

S·M· -278
COLLINS HOUSE
Abell
Private

1890's

Robert Henry Collins, a successful black farmer, had this house built in the late 1890's. It stands two stories in height, has a symmetrical facade of five bays and carries a handsome cross gable decorated with scrollwork and finial. Decorative features in the interior include the staircase in the central hallway of bold inset panels with broad, cyma reversa-cyma recta moldings, and trim of repeated half round moldings around the doors and windows in almost every room. This house was once among the finest owned by a rural black family in southern Maryland. It is now abandoned and has been thoroughly vandalized.

STMA- 278
Robert Henry Collins House
Abell
Private

C. 1898

This two story frame house was built by a local white carpenter named Gibson for the Negro family of Robert Henry Collins, a prominent landowning farmer. Though it is now in derelict condition, the house was one of the finest dwellings of rural Negro families in southern Maryland when it was built.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

SM - 278

MAGI # 1902785604

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC Robert Henry Collins House
 AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER South side of Hatchet Thicket Road, 0.25 mile west of its junction with Abell Road.
 CITY, TOWN Abell VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7
 STATE Maryland COUNTY St. Mary's

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input checked="" 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 | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

Abandoned

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Edward Collins Telephone #:
 STREET & NUMBER Hatchet Thicket Road
 CITY, TOWN Abell VICINITY OF STATE, zip code Maryland 20606

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, LIBER #: EBA 19
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. St. Mary's County Courthouse FOLIO #: 124
 STREET & NUMBER Map # 46; P. 180
 CITY, TOWN Leonardtown STATE Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None
 DATE
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" 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

This once handsome and now abandoned, derelict house faces south down a long drive to Hachet Thicket Road. While the house was occupied, the land around it was cultivated, and the front and side yards about it were maintained and planted with flowering shrubs. Those conditions no longer exist, and the site is rapidly becoming overgrown, and the house is collapsing.

The structure was a large two-story frame dwelling, built in the form of an "I house," a type that was especially popular in the 19th century among prosperous middle class farmers, both black and white. Along the entire facade extended a shed porch, which has since been knocked down. The facade was five bays in length, with a door centrally located, flanked by two windows on each side, with matching windows above, giving the house a symmetrical appearance in the front. The house was one bay in depth, with no window opening in either gable end, an arrangement not uncommon among houses of this design. To the southwest corner was attached a two-story appendage which served as kitchen and which was one bay in length and width. From the kitchen and across the rear length extended a shed porch, which served as a storage space, and as an intermediate zone between the farm yards in the back and the house itself.

The structure was balloon frame, with the members toed into place with a mixture of cut and wire nails, and with no handmade joining as found in earlier houses. The skeleton was clad with overlapping weatherboards, that were painted white, with green trim around the door and window openings. Inside of the latter were hung double sash windows with two ^{over} two lights. The front door is missing, but the doorway was panelled on either side, and the ^{transom} had three lights.

The floor plan consisted of a central hallway flanked by two rooms downstairs, the one on the east probably serving as the parlor, while the room opposite served as the dining room since it led directly into the kitchen. The central passageway was spacious and held a single flight of stairs with turned balustrade and massive turned newel post at the bottom, and another smaller one at the top. The staircase was clad in panels of pine with raised square blocks in the center of each. The pine was painted a rich brown, probably to simulate the finer, more fashionable dark woods of the late 19th century.

The doors into the rooms were missing, but the molded trims in the downstairs and upstairs along the door frames were manufactured with a reeded pattern and concentric circles in each top corner, a design that was popular in the houses of that period, and that was found for example in the Negro landowners' houses at Ben's Creek in Calvert County.

See Continuation Sheet No. 1
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | Black History | |

SPECIFIC DATES Circa 1898 **BUILDER/ARCHITECT** Gibson, a local carpenter

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to John Dickerson Collins -- the son of Robert Henry Collins, the owner of this house -- this dwelling was built by a white carpenter named Gibson, hired by his father. That carpenter was from the Abell community and built a number of other structures, among them a portion of Holy Angels' Church. Though the son does not remember the costs of construction, he does remember that his father built it as the replacement for an earlier dwelling on the same site: a two-story, two-room, side passage house that the Collins family had first occupied after purchasing the land.

Dickerson Collins provided the following history of his father: Robert Henry Collins was born in a log house near Clements, a house that was located and recorded as part of this survey. He married the daughter of John Dickerson, a prominent Negro waterman and land-owning farmer. From that marriage, he obtained his first land holdings, given him by his father-in-law. He successfully farmed that. ~~He~~ did not hire sharecroppers, but instead hired free labor or worked the land with his own family labor. Unlike other Negroes in the community, he did not turn to the water, but made his living almost exclusively from his farm. According to his daughter, Margaret Collins Branson, he built this house in circa 1898. The size, style, and decorative features reveal the success of his farming efforts. Indeed, when this house was occupied and maintained, it was one of the finest houses of rural Negroes in southern Maryland.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

| STATE | COUNTY |
|-------|--------|
| | |
| | |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

| | |
|--|-----------|
| NAME / TITLE | |
| George W. McDaniel | |
| ORGANIZATION | DATE |
| Maryland Commission on Afro-American History and Culture | |
| STREET & NUMBER | TELEPHONE |
| 20 Dean Street | |
| CITY OR TOWN | STATE |
| Annapolis, 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

Robert Henry Collins House
St. Mary's County
Maryland

(DESCRIPTION CONTINUED)

Item # 7

Page 1

Throughout the interior, the walls were lathed and plastered. The brick stove flues that ascended the inside of each gable end were masked by a larger frame which was lathed and plastered. In the downstairs rooms mantelpieces were installed on this frame, continuing with the traditional appearance of a formal room in a fine house.

Upstairs, the plan continued, except that the space on the east side of the passageway was divided into two small rooms, while on the opposite side there was one large room, presumably the parents' bedroom. Both rooms were heated. A smaller, and more crudely finished room was above the kitchen. A boxed staircase led to this chamber. According to oral informants at other sites, this chamber above the kitchen was commonly occupied by the boys, while the daughters had the more comfortable and more nicely appointed chambers (see Christopher Butler House, Beachville Community, St. Mary's County). Like the others, this chamber was heated, and its walls lathed and plastered.

Behind the house stood outbuildings for the equipment, crops, and animals of the farm; none remain.



SM-278

ROBERT Henry

Collins House

STMA 278

Abell, Md.

SOUTH Lacade

GWM 5/77



SM-278

ROBERT Henry Collins House
STMA 278

Cibola, Md.

NORTHWEST VIEW

GWM - 5/77



ROBERT Henry Collins

STMA 278

Abell, Md.

Stairway

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ROBERT Henry Collins

STMA 278

Abell, Md.

Doorway

GWM — 5/77



52-775

ROBERT Henry Collins
STMA 278
Abell, Md.
Hinge
GWM — 5/77