Property Name: Thainston
Survey No.: NR-1047; CH-51 (PACS C13)

Property Address 8790 Mitchell Road, vicinity of La Plata, Charles County
Owner Name/Address
Year Built 1865

Description:

Thainston was previously surveyed by J. Richard Rivoire, Architectural Historian, in February 1989 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since the time of the previous survey, Buildings 1 through 15, and Building 27 have not changed. Buildings 16 through 26, and Buildings 28 and 29 were not accessed during the survey.

National Register Evaluation:

Thainston (NR-1047) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in March 1990.

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

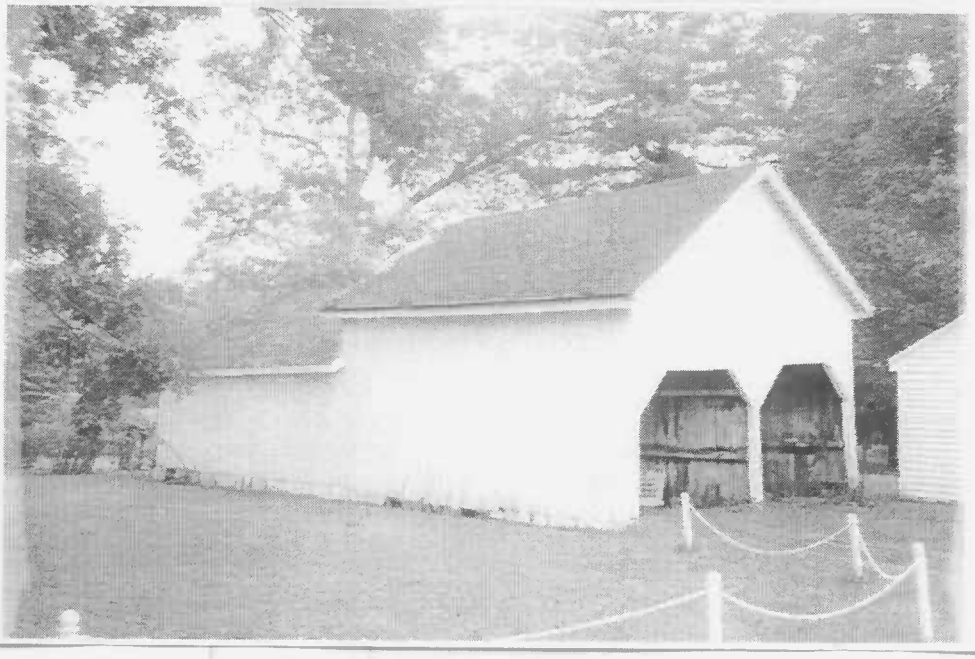
The boundaries of the property consist of 153.38 hectares (379 acres), all of that parcel of land shown on Charles County Tax Map 22, Parcel 165. According to the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, completed in February, 1989, the boundaries of Thainston are "essentially those set at the time the farm was established in the third quarter of the nineteenth century."

MHT CONCURRENCE:
Eligibility _____recommended _____ not recommended
Criteria ___A ___B ___C ___D Considerations___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G ___None
Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date Reviewer, NR program Date

Preparer:
P.A.C. Spero & Company
September 1996

CH-51



CH-51

CN-51

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Thainston CH-51

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Mitchell Road ☐ not for publication

city, town La Plata ☒ vicinity

state Maryland code 024 county Charles code 017 zip code 20646

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
☒ private	☒ building(s)	13	0	buildings
☐ public-local	☒ district	6	0	sites
☐ public-State	☐ site	8	0	structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure	2	0	objects
	☐ object	29	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER Date 1/29/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

CN-51

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90000436 Date Listed: 3/28/90

Thainston	Charles	MD
Property Name	County	State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrus 3/28/90

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

In section 3 of the nomination form this resource has been categorized as building(s). Because the nomination includes buildings, structures, objects, and sites, it should be categorized as a district (per instructions in National Register Bulletin 16). Ron Andrews with the MD SHPO agree with this change. The form is now officially amended to change the category from building(s) to district.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single family	DOMESTIC/single family
DOMESTIC/secondary structure	DOMESTIC/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/process	AGRICULTURE/process
AGRICULTURE/storage	AGRICULTURE/storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
roof SLATE
other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

A two-story, ell-shaped brick house built in 1865 and enlarged early in this century, Thainston stands amid informally landscaped grounds framed by cultivated fields to the south, west and northwest, woodland to the north and northeast, and meadows and Mitchell Road to the southeast. Facing south, the five-bay main block features floor-to-ceiling windows sheltered by a full-width, one-story porch. Set on an east-west axis, the slate covered roof has a cross gable centered on the front and, on the opposite side, two blind paneled chimney stacks. Thainston's original design was that of a T-shaped structure, with its main stair housed in a shallow, tower-like projection centered on the rear elevation. This in turn abutted a frame, kitchen-service wing with a large interior chimney at its north end. The first floor plan of the main block includes a central passage flanked by two rooms, with three bedrooms above arranged in a U-shaped configuration off the rear stair passage. Original interior embellishments include bold window and door architraves, slate mantles, and plaster ceiling cornices and medallions. The rear wing, however, was altered early in this century by brick veneering the north and east elevations of the frame section, and by a brick, two-story extension of its west elevation. A one-story porch extends the full length of the east side of the wing, and off from this are a number of early dependencies, including a wellhouse, a brick dairy, a storage building and a meathouse. To the east of these are the sites of a former icehouse and a frame, pyramid-roofed privy. A frame garage and a large chicken house, both dating from the early-1900s, stand a short distance north of the wing. About 300-yards north of the main residence is a collection of agricultural buildings, consisting of tobacco barns, cattle barns and equipment sheds clustered around a corncrib/granary. Two of these buildings, including the crib/granary, date from the mid-1800s or earlier, with the balance built at various times during the first quarter of this century. Sited in different locations beyond these are three frame tenant houses, all basically structurally sound, but long abandoned and now dilapidated, several associated sheds, a probable early building site, an early well, a pit remaining from a former icehouse, and the former ice ponds. Another early-20th century building, a tobacco barn, stands in a field to the west of the main grouping of agricultural buildings. Near it is what is traditionally said to be the site where the bricks used in constructing the house and dairy were made and fired. Near this is the site of an early barn. Most of the landscaping features proximate to the house itself, including a crescent-shaped planting of boxwood in front, date from the early-1900s. With the exception of the former tenant houses, all of the improvements on the property are in excellent condition.

[X] See continuation sheet for GENERAL DESCRIPTION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The following descriptions of buildings and sites on the Thainston property are keyed to the accompanying site plan on Continuation Sheet number 7/7.

1. **HOUSE** (building - contributing)

Built on an east-west axis, Thainston's 1865 main block is a two story, T-shaped, common bond brick structure whose restrained architecture is fairly typical of mid-nineteenth century residential and commercial buildings in this locality. Its five-bay south facade features four floor-length windows flanking a centered, double door with a three-pane transom. These are sheltered by a full-width porch with square posts supporting a shallow, semi-hipped metal roof. The five second floor windows of this elevation are surmounted by a centered cross-gable the width of the three middle windows. The building's end elevations have a centered first and second floor window, but unbroken gables. There are no exterior openings in the north, rear elevation, where two paneled chimney stacks serving interior fireplaces extend above the eaves. The exposed east elevation of the rear stair tower has a transomed first floor door with an etched glass panel, over which is a window. The slate covered roof of the main block has unornamented, overhanging eaves on all four elevations. All of the window and door openings have shallow flat arches of splayed brick, and the windows are framed by lowered exterior blinds.

The two-story rear wing, altered early in this century from its original appearance, is set back from the east end of the main block, but flush with the latter's west end elevation.

A former frame structure positioned against and extending off from the brick stair tower of the main block, the wing has two doors and two windows at the first floor level of the east elevation that are sheltered by a shed-roofed, full-width porch, and three windows above. There are two first and three second floor windows in its north end, and a projecting three-part bay window and three additional windows in its west wall. The original frame portion of the wing was of one room depth, corresponding to the width of the adjacent porch tower of the main block. In the early 1900s the formerly clapboarded east and north elevations were brick veneered and the west elevation covered by a full-width, two-story brick addition. The original roof, which has an interior chimney at its north end, was left intact, with the roof of the west addition built over the west side of the former. In renovating the wing, whose brick contrasts with - but not markedly so - that of the main block, a narrow vertical channel was left between the old and new walls to distinguish the two parts of the house.

See Continuation Sheet 7/2

The interior of the main block, like its exterior, remains unaltered. The front entrance opens onto a central through passage, with a door at the opposite end of the passage opening onto the rear stair area. The stair, with scrolled spandrels and turned balusters, rises along the north wall of the rear hall, providing a visual focal point when seen from the front entry hall. Two rooms of similar size, each with a fireplace on its north wall, flank the front passage, their high ceilings and large windows providing the impression of light, airy spaciousness. All three principal areas retain their original door and window architraves, and plaster ceiling cornices and medallions. The plaster ornamentation, while of a fairly simple design throughout, differs in degree of complexity from room to room, that of the former east end drawing room or parlor being slightly more elaborate than that of the entry passage, and the plasterwork of the former west dining room being the least formal. The second floor of the main block is divided into three bedrooms off a rear stair passage. The dimensions of the two end bedrooms correspond with those of the rooms below, while the smaller center room is foreshortened to allow for doors to all three rooms opening off the stair hall.

The rear wing originally contained a large north end kitchen served by a wide fireplace opening on its north wall. The kitchen was connected to the main stair by a small hall off from which was a pantry and a second narrow stair providing access to servants' rooms above. The alteration of the wing provided a partial cellar, a dining room, servant's room and cellar entry at the first floor, and two additional second floor bedrooms.

A cursory examination of the original part of the wing did not reveal any conclusive evidence of its having been built before 1865. The roof frame does exhibit some evidence suggesting that it may have been altered or replaced at about the time the main block was built, however. Also, the scored exterior masonry joints of the 1865 stair tower extend behind the roof rafters positioned against its north wall. Other details suggesting that the wing may be older than 1865 is the unusually large size of its kitchen fireplace and the fact that the first floor exterior and interior partition walls are said to be brick nogged.

