

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes ___
no

Property Name: Wright House Inventory Number: WI-682
Address: 26120 Delmar Road (MD 54) Historic district: ___ yes no
City: Delmar Zip Code: 21875 County: Wicomico
USGS Quadrangle(s): Hebron
Property Owner: Edward C. and Ellen D. Wright Tax Account ID Number: 01-015079
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 0179 Tax Map Number: 0009
Project: MD 54 over Mockingbird Creek, Replacement of Strx 22029X Agency: Maryland State Highway Administration
Agency Prepared By: Maryland State Highway Administration
Preparer's Name: Consultant Architectural Historian Matt Manning Date Prepared: 9/26/2014
Documentation is presented in: Project review and compliance files
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ___ Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended
Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
Name of the District/Property: _____
Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: ___ yes Listed: ___ yes
Site visit by MHT Staff ___ yes no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

The Wright House is a modified two-story, side-gabled, single-family dwelling. The building occupies a 70.64-acre parcel along MD 54 (Delmar Road) east of Mardela Springs in Wicomico County. According to state tax data, the property was constructed in 1910, however, physical evidence and historical documentation suggest the house may have been constructed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The building, oriented on an approximately east-west axis, has a symmetrical facade that faces south along MD 54. It comprises a two-story main block with a one-and-one-half-story cross gable at the rear. The house is finished with asbestos shingle siding and its roof is covered with asphalt shingles. It is located in a rural area amid agricultural land and scattered single-family dwellings.

This segment of Delmar Road is a two-lane asphalt highway between Mardela Springs to the west and Delmar to the east. The house is set far back from the road behind a grass lawn. Large crepe myrtle trees occupy the yard in front of the house. A gravel driveway extends north from MD 54, loops around the house, and returns to the highway. Several outbuildings occupy a grass lawn north of the dwelling. An agricultural field forms the property's eastern boundary, and Mockingbird Creek, lined with trees, borders the parcel on the north and west.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW
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MHT Comments:
Jim Tarquinio 11/20/2014
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date
B. Krutz 11/21/14
Reviewer, National Register Program Date

The house has a two-story, three-bay main block with a side-gabled roof and a parged concrete foundation. The center bay holds a one-story distyle portico. The portico foundation's west elevation is parged, and its southeast corner appears to have been repaired using concrete block. Plywood and wood lattice obscures the rest of the foundation. Poured concrete steps lead to the portico's wood floor. Square wood columns with simple, rounded capitals support the portico; they are complemented by similar wood pilasters flanking the entrance. The portico includes a flat frieze and overhanging cornice surmounted by a pediment with a recessed, unornamented tympanum. Its roof is finished with asphalt shingles. Beneath the portico, the entrance consists of a paneled wood door with sidelights. The wood surround features a layered, flat casing with simple, unadorned corner blocks. Each sidelight comprises four rectangular lights above a paneled base. Although the house has been refaced with wood-grain asbestos shingles, the original wood clapboards are still visible between the sidelights and the pilasters.

Wood-framed six-over-one sash windows flank the entrance and occupy the second story's three bays. Each includes a one-over-one storm window and narrow, flat vinyl trim. A wood cornice adorns the roofline, comprising a three-part built-up bed molding, a projecting slab corona, and a cymatium, or crown, similar to the simple capitals that crown the portico columns. Cornice returns wrap around the main block's east and west elevations, where a close rake contrasts with the wide overhanging eave on the façade and north (rear) elevation.

Each side elevation is two bays deep with wood-framed, six-over-one sash windows. Two square, wood-framed, four-light windows occupy the attic level. All windows feature storm windows and the same vinyl trim used on the façade. At the roofline, a narrow band of wood trim follows the rake and joins the cornice returns.

The dwelling's north elevation consists of a one-and-one-half-story cross-gabled addition projecting from the center of the main block's north elevation. Approximately half of the main block's north elevation remains exposed. Wood-framed six-over-one sash windows occupy each level west of the addition and another is located to the east on the second story.

The addition has a parged foundation and asbestos siding. Its two-bay east (side) elevation appears to be an enclosed, extended shed-roofed porch. Its south bay holds a secondary entrance comprising a half-glazed paneled metal door. A tripartite window, consisting of one-over-one vinyl clad units, occupies the north bay. A concrete sidewalk spans the entire east elevation, and poured concrete steps lead to the entrance. An aluminum gutter spans the roofline, obscuring any trim.

The addition's west elevation, also two bays deep, is two stories tall where it adjoins the main block. A wood-framed, six-over-one sash window is located on the second level. The north bay is one-story, and a wood-framed, eight-over-one sash window occupies the first level where the one- and two-story sections meet. Both units have storm windows and vinyl surrounds. The addition's west elevation features a boxed wood cornice with a simple flat fascia. The second level has a shallower roofline resulting in a flatter cornice. Flat wood trim follows the close-set rake.

