Flat Iron Road
SM-920
St. Mary's County
Drayden Vicinity
Late-17th century – 20th century
Public

Flat Iron Road is located in southern St. Mary's County. The portion of the surveyed roadway extends from its origin at Drayden Road northwest for approximately 0.8 miles to its intersection with St. Georges Church Road. Mature evergreen and deciduous vegetation and agricultural fields interspersed with late-nineteenth and twentieth-century dwellings and outbuildings characterize the majority of the length of the road's right-of-way.

Flat Iron Road most likely began as a seventeenth-century dirt path leading inland from St. Mary's River to the various farms and churches located along the present-day Drayden Road. Flat Iron Road reflects the early road networks in St. Mary's County associated with early settlement patterns that were characterized by scattered farms situated along the navigable waterways of St. Mary's County. From the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century, Flat Iron Road was used by local farmers to reach the St. Mary's River to the northeast and the St. Georges River to the southeast as well as by worshippers to reach the St. Georges Protestant Episcopal Church (SM-12) located in present-day Valley Lee on MD 244.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. SM-920

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Flat Iron Road
other	County Route 30283

2. Location

street and number	Election District No. 2, Road runs NE from Drayden Road to St. Georges Church Road		
city, town	Drayden	X vicinity	
county	St. Mary's County		

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

name	St. Mary's County Board of County Commissioners				
street and number	P.O. Box 653, 23115 Leonard Hall Drive			telephone	301-475-4200, ext. 1300
city, town	Leonardtown	state	MD	zip code	20650

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. N/A			liber	folio
city, town	tax map	tax parcel		tax ID number

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
_____district
_____building(s)
_X_structure
_____site
_____object

Ownership
_X_public
_____private
_____both

Current Function
_____agriculture
_____commerce/trade
_____defense
_____domestic
_____education
_____funerary
_____government
_____health care
_____industry
_____landscape
_____recreation/culture
_____religion
_____social
_X_transportation
_____work in progress
_____unknown
_____vacant/not in use
_____other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
0

7. Description

Inventory No. SM-920

Condition

___ excellent ___ deteriorated
X good ___ ruins
___ fair ___ altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Summary Description

Flat Iron Road is located in southern St. Mary's County. The portion of the surveyed roadway extends from its origin at Drayden Road northeast for approximately 0.8 miles to its intersection with St. Georges Church Road. The road is asphalt paved and varies in width from 16 feet to 22 feet. Mature evergreen and deciduous vegetation and agricultural fields interspersed with late-nineteenth and twentieth-century dwellings and outbuildings characterize the majority of the length of the road's right-of-way.

Location

Flat Iron Road is located in the southern portion of St. Mary's County in the county's Second Election District. The surveyed roadway extends northeast from its origin at Drayden Road and bends slightly northeast at mile point 0.1 to its terminus at St. Georges Church Road. The entire length of the surveyed portion of the road is approximately 0.8 miles in length.

Detailed Description

The Roadway
Flat Iron Road is a major-collector route that varies from 16 to 22 feet in width. The travelway contains two divided lanes—one in each direction separated by a yellow-painted, double line, and white-painted lines frame the outer edges. The roadway is in good condition throughout its length. The road's horizontal alignment incorporates gentle curves and several straight-aways. Its vertical alignment consists of a small ascent from mile point 0.2 and levels off at mile point 0.3. The majority of the route is at-grade or slightly depressed below the surrounding land. The roadway does not include a visible crown.

Beginning at mile point 0.0 through mile point 0.2, recent asphalt patching on the roadway denotes the installation of drainage pipes underneath the roadway at various intervals.

The Right-of-Way
Informal grassy and gravel shoulders appear on both sides within the Flat Iron Road right-of-way. Several traffic signs, including speed limit and warning signs, appear within the right-of-way. These consist of standard reflective metal signs mounted to metal or wood posts. Private property owners have posted a variety of identification signs, typically painted wood of various shapes and sizes that include names and addresses of the properties.

Electric and telephone utility lines are strung on wood poles that stand within the right-of-way. The lines are carried on standard pine poles that run along both the east and west sides of the road.

The Setting
Flat Iron Road traverses a rural/residential area of southern St. Mary's County. The road extends through a landscape dominated by rural and residential land uses.

The first 0.3 miles of the road from its intersection with Drayden Road passes through an open rural area. A long gravel farm lane leads east from Flat Iron Road to a late-nineteenth-century farm complex (SM-756) located at 18926 Flat Iron

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. SM-920

Name Flat Iron Road
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

Road at mile point 0.0. An abandoned late-nineteenth-century I-house (SM-757) is located at mile point 0.1 to the west side of Flat Iron Road. A mid-twentieth-century farm complex consisting of a circa-1945 side-gable dwelling is located at mile point 0.3.

The last half-mile of the road consists of dense mature and evergreen deciduous trees lining the north and south sides of the roadway. Several asphalt and gravel driveways presumably lead from Flat Iron Road through the woodland to single-family dwellings, none of which are visible from the roadway.

8. Significance

Inventory No. SM-920

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

Specific dates Ca. 1692; ca. 1799; ca. 1823 **Architect/Builder** Unknown

Construction dates Late-Seventeenth Century-Twentieth Century

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register _____Maryland Register ___X___not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Historical Summary

Flat Iron Road most likely began as a seventeenth-century dirt path leading inland from St. Mary's River to the various farms and churches located along the present-day Drayden Road. Flat Iron Road reflects the early road networks in St. Mary's County associated with early settlement patterns that were characterized by scattered farms situated along the navigable waterways of St. Mary's County. From the seventeenth century through the early twentieth century, Flat Iron Road was used by local farmers to reach the St. Mary's River to the northeast and the St. Georges River to the southeast as well as worshippers to St. Georges Protestant Episcopal Church (SM-12) located in present-day Valley Lee on MD 244.

