition and features a three-bay, one-story, enclosed front porch and a one-story, rear, shed-roofed addition.

The small rural community of Coxes Neck reflects the historical development of African-American communities in Queen Anne's County. After the Civil War, African-American oystermen and farm laborers on Kent Island created communities by buying land to build their own houses. The house at 1439 Cox Neck Road, owned by one such family, was originally built as a school located south of the community, and was moved to the southern edge of the community and converted to domestic use by the late 1920s.

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. QA-601

## 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Watkins House

other \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street and number 1439 Cox Neck Road \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Chester X vicinity

county Queen Anne's County

## 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Helen B. Watkins

street and number 1439 Cox Neck Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Chester state MD zip code 21619-2303

## 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Queen Anne's County Courthouse liber ASG 12 folio 8

city, town Centreville tax map 64 tax parcel 56 tax ID number 04-061799

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District  
 Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
 Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Recorded by HABS/HAER  
 Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
			Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
				<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>
				<u>0</u>

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. QA-601

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### Condition

excellent       deteriorated  
 good             ruins  
 fair               altered

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### Summary

Located approximately one mile south of Chester on the east side of Cox Neck Road, the house at 1439 Cox Neck is set in a small, rural, African-American community. The true one-and-one-half-story, three-bay, front-gable house is in fair condition and features a three-bay, one-story, enclosed front porch and a one-story, rear, shed-roofed addition.

### Description

The house is set back approximately 20 feet from Cox Neck Road with a gravel driveway that extends east and separates the house from the neighboring house to the north. The level, grassy lot of 13,750 square feet is surrounded on the south and east by a mature forest. A deteriorated, poured-concrete walk extends south from the driveway to the poured concrete stoop at the porch entrance. Two large bushes flank the entrance.

The true one-and-one-half-story, three-bay, front-gable house stands on a foundation that is covered by rock-faced, pressed metal sheets. The walls are clad in asbestos shingles with wood corner boards. The corrugated-metal gable roof features a boxed wood cornice with cornice returns. An interior brick chimney with a corbelled cap rises from the center of the roof. The enclosed, hipped-roof, front porch has the same foundation covering as the main block. Its walls are clad in asbestos shingles with masonite board repairs, and the roof is clad with asphalt sheets. The one-story, rear, shed-roofed addition is clad with asphalt paper.

The first story of the façade (west elevation) is obscured by the enclosed porch. The three-bay second story features three symmetrically placed, six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash windows that extend into the gable. The window trim consists of square-edged wood surrounds; the sills on the north and south windows are wider than the windows. The north cornice return is missing. The porch contains a three-light-over-three-panel wood door with a metal storm door; the door opening is slightly off-center to the south. The north bay of the porch features a window opening with paired, six-over-six, wood sash windows with large, metal storm windows and a double, three-light, casement window. The south bay contains paired, six-over-six, wood sash windows. All of the porch windows display square-edged wood trim.

The south elevation features two symmetrically placed bays on the first story. Both bays contain a six-over-six, wood sash window that is taller than the second-story façade windows, and matches the trim on the center window in the second story of the west elevation. The lower sash on the east window is boarded up. The four-bay, frieze windows on the second story are asymmetrically placed with the center two set close together. Located directly under the eaves, the six-light, wood windows are half the size of the façade second-story windows and appear to be awning-type. The trim consists of square-edged wood window surround with an overhanging lintel and projecting sill with a wide apron. The north elevation is similar to the south. The east elevation was not visible from the public right-of-way.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. QA-601

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/	<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

### Specific dates

### Architect/Builder

**Construction dates** 1860s with 1920s alterations

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

### Statement of Significance

The small rural community of Coxes Neck reflects the historical development of African-American communities in Queen Anne's County. After the Civil War, African-American oystermen and farm laborers on Kent Island created communities by buying land to build their own houses. The house at 1439 Cox Neck Road, owned by one such family, was originally built as a school located south of the community, and was moved to the southern edge of the community and converted to domestic use by the late 1920s.

