

S M -279
DICKERSON-CLARK HOUSE
Abell
Private

mid-19th century

Inside this two-story frame house of the 20th century is the original mid-19th century, 1 1/2-story frame dwelling. After the Civil War, it was purchased by John Dickerson, a Negro veteran of the Union Army who became one of the largest Negro landowners in the area. After his death, this portion of the farm was acquired by Luke Clark, a leading Negro farmer and waterman who owned the bug-eye "Hiawatha." The house has since been enlarged and improved and is inhabited by Clark's daughter, Bernice Sherman.

S M - 279
Dickerson/Clark House
Abell vicinity
Private

Antebellum 19th
century

This house was built as a one and half story central block with one room down and one up, and with a kitchen attached to a gable end. Since then considerable changes have occurred, completely masking the reliably datable features. Since the years after the Civil War, it has been the home of the Dickersons and Clarks, prominent black farmers and watermen who contributed time, talent, and money to the development of community institutions.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC The Dickerson/Clark House
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East side of Abell Road, circa 1 mile from its junction with Oakley Road.
CITY, TOWN Abell CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7
VICINITY OF
STATE Maryland COUNTY St. Mary's

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Bernice Clark Sherman Telephone #:
STREET & NUMBER Abell Road
CITY, TOWN Abell VICINITY OF STATE, zip code Maryland 20606

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, LIBER #: 47
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. FOLIO #: 179
ST. MARY'S COUNTY COURTHOUSE
STREET & NUMBER
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 type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 house is located on the east side of Abell Road on the west bank of Canoe Neck Creek. Its roof line runs north-south, with one length facing the water and the opposite oriented toward Abell Road. The house was originally considerably smaller than it is today, consisting of a principal, two-story block with a one room, one story kitchen attached to the northern gable end. The central block had one room downstairs and another above.

The development of this house in the 20th century was provided by the present occupant and owner, Bernice Clark Sherman, who inherited the property from her father, Luke Clark. The following description given that history as related by her:

During the 19th century this house was owned by a family named Russell. John Dickerson, a successful black farmer and waterman, purchased the property and house from him in the last quarter of the 19th century, with money acquired either from a mortgage or loan. At Dickerson's death, the property was sold at public auction at the courthouse door, Dickerson's son, George, and another neighbor and friend, Luke Clark, purchased it. Luke Clark continued to live with his family in his two-story frame house in Abell until it burned in circa 1904, a which time he moved his family into this house.

He soon enlarged the house by adding a second story with two rooms to the original kitchen on the north gable end, and by adding a two-story addition along the west length of the original block, doubling its size. In the 1920's, Luke Clark dismantled the massive brick chimney between the principal block and kitchen. With the bricks he rebuilt a smaller brick stove flue for the main room (dining room) of the original block and another for the downstairs room of the added block (living room). The remainder -- which was a considerable number, according to his daughter -- he donated to the construction of the brick high school for Negroes in the community, Banneker High. Clark had mortgaged his land to help buy the property for this school. He was also active in the formation and administration of the Abell Elementary School, which has been recorded in this survey, and of which he was a Trustee. His two daughters continued his devotion and work for education, both of them -- Julia and Grace -- having taught in the schools in the Abell community for many years.

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 checked="" 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 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		

Black History

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house has been occupied by black families who have been successful waterman, farmers, and educators since the last quarter of the 19th century. Due to considerable changes in its design over the years and to improvements that have covered original, datable features, it is not known when this house was built. It may date from the late 18th or early 19th century. It is known that in the years after the Civil War, it became the residence of black, independent families who have contributed to and strongly influenced the growth of the community at Abell. It is probably illustrative of the homes of black families influential in their local communities elsewhere in the state.

Note: As part of this survey, a faded snapshot of Luke Clark and his wife, Julia Plater Clark, was copied, as was the family photograph in decorative frame of Julia's father, Oswald Plater.

Note: The devotion of the family to education was also exemplified by the third daughter of the Clark family, Bernice Clark Sherman. She taught in the Fenwick, Morgany, and Leonardtown elementary schools for many years. She has now retired and lives in her parents' house. Her daughter is a librarian in the District of Columbia, continuing in the family tradition of respect for education.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

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

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George W. McDaniel

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Commission on Afro-American History and Culture

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

20 Dean Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis, Maryland

STATE

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

Faunce," built by J. T. Marsh, at Mill Creek, Solomons Island in 1887. She was a sharp stern and sharp rig ship of 25 tons, 60.7 feet in length. Captain Jake was quite a fabulous character on the Potomac and truly representative of the old-timers on the river. On June 5, 1896, the "George B. Faunce" was sold to Captain Drew Freeman Cheseldine of White's Neck Creek when Captain Jake decided to devote full time to trap net and seine fishing. Captain Jake later owned the small schooners, "Jacob D. Faunce," built in Washington in 1876 and the "Emma R. Faunce" built on St. Patrick's Creek in 1902 which were used in his seining operations.

