

WO-263
Oscar M. Purnell House
Snow Hill
private

c. 1900

Known for much of this century by the older residents of Snow Hill as the prominent dwelling of Oscar M. Purnell, this large Colonial Revival style brick house boasts a colossal Ionic columned front portico and a Tuscan columned wraparound porch. Other noteworthy features including Palladian-style colored glass windows and rusticated stone dressings around the various openings add to the impressive nature of this center hall, stretcher bond brick dwelling.

Interesting as well is the early history of this triangular property, designated as "Lot 22" on the 1793 Snow Hill plat. On June 11, 1796 part of the lot was transferred through a twenty-year lease from George Spence to James Givans at an annual rental of twenty-five shillings. Later, James Givans surfaces in the history of Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal church as a trustee of the early congregation, and it is recorded that the incorporation of the church and the election of the trustees was accomplished at the Givans house on January 25, 1808.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: Oscar M. Puenow House

MHT Inventory Number: NO-263

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture

2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

1970-1990 INDUSTRIAL (URBAN DOMINANCE)

4) Resource Type(s):

1. SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING (NOW SENIOR CENTER)

A

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic OSCAR M. PURNELL HOUSE

and/or common SNOW HILL SENIOR CENTER

2. Location

street & number 107 East Market Street ___ not for publication

city, town Snow Hill ___ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Worcester

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Worcester County Commission on Aging, Jean Monroe, Director

street & number 107 East Market Street telephone no.: 632-1277

city, town Snow Hill state and zip code MD 21863

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Worcester County Courthouse folio

city, town Snow Hill state MD 21863

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. WO-263

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.

The Oscar M. Purnell house, now used by the Worcester County Commission on Aging, stands at 107 East Market Street in the center of Snow Hill, Worcester County, Maryland. Facing southeast, the two-and-a-half story brick house stands on a triangular lot of ground bordered by the eastern section of Green Street, formerly known as Spence's Alley, and East Market Street. Facing southeast, the roof ridge is oriented on a southeast/northwest axis.

Built during the first few years of the twentieth century, the two-and-a-half story, three-bay, stretcher bond brick dwelling is supported by a rusticated masonry foundation, and it is covered by a steeply pitched hip roof that has a slight kick to the eaves. Encircling three sides of the house is a Tuscan columned porch supported by rusticated masonry piers. The front center bay is dominated by a colossal Ionic columned porch that rises two full stories and is covered by a flat roof. The eave is trimmed with large console brackets, and square baluster railings stretch between the porch columns.

The southeast (main) elevation is a roughly symmetrical facade with a center projecting pavilion that contains double-door entrances on both floors which open onto generous porches. The front door is flanked by single-pane sash sidelights that are fitted with rusticated stone sills. East of the entrance is a large Palladian-style window with a rusticated stone arch and colored glass sash to each side of the center window. West of the entrance are large single-pane sash windows that pierce a rounded corner of the house. The second floor is marked by a pair of three-sided bay windows to each side of the center portico. Centered on the hip roof is a large gabled dormer that is pierced by an arched window opening that is surrounded by a field of fishscale shingles. Flanking the large gabled dormers are smaller gabled dormers with single pane windows and a pedimented front. Squarish brick chimneys rise through the center of the house.

The east and west sides of the house follow along similar lines with three bays defining each floor. Single-pane sash windows fitted with rusticated stone lintels and sills as well as three-sided bay windows mark the various openings. Pairs of large gabled dormers with round arched windows mark each roof slope. The sides of the dormers are sheathed with fishscale shingles.

The northwest (rear) elevation is an asymmetrical three-bay facade with a projecting center pavilion pierced by a tripartite colored glass window and topped by a large gabled dormer sheathed with fishscale shingles as well. Flanking the center pavilion to the east is the continuation of the Tuscan columned front porch and to the west the corner is filled with a two-story square columned porch. The window and door openings are fitted with rusticated stone lintels and door sills. A handicapped entrance has been added to the east side next to the cellar entrance.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input 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 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 Oscar M. Purnell house stands out as the largest Colonial Revival dwelling erected in Snow Hill. Dating to the first decade of the twentieth century, the squarish stretcher bond brick structure is covered by an expansive hip roof which is marked by a variety of gabled dormers sheathed in fishscale shingles. Most dominant, however, is the colossal Ionic columned front portico and the wraparound Tuscan columned porch. Additional features including Palladian-style colored glass windows and rusticated stone dressings around window and door openings enhance the expansive center hall, double-pile house. Although the property has been turned over to county offices for the Commission on Aging, the house maintains a residential type setting with a generous yard dotted with shrubs and small trees.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Known for much of this century as the prominent dwelling of Oscar M. Purnell, the land on which this house stands, designated "Lot 22" on the 1793 Snow Hill plat, was partially devised to James Givans on June 11, 1796. (R/338) James Givans surfaces in the history of Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Church as a trustee of the early congregation, and it is recorded that the incorporation of the church and the election of the trustees was accomplished at the Givans house on January 25, 1808. (See Democratic Messenger article, "100 years of Methodism in Snow Hill," Saturday, February 1, 1908 by Eben Hearne)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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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 Worcester County date 7/13/88

street & number Worcester County Courthouse telephone 301-651-1194

city or town Snow Hill state MD 21863

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
 Shaw House
 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 269-2438

WO-263
OSCAR M. PURNELL HOUSE
Snow Hill, MD Quadrangle, 1966

WO-263

