STMA-~~201~~ 162
UNDERWOOD
Charlotte Hall
Private 18th century

Underwood is a 1 1/2-story, three-bay frame house which has been restored in recent years. Perhaps originally a one-room house, it later had a four-room first floor plan, first with separate kitchen and later with an attached one on the east end.

A single brick chimney stack laid in common bond stands at each end of the house. The base of the west stack is constructed of red sandstone. During restoration the footings of another chimney at each end were found. The second floor was originally lighted only by a 6/6 sash window in each gable. Dormers were added during renovation to make the house more livable. The porches and kitchen were in poor condition and removed. The former were replaced in the same manner, and a new, slightly larger kitchen built over the foundations of the old. The house was covered with beaded, random-width weatherboarding. Some original woodwork, hardware, doors and flooring were re-used; a new stair was built, and the second floor plan altered to accomodate a bathroom.

On the property are the sites of two slave quarters, a stable, an ice house and a meat house. One tobacco barn survives.

SM-162

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

N. R. FIELD SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Underwood

1901625304

AND/OR HISTORIC: Sothoron's Desire

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Oaks Cooksey Swamp Road

CITY OR TOWN: Oaks

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Maryland		St. Mary's	

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐	Public ☐ Private ☐ Both ☐	Public Acquisition: In Process ☐ Being Considered ☐	Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress ☐	Yes: Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No: ☐

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Agricultural ☐	Government ☐	Park ☐	Transportation ☐	Comments ☐
Commercial ☐	Industrial ☐	Private Residence ☐	Other *(Specify)* ☐	
Educational ☐	Military ☐	Religious ☐		
Entertainment ☐	Museum ☐	Scientific ☐		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: St. Mary's County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER: Washington Street and Courthouse Drive

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Leonardtown	Maryland	

ACREAGE — APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE

STATE: COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY — ENTRY NUMBER — DATE

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N. R. FIELD SHEET

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) Excellent ☐	Good ☐	Fair ☐	Deteriorated ☐	Ruins ☐	Unexposed ☐
INTEGRITY	(Check One) Altered ☐	Unaltered ☐		(Check One) Moved ☐	Original Site ☐	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(If known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SM-162

N. R. FIELD SHEET

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Pre-Columbian ☐	16th Century ☐	18th Century ☐	20th Century ☐
15th Century ☐	17th Century ☐	19th Century ☐	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	Education ☐	Political ☐	Urban Planning ☐
Prehistoric ☐	Engineering ☐	Religion/Philosophy ☐	Other *(Specify)* ☐
Historic ☐	Industry ☐	Science ☐	
Agriculture ☐	Invention ☐	Sculpture ☐	
Art ☐	Landscape Architecture ☐	Social/Humanitarian ☐	
Commerce ☐	Literature ☐	Theater ☐	
Communications ☐	Military ☐	Transportation ☐	
Conservation ☐	Music ☐		
Architecture ☐			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)*

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N. R. FIELD SHEET

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

BENEDICT QUAD

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY									OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE						LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds				Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"				°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"									

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Rivoire

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE

CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

_____

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

_____

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

~~SM9-201~~
SM-162

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MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST WORKSHEET

NOMINATION FORM
for the
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Underwood site Sotheron's Desire site

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE | COUNTY:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building ☒ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☐ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☐ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE

Title Reference of Current Deed (Book & Pg. #):

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE:

PS-709

SM-16 Z

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed	
	(Check One) ☐ Altered ☐ Unaltered	(Check One) ☐ Moved ☐ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (*If known*) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Underwood was a two-story farmhouse demolished about 1968.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SM-162

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- ☐ Pre-Columbian
- ☐ 15th Century
- ☐ 16th Century
- ☐ 17th Century
- ☐ 18th Century
- ☐ 19th Century
- ☐ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal
- ☐ Prehistoric
- ☐ Historic

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Conservation
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Invention
- ☐ Landscape Architecture
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Religion/Philosophy
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Sculpture
- ☐ Social/Humanitarian
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Urban Planning
- ☐ Other *(Specify)*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SM-162

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY							OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE				LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"		°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