Captain John Bryant was another to sail in the river trade out of St. Patrick's. Among his vessels was the "Edith Marcy," a sharp sail 60 ton bugeye he bought of Captain Dick Chesser of St. George's Island. He also sailed the "Winnie H. Windsor" which he bought from Captain Jerry Gibson and sold or traded to Captain Dick Chesser.

Captain Jimmie Dingee sailed the "Water Lily," a sloop, and Bernard Ellis had at least two boats out of St. Patrick's, the "Fanny Kemp" and the "Horn Point," a sloop.

In addition to the white masters in the oyster and general hauling trade on the river, there were several negroes out of St. Patrick's Creek who captained their own boats. Beverly Collins had a sharp sail bugeye, the "Mark Stevens," built by R. E. Tyler of St. Peters in 1888. She was 54.5 feet in length. Captain Collins displayed a great deal of courage when a January snow and sleet storm in the Bay carried away both of his masts during a trip to Baltimore. Though offered tows, Collins refused because he knew the salvage would eat up his ship. After two days and a night in terrible weather, Collins made it to port under a jury rig. A story is told that at one time Captain Collins had a boy, Fred Jones, as cook. Like most youngsters, Fred was always hungry. On this particular occasion Fred had cooked dinner and called to the Captain that everything was ready. The Captain was busy and several calls went unheeded. Fred couldn't stand the tantalizing odors of the hot cooked food and pitched in and ate his dinner. When Captain Collins came below, Fred was just finishing. It was said by the crew that the Captain's wrath was something to behold, although a good deal of it was simulated, it seems. After the Captain threatened to "keel-haul" him, to hang him from the bowsprit, tow him by a rope from the stern, give him 30 lashes and the like, Fred promised on bended knee never again to even think about eating until the Captain had been served and then only after permission had been obtained.

Other outstanding colored men on St. Patrick's Creek included Henry Stewart who captained the bugeye, "Eva Clarence," built by L. Shores in Somerset County in 1887, a 50 footer. The "Willie Clarence," a bugeye, also was built in Somerset County at Oriole in 1892, probably by the same builder. This vessel was captained by James Dickerson and was 51.5 feet in length. Both were sharp sail craft. Captain Luke Clark bought the "Hiawatha" from Captain Tommie Morris and sailed her for many years. His brother, Joe Clark, also owned his own vessel. Richard Jones of Canoe Neck Creek had a reputation as an excellent riverman and while he did not own a vessel he sailed both bugeyes and schooners on a sharing basis.

Other negroes who were well known on the Potomac were Taylor Green and Henry Branson. All of these men made good reputations on the river. Captain Collins and Captain Clark owned fine farms on the river front which are still in possession of their descendents.

In connection with the activities of Taylor Green, an interesting side light was furnished the writer by Mr. R. Johnson Colton, II, of St. Mary's County in reply to an inquiry regarding the bugeye, "Colonel R. Johnson Colton." Mr. Colton replied as follows:

"In reference to the bugeye, "Col. R. Johnson Colton," my father had the boat built for Taylor Green, a colored man. Green was a handy man around Colton's Point and bought produce up and down the river for the hotel, then run by my father and Uncle Bruce. My father esteemed Taylor so much for his honesty and faithfulness that he had the bugeye built and gave it to Taylor, who named it the "Col. R. Johnson Colton." He ran oysters each winter to Washington, D. C."

Prior to sailing the "Col. R. Johnson Colton," Taylor Green owned and sailed the sloop, "John Williams," (1880-1885), built by Captain Kenelm Cheseldine. Green was renown as the champion whistler of the area and the old-timers say that he not only whistled beautifully but also he could be heard at considerable distances. The writer's brother, Charlie, recently stated that one calm morning, when he and cousin Frank Lawrence were rowing a skiff up Canoe Neck Creek on their way to the old Oakley public school, Frank suddenly stopped rowing and said, "Listen to that fellow whistling -- that's Taylor Green, clear over on Newtown shore" (a distance of about 2 miles across St. Clement's Bay). Charlie said he listened but couldn't hear him but he didn't doubt that Frank did because Taylor "was a powerful whistler." Green lived for many years in a log cabin on "Bluff Woods" at the mouth of Canoe Neck Creek. This was the last surviving log cabin in the area and was pulled down about 1915.