Historical Narrative[1]

Summary of Road Building in St. Mary's County

Until the twentieth century, the abundant waterways of St. Mary's County provided the main transportation routes throughout the area. Ships from England transported goods and tobacco to wharves along the Potomac River, and smaller vessels navigated the smaller waterways to move goods farther inland. Early roads linked residents to points along the waterways as well as to government centers, churches, and other residents. Several roads provided access to the state capital at Annapolis after 1695, and to markets in Baltimore and other economic centers outside the county after the 1780s, but transportation via waterways, the preferred alternative, provided a much safer, swifter, and easier journey throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.[2]

European settlement in St. Mary's County began in 1634 when a group of English Colonists, lead by Leonard Calvert, son of Lord Baltimore, arrived on St. Clement's Island located in the Potomac River. The settlers soon thereafter traveled inland on the tributaries of the Potomac River and began establishing farms in the areas around the river and its tributaries. As a result of their gravitation to settle near navigable waterways on large farms that promised successful tobacco

[1] The historical context will only detail the history of the road building in St. Mary's County as it relates directly to Flat Iron Road. For a more detailed history of road building in St. Mary's County and Maryland, please see History Matters, LLC, *St. Mary's County Historic Roads Survey Final Report*, 30 June 2006, Prepared for St. Mary's County Department of Land Use and Growth Management, on file at the Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, Maryland.

[2] History Matters, LLC 2006: 7

cultivation, colonists lived on widely scattered farmsteads.[3] Over the course of the seventeenth century, colonists established plantations and farms along the St. Mary's River located in the southern point of what would become St. Mary's County.

Aside from facilitating the transport of tobacco from farms to waterways for shipping, colonial roads in St. Mary's County also served to connect colonists to the capital, the courts, and church. Roman Catholic and Anglican churches served as focal points for early community networks, and colonial roads helped to connect colonists to these religious centers. Colonists developed trails and roads leading to local houses of worship, many of which were located inland in order to be closer to the center of population.[4]

Seventeenth-century roads in St. Mary's County were likely narrow dirt paths intended primarily for travel on foot or horseback. From the eighteenth through the early nineteenth centuries, the number of roads increased throughout the county but the design standards remained comparable to the colonial era. Public roads were required to be 20-feet wide and maintained in "good traveling condition." However, since most of the county's roadways were not public roads, they did not necessarily have to meet these standards. Therefore, the roads in St. Mary's County were often reported as being in poor condition and cumbersome to travel.[5]

Between 1790 and 1840, the internal economy of St. Mary's expanded, creating a greater demand for overland travel routes. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the economy of St. Mary's County relied upon its agricultural exports. Since waterways provided the primary means of shipping these goods, county farmers continued to rely on the roads to wharves in order to collect imported manufactured goods and ship their staple crops.[6]

During the early nineteenth century, public roads in St. Mary's County were created by acts of the legislature. Fourteen existing roads throughout the county were added to the public road system. After the mid-nineteenth century, those property owners and local government officials wishing to add an existing road to the public road system had to apply to the County Commissioners. The number of public roads increased throughout this era, particularly in response to landholders' pleas for more efficient access to the wharves from which they exported their crops. However, the quality of roads during this time period was similar to that of road conditions in the early eighteenth century. The specified width of public roads was still 20 feet, and the County Commissioners' instructions to the road superintendents were similar to those of 1704.[7]

However, by the late-nineteenth-century, travelers began to see a gradual increase and improvement of the roadways in St. Mary's County. The public roads in the county were typically un-surfaced clay or sand measuring 20 feet in width. Some of the more traveled roadways were paved with oyster shells and cleared to a minimum width of 30 feet. Yet, St. Mary's County roads were still regarded as poorly maintained. Residents continued their campaign for road improvements and

[3] History Matters, LLC 2006: 7-8
[4] History Matters, LLC 2006: 13-14
[5] History Matters, LLC 2006: 11-15
[6] History Matters, LLC 2006: 20
[7] Regina Combs Hammett, *History of St. Mary's County, Maryland 1634-1990*, (Ridge, Maryland: n.p., 2005 [Reprint of 1991 edition]), 283-285.

pushed for changes to the laws governing the maintenance of public roads. However, since waterways remained the favored transportation method in the county, many of the efforts at road improvements were futile.[8]

Waterways continued to be the preferred travel method until the widespread use of automobiles took hold in the twentieth century. Consequently, roads overtook waterways as the primary transportation network for both local travel and for transportation into and out of the county. The first half of the twentieth century witnessed significant changes in the condition, character, and use of roads throughout Maryland. Many of the road improvements in the first half of the twentieth century were the result of the state government's growing involvement in local road planning and maintenance. The movement for state responsibility for roads began in 1898 when the state legislature, after agitation by farmers for better roads, created a Highway Division within the Maryland Geological Survey to oversee an investigation of the condition of the state's roads and the estimated cost of improving them.

In 1908, Governor Austin Crothers, leader of the Good Roads Movement in Maryland, persuaded the state legislature to appropriate five million dollars for state-sponsored improvement and construction of roads. The result was the creation of the State Roads Commission, charged with the powers to construct, improve, and maintain a state system of improved state roads and highways. In the 1910s, St. Mary's County started receiving substantial state-financed road improvements beginning with the creation of MD 5, which traversed the entire length of St. Mary's County from Charles County to Point Lookout at the southern tip.[9] Subsequent state road projects focused on the interior roads that connected inland towns.

By 1927, the majority of state roads in the county were gravel and shell surfaced with portions of MD 5 and MD 235 surfaced with macadam to accommodate the increasing widespread use of automobiles and trucks.[10] By 1938, the majority of public roads in St. Mary's County were improved through grading, drainage systems, and improved surfacing materials including sand-clay, shells, and gravel. Some of the improved roads were also treated with a bituminous material in order to bind the surface materials and reduce dust.[11]

The advent of the automobile and truck changed the road landscape throughout St. Mary's County. The increase in automobile use necessitated the construction of directional and warning signs as well as roadside structures that catered to the use and maintenance of the automobile, such as gas stations and dealerships. Particularly after steamboat service stopped in the 1930s, former primary routes to waterways and wharves became secondary roads, and inland roads that paralleled the major thoroughfares formed important components of the county's road network.[12] As roads improved, settlement along previously inaccessible or unenviable roadways became more desirable, and the county contains a wide array of dwellings exhibiting stylistic details and forms characteristic of early twentieth-century architecture.