### Historical Narrative

After the Civil War ended in 1865, Queen Anne's County underwent significant economic, social, and political change. Many of the county's African-American communities formed in the 1860s and 1870s as newly free African Americans bought land to build their own churches, schools, and homes. Between 1866 and 1877, the small community of Coxes Neck was established by Noah Robinson, Frank Watkins, George and John Richardson, John Wilson, Charles Harvey and others, who all built houses along Cox Neck Road in this area.<sup>1</sup> The community's position on Cox Neck between Crab Alley and Cox Creeks was convenient for oystermen, and the surrounding rural area provided employment for farm laborers.<sup>2</sup>

According to a member of the Watkins family, the house at 1439 Cox Neck Road was a schoolhouse moved to the site from further south.<sup>3</sup> By 1866, a schoolhouse was located south of the area that would become the Coxes Neck community.<sup>4</sup> During the Civil War, proponents of a state school system pushed to include a tax-supported educational system in the new state Constitution of 1864. The resulting system educated more than 71,000 children in 1,279 schools during the 1866-67 school year.<sup>5</sup> The school on Cox Neck Road may have been constructed earlier than 1866, and by 1877, it was part of the state public school system; it was designated "School No. 5" in Queen Anne's County.<sup>6</sup> The county made a limited effort after the Civil War to provide schools for African-American children.

<sup>1</sup> An 1866 map does not show any houses in this location; an 1877 map shows a number of residences, and only labels buildings with the names of their owners. *J. G. Strong's Map of Queen Anne's County* (n.p.: J.G. Strong, 1866). Also *An Illustrated Atlas of Kent and Queen Anne Counties, MD* (Philadelphia: Lake, Griffing & Stevenson, 1877). The community's name appears to be almost entirely local; it does not appear on any historic or modern maps. "The community of Chester might really be called the communities of Chester; there is Dominion on Route 552, and Coxes Neck, wherein clusters of Blacks dot each small section." Bertha Pulley, "Chester," *The Black Arts Festival of Queen Anne's County, Theme: "Black Horizons in Queen Anne's County,"* program (Centreville, Md.: Queen Anne's County Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 10 June 1978), p. 14. Also Fordonia E. Watkins, conversation with author, Chester, Md., 18 July 2007.

<sup>2</sup> 1870 U.S. Population Census, Queen Anne's County, Maryland, District 4, Broad Creek, Page Nos. 18, 20, 22, and 24. "Other Blacks were oyster packers, insurance agents, blacksmiths, shopowners such as shoe repairing, cleaning establishments, and an owner of an ice cream parlor." Pulley, "Chester."

<sup>3</sup> Fordonia E. Watkins, conversation with author, Chester, Md., 18 July 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *J. G. Strong's Map*.

<sup>5</sup> Charles B. Clark, *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia* (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1950), pp. 714-715.

<sup>6</sup> *Illustrated Atlas*.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. QA-601

See Continuation Sheet 9-1.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 13,750 SF  
Acreage of historical setting N/A  
Quadrangle name Kent Island      Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000 (7.5 minute)

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

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The property boundary is defined by the current parcel boundaries shown on tax map 64, grid 1, parcel 56 in Queen Anne's County, Maryland.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Evelyn D. Causey, Ph.D., Senior Historian, and Gerald M. Maready, Jr., Architectural Historian		
organization	History Matters, LLC	date	November 16, 2007
street & number	1502 21 <sup>st</sup> Street, NW, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	telephone	202-223-8845
city or town	Washington	state	DC

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to:      Maryland Historical Trust  
Maryland Department of Planning  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. QA-601

Name: Watkins House  
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

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There is evidence that by 1875, a school for African-American children was located somewhere along Coxes Neck, but its exact location is unknown.<sup>7</sup>

According to local residents, Charles Watkins, a descendant of the one of the earliest settlers of the Coxes Neck community, moved the school to its current location and converted it into a dwelling. Early twentieth-century maps of the area support the structure's change of location: in 1905 the school remained south of the community, and only two structures were located east of Cox Neck Road in the current vicinity of the house; in 1931, the school building was no longer in place, but a third structure appeared east of the road in the community.<sup>8</sup> Charles Watkins was an oysterman like his grandfather Frank. Charles's widow, Helen, is listed as the current owner of the property; she recently died at the age of 104.