Acreage Justification:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

ORGANIZATION | DATE

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE

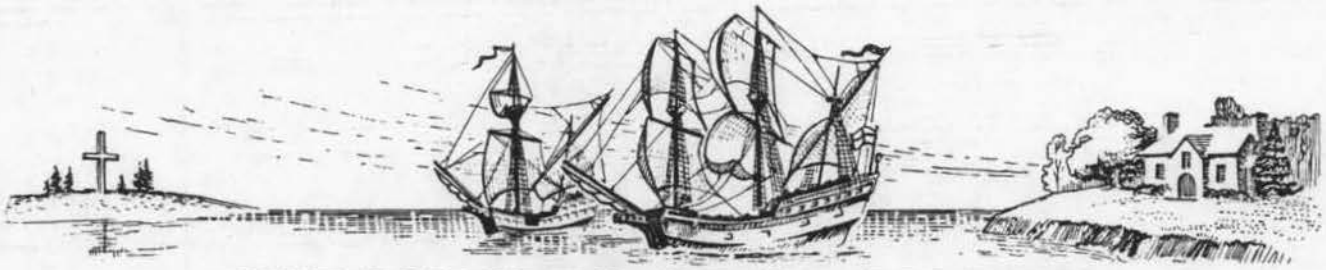
12. State Liaison Officer Review: (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Signature

SM-162



CHRONICLES OF ST. MARY'S

Monthly Bulletin of the St. Mary's County Historical Society

CHARLES E. FENWICK, *President*
Leonardtown, Maryland

EDWIN W. BEITZELL, *Editor*
Abell, Maryland

Volume 16 May 1968 No. 5

"UNDERWOOD"

A Restoration and Modernization
By John A. Chappelear

"Underwood," an early one and one-half story colonial plantation house, stands high on a hill, near Charlotte Hall in St. Mary's County, Maryland. It overlooks the old main road from lower St. Mary's to the port of Benedict on the Patuxent.

Who, when, or how many artisans built "Underwood" we do not know, but its sturdiness, durability and charm attest to the excellence of their craftsmanship. As known to persons now living, the first floor consisted of four rooms. The original kitchen was a separate building. Later a kitchen was added on the east end. The parlor was 16 X 16 and the dining room was 16 X 12. There were two smaller rooms behind these, one 16 X 10.6 and the other 12 X 10.6.

Access to the second floor was by means of a stairway in the 16 X 10.6 room, set at such a steep angle as to be little more than a ladder. There was one hand rail from a plain post at the bottom to the point where the stairway was boxed-in about two-thirds of the way up. There were no balusters. The treads were six inches wide and the risers twelve inches high. Upstairs there were three rooms, two 8 X 12 and one 16 X 16.

AFTER RESTORATION

AFTER RESTORATION

In preparing the timbers for this structure several methods were used. Large members were hand hewn. Flooring and siding were hand sawed as were the second floor beams and most other pieces not hidden from view. Plates, studs, rafters, and other timbers were hand hewn and/or hand sawed. Frequently two sides of a timber would be hewn and two sides sawed. This was particularly true in making the studs. Two sides were sawed in order that the walls might be straight.

Since there was no limestone in Southern Maryland, oyster shells were

burned to provide lime for the foundation and chimney mortar as well as the plaster. Shingles were split from cedar or chestnut blocks. Bricks were burned -- probably nearby as there are clay deposits suitable for this purpose. Nails, thumb latches, and "H L" hinges for the doors were hand forged.

In "Underwood," we find a timber framed plantation house constructed in the manner typical of the late 17th or early 18th century. It is simple but sturdy. The sills are hand hewn oak 10 X 12 laid on a foundation of sandstone held together by oyster shell mortar. The corner posts and those on each side of the outside door frames are hand hewn oak 6 X 6 with a two inch square section removed from one corner the full length of the posts so that the four inch edges of the upright post serve in lieu of 3 X 4 studs, as used throughout the structure. The sills were morticed at 24 inch intervals to receive the tenons formed at each end of the studs. The studs were held in place by the sill mortice at the bottom and the plate similarly morticed at the top.