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[8] History Matters, LLC 2006: 15-25
[9] Hammett 2005: 287
[10] *Map of Maryland Showing State Road System and State Aid Roads*, 1927, available at the Maryland Room, University of Maryland-College Park.
[11] History Matters, LLC 2006: 33
[12] History Matters, LLC 2006: 40

Since 1956, St. Mary's County roads have undergone significant alterations, including realignment, to meet current design and safety criteria and standards for width and shoulders. As farming became less important in the local economy during the second half of the twentieth century, the U.S. Navy presence contributed to the rise of a service economy and the development of residential suburbs. Consequently, suburban and commercial development continues to heavily influence and alter the setting of some of the county's historically rural roads.[13]

Development of Flat Iron Road between St. Georges Church and Drayden roads
The origin of the name "Flat Iron Road" is unknown; however, the road most likely originated as a seventeenth-century route connecting worshippers from the St. Mary's River to the St. Georges Protestant Episcopal Church (SM-12) located at Poplar Hill. The existing St. Georges Church (located on south side MD 244 near MD 249 intersection) was built in 1799 and is the fourth to serve the William and Mary Parish. Three buildings preceded the present structure; the earliest dating to circa 1692. Many of the worshippers within the parish traveled from St. Mary's City, the colonial seat.[14] Therefore, portions of present-day Flat Iron Road facilitated those traveling across St. Mary's River from the city to the church.

Portions of the current Flat Iron Road were also most likely established in the early nineteenth century in order to facilitate the movement of people and goods from St. Mary's River to and from points further inland, particularly those associated with the "Mount Olive" farm (SM-455). In 1823, John Cole purchased two large tracts of land, "Jones Woods" and "Guythers Grange," upon which to erect a farm complex. Following Cole's death, his son, William E. Cole, assumed ownership of the land. Purportedly, Cole operated a store and post office on the farm complex between 1850 and 1860, after which he reverted back to farming as his main livelihood.[15] Portions of Flat Iron provided the most direct overland route north from present-day Drayden Road, where Mount Olive farm was located, to the St. Mary's River.

Flat Iron Road does not appear on Dennis Griffith's 1794 *Map of the State of Maryland*.[16] The portion of Flat Iron Road between St. Georges Church Road and Drayden Road existed in the late-eighteenth century as a narrow dirt path used to connect travelers from St. Mary's River to St. Georges Protestant Episcopal Church.

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[13] History Matters, LLC 2006: 41
[14] No Author, "St. Georges Protestant Episcopal Church (SM-12)," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form, on file at the Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, Maryland, no date.
[15] Elizabeth Hughes, "Mount Olive (SM-455)," Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties form, on file at the Maryland Historical Trust, 1994.
[16] Dennis Griffith, *A Map of the State of Maryland*, 1794, available at the Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

Simon J. Martenet's 1865 *Atlas of Maryland* illustrates St. Georges Church Road and the portion of Flat Iron Road located to the north of the surveyed portion between Drayden Road and St. Georges Church Road. The road illustrated in the 1865 atlas is located to the further to the east of the current alignment. The 1865 road leads north from the "P.E. Church," "St. Georges Oak," and "Mount Olive" and turns in a northeast direction at St. Mary's River to continue west to Breton Bay.[17] The 1892 and 1902 U.S. Geological Survey Topographical quadrangle maps are the first maps to illustrate the surveyed portion of Flat Iron Road between present-day Drayden (MD 244) and St. Georges Church roads. The alignment depicted in each map closely follows the current alignment of the 0.8-mile stretch of roadway.

The portion of Flat Iron Road between Drayden Road and St. Georges Church Road does not retain any extant architectural resources dating to the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth centuries. The earliest dwellings, which date to the late nineteenth century, are located near the origin of the roadway at Drayden Road (MD 244). Between the 1910s and 1930s, many of the roads throughout St. Mary's County were improved and surfaced, including Flat Iron Road. Flat Iron Road received a bituminous surface coating between 1939 and 1959 and was paved in asphalt as a result of the residential development that occurred in the 1970s. The road has since been widened and improved to meet current design standards and safety criteria, particularly after the construction of the two late-twentieth-century residential developments located at near its intersection with Drayden Road to the south and along St. Georges Church Road to the northwest.

[17] Simon J. Martenet, *Martenet's Atlas of Maryland: Including the District of Columbia, a Stretch of Delaware, and a Portion of Northern and Eastern Virginia Showing some of the Most Interesting Localities of the Late War*, 1865, available at Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. SM-920

See Continuation Sheets.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	0.8 miles		
Acreage of historical setting	Approximately 0.8 miles		
Quadrangle name	St. Mary's City, MD	Quadrangle scale:	1:24,000 (7.5 Minute Series)

Verbal boundary description and justification

The surveyed area Flat Iron Road between St. Georges Church and Drayden roads encompasses the roadway and right-of-way, which were intensively surveyed. The road's setting and viewshed were documented in depth; individual above-ground structures and landscape features that are visible from the road were characterized only as part of a larger road setting.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Emma Young/Architectural Historian		
organization	A.D. Marble & Company	date	June 25, 2008
street & number	10989 Red Run Blvd., Suite 209	telephone	410-902-1421
city or town	Owings Mills	state	MD