The house's earlier use as a school is evident in its form. Late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century rural schoolhouses were typically one-story, front-gable structures composed of one or two rooms.<sup>9</sup> Often, they have a blank rear wall, and large banks of multi-paned windows along their side elevations. The house at 1439 Cox Neck Road displays a gable-end entrance; the windows along its sides are larger than those on contemporary dwellings, and than the other windows on the house. The rear elevation was not visible from the public right-of-way. The addition of a second floor could date to the late 1920s when the structure was moved to its current location and converted to domestic purposes.

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<sup>7</sup> "Public Education of Blacks in Queen Anne's County," *The Second Black Arts Festival of Queen Anne's County, Theme: "Black Horizons in Queen Anne's County,"* program (Centreville, Md.: Queen Anne's County Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 21 April 1979), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Geological Survey, *Map of Queen Anne's County Showing the Topography and Election Districts, 1905*; U.S. Post Office Department, *Rural Delivery Routes, Queen Anne's County, Maryland, 1931*.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of another school built for African-American children in Queen Anne's County, see *Bowser Chapel and Carmichael "Colored" School, QA-577*.

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. QA-601

Name: Watkins House  
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

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## Major Bibliographical References

Clark, Charles B. *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia*. NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1950.

*An Illustrated Atlas of Kent and Queen Anne Counties, MD*. Philadelphia: Lake, Griffing & Stevenson, 1877.

*J.G. Strong's Map of Queen Anne's County*. N.p.: J.G. Strong, 1866).