BEFORE RESTORATION

Since framing members and in fact the entire frame of the building was shaped piece by piece on the ground to be later raised as the second stage of construction, each upright was given a Roman numeral. These identifying marks were made with a three-quarter inch chisel struck lightly with a hammer. A corresponding Roman numeral was cut into the sill and plate indicating the proper position for each stud and post. The entire framework of the first floor segment of the structure, when each pre-fitted member was placed in its proper position was held together by its own weight alone. No nails, bolts, or other fastenings were used. The only exceptions were the corner braces which are morticed into the corner posts and secured with wooden pegs made of walnut or cedar. The pegs were approximately one inch in diameter and six to eight inches long slightly tapered for a tight driving fit. By such careful fitting of the members, the entire structure when assembled became in effect one solid entity.

The first floor doors were made of vertical molded pine boards running the full length of the door and bound together by molded battens on the back secured by handmade finishing nails counter sunk and clinched. They are hung on 10 or 12 inch "H L" hinges held in place by common handmade nails.

The siding was random width, hand sawed, native pine, ship lapped and finished with a half inch bead along the lower edge. The ship lap cut was one-eighth inch less the one-half the thickness of the siding so that the bottom of each board stood out nearly one-quarter inch beyond the top of the board next below it. This prevented water from seeping into the joints and further it accentuated the joint with a pleasing effect.

BEFORE RESTORATION

The foundation and sill arrangement clearly indicated that at one time there were four chimneys. When restoration began there were only two, both free standing. The base of the one on the west end is constructed of native red sandstone, locally called "iron mine stone," to a height of three and one-half feet. From that point to the top

of the chimney it is brick. The chimney on the east end is entirely of brick. Both are common bond, the bricks being approximately 8 1/2 X 4 1/4 X 2 1/4. There are eight rows of stretchers to one row of headers.

The walls were plastered with oyster shell lime mortar over hand split lathes, so arranged that one end of each three lathes was secured by one handmade nail about one inch long. This is one of many examples of the early builders ingenuity in economizing in the use of the precious nails.

The kinds of nails used in the house vary according to their use, but they were all hand forged from soft iron. There were common nails two to three and a half inches long with large irregular heads and flat splayed points used for siding and in some cases for upstairs framing. Similar nails only shorter were used for lathes and other fastenings not ordinarily exposed. The third class was the finishing nail which might be from one to three inches long depending on the purpose for which it was used. It was made very much as the common nail except that the head was flattened making it long and narrow, approximately one-eighth inch wide by one-quarter inch long. Of course, the smaller the nail, the smaller the head. When this nail was driven in fully, the head was not noticeable, especially after painting. This nail was used for all the interior trim, the doors, and wherever else it might be visible.

The second floor joists were 4 X 7 with a half inch bead at each side along the lower edges. The first floor ceiling was originally the underside of the second floor random width flooring. The height of the first floor ceiling was and is nine feet.

Young chestnut and oak trees approximately 10 to 12 inches in diameter were used for the first floor joists. These were not attached to the sills but were merely placed on the sills with their ends flattened to keep them from rocking. They were held in place by the flooring. The flat side to which the flooring was nailed was hand hewn, the bark left covering the remainder. In many places the undersides of the floor boards were notched with an adz fitting them more closely to the uneven hand hewn joists. They were native pine, random width, tongued and grooved. The width varies from seven to twenty inches.

The baseboards were of six inch pine with a half inch bead along the upper edge. The chair rail was thirty-two inches from the floor and was made in three parts, one a two and one-eighth X a half inch horizontal top piece bearing a quarter inch bead top and front with a rounded edge resting on a six inch vertical supporting apron with a half inch bead on its lower edge. A one and one-quarter inch molding strip occupied the angle between the horizontal and the vertical parts and helped support the horizontal top. All were of native pine and were fastened with handmade finishing nails.

The windows were guillotine type. On the first floor there were two windows of twelve panes each on the front and two similar windows on the back. On each end, there were two windows of eight panes each. The second story was illuminated by one twelve pane window on the east gable end and two twelve pane windows on the west. Prior to reconstruction and modernization there were no dormer windows.

The Second Story

There were three rooms on the second floor. One of these also served as the stair landing making it much smaller as far as usable space was concerned. Further there was no privacy as it provided passage to the other two rooms.