2. **WELLHOUSE** (structure - contributing)

This one story, frame, gable-roofed structure has a door at one end, a window in each side wall, and shelters a large, cast iron hand pump manufactured in Baltimore. The building and pump probably date form the late-19th century, while the well itself is possibly contemporary with the 1865 house, or even older.

See Continuation Sheet 7/3

3. **DAIRY** (structure - contributing)

A common bond brick structure with a gable roof, the dairy has a batten door centered in its south, side wall, a small louvered window in each end wall, and two slit-like apertures in its rear wall. The brick-floored interior has a plastered ceiling, whitewashed walls, and a low, brick trough along three sides. Measuring 11' 7" square, the dairy was built in 1865.

4. **SHED** (structure - contributing)

Of hewn, mortiсed and tenoned framing, all of which is exposed on the interior, this building has closely spaced wall studs and was probably used for storing foodstuffs. The exterior retains its early random-width clapboards and there is a batten door hung on wrought strap hinges centered on its south side elevation. The shed measures 10' 3" square and is thought to be contemporary with the dairy and meathouse.

5. **MEATHOUSE** (building - contributing)

Framed in a manner nearly identical to the adjacent shed (#4), the meathouse has a door centered in its west end, a wood floor, and was originally used for smoke and salt curing meats. Of the same overall dimensions as the shed, the meathouse probably dates about 1865.

6. **ICEHOUSE** (site - contributing)

The site of the ca. 1865 icehouse is marked by a shallow circular depression. On a slightly lower elevation from the house, the pit would have been about 15' deep, lined with planks, and covered by a floor-like structure. Ice gathered from the ice ponds (#23) and packed between layers of straw, was stored here for domestic use during the summer months.

7. **PRIVY** (site - contributing)

Destroyed in recent years as the result of an accidental fire, this was a square, pyramid-roofed, frame structure believed to have been built circa 1865.

8. **GARAGE** (structure - contributing)

A rectangular, gable-fronted two-part, frame structure that was built in the early 1900s.

9. **CHICKEN HOUSE** (structure - contributing)

A long, low, shed-roofed frame building dating from the early-1900s.

See Continuation Sheet 7/4

10. **CATTLE/HAY BARN** (building - contributing)

This rectangular, gambrel-roofed, frame structure built on a north-south axis, has a large central aisle flanked by stalls and pens with a hayloft above. Circa 1920s.

11. **SMALL BARN** (building - contributing)

A one and one-half story frame building with a gable roof and two doors in its south end wall, this is said to be one of the oldest agricultural buildings standing on the property. Its framing, including hewn, morticed and tenoned timbers, has been extensively reworked, and the original design and function modified to serve other uses. Probably mid-19th century (altered).

12. **CORNCRIB/GRANARY** (structure - contributing)

This multi-use building, with a grain storage room at one end and a corncrib at the other, probably dates from the mid-1800s. Its original morticed and tenoned framing has had some repairs, and its sills and brick support piers are 20th century.

13. **CATTLE/HAY BARN** (building - contributing)

Larger but very similar to #10 and probably built at about the same time.

14. **TOBACCO BARN/ANIMAL SHED** (building - contributing)

A small frame barn with an attached shed, the latter having a hay manger along its rear wall. Early 1900s.

15. **TOBACCO BARN** (building - contributing)

Circa 1900.

16. **BUILDING SITE** (site - contributing)

A cleared area encircled by large older trees, believed to be the site of a former dwelling or barn.

17. **WELL** (structure - contributing)

A brick-lined well, now covered over, that serviced the nearby tenant houses. The well, however, may be older than these buildings.

See Continuation Sheet 7/5

18. **TENANT HOUSE** (building - contributing)

A two-part frame building consisting of a two story main block with an attached shed housing the kitchen. The three first floor rooms are arranged shotgun-fashion. The three-bay facade is located at the south end and is fronted by a shed porch. Now abandoned and deteriorating. Very early 1900s.

19. **CORNCRIB** (structure - contributing)

A small frame crib, now near collapse, associated with #18.

20. **PRIVY** (building - contributing)

A frame dependency of #18 now in ruins.

21. **SHED** (structure - contributing)

A low two-part, multi-use frame structure probably contemporary with #22.

22. **TENANT HOUSE** (building - contributing)

The smallest of the three tenant houses, this is a clapboarded, two-room building with a front porch and a rear kitchen, and is said to have been built in the 1930s. Abandoned and deteriorating.

23. **ICE POND** (object - contributing)

24. **BUILDING SITE** (site - contributing)

A circular depression whose proximity to the ice pond suggest it may be the site of an ice house that either preceded or was used in conjunction with #6.

25. **ICE POND** (object - contributing)

A spring-fed area whose configuration suggests it was utilized for gathering ice during the 19th and early-20th century.

26. **TENANT HOUSE** (building - contributing)

Said to be the oldest of the three tenant houses, this ell-shaped frame structure has a two-story, three-bay main block with a shed-roofed kitchen to the rear. Now abandoned and deteriorating, it was built at about the turn of this century.

See Continuation Sheet 7/6

27. **TOBACCO BARN** (building - contributing)

A frame structure with a full width front shed, this barn was built parallel to an old farm road leading toward Thainston's lower fields and Port Tobacco Creek. Early-1900s.

28. **KILN OR BUILDING SITE** (site - contributing)

Bricks and brick fragments scattered throughout this general area are said to remain from a kiln, here the bricks used in constructing the 1865 house and dairy were molded and fired. Many of these bricks are larger and of a different coloration and texture from those of the house and dairy, however. While Thainston's bricks probably were made on the property, those found here may relate to a building site instead.

29. **TOBACCO BARN SITE** (site - contributing)

The age and appearance of this building is unknown, but it is said to have been the oldest agricultural building remaining on the farm in this century.

See Continuation Sheet 7/7

8. Statement of Significance

CH-51

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☒ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	1865-1940	1865
Agriculture		

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: Faxon, Eben, Architect; Ogle, Charles, Builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Developed between 1865 and the 1930s, Thainston is a farm that is significant in the architectural and agricultural history of Charles County. The Civil War and the end of the institution of slavery upon which southern agricultural production was so dependent had a devastating economic impact on the lower souther Maryland region, particularly Charles and St. Mary's counties. This impact manifested itself in a number of ways, including a cessation of measurable building activity that continued for several decades. A mere handful of architecturally noteworthy buildings date from the second half of the nineteenth century. Of this group, Thainston is the only one to have been built in that especially critical decade immediately following the war. Designed by Eben Faxon, a Baltimore architect, and constructed under the supervision of Charles Ogle, a building contractor also from Baltimore, it is one of a small number of highly important mid-nineteenth century houses in Charles County known to have been designed and/or built by urban-oriented architects and contractors employed from Washington and Baltimore, but the only one for which substantial documentation survives relating to its actual construction. Thainston's spatial configuration, as well as many of its structural and decorative details, are clearly derived from architectural pattern books of the period. It is one of the county's first post-Civil War buildings whose design presaged a final departure from regionally traditional concepts of form and function that otherwise continued to characterize this region's architectural landscape well into the latter half of the nineteenth century. Also of significance is Thainston's unusually large number of surviving original domestic support structures, and the manner they were arranged off the kitchen-service wing of the house. One of these, the brick dairy, built by Charles Ogle in 1865, is of particular importance in a local context for its design and rarity. While most of the agricultural buildings, as well as houses provided for farm and domestic workers, date from the first decades of this century, they, too, add to the historical interest of the site. No collections of farm buildings with late nineteenth or early-twentieth century origins of this stature and size have survived the county's current rapid transformation from rural agrarian

See Continuation Sheet 8/2

☒ See continuation sheet for HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

to urban suburban. Seen as a whole, Thainston's buildings reflect the domestic and agricultural development of a Charles County property from the 1860s to the 1930s. It complements the National Register-listed McPherson's Purchase farm complex of the 1840s in providing an exceptionally valuable record of the county's traditional agrarian economy. With essentially the original boundaries, Thainston provides further record that could reveal information on agricultural undertakings, practices and land uses through the vast acreages of farm fields not significantly disturbed over time.

See Continuation Sheet 8/2

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization:

Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Agriculture-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930
Modern A.D. 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Agriculture
Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning
Government/Law

Resource Type:

Category:

Buildings

Historic Environment:

Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

DOMESTIC/single family
DOMESTIC/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/process
AGRICULTURE/storage

Known Design Source:

Architect - Eben Faxon

See Continuation Sheet 8/3

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Historic Setting

During the early months of 1865, as Thainston was being built, thousands of federal troops remained stationed throughout Charles County, to maintain the same military control they had exercised since October 1861 over a local populace largely sympathetic to the southern cause. Military headquarters were located at Port Tobacco, the then county seat and principal center of commerce located about three miles south of Thainston's site. Union soldiers, often aggressively, guarded the public wharves where the materials used in Thainston's construction were shipped from Baltimore. It was a bleak period in Charles County's history. The war brought about the end of an agricultural system and a social structure largely supported by slave labor, resulting not only in a severely depressed economy, but an apathetic, defeatist attitude among a vast majority of citizens that continued to hamper the county's progress well into this century.

Despite its proximity to the growing urban/industrial centers of Alexandria, Virginia; Washington; and Baltimore, and its accessibility by water and, by the 1880s, rail transportation, Charles County remained relatively isolated, and insulated. Many of those able to do so left the area in the post-Civil War years in search of better opportunities. A large proportion of its once productive, slave-cultivated farmland was abandoned, although agricultural products, augmented by commercial fisheries, remained a chief staple of the local economy. And, it wasn't until the turn of this century that any measurable building activity was resumed, though this was largely confined to the developing railroad town of La Plata, which in 1895 replaced Port Tobacco as county seat, and to a lesser degree, the villages of Bel Alton, Waldorf and Indian Head. In the 1930s and early 1940s, when U.S. Route 301 and the Potomac River Bridge made the area more accessible, Charles County began to finally emerge from its years of economic stagnation and social provincialism. Radical changes in the county's population, growth patterns and economic base started taking place in the 1950s, and today its former rural agrarian landscape is being rapidly overtaken by intense residential, commercial and industrial development.