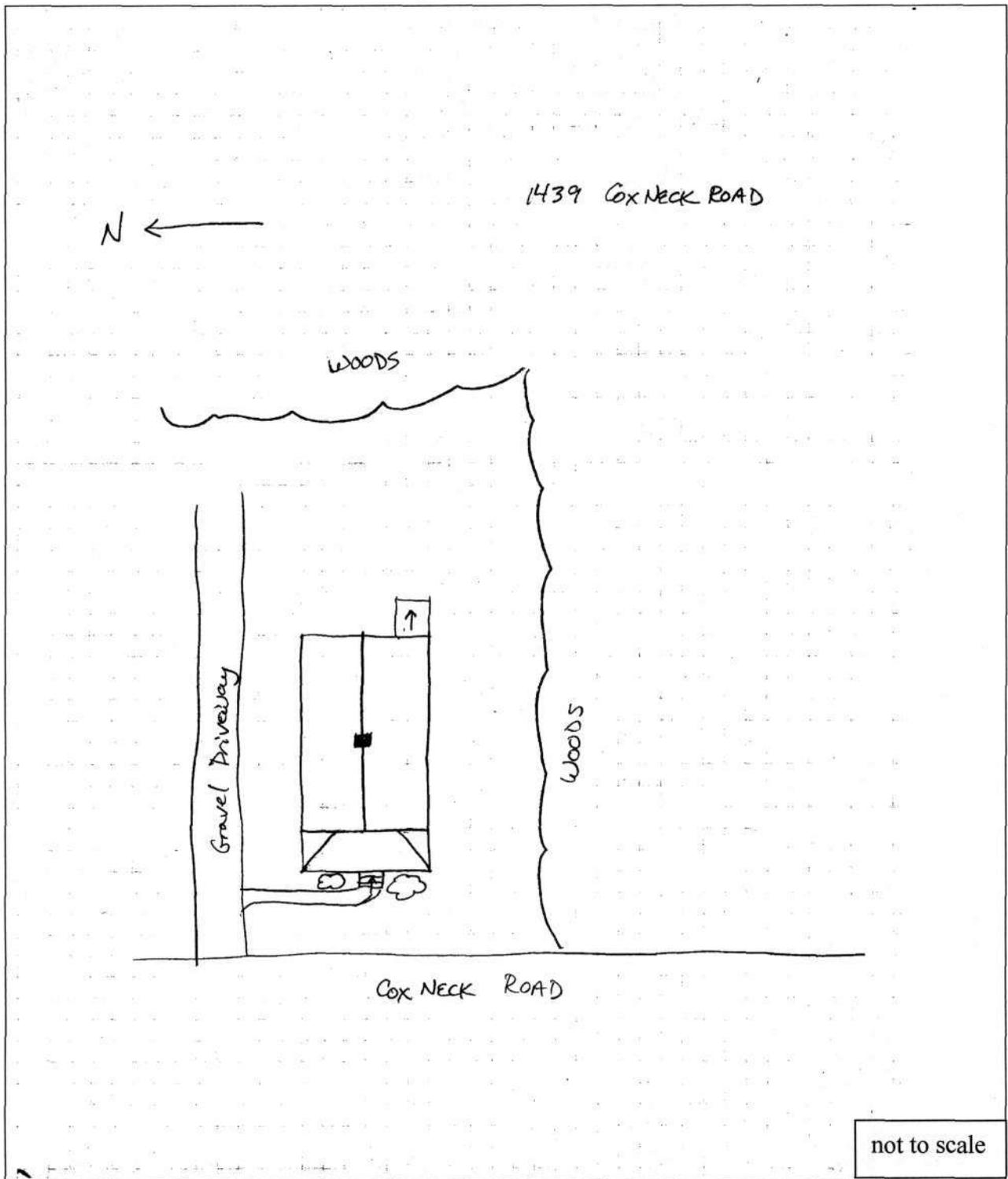
Maryland Geological Survey. *Map of Queen Anne's County Showing the Topography and Election Districts*. 1905.

"Public Education of Blacks in Queen Anne's County." In *The Second Black Arts Festival of Queen Anne's County, Theme: "Black Horizons in Queen Anne's County"*. Program. Centreville, Md.: Queen Anne's County Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 21 April 1979.

Pulley, Bertha. "Chester." In *The Black Arts Festival of Queen Anne's County, Theme: "Black Horizons in Queen Anne's County"*. Program. Centreville, Md.: Queen Anne's County Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 10 June 1978.

U.S. Population Census, Queen Anne's County, Maryland, 1860-1930 [inclusive].

U.S. Post Office Department. *Rural Delivery Routes, Queen Anne's County, Maryland*. 1931.