The "Col. R. Johnson Colton" was built at Solomons in 1886, priatly by M. M. Davis, with a so-called patent stern. After passing through many hands, she was

abandoned around 1928 in Little Creek, Virginia, and then resurrected and rebuilt there in 1929. She was converted for use as a yacht in 1936, to the extent of the addition of a full length "house" on her deck, and an engine was installed. For some years she was kept in the waters of the upper Bay until purchased in 1948 by N. T. Kenney, a newspaperman who planned to use her in his journalistic assignments at regattas on the Bay in summers, and to dock her at Washington in the winter time for use as his home. At the time of purchase in 1948, the "Colton" had been subjected to inexcusable neglect. She had sunk at her moorings; rainwater, seeping through frayed canvas and open deck seams, had caused rot in places. Her foremast was badly decayed at the partners; her running rigging was about gone, and her standing rigging none too good. Mr. Kenney, after a somewhat hazardous trip down and across the Bay, took her to Dick Hartge's shipyard at Galesville for the major repairs, and then on to Washington. She changed hands again in 1956, but is still afloat in the harbor of Annapolis and her present owner, George Allen Pierce, Jr., plans some extensive repairs and to get her back into good sailing condition. She continues as one of the few survivors of a fabulous age in the life of the Potomac. It would be a wonderful contribution to the children of Maryland if the "Colton" could be preserved as a typical vessel of the tidewater area of the state.

No story of the colored men on the river would be complete without a mention of Portious Moore. Portious was a West Indian negro who sailed with Grandfather, Josiah Beitzell, from the age of 12 until he was grown, and he sailed boats on his own when a man. He worked some years for Captain Con Faunce, and in his old age Portious lived in Washington. As a young man he loved children and was quite a "ladykiller" in the colored circle. The writer's brother, Harry, was somewhat sickly as a child and Portious relieved Mama many days by taking Harry with him in his boat, crabbing and fishing for the day, and of course Harry loved it and was quite content to stay with Portious as often as Mama would permit. Harry never lost contact with Portious over the years and was sent for when Portious was on his death.

Prior to owning the "Mattie F. Dean" (1919-1944), Captain Matt Bailey of White Neck Creek owned the "George B. Faunce" (1902-1907). He acquired the "Faunce" from Freeman Cheseldine, giving in trade a store on White's Neck Creek, and other considerations. In 1907, he sold the "Faunce" and bought the "Lottie L. Thomas" from Captain Edwin Gibson and for five years following World War I had two vessels, the "Thomas" and the "Dean," in the river trade. The "Faunce" wound up on the North Carolina coast and was abandoned at Beaufort in 1920.

Upon retirement from the river in 1944, Captain Matt again opened a store near his home at the mouth of White's Neck Creek, but was soon elected a County Commissioner and became quite prominent in county affairs until his death on September 2, 1959.

Captain Lum (George Columbus) Bailey who lived on Bullock's Island, near the mouth of White's Neck Creek, sailed a vessel called the "Annie Lee" and later sailed the schooner, "Ruth and Ella," named for his daughters, until his death in 1899. After this she was sailed by his son, Boss (James Mitchell), for some years and then sold to Captain Nick Norris of Charles County. This schooner was built by Captain Kelly Cheseldine for his brother, Jack, who sold her to Captain Lum.

Captain Ned Russell, also of White's Neck, owned and operated several small flatties in the oyster trade. Prior to this time he had owned the pungy, "Dove," which he sold to Captain Ned Hayden. The "Dove" foundered in Canoe Neck Creek, when the writer was a small boy, a half-century ago.

After the "Ruth and Ella" was sold, Captain Boss Bailey owned a small bugeye, the "Quick Time," and later bought the "Thomas H. Kirby" from Jim Bailey and sailed this vessel for about ten years, when she was sold, dismantled and turned into a barge. At this time he had John Cheseldine build a barge for use in the oyster trade which he named for his daughter, Helen Bailey. Due to the inroads made in river transportation by the trucking industry, Captain Boss sold this boat in 1935 and retired.

Captain Jim Bailey first owned a big sloop, the "Emmett Arthur," then the "Lizzie Lane," another sloop, and then acquired the bugeye, "Thomas H. Kirby," which was built at St. Michael's in 1882, by T. H. Kirby. She was 61.1 feet in length and was the second round stern bugeye to be built. The "Kirby" was schooner rigged. Upon leaving the river about 1922 to run a store at River Springs, Captain Jim sold her to Captain Boss Bailey, as previously noted. A colored print mounted on canvas of the "Kirby" at anchor in White's Neck Creek, with her sails up, hangs on the wall of the writer's study, given to him by Mrs. Helen Bailey Downs.