The second story doors differed from those on the ground floor. They were also board and batten doors but were made of seven-eighths by six inch boards with one-half inch bead on each board. The battens were plain though bevelled on all edges. These too were bound together with handmade finishing nails counter sunk and clinched on the batten side.

The walls and ceilings were oyster shell mortar on split lathes as they were on the first floor. There is a small crawl space attic approximately five feet high at the crown. This is based on the tie beams which are dovetailed into the rafters and fastened with wooden pegs. These tie beams not only serve as a base for the upstairs ceiling but also prevent the rafters from spreading when under stress.

The rafter ends sit not on the exposed beams which extend about six inches

beyond the plate on which they rest, but rather on an eight inch board which lies on the beams above the plate. The rafters are notched to fit these boards and beams and are fastened together with wooden pegs which extend through the rafter, the board, and the beam protruding two inches or more below the beam.

Restoration and Modernization

"Underwood" at one time appeared to be, and in many respects was, in an advanced stage of dilapidation. Its main roof was in fair condition, but the porches and kitchen had partially collapsed. They were removed and discarded as beyond salvage. Much of the woodwork exposed to the elements was also in bad repair, however, the basic structure was for the most part sound.

As the first step in restoration, all salvable material was removed for storage leaving only the roof and frame. Every sound piece of wood, every nail, every piece of hardware, and every brick was saved. Sub-weather boarding and sub-flooring were installed but the work was then discontinued for nearly eight years during the writer's absence from the country.

Restoration means many things to many people. To some, a minimum amount of repair and new material is allowed but no change of form in any respect. In some cases previous changes have been corrected providing a return to the original. To others, it means building a large addition to or around the original or part of the original structure, thereby changing the character completely.

At "Underwood" the objective was to re-create a home, not a museum, to retain as much of the original as possible yet incorporate those modern conveniences which make for comfort and pleasant living. The only compromises made were those necessary to achieve this goal.

In 1962 with the able assistance of two local workmen, reconstruction and modernization were undertaken. Work started at the foundations.

The softness of the oyster shell mortar over a long period of time had allowed the stone foundation to crumble and the sills to settle. The first step was to level the outside sills and rebuild the foundations. The interior sills were then leveled and new boxing of stone and concrete installed to contain the hearths of the two existing fireplaces. Bracing members were added to strengthen and stabilize the first floor joists. New sub-flooring was installed and the hearths were relaid using the original brick. Minor repairs were made to the fireplaces themselves and dampers were installed in the chimneys to prevent the loss of heat. The dampers were placed well up in the chimneys and so arranged that no part of their operating mechanisms are visible.

Originally the irregularities caused by the use of handmade studs and split lathes had been corrected by the plasterer. In some places the oyster shell plaster was found to be over three inches thick and in other places one-half inch. Rather than repeat this process, it was decided to use modern dry wall instead of plaster. Where necessary, furring strips were used to straighten the lines of the walls as they were badly out of line because of the crumbling foundation. At this time insulating materials were incorporated in all of the outside areas and new weatherboarding was installed. The original weatherboarding was of random width with 1/2 inch bead. The new has the same 1/2 inch bead but is made of material 10 inches wide.