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

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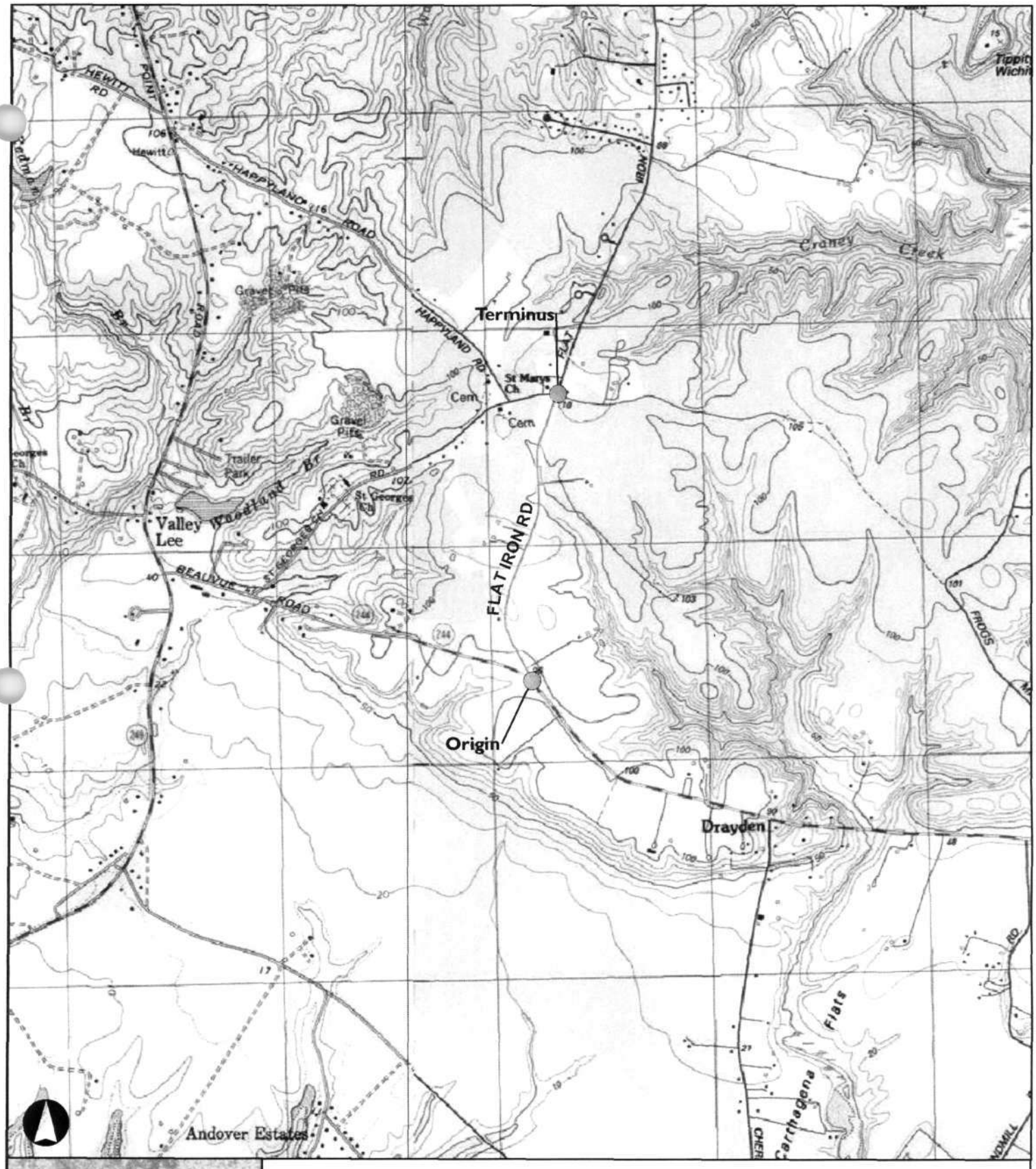
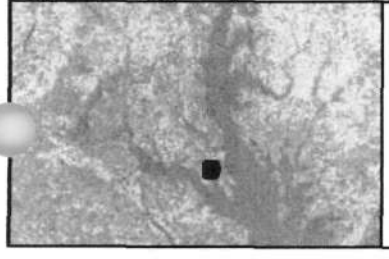
1892 *Piney Point, MD Quadrangle* (15 Minute Series)
1901 *Piney Point, MD Quadrangle* (15 Minute Series)
2007 *St. Mary's City, MD Quadrangle* (7.5 Minute Series)