Captain Sam Bailey, a nephew of Captain Matt, has owned many boats from school barges and his current assortment includes log canoes, a small pungy, some Hoop Island boats, dories, box sterns, and most anything one can name. In earlier years Captain Sam was part owner, with his brother Robert, of the "Joseph T. Brennan," and also sailed a double ender in the oyster trade, bought of Jackson Wise of Compton, named the "Five Sisters." Although he has engaged in many business enterprises,

APPENDIX "A"

<u>Master**</u>	<u>Home Port or Sailed From</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
- Shill Simpkins Clarence Biscoe	Washington, D. C. St. George's Island, Md. St. Mary's River, Md.	Second largest pungy on the Bay. Foundered at Millstone Landing, Patuxent River, in 1933.
- Charles Chesser	Norfolk, Va. St. George's Island, Md.	Owned by - Webster of Baltimore, Md.
Walter Chesser	St. George's Island, Md.	Converted yacht.
- Jacob R. Faunce John Beitzell Freeman Cheseldine Matt Bailey	Alexandria, Va. St. Patrick's Creek, Md. Canoe Neck Creek, Md. White's Neck Creek, Md. White's Neck Creek, Md.	Built by J. T. Marsh. Changed to gasoline screw 3-16-1911. Abandoned at Beaufort, N. C. on 7-6-1920.
Joe Ed Trice John J. Allston James S. Saunders	St. George's Island, Md. St. Mary's River, Md. St. Mary's River, Md.	Wrecked and abandoned at Washington, D. C. on 6-13-1899.
- Burton Graham	Alexandria, Va. St. George's Island, Md. Washington, D. C.	Abandoned Lower Machodoc Creek, Va. in 1932.
Burton Graham	St. George's Island, Md.	Center board.
- George W. Ellis Paul Ellis Cyrus Ellis Havie Bannigan	Georgetown, D. C. River Springs, Md. River Springs, Md. River Springs, Md. River Springs, Md.	Built by J. T. Marsh. Foundered 30 miles N. E. Jupiter Light, Florida on 12-13-1935.
Henry Neitzey George H. Sheldon	Washington, D. C. Alexandria, Va.	Abandoned at Alexandria, Va. 4-15-1901, because of decayed condition (probably worms in bottom).
- Andrew Jackson Cheseldine George Cheseldine Josiah Beitzell Samuel P. Brown Josiah Beitzell	Washington, D. C. White's Neck Creek, Md. White's Neck Creek, Md. Fleet's Bay, Va. Fleet's Bay, Va. Canoe Neck Creek, Md.	Rebuilt in 1882 and renamed the "Rosa Beitzell."
George Dickens	St. George's Island, Md.	Square sail. Owned by Adams Bros., St. George's Island.
- - Ed Cox H. Webster Foxwell	Georgetown, D. C. Wicomico River, Md. Colonial Beach, Va. Bretton Bay, Md.	Built for Philip Turner, Henry M. Clements, and George Morgan. Abandoned in 1945. Owners - Francis E. and Hester A. Waters. Last record at Miami, Florida, on 8-13-1945. Probably sold down in the West Indies.
Thomas Morris Luke Clark	Canoe Neck Creek, Md. St. Patrick's Creek, Md.	Built by E. J. Tull.
Lawrence Walter Bernard Ellis Billy Ellis Kenelm Cheseldine	St. Mary's Co., Md. White's Neck Creek, Md. White's Neck Creek, Md. White's Neck Creek, Md.	In service in 1790.

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LIFE ON THE POTOMAC RIVER

By Edwin W. Beitzell
of St. Mary's County, Maryland

Life on the Potomac River describes the activities of some of the people who have lived along the tidewater banks of this great river from colonial times until the present.

It is dedicated to the rivermen of the Potomac and their families, and to John, Kate, Joe, and Charlie Quinnette who are learning to love the river as their Grandfather does.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5660 IV SE
(ROCK POINT)

76°45' 347000m E 348 349 880 000 FEET (MD.) 350 42'30" LEONARDT

150 000 FEET
(MD.)