The Civil War and the end of the institution of slavery on which southern agricultural production was so dependent had a devastating economic impact on the lower Southern Maryland region, particularly Charles and St. Mary's counties. This manifested itself in a number of ways, including a cessation of measurable building activity that continued for several decades. While a large percentage of Charles County's many surviving historic buildings were either constructed or extensively renovated during the prosperous years of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a mere handful considered architecturally noteworthy date from the second half of that century. Of this latter, very elite group, Thainston is the only one to have been built in that especially critical decade immediately following the war. Designed by Eben Faxon, a Baltimore architect, and constructed under the supervision

See Continuation Sheet 8/4

of Charles Ogle, a building contractor also from Baltimore, it is one of a small number of highly important mid-nineteenth century houses in Charles County known to have been designed and/or built by urban-oriented architects and contractors employed from Washington and Baltimore, but the only one for which substantial documentation survives relating to its actual construction. Thainston's spatial configuration, as well as many of its structural and decorative details, clearly derived from architectural pattern books of the period, and is one of the county's first post-Civil War buildings whose design presaged a final departure from regionally traditional concepts of form and function that otherwise continued to characterize this region's architectural landscape well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Also of significance is Thainston's unusually large number of surviving original domestic support structures, and the manner they were arranged off the kitchen-service wing of the house. One of these, the brick dairy, built by Charles Ogle in 1865, is of particular importance in a local context for its design and rarity. While most of the agricultural buildings, as well as houses provided for farm and domestic workers, date from the first decades of this century, they, too, add to the historical interest of the site.

No collections of farm buildings with nineteenth or early-twentieth century origins of this stature and size have survived the county's current rapid transformation from rural agrarian to urban suburban. Seen as a whole, Thainston's buildings reflect the domestic and agricultural development of the property from the 1860s to the 1930s, and complement the National Register-listed McPherson's Purchase farm complex of the 1840s in the same county, providing an exceptionally valuable, physically tangible illustration of what future historians may well view as the final chapters in this region's 300-year agricultural history, and the demise of the self-sufficient family farmstead.

Yet another factor contributing to Thainston's significance in a local context is its direct association with one of the county's most historically prominent families, the Mitchells. In every succeeding generation, from the American Revolution to the present day, the Mitchells distinguished themselves in the areas of law and politics at both a local and state level. Of particular importance to historians is the fact that there survives several extraordinary manuscript collections recording in minute detail nearly every possible facet of the Mitchell's domestic, business and political activities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thainston, very much an integral part of this history, stands on land that has continued in family ownership since the beginning years of the eighteenth century, and is one of five Mitchell homes that formerly stood on several contiguous tracts that once constituted one of Charles County's largest and most productive antebellum plantations.

See Continuation Sheet 8/5

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

RESOURCE HISTORY

In the annals of the Mitchell family it is said that Thainston was built by General Walter H.J. Mitchell (-1870) for his daughter, Emily Ellen, immediately following the death of his first grandchild, Emily Ellen's infant daughter, Ellen. It is apparent from Mitchell's own writings that he was deeply affected by the sudden loss of this child and concerned about the health and safety of his daughter to whom he was particularly attached and who was pregnant with her second child. By building Thainston for Emily Ellen, who since her marriage had lived with her husband in the then isolated, and then Union occupied, southwestern section of the county, Mitchell was able to bring his daughter and her family into closer physical proximity and the arms of parental safety.

This traditional history is supported by contemporary manuscripts relating to the Mitchell family and the building of Thainston. While an interesting facet of Thainston's history - providing the reason why Mitchell built Thainston at that particular time and in that location - it does not address an even more intriguing and significant aspect: that Thainston was built by a slave-owning planter who, despite his pro-southern secessionist stance, had managed to weather the economic devastation experienced by most countians, the result of astute investments in the North. At the time Thainston was built, Charles County still suffered the economically and morally debilitating effects resulting from its treatment as occupied territory by the federal government. The war was not yet over and thousands of Union soldiers were stationed throughout the county when Thainston's bricks were made and other materials used in its construction were being shipped from Baltimore by boat to the wharf at Port Tobacco, and then hauled from there by wagon to the site. General Mitchell, it can be said, was "a survivor", and the building of Thainston was a clear, and perhaps intentional, statement of that fact.

The Resource History is presented in three parts. First is the Property History, which explains the ownership of the Thainston property as it descended through nine generations, with particular emphasis on the portion of the property on which the house and ancillary domestic and agricultural buildings are located. The second part, Thainston, discusses the building of the house and the physical development of the property between 1865 and the 1940s. The third, The Mitchells, reviews the history of the Mitchell family from the Revolution to this decade, the extraordinary amount of documentary material associated with them, and how both contribute to Thainston's architectural and historical significance. Walter Jenifer Mitchell is discussed in this last section.

See Continuation Sheet 8/6

THE PROPERTY

The site Mitchell chose for his daughter's home was near the northernmost end of his plantation, about three-quarters of a mile from Linden (NR, CH-48). This part of Mitchell's plantation, which by that time totalled more than 2,000 acres, was known as Friendly Hall, a tract of about 500 acres whose ownership he assumed when his wife Mary Fergusson Mitchell, died intestate in 1855.[1]

Born in Charles County in 1809 to a highly respected and affluent family, the first of whom immigrated from Scotland in the early 1760s and by the 1780s had become one of Southern Maryland's leading merchants, Mary Fergusson Mitchell was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Turner Fergusson.[2] When she was 17 she inherited the Friendly Hall property from her grandmother, Mary Beale Turner, whose dwelling plantation it had been, subject to a life estate vested in her mother, Elizabeth.[3]

Mary Turner's Friendly Hall plantation was composed of two adjoining tracts, one called Durham, 300 acres, and the other Barbadoes, 200 acres. The former had been acquired by Turner partly by assignment and partly by purchase following the death of her father, John Beale, Jr.[4] This acreage had formerly been part of a larger tract of the same name Beale's stepmother, Elinor Bayne Beale, had come to own through inheritance and patent in 1670 and 1676.[5] The 200 acres of Barbadoes, a subdivision of a 1,000-acre tract granted to Elizabeth Wharton in 1673, had been purchased by Mary Turner's husband, merchant/planter/legislator Zephaniah Turner, in 1776.[6]

A resurvey to correct the boundaries dividing two parts of Durham owned by Horatio Clagett and Mary Turner, recorded in 1804, shows that Turner's share encompassed 323 acres and Clagett's 161.[7] Horatio Clagett's part of Durham, later purchased by General Mitchell and renamed Linden, had come to his possession on his marriage to Catherine Barnes, whose mother Elizabeth Beale Barnes, was a sister of Mary Turner and an heir of John Beale, Jr.[8]

A survey plat included as part of the 1804 record, when compared to later surveys, proves conclusively that the site General Mitchell selected for his daughter's house lay about a quarter-mile south of the northern boundary of Mary Turner's part of Durham, which line also formed the southern boundary of the 200 acres of Barbadoes Mary inherited on the death of her husband in 1796.[9] This is further confirmed in a 1728 deed in which John Digges, the grandson of Elizabeth Wharton who sold the 200 acres of Barbadoes to Dr. John Parnham that Zephaniah Turner was to purchase in 1776, described this land as beginning at a marked white oak standing by the fresh of Port Tobacco being the northernmost boundary of a parcel of land now in the possession of John Beale, "then running east and binding on Durham's north boundary."[10] In a deposition taken in 1803 to locate the "lost" boundary points of Durham, Edward Hamilton, then 43, related that when he was a small boy he accompanied Zephaniah Turner to the stump of an old white oak tree. After placing

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several stones around the stump, "the said Turner cut a switch, then threatened to whip (Hamilton) at which (Hamilton) being alarmed the said Turner said he did not mean to hurt him, that he did it for the purpose of making him remember that this was the last bound tree of John Beale's land called Durham."[11]

There are numerous early references to buildings on the property Mary Turner called Friendly Hall. For instance, by 1737 the 200 acres of Barbadoes Zephaniah Turner purchased in 1776 is known to have been the site of a dwelling house occupied and presumably built by John Parnham, Jr.[12] In 1746, Parnham, by then a prosperous merchant, moved from Barbadoes to a newly built house, known today as Stagg Hall (NR), in the nearby port town and county seat of Port Tobacco (NR). From that year until its sale to Turner, the 200 acres were leased to tenants.[13] The 1783 tax assessment records for Charles County describe the improvements to the property then in existence as "a new clapboard dwelling house, a kitchen, quarter, corn and meat houses, and a tobacco house valuable only for the nails."[14]

It is known as well that John Beale, Sr., (ca. 1674-1751), whose wife Elinor died before 1719, had occupied the Durham lands beginning shortly after their marriage in about 1700.[15] In 1783 the three daughters and only surviving heirs of his son, John, Jr. (1700-1754), are recorded as each owning 150 acres of Durham. The 150 acres listed in the tax assessments of that year in the name of Zephaniah Turner, in right of his wife Mary (and that part of Durham on which Thainston stands), were improved by "a small dwelling house with brick chimneys, 2 quarters newly covered, a cornhouse and 2 tobacco houses much out of repair, a milk and cellar house (and) a good tobacco house." The 150 acres owned by Mary Turner's then unmarried sister, Eleanor (that part of Durham on which the Charles County Community College presently stands), was improved by "a common dwelling house with brick chimneys, a kitchen, quarter, corn, meat and spinning houses all much out of repair, a small new store house and (a) tobacco house." The third 150-acre parcel, owned by Henry Barnes in right of his wife Elizabeth was described as having on it "a small unfinished dwelling house, (a) new kitchen, (and) meat, corn and tobacco houses." (It was this last of the three parts of Durham and the house then standing that General Mitchell purchased in 1838 and, after enlarging the house, named Linden.)[16]