Road Alignment 2005

2,000 Feet

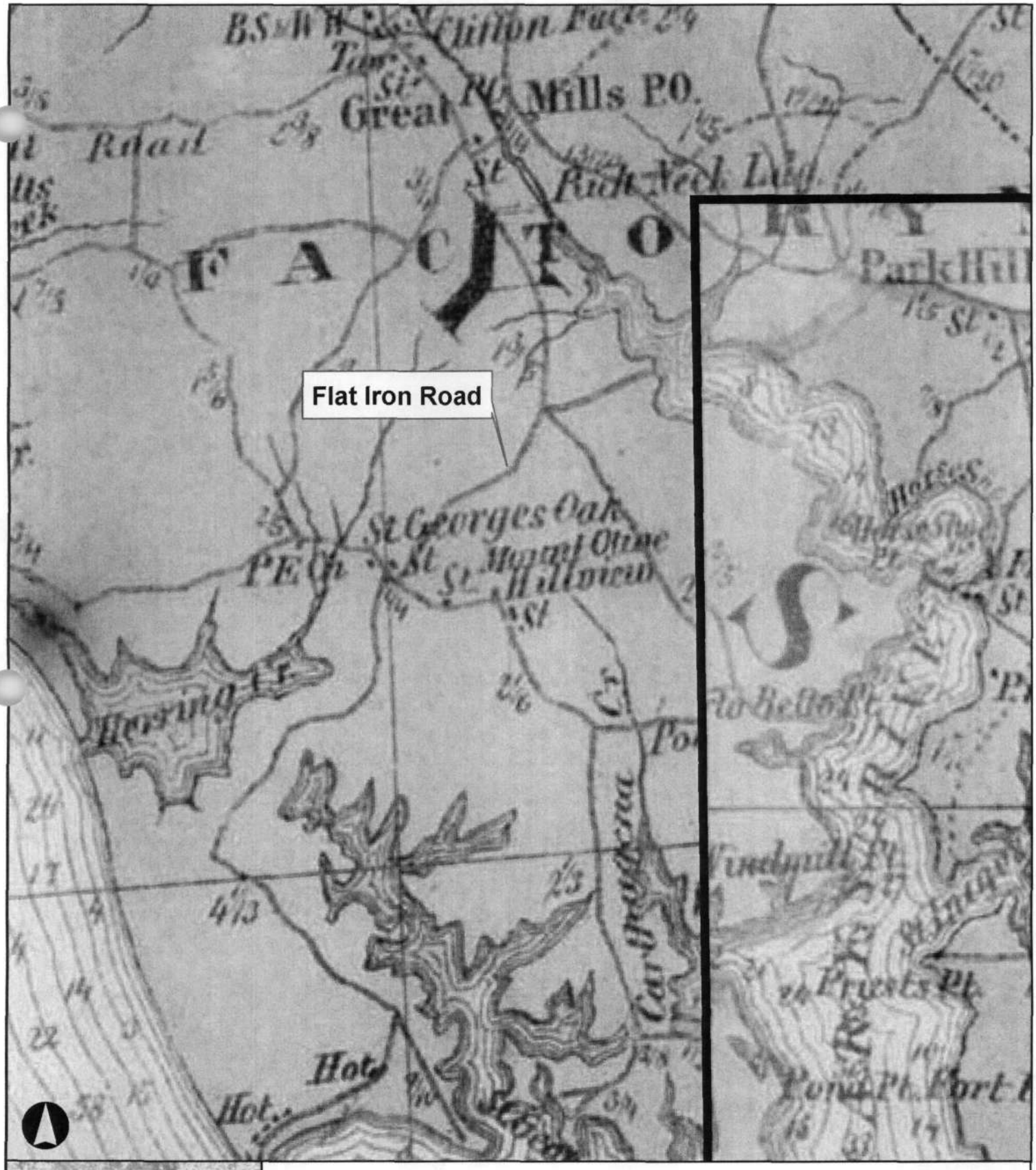
Flat Iron Road

SM-920

Drayden Vicinity

St. Mary's County, MD

Source: USGS 7.5' Topo Quad, St. Mary's City, MD. (2007)