The addition's north elevation is two bays wide with a paneled and glazed metal door to the east and a wood-framed, six-over-one window to the west. The door opens to a shed-roofed screened porch that occupies the east half of the north elevation. The wood-framed porch is partially clad with T1-II grooved plywood sheet siding. An enclosed stairwell or shed addition opposite the porch extends below the west window, meeting the porch at the middle of the north elevation. A square, wood-framed window occupies the half story above. The roof is clad with asphalt shingles. At the ridgeline, a square brick chimney protrudes from the interior.

Multiple outbuildings occupy the yard north of the house and driveway. These include chicken houses, a gambrel-roofed, vinyl-sided shed, and two small wood-framed structures with corrugated metal roofs. An above-ground swimming pool stands between the house and the driveway.

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The agricultural field north of the house includes a family cemetery with stone markers dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Four markers are visible at the gravesite. The oldest legible marker is that of Willin Wright, dated April 1849. An arched headstone to the north belongs to his wife, Nancy Wright, who died in 1882. East of these markers, two smaller marble stones stand askew and partly overgrown. The north stone is marked with the initials N.W.

History/Context

The Wright House is located northwest of Salisbury near Mardela Springs, west of the Delaware line. Settlement in the area began in the mid- to late seventeenth century. In 1735, Samuel Venables established a mill seat along Barren Creek, and an inspection station for tobacco was located on Barren Creek at the Nanticoke River in 1747. Over time, the Mardela Springs community, first known as Barren Creek Mills and later Barren Creek Springs, developed around the mill and inspection station. By the 1800s, numerous grist and saw mills operated in the area.

The Venables family owned several mills along Barren Creek, referring to them in wills as the Lower, Middle, and Upper Mills. The Middle Mills was also known as Double Mills due to the presence of both a grist mill and sawmill. Over time, a small community, including a schoolhouse and Methodist church, grew around the mills.

An early depiction of the Wright House property appeared in 1836 on a map of the planned Eastern Shore Railroad. A survey for the line, to run from Cecil County to Somerset County and by a branch line to Virginia, was ordered by the Maryland General Assembly in 1835. The map includes all wooded and cleared areas the proposed line might cross, bodies of water, and the names of adjacent property owners. On the map, Barren Creek is described in its present location near the cornerstone marking the Delaware state line. The creek appears the same as it does today, with two tributaries converging before continuing west to Barren Creek Springs. A saw mill is depicted along the northern tributary (now known as Mockingbird Creek), and a building is shown west of the mill, near the present-day Wright House. The property owner is listed as Venalles.

The name Venalles is likely a misspelling, as deed records reveal that the Venables family owned the property until 1830. That year, Charles and Joseph Venables sold 125 acres to the brothers Turpin, Jacob, and Charles Wright of Delaware. According to the deed, Charles and Joseph inherited the property from their father, Benjamin Venables, Jr., who in turn had inherited the property from his father, Benjamin Sr. At the time of the sale, the deed noted the presence of a mill, mill seat, mill pond, and mill race. This mill is almost certainly the same one that appears on the railroad map, although the map still attributes the property to the Venables family. This may have been an error, or perhaps the Venables continued to operate the mill or occupy the property for a time following the sale.

Charles Wright purchased his brothers' shares of the property in 1843 and sold the entire 125 acres to his cousin, Willin Wright, in 1847. Willin Wright passed away in April, 1849, leaving the property to his son, Clement M. Wright. Willin and his wife Nancy (d. 1882) are buried in an agricultural field north of the Wright House.

The 1865 Map of Somerset County by Simon J. Martenet shows only settlements and prominent structures, but one of these is the same sawmill pictured in the 1830 railroad map. Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson's 1877 "Atlas of Wicomico, Somerset, & Worcester Cos., Md." shows the saw mill in the same location, and lists C.M. Wright as owner of two buildings to the east. Deeds to adjacent parcels from the mid- to late nineteenth century reference Wright's Mill or Mill Lot, but census records from 1860 to 1900 list Clement Wright as a farmer. He lived on the property with his wife, Elizabeth, and six children. Elizabeth passed away in 1892; by 1900, Clement's household consisted of two granddaughters, Lucy and Lizzie. The 1900 census also shows that Lucy and Lizzie Wright's widowed aunt, Sallie, lived with seven other children in a rented house next door, possibly the second building

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owned by Clement Wright depicted on the 1877 map.

At his death in 1906, Clement Wright's property was divided and sold at auction. Charles M. Wright, Clement's grandson, purchased one of two parcels described as "part of the home farm" belonging to Clement Wright. Charles probably constructed the Queen Anne style house at 26244 Delmar Road at that time or shortly thereafter. An adjoining 75-acre parcel, where Clement Wright formerly resided, was sold at auction in 1908 to Lucy and Lizzie, who had recently married. Lucy Bacon and Lizzie Owens immediately sold the property to Rufus, Phyllis, and William Mills. Charles Wright purchased the property after it went to foreclosure in 1922, combining it with the adjacent parcel he acquired in 1906.