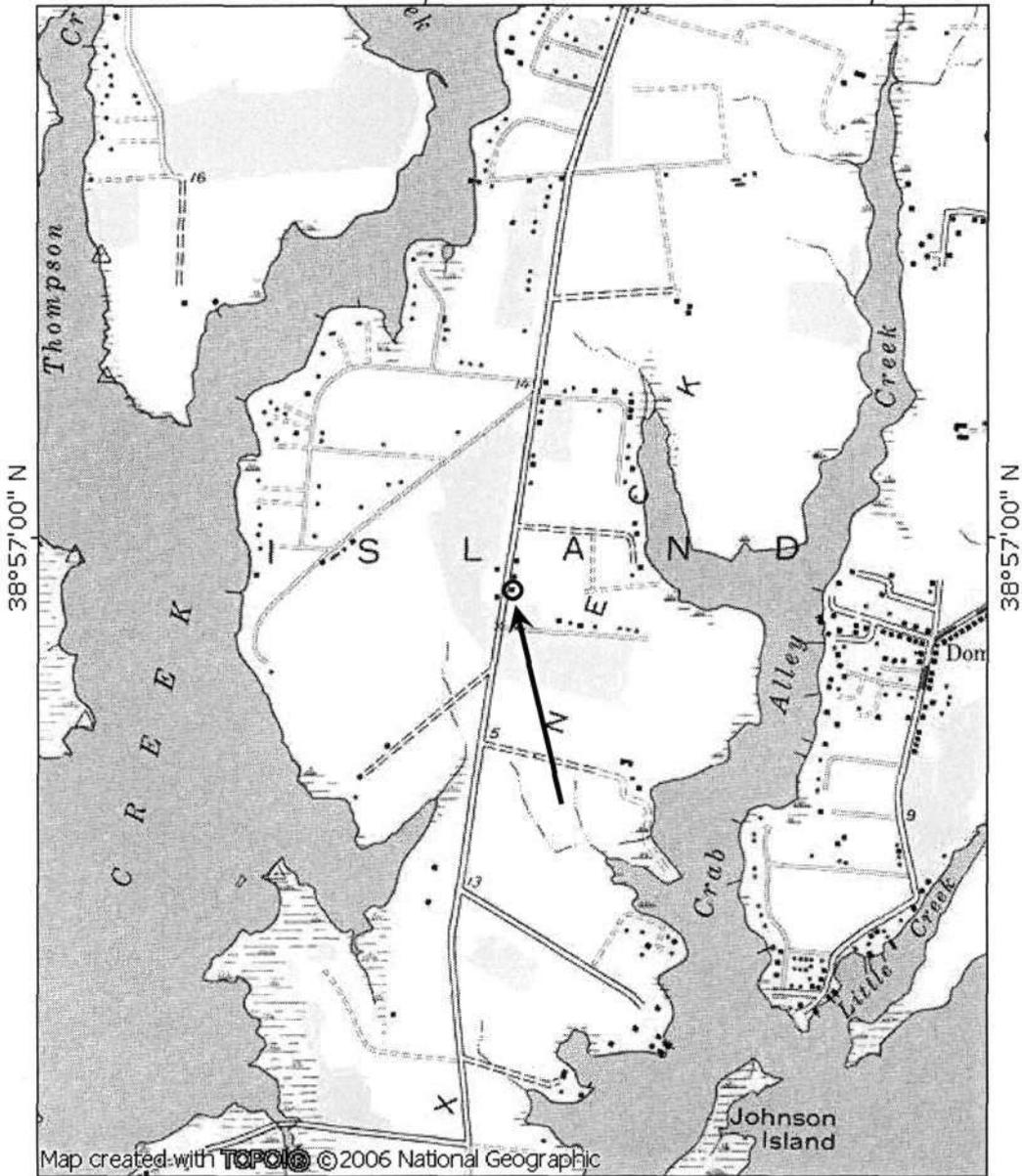


Site Plan  
QA—601  
Watkins House  
1439 Cox Neck Road  
Chester vicinity  
Queen Anne's County, Maryland

USGS Kent Island Quadrangle Map, Maryland, 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic)

76°18'00" W

WGS84 76°17'00" W



38°57'00" N

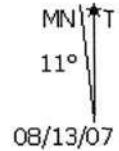
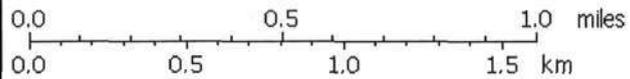
38°57'00" N

Map created with TOPOIC © 2006 National Geographic

76°18'00" W

WGS84 76°17'00" W

**QA-601**  
**Watkins House**  
**1439 Cox Neck Road**  
**Chester vicinity**  
**Queen Anne's County**





4832

QA-601

Watkins House

1439 Cox Neck Road, Chester vicinity

Queen Anne's County, MD

History Matters, LLC

7/2007

MD SHPO

West + south elevations, looking NE

1 of 1