

WO-292
Bishopville
Public and private

Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Land records research for this northern section of Worcester County reveal the region was generally referred to as St. Martins during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Named after the region's principal watercourse, St. Martin's River and its tributaries provided an essential means of transportation and trade for northern county residents. River tributaries, when harnessed, also provided power to turn wheels for grist and saw mills. An indication of the early interest in milling vast stands of local timber is reflected in the land patent issued in 1775 to William and Levin Tull for "Saw Mill Range." Evidently a mill operated at the head of the northern branch of the St. Martin's River through the efforts of the Tulls and later, Jesse and Joseph Gray.

A small mill community was evidently in place by the late eighteenth century. During the early nineteenth century the mill at this site was known as "Robins mill," and Robins family interests in the property were held until 1835, when John L. B. Robins and his wife, Henrietta, sold, "all their estate right, and title...to the saw and Grist mills formerly Robins' Mills, the House and lot of land contiguous thereto containing four acres of land and also the mill dam and pond" to Littleton and William R. Bishop, James Dirickson, and William U. Purnell. The following year the Bishops purchased the mill property from the others three partners.

The year when this small mill village was first called Bishopville is inexact, but it is generally believed the name was in place by the mid nineteenth century. The village expanded through the balance of the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a commercial center for the agrarian and timber-related interests in northern Worcester County. In 1877 Bishopville was a well developed community with over two dozen houses, a hotel, several stores, saw and grist mills, blacksmith and wheelwright shops, two doctor's offices, as well as two Methodist churches. A few local merchants advertised their wares in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas business directory along with Dr. T. A. J. Holloway, listed as a physician and surgeon, and L. S. Nelson and Bro., dealers in "Lumber of all kinds, both hard and soft." The Nelson brothers also commented that they could ship their lumber to any point.

Similar to many Eastern Shore communities, Bishopville had a vegetable cannery during the early twentieth century. Known as the Eureka Packaging Company, the firm first appears in local business directories in 1919 but it was closed apparently by 1927. With its proximity to the Atlantic seashore and its quiet nineteenth century character, the population of Bishopville has remained relatively constant through the twentieth century.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISTRICT

MHT Inventory Number: NO-292

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

ARCHITECTURE
COMMENCE

2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

AGRICULTURAL - INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION
(1815 - 1870)

4) Resource Type(s):

1. SURVEY DISTRICT

A. SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLINGS

B. CHURCH

C. STORES

D. MILL SITE

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. W0-292

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic BISHOPVILLE

and/or common BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISTRICT

2. Location

street & number Junction of MD 367 and St. Martin's Neck Rd. not for publicationcity, town • Bishopville vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Worcester

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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. Worcester County Courthouse liber

street & number Market Street 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-292

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.

Bishopville, Maryland is a small rural village located in northern Worcester County next to the Delaware/Maryland state line and at the head of the Bishopville Prong of the St. Martin's River. Maryland Route 367, also called the Bishopville Road, serves the village as its main street whereas a number of side roads; St. Martin's Neck Road, Jarvis Road, Hotel Road, and Bank Street, intersect MD 367 from the east and west. The village includes approximately sixty (60) buildings that contribute to its historic character.

Maryland Rte 367 crosses the Bishopville Prong of the St. Martin's River, and a dam on the north side of the road traps a small body of water which formerly served village mills. Defining the center of Bishopville are four commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The one, two- and three-story frame structures mark the center of the old commercial section, however, three of the buildings are currently unused. The largest of the four and the only one to house a current business is located on the west side of the road. The Bishopville store is a three-story frame structure sheathed with pressed metal siding and distinguished by a parapet front.

The earliest houses in the village date from the middle decades of the nineteenth century and include single story or two-story, three-bay frame dwellings that follow side hall/single pile plans. Perhaps the oldest house in the village is the story-and-a-half, one-room plan rear wing of the Levin W. Collins house (WO-242), dating to around 1840. The house was expanded later with the addition of a bracketed two-story, center hall/single pile main block. One of the best preserved of the village dwellings is the old Lizzie Bishop house (WO-24), a two-and-a-half story frame dwelling dating from around 1870. Well preserved inside as well as out, the center hall frame house is accompanied by two contemporary outbuildings, a privy and a smoke house.