Of the buildings recorded as standing on these three parts of Durham, which were the same lands owned by Horatio Clagett and Mary Turner in 1804, only the oldest part of Linden and, possibly, the rear kitchen-service wing of Thainston survive. The former having been the house of Henry and Elizabeth Barnes and later Horatio and Catherine Clagett, and the latter, only possibly, a portion of the house standing on the 150 acres listed in the name of Zephaniah Turner.[17]

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In 1856, following the death of his wife, General Mitchell advertised a major portion of his dwelling plantation for sale. Estimated to contain 1,500 acres, he described it as made up of "three fine estates, adjoining each other, and all lying upon and embracing a portion of the Port Tobacco Valley: First, Linden, my present residence; and second, Friendly Hall, and third, Hanson Hill ... There are on these farms three dwellings and all necessary out-houses."[18]

When this advertisement was published it is known that there was a house in existence at Hanson Hill that had been the home of John Josias Hanson, from whose heirs Mitchell had purchased the property earlier that year. This together with the General's home at Linden, accounts for two of the three dwelling houses mentioned. The third dwelling Mitchell referred to may have been standing on what later became Thainston, or that part of Friendly Hall Mitchell devised to his oldest daughter, Elizabeth, on his death in 1870.[19]

A building contract executed between Bettie (Elizabeth) Mitchell and Israel Griffith in 1873 for completion of a house begun a few years earlier on Bettie's share of Friendly Hall includes references to an older building then standing. In one of the last paragraphs of the agreement it was stipulated that Griffith was "to pull down the kitchen of the old house and make the portion left standing secure where it joins the (new) kitchen."[20] Earlier associated land records suggest this may have been the dwelling known to have been occupied by Mary Turner's sister, Eleanor Halkerson, in 1795.[21]

Similarly, letters addressed to General Mitchell regarding the construction of Thainston contain questions about repairs to "the old wood shingled roof" of a building that in the context of their use suggests that an existing structure on the site may have been incorporated into the design of the new house. If so, it is possible that it was the house recorded as standing on Turner's 150-acre share of Durham in 1783.[22]

THAINSTON

On June 16, 1865, Charles Ogle, a Baltimore City building contractor, wrote General Mitchell responding to a letter received the previous week. Much of its contents pertain to final interior finish work on a house subsequent letters revealed to be Thainston. This particular letter, the first in a series written by Ogle to Mitchell between June 1865 and July 1866, is of interest for his reference to an earlier visit to the site by "Mr. Faxon," a Baltimore architect, and his (Ogle's) inference that Mitchell was demanding more of him than his contract allowed: "It seems to me you fear I will make something by the job, but I think if I get out of it free of debt I will be well off. Others that I have built for, without any exceptions, wished me to make something for my trouble, and your job has been more troublesome than any I ever had."[23]

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The date of this letter and Ogle's references to having expected the painter to finish his work the following week and a tinner he would furnish to install guttering, suggest the house was substantially completed by that time. Work on the design, attributed to Faxon, and constructon of the brick portion of the house had obviously commenced some months previously, perhaps before Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Construction was undoubtedly well underway when thousands of federal troops and civilian detectives descended on the area in their aggressive search for Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth.[24]

By August 1865 the house was ready for occupancy, and on the 30th of that month Ogle wrote Mitchell requesting that their account be settled. Ogle suggested that this could be arranged between Mitchell's nephew, Richard, who handled Mitchell's business interests in Baltimore, and the architect, Faxon. Ogle also asked that tools and miscellaneous building materials left at the site be returned "by the first boat," saying that "your colored man up at the house, Nick, promised to gather them all up and haul them down (to the landing near Port Tobacco) for me whenever you told him."

On September 11, 1865, Ogle acknowledged receipt of $500.00 from Mitchell, though saying he "expected at least $1,000.00." Mention is made in the letter of a porch bannister, fro which he said he had earlier offered "to get a pattern and send down for you to adopt," as well as work done on completing the brick dairy.

On the 12th of the following month, Ogle again wrote Mitchell complaining about the fact their account had not been settled: "I got you letter yesterday stating you would send your accounts as soon as you got them ready. At the rate you are getting them ready, if I had a house to build, and in proportion to the amount of exertion required, it would take about fifty years. My wife says you are retaliating for waiting on me for your house, although I did all in my power to give it to you. If you but used half the exertion the matter would have been settled long ago." Ogle's concluding comment that "if I had received the dimensions of the porch a week sooner it could have been there now," suggests that the framing of the porch referred to was pre-cut in Baltimore and shipped by water to the site. If so, it is conceivable that this was also true of other framing used in building the house. Bills of freight submitted to Mitchell in Ogle's name show that nearly all of Thainston's materials, including porch columns, doors, window sash and shutters, glass, nails and hardware, door and window jambs and trim, and roofing slate all originated from Baltimore. References are made in Ogle's letters to bricklayers working on the job, of the building's masonry surfaces, only sand and lime and masonry tools and equipment were sent to the site, supporting the belief that the bricks used in building the house and dairy were molded and fired on the property.

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Mitchell's debt to Ogle still remained unpaid as late as June, 1866, apparently because of a dispute between the two over the final balance. In a letter written on June 27th, Ogle refers to an award in his favor reached by arbitration between the General's nephew, Richard Mitchell, and Faxon, and threatened to "put the matter in other hands for collection," though at the same time expressing the hope that he will have "no further trouble ... still believing you are a man able to fulfill your obligations."

Two weeks later Mitchell received a letter from Henry Clay Dallam, a Baltimore attorney representing Ogle, who asserted that an award by arbitration had been made that Mitchell had failed to honor, and that there remained a balance of $631.98, though Ogle claimed the award, $931.98, "did not give him by 3 or $400.00 what he was justly entitled to (but that he) was willing ... as a compromise, to take it, rather than have a protracted (and) costly litigation over it." Dallam's was the last in a package of correspondence and bills relating to Ogle's work Mitchell preserved, and it is assumed the matter was finally settled.

The date that Mitchell's daughter and son-in-law actually moved into the house is not known, though it probably occurred sometime during the late fall or winter of 1865 and, according to family tradition, before the birth of their second child, Elizabeth.

The house Faxon is credited with designing is architecturally similar to another Charles County house, Ellenwood (CH-33), in its T-shaped plan and the placement of the kitchen-service rooms in the rear wing. Built for Marshall Chapman in 1857, Ellenwood is a five-bay brick house that, though larger than Thainston, shares other architectural and decorative details as well. Unfortunately, very little is known regarding Ellenwood's architect or any aspects relating to its construction, though it is of interest that the Chapmans, like the Mitchells, had close business and social ties to Baltimore during the period when the two houses were built. Another T-shaped house in the county that can be related to Thainston and Ellenwood, though it displays a higher degree of architectural exuberance reflective of the period in which it was built, is Evergreen (CH-135), constructed in 1874 in the village of Bryantown (NR, CH-369). Of these three, Thainston is the only one to have its main stair housed in a cross hall at the end of a central through passage, and its chimneys positioned on the back wall of the main block. There was, however, one house in the county whose plan was nearly identical to that of Thainston: the house built by Emily Ellen's sister, Bettie, on the lower half of the original Friendly Hall tract, less than a half-mile from Thainston. This building, which Bettie Mitchell contracted Israel Griffith to complete in 1873, was razed following the sale of the property in 1965.

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In a local context, Thainston's outbuildings are nearly as significant as the house, especially in their unusual ell-shaped arrangement off the rear wing. All are positioned according to their order of importance to the domestic activities carried out in the kitchen-service portion of the residence, and undoubtedly once framed a kitchen yard. On those few local historic properties that retain their original domestic dependencies, these structures are generally strung out in a line, or else seem to have been haphazardly placed around the rear or to one side of the dwelling. Thainston's dependencies, which exceed in number those of any other recorded county property, were obviously arranged according to a deliberate plan. Also, the brick dairy, while not dissimilar to such buildings in Maryland's northern and northeastern counties, is of a design that is locally unique. Thus, the physical arrangement of these buildings, and the distinctive architecture of the dairy, suggest they might well have been part of Faxon's overall design. If so - and there is clearly no reason not to believe this to be true - then it makes Thainston one of the region's most important mid-nineteenth century properties in the area of architectural and social history.

On a Sunday evening toward the end of March, 1870, General Mitchell died at his home, Linden. His will, dated September 25, 1869, devised the lower part of Friendly Hall, together with a detached tract of 93 acres composed of parts of Durham and Barbadoes, to his daughter Elizabeth (Bettie). To Emily Ellen Mitchell, he bequeathed "the balance of Friendly Hall and the woodland adjoining" to be held in trust by his son, attorney John Hanson Mitchell. In preparing his will General Mitchell was very specific as to the boundaries of the various parts of his plantation he divided among his five surviving children, and of these Thainston is the only one whose boundaries have remained essentially unchanged.[25]

The extent of improvements William and Emily Ellen Mitchell may have made to the property, which they named Thainston after an ancestral estate in Scotland, is not known. Other than the house, the earliest domestic dependencies and the older agricultural buildings discussed in Section 7, there are no existing structures that show conclusive evidence of having been built before 1900. William H. Mitchell died in 1908. Emily Ellen Mitchell continued to live at Thainston until her death in 1921.[26]

Since Emily Ellen died intestate, Thainston passed directly to her two surviving children, Edith Mae Mitchell Jenifer and Walter Jenifer Mitchell. In 1926 Edith Mae Jenifer sold her half-interest in Thainston to her brother, Walter. Walter J. Mitchell is generally credited with the twentieth century agricultural improvements and the alteration and enlargement of the rear wing of the house, though some of these changes clearly occurred before 1921. No further improvements of any significance were made to the property after about 1940. On Walter Mitchell's death in 1955, Thainston was jointly inherited by three of his children, whose heirs are the current owners.[27]

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THE MITCHELLS

Thainston can be said to be one of Charles County's most visible and best known historic landmarks, particularly for its architectural significance and association with the Mitchells, a family that has remained in the forefront of the county's economic, political and social life for over two hundred years.