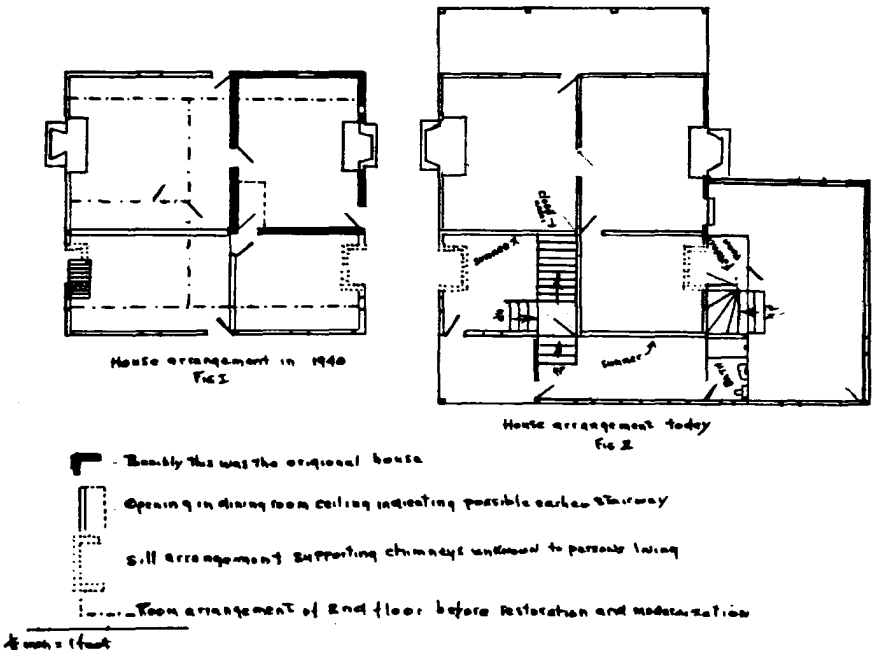
The beaded beams in the living room were refinished and remain exposed. Since there was not sufficient original flooring available for the second floor, new flooring was laid there. The underside of the flooring was covered by strips of plaster-board fitted in between the exposed beams. It now appears as though it were plastered between the beams.

The porches front and rear were replaced using new material but following the original pattern. The kitchen was replaced using new material. It was necessary to enlarge the kitchen slightly in order that space might be provided for a first floor bathroom and furnace room. A third chimney was added to accommodate the modern furnace. This was laid with old brick and in the position indicated by the outline of the sills as having been the location of one of the missing chimneys. As now constructed this chimney has no fireplace although one could be added later.

A new well was dug as the condition of the old well made it too dangerous to attempt repairs. Modern kitchen equipment was installed. In addition to the bathroom on the first floor a bath was installed on the second floor. It

was necessary to change the room arrangement on the second floor to accommodate this new bath and to provide a more appropriate means of access to the second floor. The ladder stairway was removed and a new stairway provided.

The figures below reflect the original arrangement and the reconstructed interior.



The original material which had been salvaged was used to its fullest extent. Unfortunately some of the flooring and all of the weatherboarding were stored in a building which lost its roof during the owner's absence. Before this was realized the contents of the building were ruined and only those pieces stored in other buildings were saved. Stored in these other buildings were, fortunately, most of the usable flooring, doors, and trim and one mantel. Actually there was very little usable weatherboarding when it was removed for salvage because long exposure to the elements had caused it to deteriorate badly.

Original material was sufficient to provide complete flooring for the living room and dining room and complete trim including baseboard and chair rail for those rooms. The living room mantel was salvaged and after minor repairs was reinstalled. The mantel for the dining room was beyond repair and had to be reproduced.

The original guillotine type windows had sills made of walnut. There were no sash weights or other means of keeping the windows open. Very reluctantly it was decided that all of the frames and sashes were in too poor condition to salvage so new windows were installed throughout.

Many of the original "H L" hinges and thumb latches were salvaged. Where hardware was missing a number of period hinges and latches had been collected over the years sufficient to complete the ground floor.

The second floor thumb latches are also original or contemporary. "H L" hinges used on the second floor doors are reproductions. It is planned that these will be replaced when contemporary hinges can be obtained.

Three of the vertical paneled doors are original. The other four were reproduced by hand.

Examination of the original living room mantel and the rear of various pieces making up the chair rail and baseboard showed that the first paint used had been blue practically identical to that used in the "Apollo Room" at the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg. This shade is available and with oyster shell white was used in this room.

When the original plaster was removed it was found that except for the fireplace end of the parlor, the walls were all plastered with oyster shell mortar

over rived lathes held in place by handmade nails. The fireplace end of this room did not have original plaster but was covered with part sheet-rock and part modern plaster on sawed lathes held in place by cut nails. The weatherboarding on that, the northwest end of the house, was also of a later period. In addition there was evidence that at one time furring strips had been laid horizontally across the studding of the wall prior to the lathes. These factors seemed to indicate very strongly that originally the fireplace end of the parlor had been paneled as was frequently the custom of that period. Since there was no way to determine exactly what type of paneling was used, rightly or wrongly, it was assumed that it would have been the same pattern as was used in constructing the doors. Hence the fireplace end of the parlor is now paneled in that manner.