The other dwellings in Bishopville follow relatively traditional nineteenth and early twentieth century forms with two-story, three-bay dwellings with or without cross gables and bracketed eaves. A few village dwellings are trimmed with decorative sawn bargeboards or an occasional corner tower highlights a house. Also represented are modest examples of early twentieth century design with bungalows or four-square houses.

The only church in the village is the Wilson United Methodist Church, a ell-shaped frame structure located at the north end of the community. Dated by a plaque to 1883, the Gothic Revival church is dominated by an entrance and bell tower.

8. Significance

Survey No. WO-292

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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: A B C D
 and/or
 Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G
 Level of Significance: national state local

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

Bishopville is significant in Worcester County as a well preserved rural village with a strong late nineteenth century character. Approximately sixty (60) buildings dating between 1840 and 1940 contribute to the period character of the community. Outstanding among the houses to survive is the Lizzie Bishop house, a well-built two-and-a-half story center hall frame house that has survived largely unchanged with an intact exterior and interior. A few of the village houses are accompanied by small frame outbuildings. Bishopville is noteworthy also for its small grouping of late nineteenth century commercial buildings that mark the center crossroads. For many years a mill was located next to the main road where part of the foundation still remains. The adjacent mill pond contributes to the historic character and attractiveness of Bishopville.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Land records research for this northern section of Worcester County reveal the region was generally referred to as St. Martins during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Named after the region's principal watercourse, St. Martin's River and its tributaries provided an essential means of transportation and trade for county residents. River tributaries, when harnassed, also provided power to turn wheels for grist and saw mills. An indication of the early interest in milling vast stands of local timber is reflected in the local land patent issued in 1775 to William and Levin Tull for "Saw Mill Range." Evidently a mill operated at the head of the northern branch of the St. Martin's River through the efforts of the Tulls and later, Jesse and Joseph Gray.

A small mill community was evidently in place by the late eighteenth century. During the early nineteenth century the mill at this site was known as "Robins mill," and Robins family interests in the property was maintained until 1835, when John L. B. Robins and his wife, Henrietta, sold, "all their estate right, and title...to the saw and Grist mills formerly called Robins' Mills, the House and lot of land contiguous thereto containing four acres of land and also the mill dam and pond" to Littleton and William R. Bishop, James Dirickson, and William U. Purnell. (JCH 2/64)

(continued)

BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISTRICT SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

The year when this small mill village was first called Bishopville is inexact, but it is generally believed the name was in place by mid century. The village expanded through the balance of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a commercial center for local agriculture and timber-related products of the nearby cypress swamp. In 1877 Bishopville was a well developed community with over two dozen houses, a hotel, several stores, saw and grist mills, two doctor's offices, as well as two Methodist churches. Several local merchants advertised their wares in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas business directory along with Dr. T. A. J. Holloway, listed as a physician and surgeon, and L. S. Nelson and Bro., dealers in "Lumber of all kinds, both hard and soft. The Nelson brothers also commented that they could ship their lumber to any point.

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WO-292
BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISTRICT
Chain of title for mill lot

JCH 4/167

James Dirickson, William U. Purnell,
and their wives, Henrietta Dirickson
and Ellen H. Purnell

to

12/21/1836

Littleton R. Bishop and William Bishop

\$2000.00 "all their right, title, and
interest and claim whatsoever in and to
the mills, store house, and lotts of
land that they the said James Dirickson,
Littleton R. Bishop, William U. Purnell
and William Bishop purchased of a certain
John L. B. Robins reference being had to
said deed...being situated in St. Martins
in Worcester County aforesaid...

