

S M -243 ABRAHAM MEDLEY'S HOUSE

mid-19th century

Oakville

Private

Apparently built in the mid-19th century, Medley's log house is representative of the single-unit structures occupied by many non-landowning whites and blacks in rural Maryland. Although the single first floor room was not partitioned by walls, the space was in fact divided by use into specific areas. In earlier years a large brick chimney ascended the northern gable end, a "summer kitchen" stood behind the house, and a porch sheltered the entire front length. Medley, an elderly tenant farmer, continues to live in a 19th century lifestyle: water from the spring, lighting from kerosene lamps and heat from a wood stove.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC ABRAHAM MEDLEY'S HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Mary Dixon Road

CITY, TOWN Turner (Laurel Grove)  VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Maryland COUNTY St. Mary's County

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE, zip code  
VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #:  
Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Today this house stands alone on a knoll surrounded by fields and forest, but years ago both it and its surroundings showed more signs of human habitation. One of these was a small structure, about the size of a "hen house" (according to the occupant, Mr. Medley), which stood just about 10 yards from the back door. It sheltered the wood cook stove and served as the kitchen. As was so often the case (according to Mr. Medley) the kitchen was built separate from the houses of tenant farmers because of the danger of fire and because during the summer the heat from cooking inside became unbearable. Another house, similar to this one, stood at the treeline about 60 yards back. It was also inhabited by black sharecroppers.

At that time Mr. Medley did not live here alone but shared the house with his wife and family of four boys. Though he farmed this land for years, he has never owned it. Mr. Matt Long, for whom Mr. Medley was a tenant farmer, once owned the land. When he sold it in his old age, he did so with the stipulation that Mr. Medley could continue to live here without paying rent as long as he wished. According to Mr. Medley, the place has considerably deteriorated ever since his wife died and the children moved on.

This one bay log house with an A roof is in the genre of folk houses once common in southern Maryland. According to Mr. Medley, most blacks lived in similar log houses until the turn of the century when they began building frame ones. These were preferred because one could build them larger and thereby have more rooms. It was at this time when people began building frame houses that they began, he said, to use wood stoves instead of the fireplace to heat the house and to cook on.

This particular house measures 19'2" long, 15'5" deep, and c.17' tall. Hewn sills rest on ferrous sandstone pilings, similar to the ones at Grasslands in A-A- County. The log walls are chinked with lime-sand mortar and V-notched at the corners. Vertical planks are nailed to the logs and serve as studs to which are nailed horizontal clapboards. Open places in the boxed cornice where some of the boards have fallen off, reveal the butts of hewn joists which overlap the plates and protrude outward about 6".

The two doorways, front and rear, and the two window openings, one on each floor, appear to be original. The doors themselves and the double hung sash windows do not. A porch once extended outward about 10 feet along the entire length of the front of the house. The exterior brick chimney and fireplace inside on the south gable end have been removed. A central chimney was installed by Mr. Medley to remove the smoke from the 2 wood stoves that he began using inside the house about 25 years ago.

The downstairs consists of one open room and was never divided into separate rooms, according to Mr. Medley. The walls are now insulated with corrugated cardboard, as was commonly done by sharecroppers (cardboard or newspaper). From nails are hung the clothes, tools, pictures, some religious symbols (crucifix and pendant with miniature of Virgin Mary) and other possessions of Mr. Medley. There is a crate shelf or two, but no closet. Near the center of the room is a small wood stove, made of tin, and used to heat the house. Near the southern gable wall is a wood burning range. It is rarely used now for cooking. The interior is very dark, the once source of light being the sunlight coming in through the one window. The ceiling, walls, and floors have been blackened by the smoke leaking

**CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY**

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

from the stove pipes, thereby further darkening this room and giving it a pungent wood smoke odor. Mr. Medley said that when his family was here, the interior was kept clean and whitewashed, like, he said, the interiors of most homes of tenant farmers in the vicinity.

In the northeast corner a stairway once ascended into the loft. The loft itself consists of one room. There is no ceiling. The rafters are morticed, tenoned, and pegged; the collars (which have been rarely found in the "slave cabins" in southern Maryland) are half-lapped and nailed with cut and wrought nails. The roof was once covered with shingles.

According to the present occupant and his friends, all of whom have lived in this area since birth, no one but black people have ever lived in this house. The evidence in its construction suggests mid 19th century, but it cannot be proved that this structure was a slave cabin from that data alone. But this "unprovability" or uncertainty is its significance for that shows the similarity between the 19th century houses of slaves and sharecroppers in terms of their construction, design, and size. This similarity shows that though emancipation was a great stride forward freedom was yet a long way off.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

MCDANIEL, GEORGE W. 2-46

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

George W. McDaniel, Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Commission on Afro-American and Indian History and Culture

DATE

STREET &amp; NUMBER

12 West Madison Street

TELEPHONE

301-383-3648

CITY OR TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

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Abraham Medley and his log

house

SM-243 Abraham Medley's House

S<sup>r</sup> TMA - ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ 243

to work

3/16

MHT, Annapolis

East Elevation

44/2



McDaniel  
SM-243

Please return to George McDaniel, Center for Southern  
Folklore, 1216 Peabody Ave., Memphis, TN 38104

3



SM-243







SM-243