4234000m N

4233

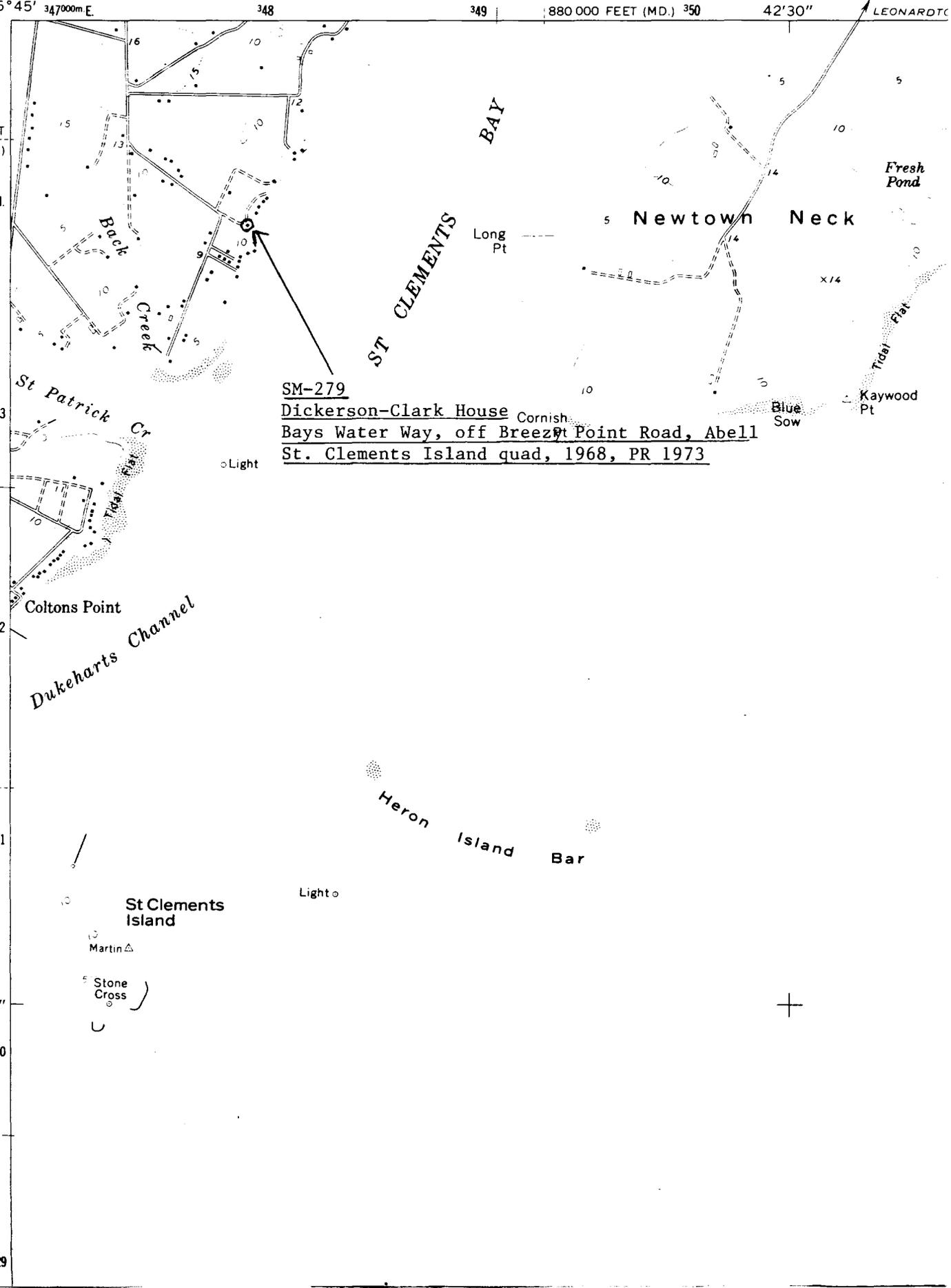
4232

4231

12'30"

4230

4229



SM-279
Dickerson-Clark House Cornish
Bays Water Way, off Breeze Point Road, Abell
St. Clements Island quad, 1968, PR 1973

o Light

Light o





STMA 279

Dickerson / Clark House

STMA 279

Abell, Md.

~~WEST facade~~ EAST Length (facing canoe neck
creek)

GWM - 3/77



SM-279

Dickerson / Clark House
STMA 279
Abell, Md.
S. W. View
Gwm
3/77



SM-279

Dickerson/Clark House

STMA - 279

Aben, Md.

Snapshot of Luke Clark and his
wife Julia Flater Clark

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SM-279

Dickerson / Clark House
STMA 279

Abell, Md.

Snapshot of Oswald PLATER
GWM — 3/77