

WI-371
Mardela Springs Survey District
Mardela Springs
Public and private

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The land that constitutes the village of Mardela Springs was patented during the late seventeenth century as “Barren Quarter,” “Cambridge,” “Morris’ Ground” and “What You Please.” In 1756, Joshua Huffington resurveyed a tract that encompassed over 900 acres, which included portions of these early patents and other parcels that he renamed “Ill Neighborhood.” While settlement of these tracts occurred during the late seventeenth century, the essential elements of a community or village did not surface until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. A condemnation for a mill seat on Barren Creek was issued in 1735 to Benjamin Venables. Twelve years later, in 1747, the Maryland General Assembly established official inspection stations for tobacco, one of which was located “at the Head of Barren Creek on Nanticoke River, on the land of William Brown.” Barren Creek Mills, as it was known in the eighteenth century, developed on the north shore of the creek and along the road that connected Salisbury and Vienna.

There are no standing structures that date from the eighteenth century in or around Mardela Springs. The 1798 Federal Direct tax assessment lists several modest sized frame houses at Barren Creek Mills. Near the mill, a house was occupied by William Bowland and owned by James H. Brattan. The single-story dwelling measured 14' by 12' with a porch. Also at the mill property was a barn, granary as well as grist and saw mills. A more substantial dwelling was owned and occupied by Captain Jonathan Walker, who

resided in a two-story frame structure 36' across by 22' deep. The house was joined on the lot by a cook house of sawed logs and a log smoke house.

The village site is identified on Dennis Griffith's *Map of the State of Maryland* as "Barren C. Mill" and a crossroads is clearly indicated there. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the natural "boiling spring" near Barren Creek was exploited commercially by Captain William Russum, who established a hotel at the site and started to popularize the curative and medicinal qualities of the spring water. (See WI-80)

Sometime during the early nineteenth century the name of the village was changed in an effort to highlight the spring rather than the mills.

Barren Creek Springs was known across the peninsula as a popular and restful place to stop en route between Salisbury and Vienna. The reputation of the springs and the popularity of the site lured Littleton Dennis Teackle of Princess Anne to purchase William Russum's hotel and mineral springs in 1816. Held by several other proprietors during the balance of the nineteenth century, Barren Creek Hotel and Mineral Springs continued as a well patronized resort, especially for local residents and travelers seeking relief from the urban centers.

Other community institutions, such as Presbyterian and Methodist churches were established during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Barren Creek Presbyterian Church was built in 1842 on a small knoll overlooking the creek. A Methodist church known as Covington's Chapel, situated on the road between Barren

Creek and Athol, was dedicated in 1840. The Methodist Protestant congregation erected a church in 1869 within the village proper and named it Emanuel. For many years, the Methodist Episcopal congregation had its own church outside the village, which was known as Barren Creek Chapel. According to E. C. Hallman's account, it was built in 1842. When the congregation was moved into town in the late 1880s it was renamed St. Paul's M. E. Church.

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century Barren Creek Springs had developed into a sizable rural village in the midst of a productive farming community. In addition to milling activities there was also a significant shipbuilding concern on Barren Creek during the second half of the nineteenth century. The 1877 town map published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas provides a distinct measure of development for the village. Barren Creek Springs Hotel, under the proprietorship of Joseph Brattan is located on the east side of the village map, while a mixture of stores and residences lined Main Street and Bridge Street, the main road leading to Athol and Quantico. Two fraternal orders, the International Order of Odd Fellows and a chapter of the Redmens' Lodge, had lodges the town as well.

Giving further vitality and economic boost to the village was the creation of a station along the new line of the Baltimore & Eastern Shore Railroad that was erected in the late 1880s between Claiborne (Talbot County) and Ocean City. By the summer of 1890 the new railroad had been stretched as far as Vienna, and within the following few months the line was complete to Ocean City.