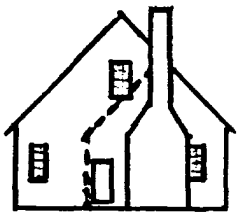


Fig III

Broken line indicates possible original house

In preparing for these repairs and while making by hand necessary replacement parts, it was strikingly apparent that only a few simple hand tools had been used in the construction. The builders used the usual saws, hammers, adz, frow, hatchet, auger, chisel, broad axe and jack plane. With these they built the basic structure. With these alone they made a sturdy, livable home, more than adequate for the period. With these they also built the barns, stables, and other outbuildings necessary to plantation life. However, this was a home. It needed decoration as well as strength. It must be pleasing to the eye. It must have charm. So with a few additional small implements, not needed for the barn or the stable they supplied the simple but charming decorative detail that gives it character.

The full length raised panels used on the doors and room paneling were formed by a jack plane and a small, thin plane designed to cut a quarter inch bead. Each alternate board in this paneling was decorated by a small thin plane making a half inch bead along each side of the board. This plane was also used to decorate the baseboards, the chair rail, the weatherboarding and the beams in the first floor ceiling and the mantel. There was also a small plane to form the groove in the flooring and in the paneling.

The only other tool used was a small plane used in making a one and one-half inch ogee molding. This molding was used throughout the house as the trim for the door frames, the window frames, the chair rails, the mantels and all other trim. In fact the entire trim of the house was made with five or six small and simple planes used in various combinations. There are no elaborate decorations such as are found in later styles. This is beauty through simplicity.

Outbuildings

About 300 yards west of the house, near a spring, which has now been excavated and made into a pond, there once stood two quarters. The only remaining evidence of their existence are the old-fashioned double jonquils locally called "Butter and Eggs" which make their appearance each spring. The writer's knowledge of these quarters came from his father who pointed out their location many years ago and explained that the slaves who lived in those quarters at the time of the Civil War continued to live there until their deaths many years later.

There is one remaining tobacco barn which is timber framed much in the manner of the house. It was originally weatherboarded with oak boards 4' 6" X 5" to 6", which had been split from oak billets. These were removed in 1938 because they were in such bad condition that a driving rain destroyed a quantity of the tobacco stored on the outside perimeter. The barn doors were hung on strap hinges whose pintles were driven into the supporting oak posts. There were massive hinges 24" to 30" in length. Some of the hinges and pintels remain and the barn has been in continual use "since the memory of man knoweth not to the contrary."

The stable was also of timber framing of oak and chestnut. It was one story with a small hay loft. It contained stalls for four horses. A carriage shed was added to one side.

The foundation of the ice house remained until recently -- also a meat house of ancient vintage. There was a utility shed which was once used as a chicken house. It was of much later construction. This was the building in which the weatherboarding and other material was lost. It is no longer in existence.

There are a number of existing records which refer to the plantation and the boundaries. However, nothing so far has been found which relates to the house itself nor to its age. It is feared that all such references were lost in the smoke and flame of the burning Court House in Leonardtown in 1831. Because of this, it is necessary to rely on the style and the materials used, the type of construction, and the size and arrangement of its rooms in attempting to date this house. As no archeological excavations have been made, no artifacts have been studied. However, one two tined fork of the type used in the 17th century was found lying on a sill between the plaster and the weatherboarding. It has a bone handle and is very badly rusted. One can almost see a small child pushing that fork through a temporary hole in the soft plaster many, many years ago.

The Pause

The process of restoration is an o-n-going one. Much has been done, many questions have been answered and much remains to be done with many questions still to be answered. Perhaps answers to some of these questions will assist in conclusively establishing the date of construction.

In the absence of record information such as that found in old plats, tax records, old wills and other official or semi-official records the dating of an early building is at best largely conjecture. There are differences of opinion even between those most knowledgeable in such matters. Differences in method and form between various parts of the American colonies are to be given consideration. So, too, are those differences brought about by the origins of the various groups that made up the early colonies.