Flat Iron Road

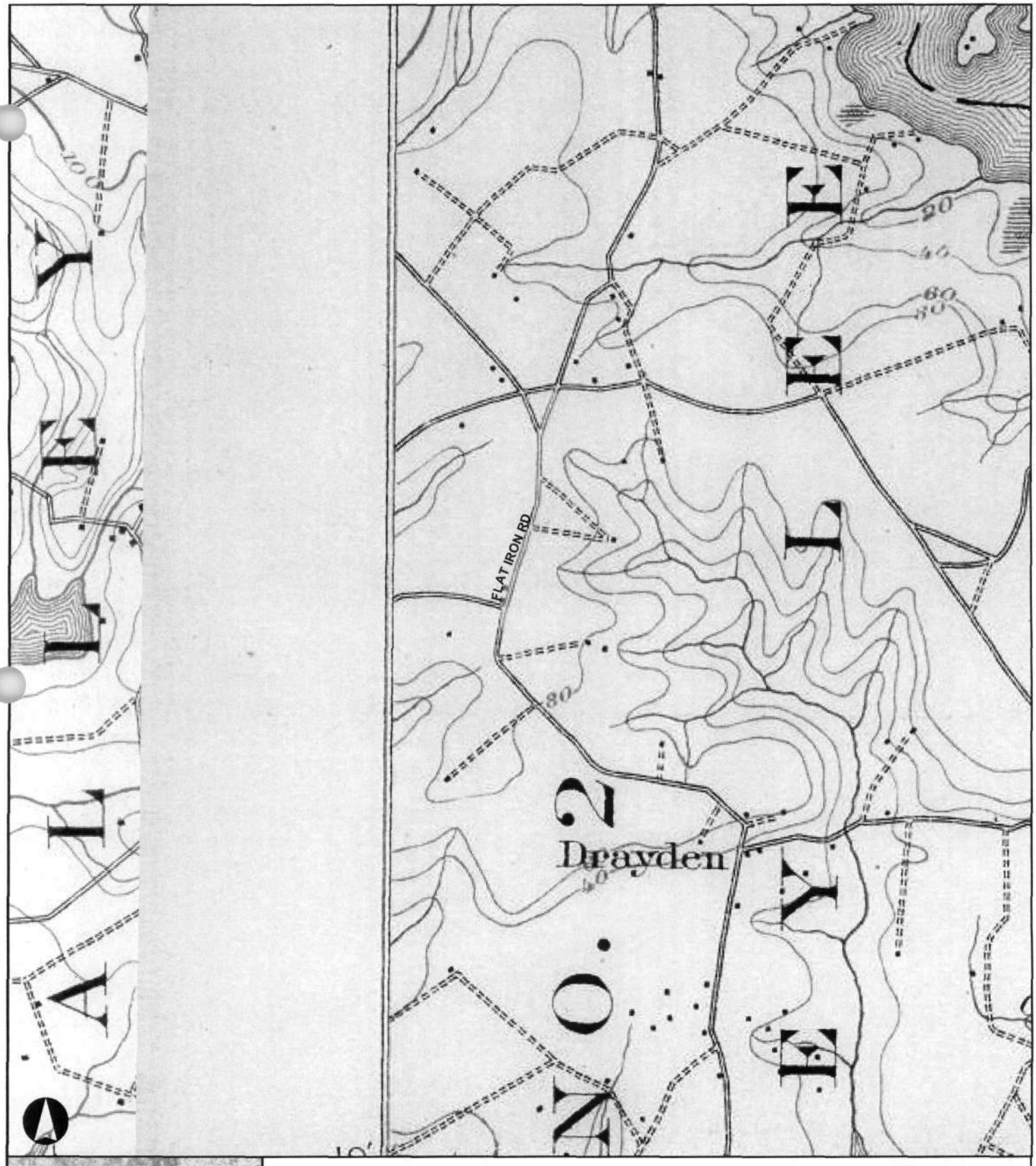
SM-920

Drayden Vicinity

St. Mary's County, MD

2,000 Feet

Source: 1865 Martenet Atlas



Road Alignment 2005

2,000 Feet

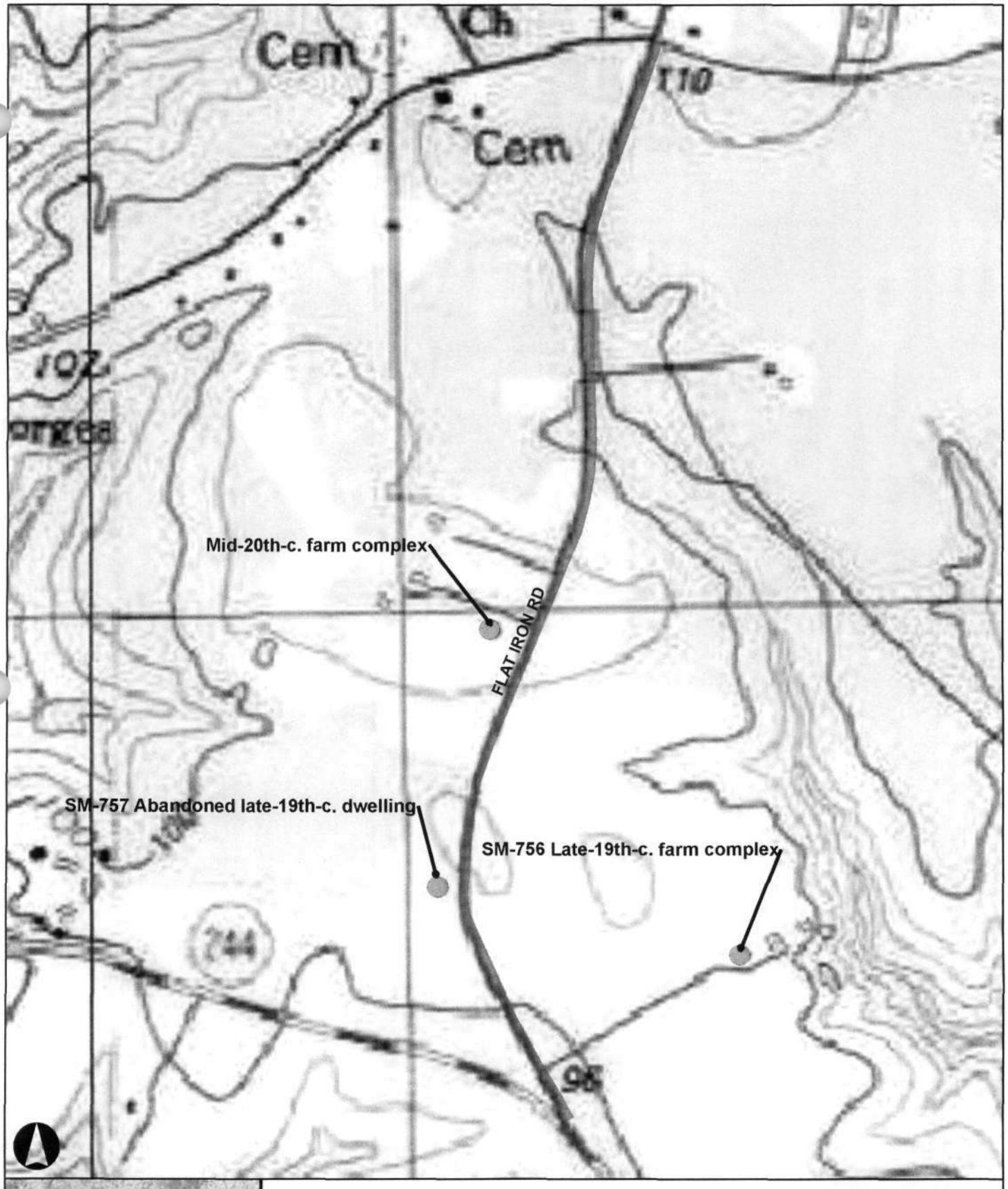
Flat Iron Road

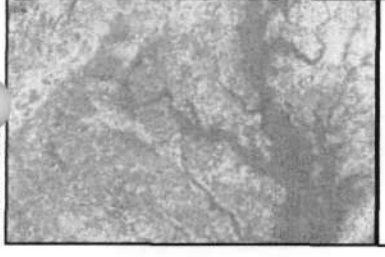
SM-920

Drayden Vicinity

St. Mary's County, MD

Source: USGS 7.5' Topo Quad (1902)





500 Feet

Extant Resources

Flat Iron Road

Flat Iron Road

SM-920

Drayden Vicinity

St. Mary's County, MD

Map Source: USGS 7.5' DRG: St. Mary's City, MD.

Map Document: (ts:\P1068\mapping\HistRes\DFlatIron.mxd)
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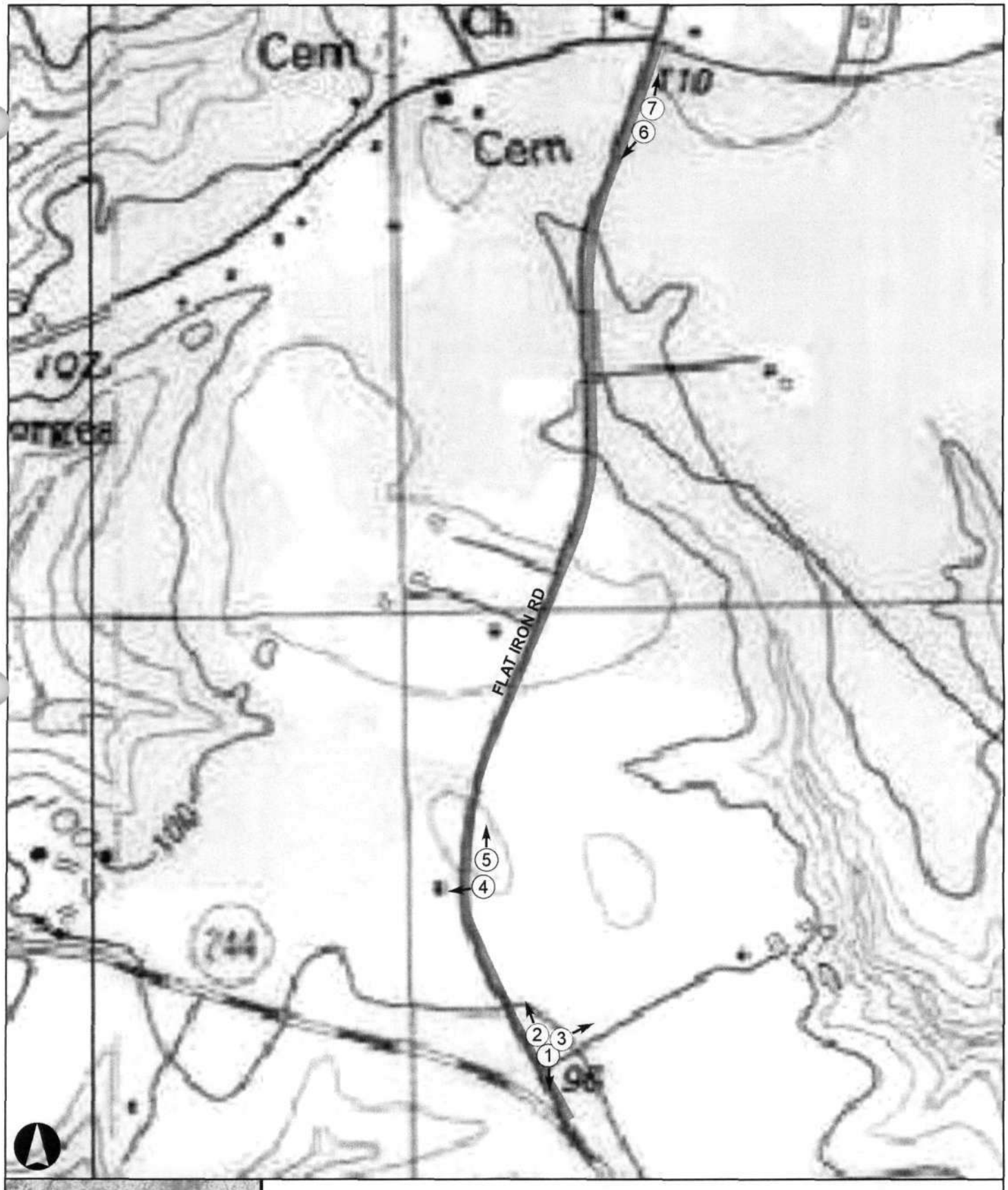