The first of this family to settle in Charles County was Hugh Mitchell, who immigrated to Maryland from Scotland in the mid-1700's. In 1760, Hugh Mitchell, then living in Port Tobacco, conveyed to his brother John, "of the City of Glasgow," a house and lot in Port Tobacco. Two years later John, of the City of Glasgow in North Britain, Gent.," purchased an additional contiguous lot, with houses and garden, from William Eilbeck. In 1764, John Mitchell, "of the City of Glasgow (but) now in Charles County in the Province of Maryland, Merchant," sold to Daniel Jenifer two lots in Port Tobacco, one being the lot "bought of his brother Hugh and being the lot on which the said John's Store House now stands," and the other "on which the said John has a brick dwelling house, kitchen and garden." The fact this sale occurred the same year of Hugh's death, and the wording of these conveyances, suggests that Hugh Mitchell probably acted as a factor for his brother, John.[28]

Hugh Mitchell married Anne Hanson, the daughter of Judge Walter Hanson (1711/12-1794), by whom he had at least three children, daughters Catherine and Jane, and a son, John.[29] The union between the Hanson and Mitchell families resulting from Hugh's marriage has been preserved in the use of the names, Walter and Hanson, in descending generations of the Mitchell family to the present day.

John Mitchell, Hugh's son, was born in 1760. His first wife, Lucy Stoddert, was a niece of Maryland Governor and Revolutionary War leader, General William Smallwood, by whom he had one son, John Heabard Truman Stoddert Mitchell. (William Heabard (a/k/a Heaberd) Mitchell, the husband of Emily Ellen Mitchell, was a grandson of John H.T.S. Mitchell.) Following Lucy Stoddert Mitchell's death John Mitchell married Catherine Barnes, and had four additional children, the youngest being Walter Hanson Jenifer Mitchell.[30]

John Mitchell, who styled himself "a Captain in the Army of the United States" in a 1780 deed, served with distinction during the Revolution in Smallwood's famed Maryland Line, and was one of the original members of the Society of the Cincinnati. He died in 1812, and his wife Catherine two years later. In 1857 their son, Walter, erected a monument over their graves on which he said of his father, "He was one of the Old Maryland Line in times that tried men's souls, and many hard fought fields attested his valor in defense of his country and his rights." In a Fourth of July oration delivered in Port Tobacco in 1860, General Walter Mitchell spoke of the bravery of "... that company of noble and daring youths who composed a part of the

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Old Maryland Line whose deeds of valor first displayed on the bloody field of Long Island, were repeated ... in almost every other hard fought battle of the Revolution. I have heard these events, and when but a boy, o'er and o'er again recounted by my venerated father ..."[31]

Walter H.J. Mitchell, arguably one of Charles County's most prominent and influential public leaders during the 1850s and 1860s, was about 13 years old when his mother died. He was apparently raised in the household of his elder half-brother, John H.T.S. Mitchell, until he was old enough to be sent to school. On graduation from Yale College in 1823, Mitchell returned to Charles County and opened a law office in Port Tobacco. As an attorney, Mitchell enjoyed considerable success thus enabling him to pursue other interests and opportunities, ranging from farming and land speculation to outside commercial and industrial investments, most of the latter in the North. By 1852, after several years of service as clerk of the county court, he "retired" from his law practice to devote his attention to another consuming interest: politics.[32]

"In state politics Walter Mitchell had become a leading figure in the Democratic Party at a time when politicians from Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore held control of the state legislature - ensuring the passage of bills friendly to their economic interests in a tobacco-planting, slave-holding society. In August of 1853, he was narrowly defeated for the party's gubernatorial nomination after a dead-locked convention in Baltimore cast 33 ballots.

"Early in 1861, the Baltimore Conference Convention met, in defiance of the governor, to chart an independent course for Maryland in the rapidly developing crisis precipitated by South Carolina's secession. Walter Mitchell was one of five commissioners sent by the convention, in March, 1861, to Richmond. Their task was to work out a common course of action with the State of Virginia; but, they arrived too late and could only present their memorial to a legislature already determined to join the Confederacy.

"General Mitchell was one of the leaders of the secessionist sentiment in a community largely committed to the southern cause. In April, 1861, Massachusetts troops were met with mob violence as they passed through Baltimore on their way to Washington. At a public meeting held in Port Tobacco, the General and other prominent Charles Countians passed a series of resolutions supporting the resistance of the citizens of Baltimore to the northern forces.

"After the war, Walter Mitchell remained active in political affairs and served as a delegate to the Maryland Constitutional Convention of 1867, called to rewrite the generally unpopular wartime Constitution of 1864. The printed proceedings of that body indicate General Mitchell took an active part representing the

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conservative views of his constituency, often finding himself in the minority position. At the final tally, he cast an affirmative vote for the completed document - possibly agreeing with his colleague, Mr. Dent of St. Mary's County, who explained 'yea' as a vote against the Constitution of 1864."[33]

Mitchell's political legacy was preserved to a degree by his youngest son, John Hanson Mitchell, a noted trial attorney, though not in the arenas of state or national politics. Nor does this son figure directly in Thainston's history, beyond the fact that he was named trustee of his sister's inherited estate, in which capacity he remained until his death in 1901. It is also traditionally said that the naming of the property Thainston originated with John, who had visited an ancestral Scottish estate of that name while a law student in Heidelberg, Germany.[34]

Two later members of the Mitchell family who attained local and state-wide prominence, and who are directly associated with Thainston, were General Mitchell's grandson, Walter Jenifer Mitchell (1871-1955), and more recently, the latter's son, James Craik Mitchell (1905-1989).

Born at Thainston in 1871 and the only son of William H. and Emily Ellen Mitchell, Walter Jenifer Mitchell achieved considerable stature both as an attorney and as the articulate editor of the Times-Crescent newspaper, the local "mouthpiece of the Democratic Party," at the turn of the century. Mitchell led an extraordinarily active public life. His 20-year political career included such influential positions as Majority Floor Leader and President of the Maryland Senate (1931-1934) during the Ritchie administration. In 1934 he was appointed Chief Judge of the local Circuit Court and a judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals. Mitchell was the "talented and fearless" editor of the Times-Crescent for nearly forty years, and despite his political and judicial obligations maintained a successful law practice and numerous business and charitable interests.[35]

Judge Mitchell died in 1955, leaving Thainston, where he had lived his entire life, to his widow, Florence Campbell Jenifer Mitchell, and three of his children, Mary Emily, Walter Jenifer and James Craik Mitchell as joint tenants. Among other bequests in his will he left to his son, Walter, Jr., "the 1931 Gavel with which I presided over the Maryland Senate, as a memento of the days that are no more."[36]

James Craik Mitchell, Walter J. Mitchell's youngest son, was born at Thainston in 1905 and, like his father, lived there his entire life. After graduating from law school he established a law practice in La Plata. Following his father's judicial appointments in 1934, he assumed the role of editor and publisher of the Times-Crescent, a position he retained for more than forty years. Like his father and great-grandfather, he led an active (though not necessarily as visible) public life, and in 1970 was appointed a judge of the Circuit Court. One of Charles County's most

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highly respected individuals of this century, about whom it was once said that he inherited from his father "the abilities and judgement to early become a successful and dedicated man of business, and the one who succeeds to his chosen profession all of (his father's) talent with the pen and powers of comprehension, plus an overshare of his father's faculty for hiding his light under a bushel," James Craik Mitchell died at Thainston at the age of 83 as this nomination was being prepared.[37]

Viewed alone, the various accomplishment of descending members of the Mitchell family outlined above might not outwardly appear to have a direct bearing on Thainston, but in fact it is a very important element of its historical significance.

While there were a number of local families who, like the Mitchells, attained and held positions of similar (or greater) stature over the course of several generations - such as the Hansons and Jenifers of the eighteenth century and the Chapmans and Stones of the nineteenth century - none maintained a comparable level of prominence and influence that continued generation after generation from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day. What makes this family particularly special is the fact that their history, so inexorably intertwined with that of this county and region, is documented by several outstanding manuscript collections. The major portion of these collections centers on the public life of General Walter H.J. Mitchell, his son, John Hanson Mitchell, and the Mitchell's family life at Linden, Hanson Hill (CH-160) and Thainston from the 1830s to 1989.

Efforts are currently being made to bring these papers, numbering many thousands of items of unparalleled scope, together as a single collection to be housed at the Southern Maryland Studies Center of the Charles County Community College. The significance of this collection as a major source of primary information on the agricultural, economic, material, social and political history of this locality to present and future scholars is obvious. Thainston, which remains in family ownership, is very much a physically and historically integral part of this unique resource.[38]

SOURCES:

NOTE:
All Equity and Court Proceedings, Land and Probate records cited are at the Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Liber and folio numbers are given as: Liber/folio.

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Abbreviations:
HR: Hall of Records, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.
SMSC: Southern Maryland Studies Center, Learning Resources Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, Maryland.

1. Sarah L. Barley, et al, "A Window on the Past: The Mitchells of Linden, 1845-1870," (Charles County Community College, 1984), p.2-3.

2. Ibid., p.2. (Additional biographical and genealogical data on the Fergusson family is contained in the J. Richard Rivoire Collection, SMSC, under "Mulberry Grove" and "Stagg Hall," and the Fergusson genealogical files of the Historical Society of Charles County, SMSC.)

3. Wills: 15/189.

4. Equity Proceedings, March Term, 1811, pp.336-376.

5. Ibid. HR: Patents: 10/67.

6. Deeds: V#3/90. Edward C. Pappenfuse, et al, A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789, Vol. II, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p.844.

7. Court Proceedings, 1802-1807, p.429.

8. Equity Proceedings, 1811, p.354, 356, 359-363, 368.

9. Wills: AK#11/213

10. Deeds: L#2/450

11. Court Proceedings, 1802-1807, p.429.

12. Wills: AC #4/89; Inventories: 36/9.
Deeds: Z#2/264. Rivoire Collection: "Stagg Hall," SMSC.

13. Ibid.

14. HR: 1783 Tax Assessments, District 6, Land.

15. Equity Proceedings, 1811, p.336-378.

16. HR: 1783 Tax Assessments, District 6, Land.

17. Court Proceedings, 1802-1807, p.429.

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18. Barley, et al, p.2.