The late nineteenth century was a period of distinct growth in Barren Creek Springs, which changed its name to Mardela Springs during the 1890s, evidently in an effort to sound more attractive and alluring to potential visitors. Additional houses were erected within the historic town limits as larger land holdings were subdivided. Many of the houses erected between 1890 and 1910 followed the prevailing architectural taste at the turn of the twentieth century. Asymmetrical plans incorporating towers and a variety of exterior decoration characterized a new generation of dwellings erected along Main Street.

Expansion and construction of new houses continued after the turn of the century, although the town's limits were not appreciably enlarged. Several early twentieth century bungalows and Colonial Revival houses were erected at the eastern end of Main Street, which is now divided from the heart of the village by the US Route 50. Like most rural villages Mardela Springs' growth stagnated during the Depression with little in the way of additional development. Stores slowly closed and several fires destroyed established business locations. Aside from a branch of Peninsula Bank, commercial activity along Main or Bridge streets has disappeared. Mardela Springs is a quiet rural village located with a comfortable driving distance to Salisbury.

MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: Mardela Springs Survey District

MHT INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-371

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s): Architecture

2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore

3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Agricultural-Industrial Transition
1815-1870
Industrial-Urban Dominance
1870-1930

4. Resource Type(s): Single-family dwellings
Churches
Stores
Firehouse

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. WI-371

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Barren Creek Mills, Barren Creek Springs
and/or common Mardela Springs

2. Location

street & number Various Streets not for publication
city, town Mardela Springs vicinity of _____ congressional district First
state Maryland county Wicomico

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Various owners
street & number _____ telephone no. : _____
city, town _____ state and zip code _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber
street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio
city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Historical 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

Mardela Springs, formerly known as Barren Creek Mills or Barren Creek Springs, is located along the path of US Route 50 northwest of Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. The boundaries of the main village include the US Route 50 corridor on the north, the winding course of Barren Creek on the south and east, and the boundary of the village on the west. The principal east/west road through the town is Main Street, and the primary north/south road is Bridge Street. Approximately a dozen other side streets intersect Main and Bridge streets in a rough grid plan.

The housing stock of Mardela Springs consists of approximately one-hundred and eighty (180) standing structures dating between 1830 and 1940. The largest share of the buildings that define the town were erected between the 1880s and 1920s, which coincides with the expansion of the village when the Baltimore and Eastern Shore Railroad was stretched from Claiborne to Salisbury. The oldest structures surviving in Mardela Springs are located at the east end of the village near the site of the Mardela Springs Mineral Springs and the former location of the large hotel facility. The houses date from the second quarter of the nineteenth century. (See WI-331, Brattan-Taylor-Truitt house; WI-332, Thomas B. Taylor house) Others structures dating from the second quarter of the nineteenth century include the Barren Creek Presbyterian Church, WI-18, erected during the early 1840s and the central core of the Brattan-Taylor store, WI-136, dating from the late 1830s.

The historic building stock of Mardela Springs ranges from relatively plain two-story, three- and five-bay center hall/single-pile frame houses with modest Greek Revival trim to two-and-a-half story asymmetrically planned Victorian dwellings embellished with a variety of turned and sawn decoration. Most houses are of frame construction, supported on low brick foundations and sheathed with a combination of artificial sidings. Asbestos shingles as well as vinyl and aluminum siding are common. A few select dwellings have their original weatherboards, or in some instances, fishscale shingles exposed. The roofs follow a variety of pitches and are mostly covered with asphalt shingles. Some late nineteenth and early twentieth-century houses have cross gables or corner towers. Decorative porches, whether of Greek Revival or Victorian design, survive on many of the houses and provide a distinct area of architectural interest and elaboration.

