

## Historic Buildings in Area Surveyed

By James C. Wilfong Jr.

*The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973); Jul 8, 1972;*

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Washington Post (1877 - 1993)

pg. D10

### An Architectural Approach

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When the Historic American Buildings Survey swept through Maryland in 1936, its researchers apparently liked what they found in Prince George's County. Five years later, on the publication of the Survey Catalog, three illustrations were accorded the Maryland section. Homewood in Baltimore was one of these. The other two related to Prince George's County.

One of these was the floor plan and elevation drawing of Want Water, still standing in ruinous condition in the Broad Creek area near Oxon Hill. The other was a photograph of the bookcase at Mount Lubertia, near Largo. Want Water dates from about 1708. Mount Lubertia is generally accorded a date of 1767.

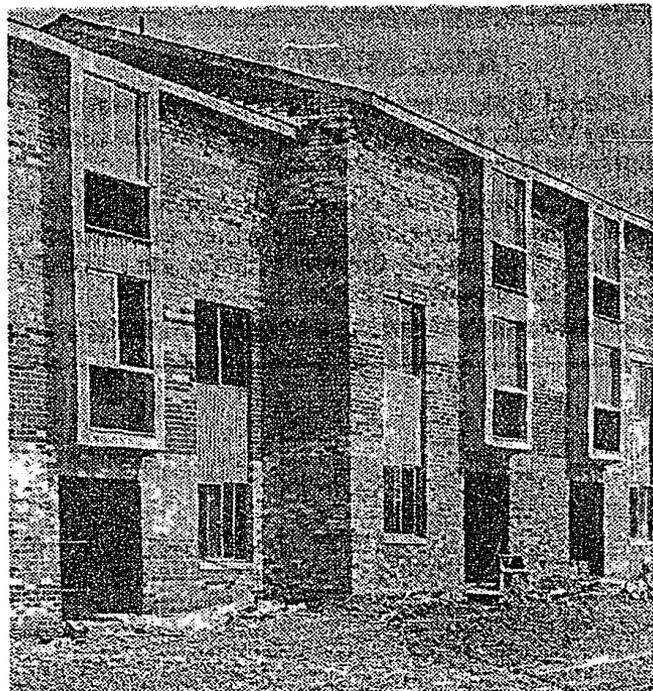
The survey workers had much to choose from. Here were mansion homes as represented by His Lordship's Kindness, Montpelier, Belair, Bellefields, Harmony-Hall, Compton Bassett and Blythewood. The state's only semi-circular bay arose a full two stories at Melford. Hallways with cross-arches existed at Sasscer's Green, Mount Pleasant, Partnership and Compton Bassett. The survey missed Pheasants' Thicket, but here was the county's only chimney pierced by a full-sized doorway. Two ancient homes—Billingsley and Largo — had underground kitchens. Northampton had burned in 1909, but its early 18th century slave quarters still stood. One little frame house on Ardmore Road had what Dr. H. Chandler Forman would later designate as probably the steepest roof pitch in Maryland. Another at Aquasco has a doorway four feet eight inches in height, but this is eclipsed at Talbot County's Anderton, where the opening is precisely four feet high.

Prince George's also had six pre-Revolutionary churches and the survey noted them all. Family cemeteries on front lawns were found to be common and two of the landmark properties possessed a separated family chapels. A secret stairway at Montpelier must have charmed the researchers. Certainly, its handcarv-

ed woodwork, possibly by Buckland himself, has instilled wonder for more than 200 years.

With all of the elegance of this, His Lordship's Kindness, Bestwick and a few other properties of distinction, the survey did not neglect the home of humble cottage styling. Perched on a hillside just south of Upper Marlboro on Croom Station Road, researchers noted the Overseer's House and called

it late 18th century. Another, perhaps a century older, has since come to light on the bank of the Patuxent. This, too, is one of the charms of the county. As landmarks leave the scene through one force or another, others, well-hidden, come to light by word of mouth and take on a statistical importance. A vanished landmark is gone forever, but additions to the list are a joy to behold.



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