19. Deeds: WM#2/443, JS#1/153,374. Wills: JS#17/15,452.

20. Private Collection.

21. Deeds: N#4/418.

22. Walter H.J. Mitchell papers. Private Collection. (See Below.)

23. The Ogle letters are part of a collection of documents associated with Walter H.J. Mitchell and the Mitchell family of Linden. Privately owned, this collection is the largest and most important of the Mitchell family papers. It is anticipated that these records will be sorted, catalogued and deposited with the SMSC in the near future.

24. Eben Faxon is listed in Wood's Baltimore City Directory for 1865 as an architect residing at 71 St. Paul Street and gives 26 N. Charles Street as his business address. In 1866 Faxon joined with John Ellicott, an architect and civil engineer, under the name "Faxon & Ellicott." Faxon's name does not appear in the directories before 1865 nor after 1868, when Ellicott is listed individually. Charles Ogle is listed in the same directories from 1865 through 1870.
HR: Microfilm collections: M2322-M2324.
(Although a copy of the Mitchell-Ogle contract has not been found, it may be discovered as the Mitchell/Linden collection (#23) is examined more thoroughly. Similarly, so too might a contract or communications between Mitchell and Faxon.)

25. Wills: JS#17/452, ERP#24/422. Deeds: WMA#45/211, 216/569.

26. Inventories: 1919-1924, p.425. Deeds: 216/569. Mitchell genealogical files, SMSC.

27. Wills: ERP 24/422. Deeds: WMA#45/211.

28. Deeds: G#3/435, L#3/183,536. (Hugh Mitchell is said to have originated from Aberdeen, Scotland, but this has not been proved.)

29. Mitchell genealogical files, SMSC.

30. Ibid., and the Walter Mitchell Jenifer, Sr. Collection, SMSC.

31. Barley, et al, p.1. Tombstone inscriptions compiled by the Historical Society of Charles County, SMSC.

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32. Barley, et al, p. 1, 4. Walter H.J. Mitchell papers.

33. Barley, et al, p. 1-2.

34. Mitchell genealogical files and the Walter Mitchell Jenifer, Sr. Collection, SMSC. (A direct blood relationship between the Mitchells of Charles County and the Mitchells of Thainston in Scotland has not been conclusively proven.)

35. Times-Crescent, December 1, 1955.

36. Wills: ERP#24/422.

37. Amy Gibson Compton, "James Mitchell: Journalist/Jurist," Maryland Magazine, Autumn, 1976. Times-Crescent, February 8, 1989.

38. The Walter Mitchell Jenifer, Sr. Collection, a recent and expanding gift acquisition by the SMSC, centers on the Mitchell family of Thainston from the mid-nineteenth century through to the early 1900s. It is hoped that this will be augmented in the near future by the currently privately owned personal and business papers of Walter Jenifer Mitchell (1871-1955) and James Craik Mitchell (1905-1989).

In 1984, a professional play by William D. Hathaway titled "Southern Voices: The Mitchells of Linden," and based on the personal papers of General Walter H.J. Mitchell from the period of 1857-1861, was produced under a grant from the Maryland Humanities Council.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

A brick, two-story, T-shaped, single family residence of relatively simple architectural styling, and retaining most of its original domestic support structures, Thainston was built in 1865 by Charles Ogle, a Baltimore contractor, from a design prepared by Eben Faxon. The property on which the house is located, continuously owned by the same family for almost 300 years, has remained in agricultural use throughout its history, though the majority of the surviving farm-related structures date from the first three decades of this century. Despite a renovation/alteration of the rear wing of the house that occurred in the early-1900s, the historic architectural integrity of the building's 1865 main block, as well as that of its original support structures, has been preserved intact.

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Thainston and its domestic dependencies were built during the closing months of the Civil War, in unfavorable political, economic and social circumstances hardly conducive to the successful undertaking of such a project by a private citizen - particularly, in Union-occupied Charles County, a slave-owning southern planter. Following the war, Charles County, isolated, provincial in attitude and economically unstable, was barely affected by the events that occurred in other areas of the state between the last decade of Maryland's "Agricultural-Industrial Transition" (1815-1870) and its period of "Industrial-Urban Dominance" (1870-1930). If anything, the county's myriad problems were exacerbated by the loss of its younger citizens and even whole families who, having survived the war but unable to cope with the economic devastation that followed, migrated in increasing numbers to urban centers in search of better opportunities.

One reflection of the post-war economic and social conditions that existed in Charles County can be seen in the proportionately small number of surviving buildings of architectural interest built during the last four decades of the nineteenth century. Of these, remarkably few possess design elements conforming with the sweeping changes in architecture that occurred elsewhere in the state and nation during that same period.

Thainston, despite the simplicity of its design, is clearly of local significance when viewed in this context. It is the county's only private residence built before the turn of this century whose architecture and builder are known and for which other important information survives relating to its construction. Its early-1865 date of construction and the special political and economic situation that existed at the time it was built add considerably to its architectural and historical interest.

In addition to the fact that Thainston's spatial configuration and other aspects of its design represent one of the first true departures from traditional architectural formulas that continued to influence local building forms well into the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is the only historic property in Charles County to retain as many original domestic support structures. The obvious placement of these buildings according to a specific and perhaps architect-devised plan, as well as the distinctive design of its brick dairy, is locally unique.

Contributing to the significance of the property is its long and continuing history of agricultural use, and the manner of its physical development between 1865 and the 1930s. The orderly arrangement of house and dependencies, agricultural buildings, and the housing provided for farm and domestic workers, is of particular interest, there being no surviving complex of domestic and agricultural buildings of comparable size and stature in Charles County dating from this period.

See Continuation Sheet 8/20

Overall, Thainston is a very special if not altogether unique resource of importance to the nineteenth and early-twentieth century agricultural, architectural and socioeconomic history of Charles County.

The buildings combined with the fields may yield information about related resources such as more outbuildings, particularly agricultural, planting and field use patterns, drainage ditches. Thainston provides a rare opportunity to study aspects of this county's history that can not readily be found in many other counties.

See Continuation Sheet 8/21

Land and Probate Records, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Mitchell family papers in private collection, the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, and the Southern Maryland Studies Center, Learning Resource Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, Maryland.

Biographical and other historical data on the Mitchell family, Friendly Hall, Hanson Hill, Linden, and related families and properties previously compiled by the author of this nomination.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties: Charles County, Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland.

See end notes in Section 8.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Specify repository: Southern Maryland Studies Center, Charles County Community College, La Plata, Maryland

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 378.604

USGS quad: Port Tobacco, Maryland

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	324360	4271220
B	18	325420	4271260
C	18	325760	4270700
D	18	325200	4269880

E 18 324180 4269960

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the property being nominated are as recorded in Charles County land records, Liber 216, folio 569.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

These boundaries are essentially those set at the time the farm was established in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Richard Rivoire
organization _____ date February, 1989
street & number Post Office Box 132 telephone (301)932-1000
city or town La Plata state Maryland zip code 20646

CH 51

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

N. R. FIELD SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
BOX 1704
ANNAPOLIS, MD. 21404

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: THAINSTON

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: MT. CARMEL RD. (PORT TOBACCO VALLEY)

CITY OR TOWN: LA PIATA

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
MD.		CHAS.	

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District ☐ Building ☑	Public ☐	Public Acquisition:	Occupied ☑	Yes:
Site ☐ Structure ☐	Private ☑	In Process ☐	Unoccupied ☐	Restricted ☐
Object ☐	Both ☐	Being Considered ☐	Preservation work in progress ☐	Unrestricted ☐
				No: ☑

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Agricultural	☐	Government	☐	Park	☐	Transportation	☐
Commercial	☐	Industrial	☐	Private Residence	☑	Other *(Specify)*	☐
Educational	☐	Military	☐	Religious	☐		
Entertainment	☐	Museum	☐	Scientific	☐		

Comments ☐

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Walter) + James C. + Mary Emily MITCHELL (DECD.)

STREET AND NUMBER: THAINSTON (MT. CARMEL RD.)

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
LA PIATA	MD.	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Chas. Co.

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
LAPIATA	MD.	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE

STATE: | COUNTY: | FOR NPS USE ONLY: ENTRY NUMBER | DATE

N. R. FIELD SHEET

CH-51

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) Excellent ☑ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed ☐	
INTEGRITY	(Check One) Altered ☐ Unaltered ☑	(Check One) Moved ☐ Original Site ☑

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (*If known*) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

2 STOREY BRICK VICTORIAN.
"A" ROOF WITH FRONT GABLE FLUSH WITH FRONT (S) WALL.
5 BAYS 1st. FLOOR (W. W, D. W. W.)
5 Bays 2nd floor ALL WINDOWS.
DEEP 1 STOREY FARM PORCH FRONT (S).
ROOF RIDGE RUNS E-W.

W. SIDE of MT. CARMEL RD. S. of CHAS. CO. COM. COLLEGE + ENTRANCE TO MT. CARMEL MONESTARY. N of HAWTHORNE Co. CLUB + 227.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

CH-51

N. R. FIELD SHEET

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Pre-Columbian ☐	16th Century ☐	18th Century ☐	20th Century ☐
15th Century ☐	17th Century ☐	19th Century ☑	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Abariginal	Educotian ☐	Palitical ☐	Urban Planning ☐
Prehistaric ☐	Engineering ☐	Religion/Phi-	Other *(Specify)* ☐
Histaric ☐	Industry ☐	lasaphy ☐	_____
Agriculture ☐	Inventian ☐	Science ☐	_____
Art ☐	Londscope	Sculpture ☐	_____
Cammerce ☐	Architecture ☐	Social/Human-	_____
Cammunicotions ☐	Literoture ☐	itarian ☐	_____
Conservation ☐	Military ☐	Theater ☐	_____
	Music ☐	Transpartation ☐	_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Include Persanages, Dates, Events, Etc.)*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

N. R. FIELD SHEET CH-51

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUOE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUOE				LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	o	'	"	o	'	"		o	'	"	o	'	"
NE	o	'	"	o	'	"							
SE	o	'	"	o	'	"							
SW	o	'	"	o	'	"							

LIST ALL STATES ANO COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNOARIES

STATE:	COOE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	COOE	CDUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CDDE	COUNTY:	CDOE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME ANO TITLE: Richard Rivoire

ORGANIZATION: MHT

OATE: 6/23

STREET ANO NUMBER:

CITY OR TDWN: Annap

STATE: Md.