"Underwood," as it now appears, is later than the medieval period and earlier than the Georgian. This would place it in the period between 1700 and 1730. There are indications that it might have been built during the latter part of that period as evidenced by symmetrical gables, common bond chimneys, and the quarter inch beading on the raised paneled doors. There is, of course, the possibility that it might be even later because many people are conservative in their taste and slow to embrace new styles.

There can be no question that "Underwood" is an early house. Its very steep ladder-like stairway, framing, hand sawed and hewn woodwork, handmade nails, oyster shell mortar, hand forged hardware and exposed beams all attest to that fact. However, all of these materials and styles lasted over a long period of time and could be early as well as late, so are therefore inconclusive.

There are several factors which are significant and could lead to a simple solution if their existence could be accounted for within the context of what we already know.

Among the things which we have found during the rebuilding are a number of molded bricks of two designs. One was no doubt for a "water table" but where, remains to be answered. The other design is for a decoration of distinction, but where was it used. (A similar brick is used in the water table at Stratford.) No person living knows of any brick work used at "Underwood" except the two remaining chimneys, their hearths, and some brick work under the new kitchen.

This was discovered when the new chimney was built. Since it is under the new kitchen we do not know what it is. It is possibly a floor to an earlier kitchen.

When restoration was first begun, the downstairs ceilings were covered with galvanized iron sheets stamped with a fancy design. When these were removed, it was found that the beaded beams in the 12 X 16 room (now the dining room) were so arranged as to indicate that at one time there had been a 4 X 7 opening in the southwest corner of the ceiling. The only apparent explanation for such an opening is that an earlier stairway existed there. To accept this theory presents further interesting speculation as to how a stairway in that location could have possibly served a house such as has been herein before described.

Examination of Figures I and II will show that this was not practical. Why it was so located can only be explained if we assume that the original house was a single 12 X 16 room with attic above. The fireplace bears evidence that at one time it was equipped with two cranes for cooking purposes. This further advances the 12 X 16 house theory. Considering the bond of the chimney, it is quite possible that this is not the original chimney.

Another feature which has long been wondered about is the height of the chimneys. Most 16th and 17th century chimneys were tall extending well above the peak of the roof. It was generally believed that unless a chimney rose well above the roof it would not draw properly. At "Underwood" the height of the chimneys barely exceeds the peak of the roof. The fireplaces function very well. One wonders if the builders of "Underwood" found that tall chimneys were not mandatory, or was it because a 16 X 12 roof line was raised to accommodate a 26 1/2 X 30 house. This could very well account for the unusual chimney heights.

Since there is no basement and the foundation is now continuous around the entire perimeter, it is not possible to make a new and closer examination of the sills. Perhaps during further study and examination of the area around the house the answer may be found. Until then, one can only weigh the various possibilities and be pleased that so much has been learned.

The writer deeply regrets that he did not ask questions of persons then living who could have told of this house at least as far back as 1850. Since this was not done, this article is written in the hope that at least that which is now known will not be lost.

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"YESTERDAY IN OLD ST. MARY'S COUNTY"

Mr. Robert E. Pogue has advised the Editor that there has been a production delay on his book and he expects it will be ready for distribution during May, 1968.

ST. CLEMENT'S ISLAND

The Editor is happy to report that the Maryland Assembly appropriated funds for further erosion control on St. Clement's Island as indicated in the March, 1968 Chronicles of St. Mary's. Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to all involved in the effort. Progress also is being made in the Point Lookout Park project.

ADDITIONAL ST. MARY'S AND CHARLES COUNTIES' MILLS

1. Samuel Sanford of London, once of Accomack County left two corn mills bought of Ralph Foster to kinsmen John Tary. Reference: Maryland Historical Magazine -- 5, 294.

2. The General Assembly charted the following corporations in the years and chapters cited:

   a. Benedict Steam Milling and Manufacturing Company -- 1839, Chap. 264.
   b. Leonardtown Steam Milling and Manufacturing Company - 1837, Chap. 33.
   c. Steam Milling and Manufacturing Company of Charles County -- 1834, Chap. 46 -- John W. McGrain.

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Sothoron's Desire

St. Mary - 162

Sothoron's Desire