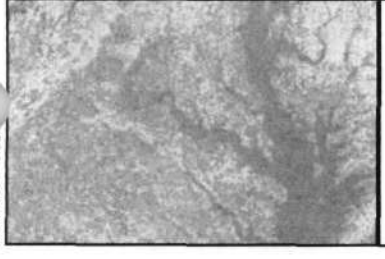

500 Feet

Photo Locations

Flat Iron Road

Flat Iron Road

SM-920

Drayden Vicinity

St. Mary's County, MD

Map Source: USGS 7.5' DRG: St. Mary's City, MD.

Map Document: (...ces\P1068\mapping\Hist\Real\Flatiron.mxd)
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Flat Iron Road (SM-920)
Digital Photo Log, Historic Roads Survey, St. Mary's County, Maryland, 2008

Photo File Name	MIHP #	Property Name	County	Photographer	Date of Photo	Photo Description	Photo Sequence
SM-920_200804_01	SM-920	Flat Iron Road	St. Mary's	E. Young	04/2008	Mile Point 0.0, looking south to origin of Flat Iron Road at Drayden Road	1 of 7
SM-920_200804_02	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.0, looking northwest to grouping of late-20th-century buildings	2 of 7
SM-920_200804_03	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.0, looking northeast to late-19th-century farm complex at 18926 Flat Iron Road (SM-756)	3 of 7
SM-920_200804_04	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.1, looking west to abandoned late-19th-century dwelling (SM-757)	4 of 7
SM-920_200804_05	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.1, looking north to mid-20th-century farm complex	5 of 7
SM-920_200804_06	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.7, looking southwest	6 of 7
SM-920_200804_07	"	"	"	"	"	Mile Point 0.7, looking northeast to terminus of Flat Iron Road at St. Georges Church Road	7 of 7

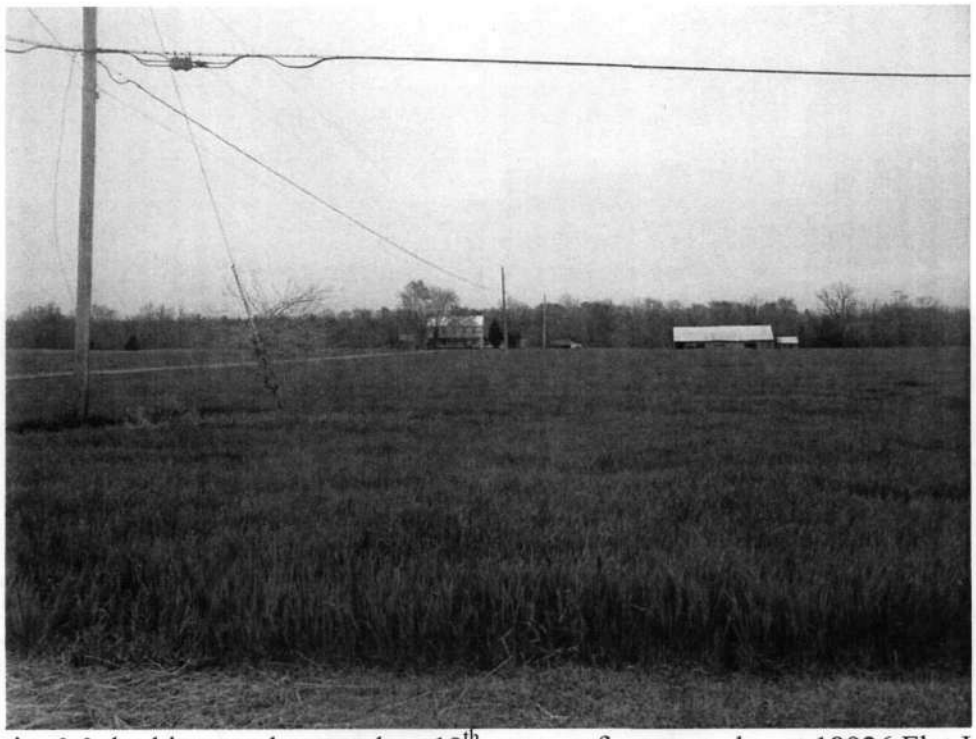
SM-920

Mile Point 0.0, looking south to origin of Flat Iron Road at Drayden Road
Photo 1 of 7