The focus of commerce in Mardela Springs has shifted over the past century and a half as the town developed westward from its early nucleus near the hotel and spring. The intersection of Main and Bridge streets was the principal commercial location, and a branch of Peninsula Bank (WI-333), originally the Farmers Bank of Mardela Springs, stands there today. The neo-classical bank building dates from 1919. Other former stores and commercial buildings were located in the vicinity of this intersection but they have disappeared due several mid twentieth-century fires. The store that had the longest history of operation is historically identified as the Brattan-Taylor store, which is now part of a museum complex created by J. Howard and Louise Adkins. Howard and Louis Adkins have also moved several buildings to Mardela Springs in an effort to preserve and interpret local history.

8. Significance

Survey No. WI-371

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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D and/or Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local	

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The land that constitutes the village of Mardela Springs was patented during the late seventeenth century as “Barren Quarter,” “Cambridge,” “Morris’ Ground” and “What You Please.”¹ In 1756, Joshua Huffington resurveyed a tract that encompassed over 900 acres, which included portions of these early patents and other parcels that he renamed “Ill Neighborhood.”² While settlement of these tracts occurred during the late seventeenth century, the essential elements of a community or village did not surface until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. A condemnation for a mill seat on Barren Creek was issued in 1735 to Benjamin Venables. Twelve years later, in 1747, the Maryland General Assembly established official inspection stations for tobacco, one of which was located “at the Head of Barren Creek on Nanticoke River, on the land of William Brown.”³ Barren Creek Mills, as it was known in the eighteenth century, developed on the north shore of the creek and along the road that connected Salisbury and Vienna.

There are no standing structures that date from the eighteenth century in or around Mardela Springs. The 1798 Federal Direct tax assessment lists several modest sized frame houses at Barren Creek Mills. Near the mill, a house was occupied by William Bowland and owned by James H. Brattan. The single-story dwelling measured 14' by 12' with a porch. Also at the mill property was a barn, granary as well as grist and saw mills. A more substantial dwelling was owned and occupied by Captain Jonathan Walker, who resided in a two-story frame structure 36' across by 22' deep. The house was joined on the lot by a cook house of sawed logs and a log smoke house.⁴

¹ Sylvia Stant Bradley, “Mardela Springs, Maryland: A History” Mardela Springs Heritage Festival Committee, 1984, p. 4.

² Ruth T. Dryden, Land Records of Wicomico County, Maryland 1666-1810, p. 218.

³ Bernard Christian Steiner, ed. *Archives of Maryland, XLIV, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly 1745-1747*, Baltimore: MD Historical Society, p. 608.

⁴ Federal Direct Tax Assessment, Barren Creek Hundred, Somerset County, 1798, various listings.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A [][] [][][][] [][][][][]
Zone Easting Northing

B [][] [][][][] [][][][][]
Zone Easting Northing

C [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

D [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

E [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

F [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

G [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

H [][] [][][][] [][][][][]

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Private Consultant date 3/15/98

street & number P. O. Box 5 telephone 410-651-1094

city or town Westover state Maryland 21871

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
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21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023
514-7600

8.1 SIGNIFICANCE

Mardela Springs Survey District, WI-371
Mardela Springs, Wicomico County, Maryland

The village site is identified on Dennis Griffith's *Map of the State of Maryland* as "Barren C. Mill" and the crossroads is clearly indicated there. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the natural "boiling spring" near Barren Creek was exploited commercially by Captain William Russum, who established a hotel at the site and started to popularize the curative and medicinal qualities of the spring water. (See WI-80) Sometime during the early nineteenth century the name of the village was changed in an effort to highlight the spring rather than the mills.

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⁵ E. C. Hallman, *The Garden of Methodism*, Peninsula Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, 1948, p. 345.

⁶ Hallman, p. 350.

