Survey No. AA-61

Magi No.

DOE __yes __no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Slave Quarter at Birchheads Chance

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1047 Wrighton Road ___ not for publication

city, town Bristol ___ vicinity of congressional district 29

state Maryland county Anne Arundel

3. Classification

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

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

name Mr. & Mrs. McCarl

street & number 8608 Edmonston Road telephone no.: 474-8441

city, town College Park state and zip code Maryland 20740

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Anne Arundel County Courthouse liber

street & number folio

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one		
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	___ original site		
___ good	___ ruins	_X_ altered	_X_ moved	date of move	After 1880
_X_ fair	___ unexposed				

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

Birchhead's Chance farm at 1047 Wrighton Road in Bristol includes a pre-1840 slave quarter with a post-1880 lean-to addition. The two periods of construction are clearly visible in the quarter cum tenant house. The quarter has been moved and is now situated approximately 200 yards from the main house. Although the building is within sight of the main house, segregation is maintained by a valley separating the two buildings.

The original slave quarter is 16 feet long and 14 1/2 feet deep. It is a one-and-one-half story, gable-roof structure with board-and-batten siding and double struck nails. The quarter is built into the edge of a hill and is constructed of heavy timber framing mortised and tenoned into sills. The south and west sills sit on piers fashioned out of tree stumps. A large earthen mound has been built up under the crawl space, perhaps to support sagging joists. The wood shingled gable roof has been replaced with corrugated tin sheeting. The ceiling joists project beyond the walls and serve as shallow eaves. The attic rafters sit atop a flat false plate; there is no cornice or soffitt. A small, recessed brick stove chimney rises through the west gable.

The front door is centered on the south facade. One circular-sawn stair stringer and a few decaying treads and risers dangle from the threshold. Patched board-and-batten siding covers a small window to the east. The window framing is visible where battens are missing.

The west gable wall is blank except for a square attic window cut in to the north of the chimney stack. Repairs on the wall indicate that the original chimney stack was much larger. The current chimney is a small, squarish stack appropriate for postbellum stove heating, but it is not suitable for the larger chimney and hearth that would be present in an early nineteenth-century structure. However, framing evidence and later siding reveal clear evidence of an earlier fireplace chimney. Evidence along the west foundation also indicates that the quarter has been moved. There is no evidence of a large chimney base at ground level. Thus, the present chimney was introduced after the quarter was moved to its present location.

The north side of the quarter has one 6/6 sash window. The original vertical siding has been covered with later vertical boards fastened with wire nails.

See Continuation Sheet 7/1

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	X agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	X other (specify) black history
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: ___A ___B X C ___D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

Level of Significance: ___national X state ___local

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

1. Geographic Organization:
   Western Shore

2. Chronological/Developmental Period(s):
   Agricultural-Industrial Transition

3. Historic Period Theme(s):
   Architecture and Agriculture

The significance of the quarter at Birchhead's Chance is threefold.

First, the original quarter is a rare survivor of slave housing in Maryland and illustrates the meager conditions under which slaves lived. The antebellum date of construction is confirmed by the heavy timber framing and, more important, by the double struck nails that are typically found from the 1790s to the 1830s. These nails, found in combination with vertical board-and-batten siding suggest a date of circa 1830s.The one-room plan with gable end chimney is typical of slave quarters. The 16 by 14 1/2 foot dimensions are actually smaller than most recorded quarters, but are probably representative of antebellum practice. The slaves adapted their small space for several uses; the attic above the one-room plan was a combination living and storage space.

Second, the slave quarter cum tenant house reveals the modest change in the standard of living of free blacks. The quarter remained unchanged after emancipation, and was not improved until after the 1880s when the addition was constructed. Family records indicate that during the late nineteenth century, the house was occupied by Isabella Belt, Alexander Henson and their four young children. During the early 20th century, the house was inhabited by Frances Henson and her seven children. The postbellum addition may well date to this period when the house would have been most crowded. The addition nearly doubled the living space and provided the privacy of a two-room plan. Yet the resulting house was still a crude structure, roughly finished.