COOE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

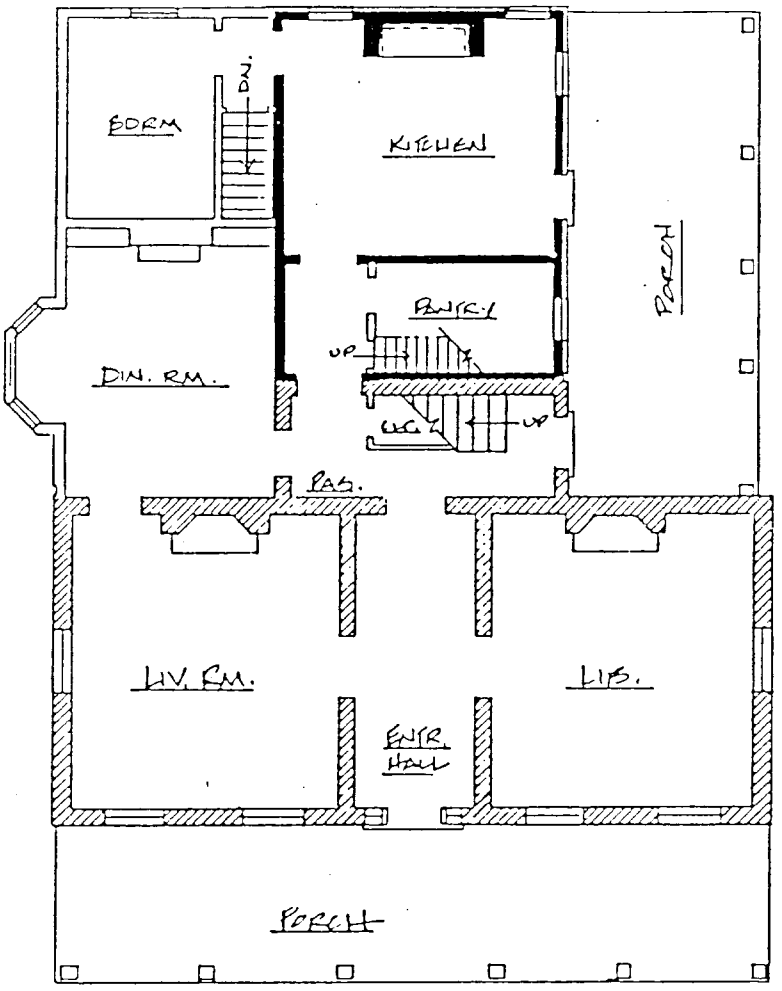
ATTEST:

_____

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



THAINSTON
SKETCH PLAN:
FIRST FLOOR
NOT TO SCALE

1989

ROOMS IDENTIFIED AS TO CURRENT USE.

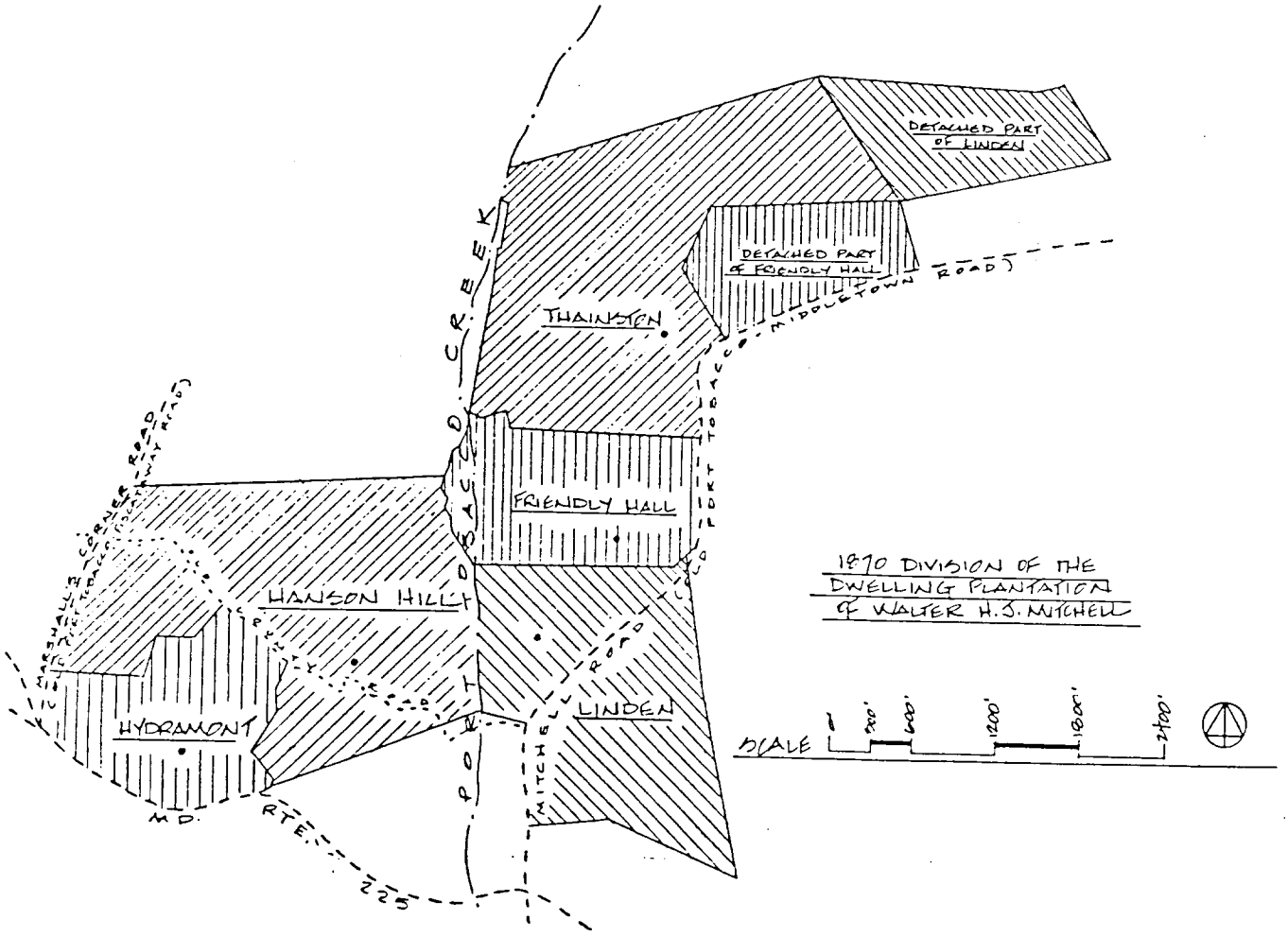
1965 (MASONRY) 1965 OR EARLIER (FRAME) CA. 1920

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Thainston CH-51
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 21



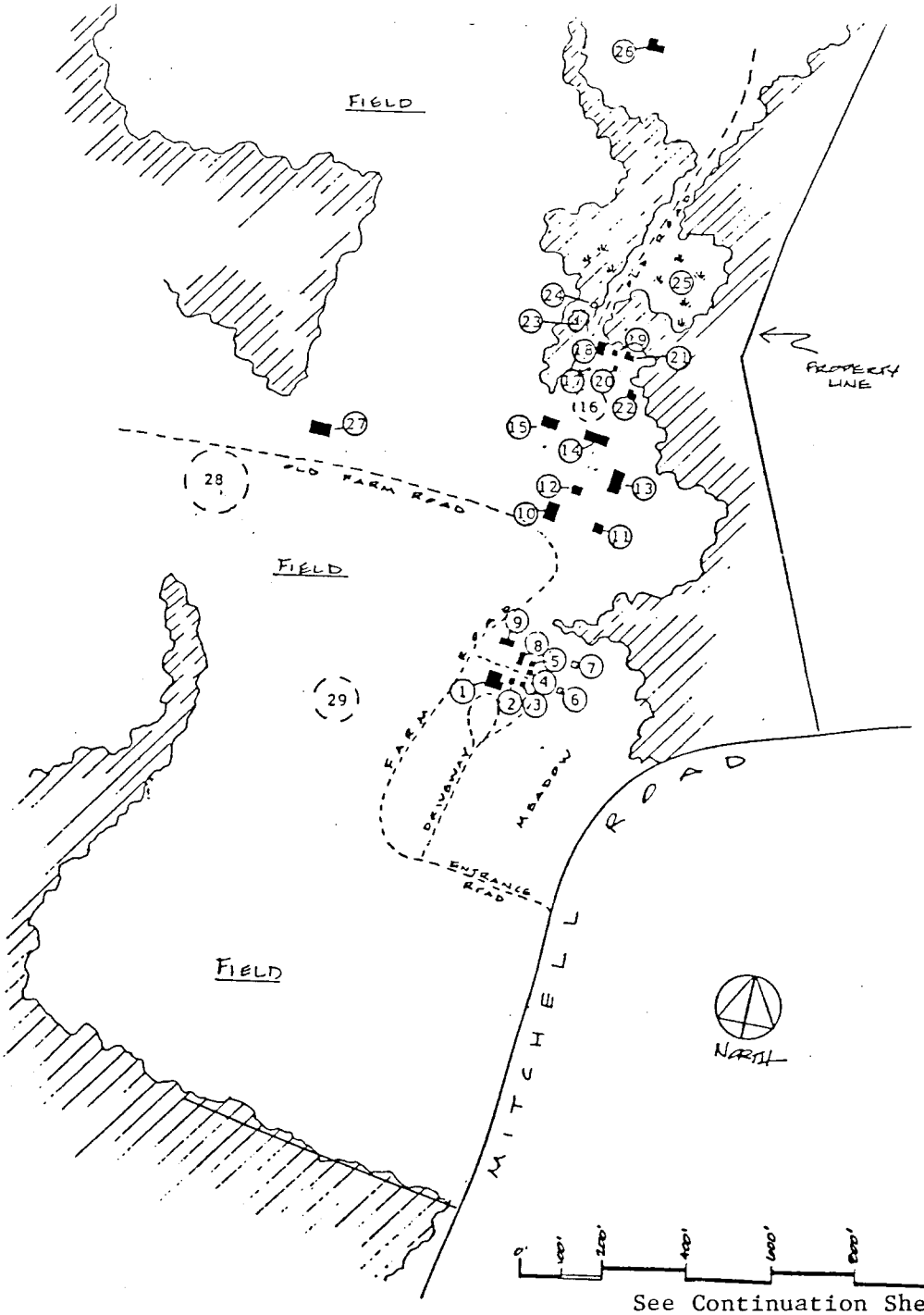
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