Changes to the Wright House over time make it difficult to determine a precise construction date. The original house most likely began as a basic I-house with wood clapboard siding. The entrance portico demonstrates a simplistic Greek Revival-style design, but the door surround's multilayered trim with corner blocks indicates a later, Victorian influence. The house's existing six-over-one windows are replacements; broken sashes from discarded two-over-two units discovered in the backyard are probably original. The combination of stylistic elements suggests a mid- to late 19th century construction date, although it is possible that the house was constructed as late as ca. 1910, shortly following the Mills' purchase of the property.

The house has undergone significant alterations, most likely following Charles Wright's purchase in 1922. The present six-over-one windows were a popular Colonial Revival fenestration type, and wood-patterned asbestos-shingle siding first appeared on the market in the late 1930s. The windows and siding may have been replaced simultaneously, possibly during the 1940s. The asphalt shingle roof is also a later replacement.

The current route of MD 54 was constructed in 1940, replacing an earlier circuitous road that crossed Mockingbird Creek northwest of the Wright House. The west side of the house's looped driveway follows the former road; at its north end, the path of this original route is still visible as it leads west across the creek. The new highway divided the property and cut it off from its southern end, which originally extended to Barren Creek. The land north and east of the house continues to be used for agriculture, planted with corn and beans. The area along MD 54 remains predominately rural, despite the presence of a late twentieth-century residential subdivision west of the Wright House.

Significance Evaluation

The Wright House was evaluated under the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C.

The Wright House is typical of modest rural farmsteads established in Eastern Maryland and is a basic example of the type commonly built in Wicomico County in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The house, associated outbuildings, and surrounding agricultural land demonstrate a common rural development pattern. The house was constructed well after the establishment of nearby Mardela Springs and the no longer extant mill that once adjoined the property. The farm did not introduce any innovations in agriculture or farm design and function. Research did not identify significant associations with events of local, state, or national importance, and the Wright House is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A.

Clement M. Wright operated one of many mills along Barren Creek and its tributaries, but his primary role was as a farmer. The Wright family has owned or occupied the property for almost 185 years, interrupted only by a brief 14-year period of ownership by the Mills family. Neither family's activities were significant in the development of Mardela Springs or Wicomico County. Research did not reveal other individuals of local, state, or national significance, and the property is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B.

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The Wright House incorporates a Greek Revival-style front portico, but this stylistic influence is not demonstrated elsewhere in the house, and it is not a significant example of the style. Furthermore, the house has been modified by later additions and the loss of original material. Since its construction, asbestos shingle siding has covered the house's original wood cladding, windows and roofing materials have been replaced, and additions have enlarged the house to the north. The small outbuildings demonstrate simple construction methods typical of rural homesteads. The rerouting of MD 54 along the property's southern boundary has further altered the surroundings, and the property no longer retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, or feeling. Therefore, the property is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

The property was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this investigation. Based on the evaluated Criteria, the Wright House is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The boundary for the property encompasses 48 acres and is confined to Part B of Parcel 179, which is found on Wicomico County Tax Map 0009 (2014).

Works Consulted

Architecture & Landscapes of Pennsylvania's Agriculture: A Field Guide. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. [Http://phmc.info/agfieldguide](http://phmc.info/agfieldguide) (accessed July 15, 2013).

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Touart, Paul B. Double Mills (WI-42). Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, Crownsville, Maryland: Maryland Historical Trust, March 1998.

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USGS Quadrangle Maps. The National Map: Historical Topographical Map Collection. 1895-2011. <http://nationalmap.gov/historical/> (accessed December 20, 2012).

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Wright House (WI-682)

26120 Delmar Road - Wicomico County



USGS 7.5' Quadrangle - Hebron
1:24,000



SPEED
LIMIT
45

W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

2/22/2014

MD SHPO

View NW along MD 54 (Delmar Rd)

1/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

View N from MD 54

2/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPo

View N along west driveway loop

3/04



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD 3410

South facade

4/14

EPSON

EPSON

Epson
Professional Paper



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD 34po

East elevation

5/14



WI-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

North elevation

6/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

South facade + West elevation

7/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

Front portico at main entrance

8/14



W1-682

Wright House

Nicomco Co MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

Main entrance detail

9/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

Wood-framed outbuilding NE of house; view NE

10/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

Chicken house; shed constructed of wood shipping container

11/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co. MD

M. Manning

7/22/14

MD SHPO

View east from Mockingbird Creek along former
roadbed NW of house

12/14



W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co MD

McManning

7/22/14

MD SHPo

Wright family grave markers N of the house

13/14



In memory of
WILLIAM WRIGHT
who departed this life
April 18th 1849,
aged 55 years 7 months &
21 days.

W1-682

Wright House

Wicomico Co MD

McManning

7/22/14

MD SHps

Willin Wright gravestone; dated 1849

1f/14