Mile Point 0.0, looking northwest to grouping of late-twentieth-century buildings
Photo 2 of 7

SM-920
Flat Iron Road
St. Mary's County, Maryland

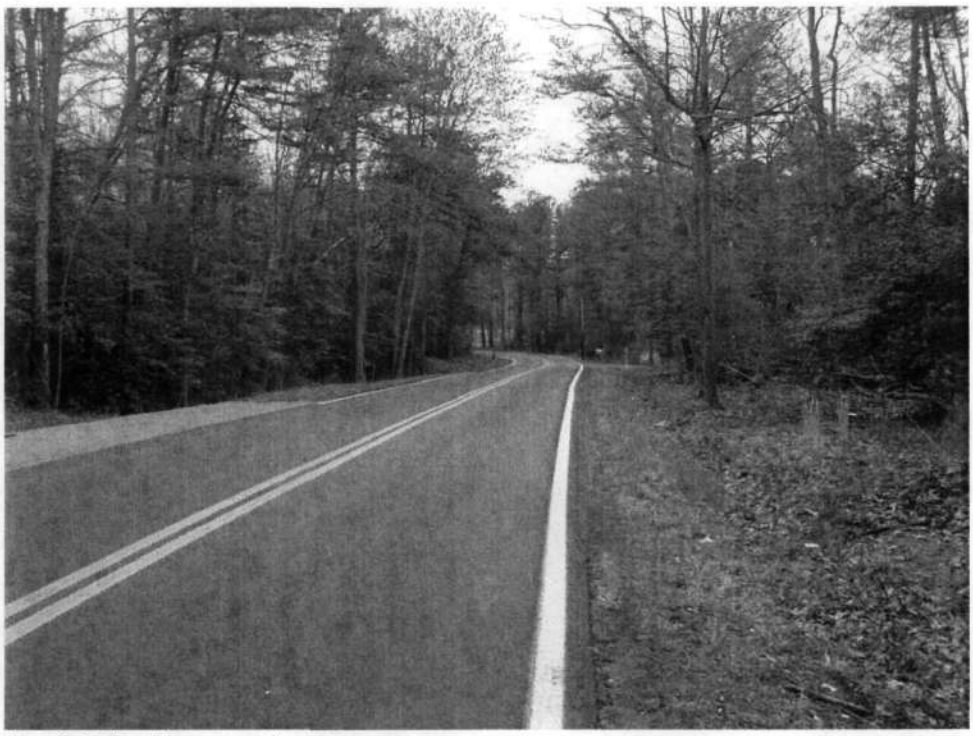
Photographer: E. Young
April 2008
MD SHPO



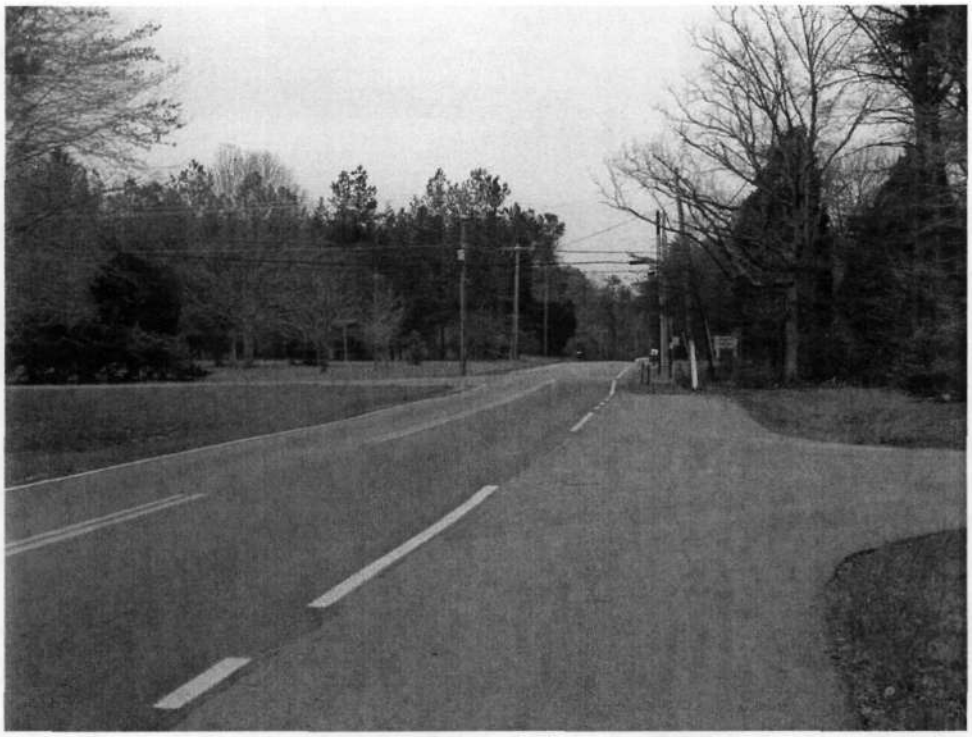
Mile Point 0.0, looking northeast to late-19th-century farm complex at 18926 Flat Iron Road (SM-756)
Photo 3 of 7

Mile Point 0.1, looking west to abandoned late-19th-century dwelling (SM-757)
Photo 4 of 7

Mile Point 0.1, looking north to mid-20th-century farm complex
Photo 5 of 7



Mile Point 0.7, looking southwest
Photo 6 of 7



Mile Point 0.7, looking northeast to terminus of Flat Iron Road at St. Georges Church Road
Photo 7 of 7

STOP

SM-920
Flat Iron ROAD
St. MARY's COUNTY, MD
E. YOUNG
04.2008
MD SHPO
Mile point 0.0, looking S to origin of Flat Iron ROAD @
Drayden ROAD
Photo # 1 of 3

SM-920
Flat Iron ROAD
St. MARY's COUNTY, MD
E. YOUNG
04.2008
MD SHPO
Mile POINT 0.1, Looking N to mid-20th-c. farm complex
Photo # 2 of 3

SM-92D
Flat Iron ROAD
St. MARY'S COUNTY, MD
E. YOUNG
04.2008
MD SHPO
mile point 0.7, looking SW
Photo # 3 of 3