JCH 2/64

John L. B. Robins and wife Henrietta
Robins

to

4/18/1835

Littleton R. Bishop, William Bishop,
James Dirickson, and William U. Purnell

\$1800.00 "all their estate right, title,
interest and claim both at law and in equity
of and to the saw & Grist mills formerly
called Robins' Mills, the House and lot
contiguous thereto containing four acres
of land and also the mill dam and pond and
the right of holding and ponding water on
any ground which has been heretofore
ponded or considered a part of said pond
and to the top of said dam and also the
priviledge of taking as much dirt adjoining
the said mill pond from the end of the
southwest point of high ground immediately
above a gully first above the Grist mill
about a Northwest course from the said mill
sufficient to repair th said mills and dam
at all times and also the priviledge of a
road or roads to haul the same on the said

WO-292

BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISRICT

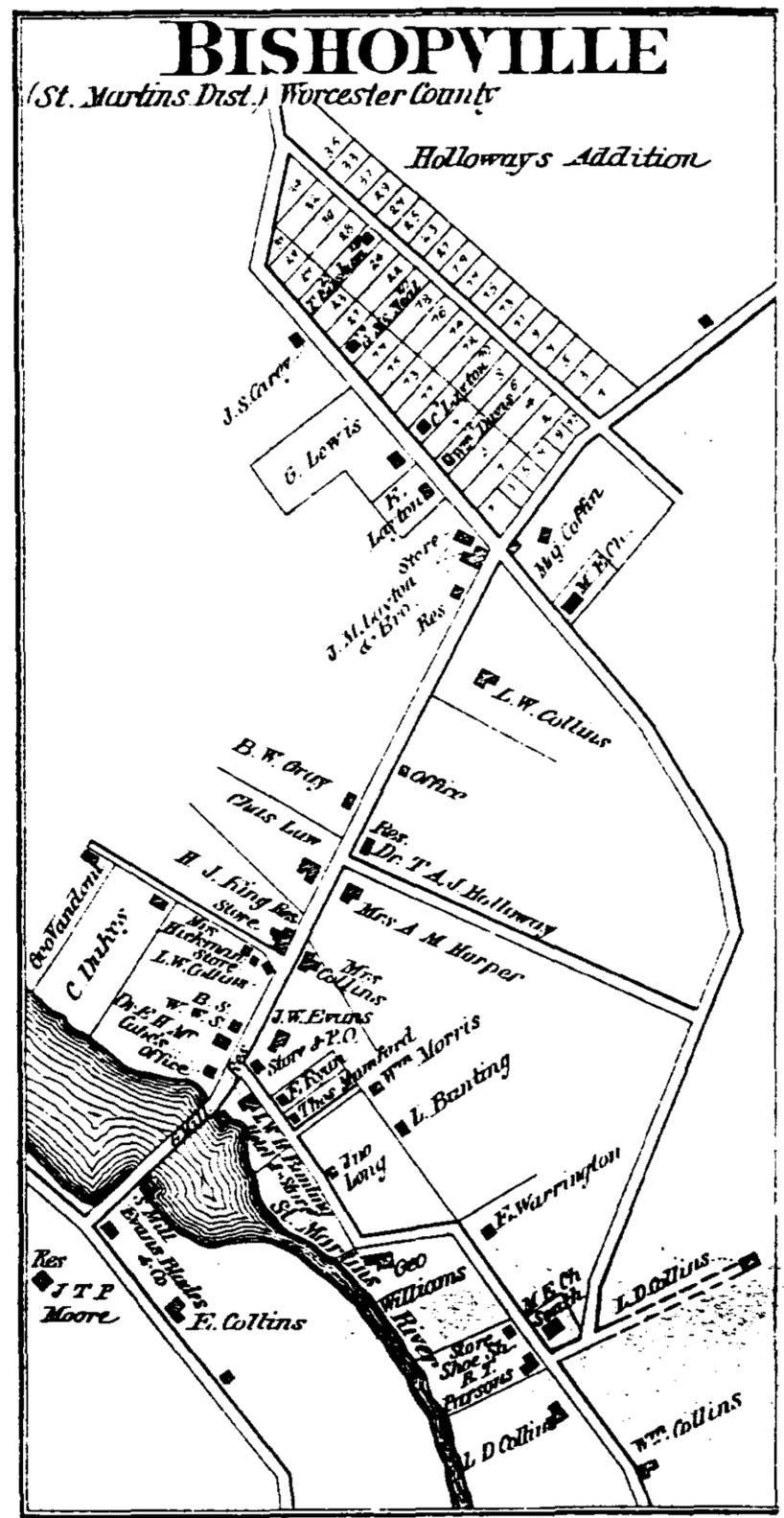
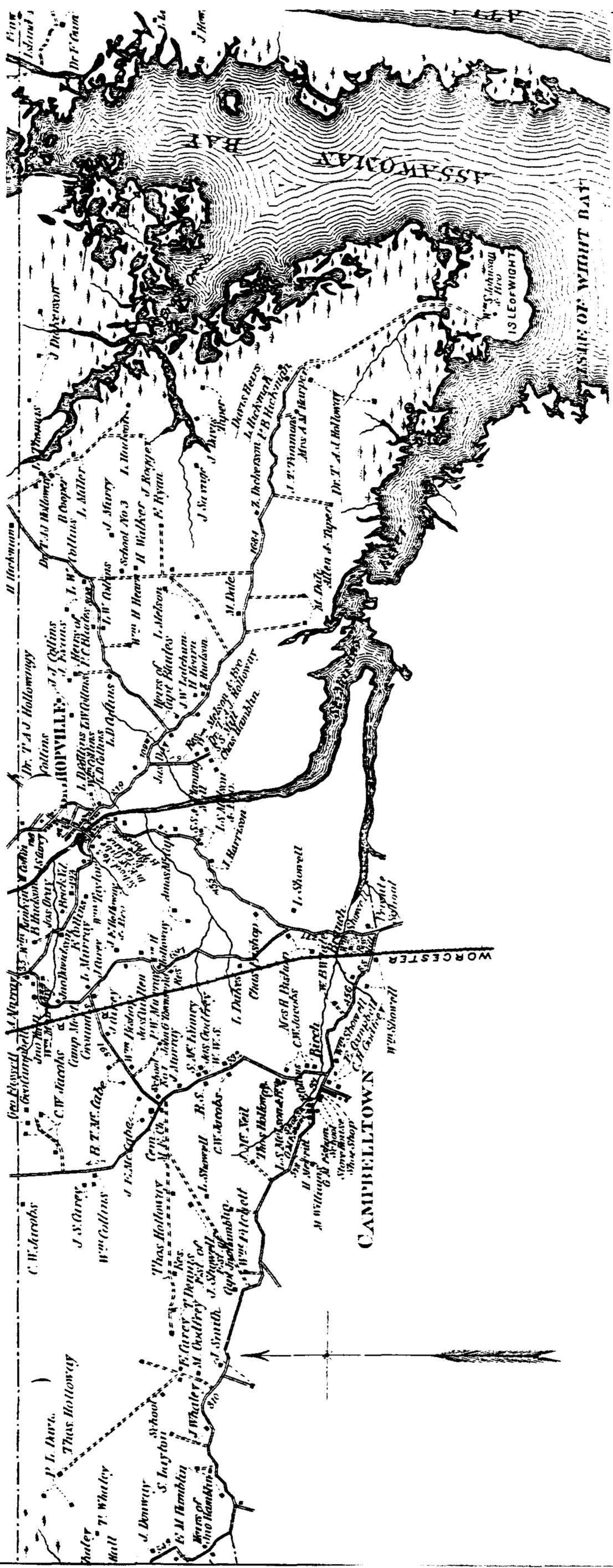
Mill lot chain of title

Page 2

Store house and mills out to the County
Road through the forest leading to
Dagboro together with all and singular
the buildings, improvements, woods, ways,
water courses..."

1877 LACE, GRIFFIN,
AND STEVENSON ATLAS

W1-292



BISHOPVILLE BUSINESS REFERENCES.

- Dr. T. A. J. HOLLOWAY, Physician and Surgeon.
- L. W. H. BUNTING, Dealer in Dry Goods, Notions, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Ready-made Clothing, &c., &c.
- L. S. NELSON & BRO., Surveyors and Dealers in Lumber of all kinds, both hard and soft. Are prepared to ship to any point.
- JOS. M. LAYTON & BRO., Dealers in Boots, Shoes, Notions, Dry Goods, Groceries, &c. The highest price given for country produce in exchange for goods.
- H. J. KING, Dealer in Dry Goods, Notions, Trimmings, Millinery, Fancy Goods, and a large line of Furs. The highest price paid for country produce.

DELAWARE
MARYLAND

LINE

ROAD

SUSSEX CO
WORCESTER CO

WO-292
BISHOPVILLE SURVEY DISTRICT
Selbyville, MD.- DEL. Quadrangle
1967