See Continuation Sheet 8/1

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ **Quadrangle scale** _____

UTM **References** do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
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	Diane S. Wasch, Administrator of Architectural Research		
organization	Maryland Historical Trust	**date**	July 6, 1990
street & number	21 State Circle	**telephone**	974-5000
city or town	Annapolis	**state**	Maryland

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

The east end is largely obscured by the postbellum addition. The attic gable, however, is sided with weatherboards and finished with plain rakeboards.

The one-story, 10 by 14 foot addition extends from the quarter's east gable wall. The front wall is slightly set back from the main quarter's facade. The addition is constructed of circular sawn weatherboards nailed to studs with wire nails. The sills, however, are hewn. There is no nogging between the studs. The shed roof slopes down from the quarter's attic gable and the cornice is boxed.

A four-panel door with traces of green paint is centered on the south wall of the lean-to. A 4/4 window is centered on the east wall. The north wall is blank and lies flush with the back wall of the quarter.

The original quarter consists of a single room on the first floor with an unfinished loft above. The main room has an extremely low ceiling, and bulging walls and an uplifted floor heighten the cramped effect. In sections where the earth mound beneath the joists pushes the floor up, the floor to ceiling height is only 5'9". Where the exposed joists span the room the clearance is reduced to 5'3".

Most of the joists are wrapped in old newspapers and magazines; the oldest dateline found was 1933. One unpapered joist reveals pit saw marks. The ceiling is simply the underside of the attic floorboards and is covered with cardboard. The walls are covered with unpainted wallboard which obscures the window on the south wall. A hole reveals newspaper "wallpaper" on the original walls. Shelves are nailed to the south and west walls.

A door has been cut into the quarter's east wall to provide access to the post-1880 addition. Unlike the other walls, the north side of the east wall is not covered with wallboard, and a down brace is revealed.

The whitewashed chimney flue is centered on the west wall. In the southwest corner, a header is fitted between the chimney wall and the first joist, evidence of bracing for a larger stack. A boxed ladder stair rises from the northwest corner to the attic. The ladder is constructed of circular sawn lumber, and the interior of the boxed stair consists of whitewashed board-and-batten siding that has not been covered with wallboard.

See Continuation Sheet 7/2

The interior gable ends of the attic are whitewashed, but there is no other finish in the room. Two small windows were cut into the east gable, but have been covered by the exterior clapboards. The one west gable window is merely an opening with no frame or glass. The common rafter roof has a few lightweight collars with nail hooks. The wide floor boards are circular sawn and may date to the same period as the lean-to addition.

The lean-to addition to the quarter consists of three new walls built against the east gable of the original quarter. Thus, the exterior face of the quarter became the interior wall of the addition. The original boards still show the double struck nails, but the battens have been replaced with boards and wire nails. The other three walls are finished with circular-sawn lapped weatherboards nailed to the inside of the studs. The ceiling follows the slope of the shed roof and is covered with weatherboards on the inside. A few of the quarter's original wood shingles are visible where the shed roof abuts the gable end. The interior of the lean-to is whitewashed.

The fact that the quarter was moved to its new location and received a new addition indicates, however, that the structure was sufficiently sound to warrant the work. Thus the building was probably of a higher caliber than other quarters on the farm.

Finally, the use of double struck nails and board-and-batten siding is an unusual juxtaposition of materials for the period. Board-and-batten construction is associated with mid-century construction and double struck nails were used between circa 1790 to 1830. Typically viewed as an architectural detail popular with the picturesque revivals, board-and-batten siding on a slave quarter raises questions about its use and connotations in the early nineteenth century.

The McCarl family that owns the property has record of the black residents of the old slave quarter. Alexander Henson lived alone in the house until 1960 when the house was abandoned. He was one of the seven children of Frances Henson, all of whom allegedly were raised in the house. Frances Henson was one of four children born during the 1870s and 1880s to Isabella Belt (died 1892) and Alexander Henson. Isabella Henson was the daughter of Eliza Belt, the oldest listed resident in the family records.