8.2 SIGNIFICANCE

Mardela Springs Survey District, WI-371
Mardela Springs, Wicomico County, Maryland

the town as well.⁷

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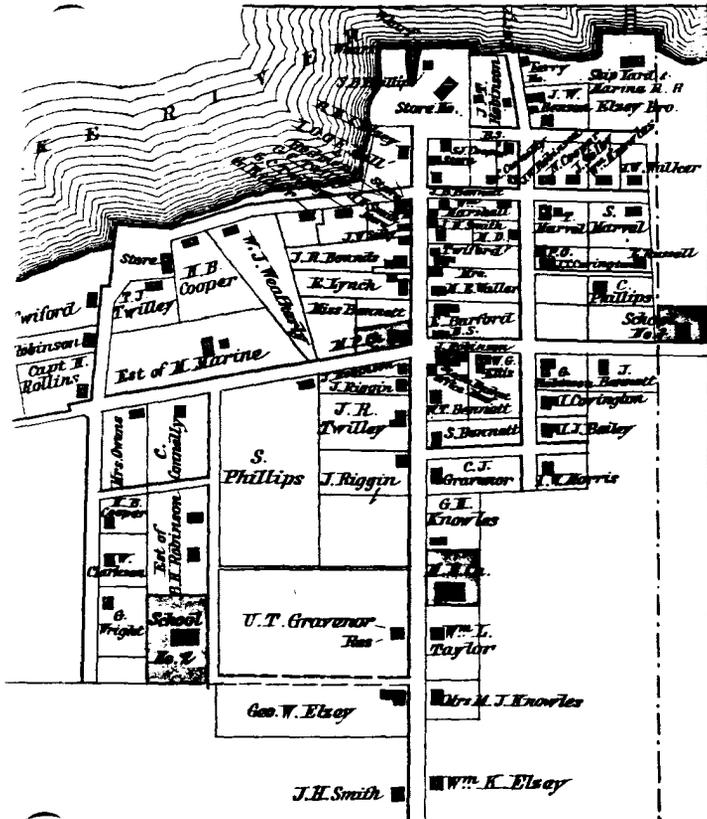
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The Mardela Springs Survey District includes approximately one-hundred and eighty (180) contributing resources. The variety of buildings and the general integrity of the district make it eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

⁷ John L. Graham, *The 1877 Atlases and Other Early Maps of the Eastern Shore of Maryland*, Wicomico County Bicentennial Committee, p. 21.

⁸ John C. Hayman, *Rails Along the Chesapeake: A History of Railroad on the Delmarva Peninsula, 1827-1978*. Marvadel Publishers, 1979, p. 91.



WI-371
 Mardela Springs Survey District
 Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson
 Atlas 1877



REF-
 Goods, Groceries, and a General Store
 Goods, Groceries, and all kinds of Goods usually kept in a Country Store
 Goods, Groceries, and a variety of Goods
 Goods, Groceries, and all kinds of Goods
 Manufacturers of each Baskets, Wedges, &c.
 Sawing, Ship and Groceries and Dealers in Dry Merchandise,
 Proprietor of a ship
 Builders of the building, Reporters notice, onable rates, Sail-maker.
 Surgeon.
 Commissioner,

BARREN CREEK BUSINESS REFERENCES.

- LEVIN M. WILSON**, Farmer and Tax Collector for Wicomico Co.
- THOMAS B. TAYLOR**, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries and all kinds of Goods usually kept in a Country Store.
- J. B. ARMSTRONG**, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, &c.
- L. M. VINCENT**, Wheelwright. All Works in his line done to order.
- E. S. BOSTON**, Blacksmith. All Work in his line done neatly and to order.
- JOHN H. BACON**, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, and all goods usually kept in a country store.
- J. W. PHILLIPS**, Proprietor of "Barren Creek Springs Hotel."
- W. C. MARSTERS**, Physician and Surgeon.
- W. J. WEATHERLY**, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
- THOS. J. WINDSOR**, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.
- A. E. ACWORTH**, Teacher and Farmer.
- A. H. CALLAWAY**, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
- J. W. BRADLEY**, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.
- ISAAC L. ENGLISH**, Teacher and Farmer.
- ALBERT M. BOUNDS**, School Commissioner.
- ROBERT L. LLOYD**, Ship-Carpenter.
- ROBERT W. HOWARD**, Saloon-Keeper.