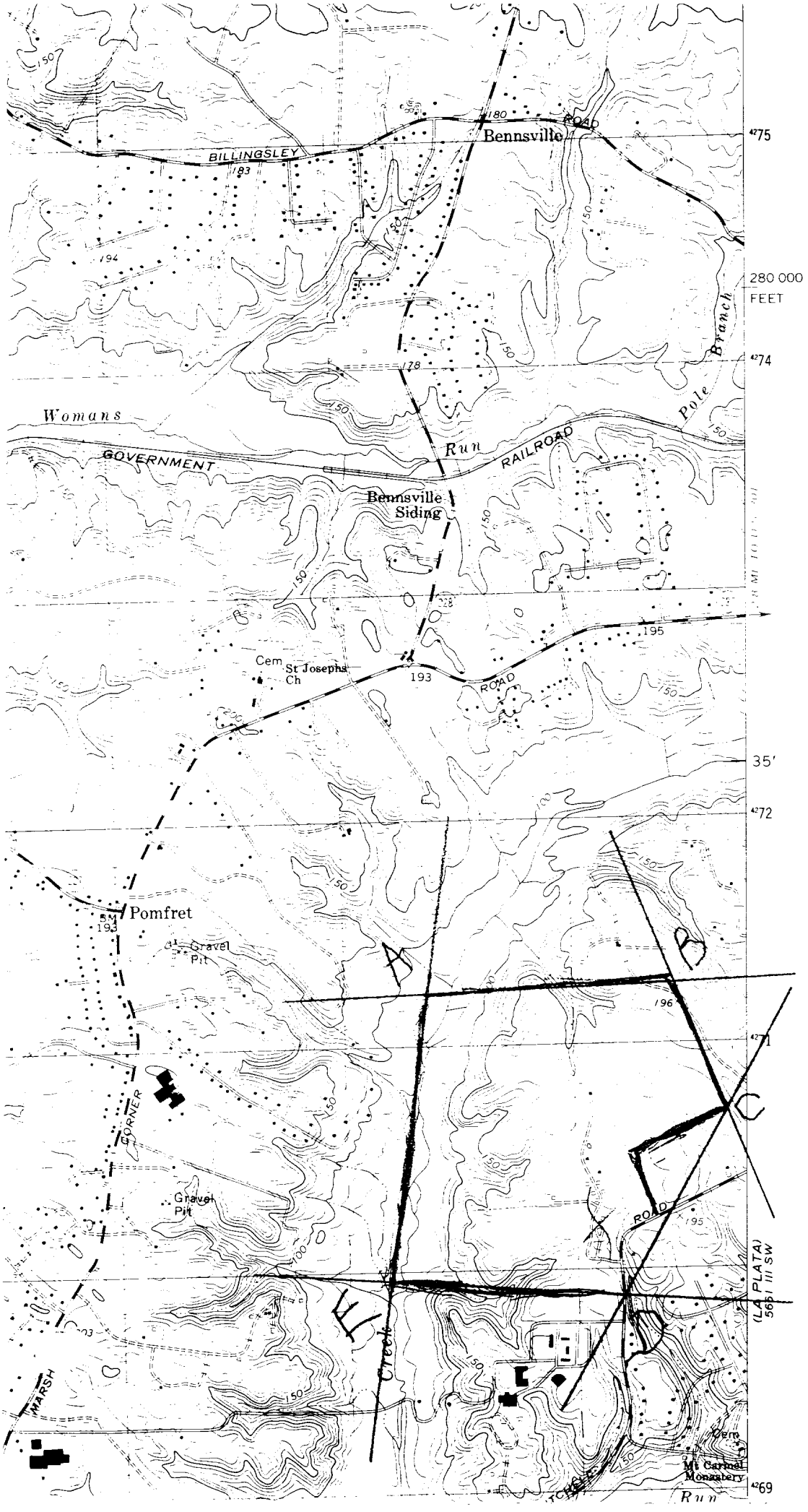
Thainston CH-51
Charles County
Maryland

Section number 7 **Page** 7

Resource Sketch Map, 1989
(see Section 7)



See Continuation Sheet 7/8



CONVERSION SCALES

Feet	Meters
15000	4500
14000	4000
13000	3500
12000	3000
11000	2500
10000	2000
9000	1500
8000	1000
7000	900
6000	800
5000	
4000	
3000	

Thainston
CH-51
Charles Co.
Maryland

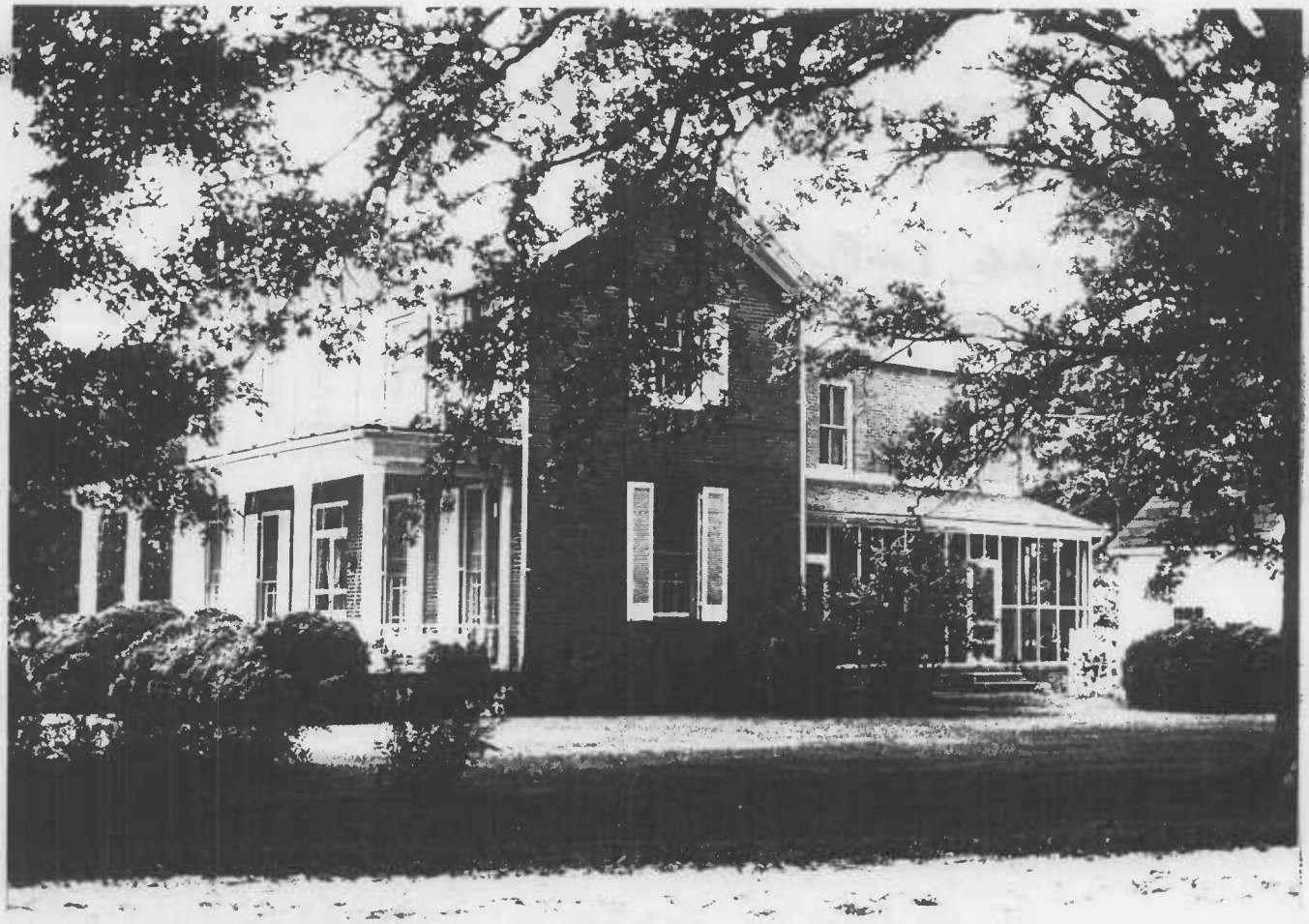
A 18/324360/
4271220

B 18/325420/
4271260

C 18/325760/
4270700

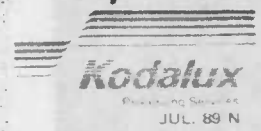
D 18/325200/
4269880

E 18/324180/
4269960

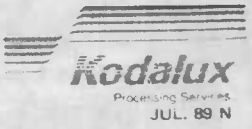


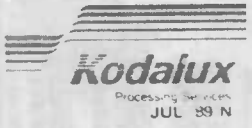
THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1980
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD. 20646
MAIN RESIDENCE VIEWED FROM WEST-SW
1/11

CN-51



THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
MAIN RESIDENCE VIEWED FROM EAST-SE
2/11





CH-51

THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD.
MAIN RESIDENCE. WINDOW,
1ST FLOOR W. ROOM.

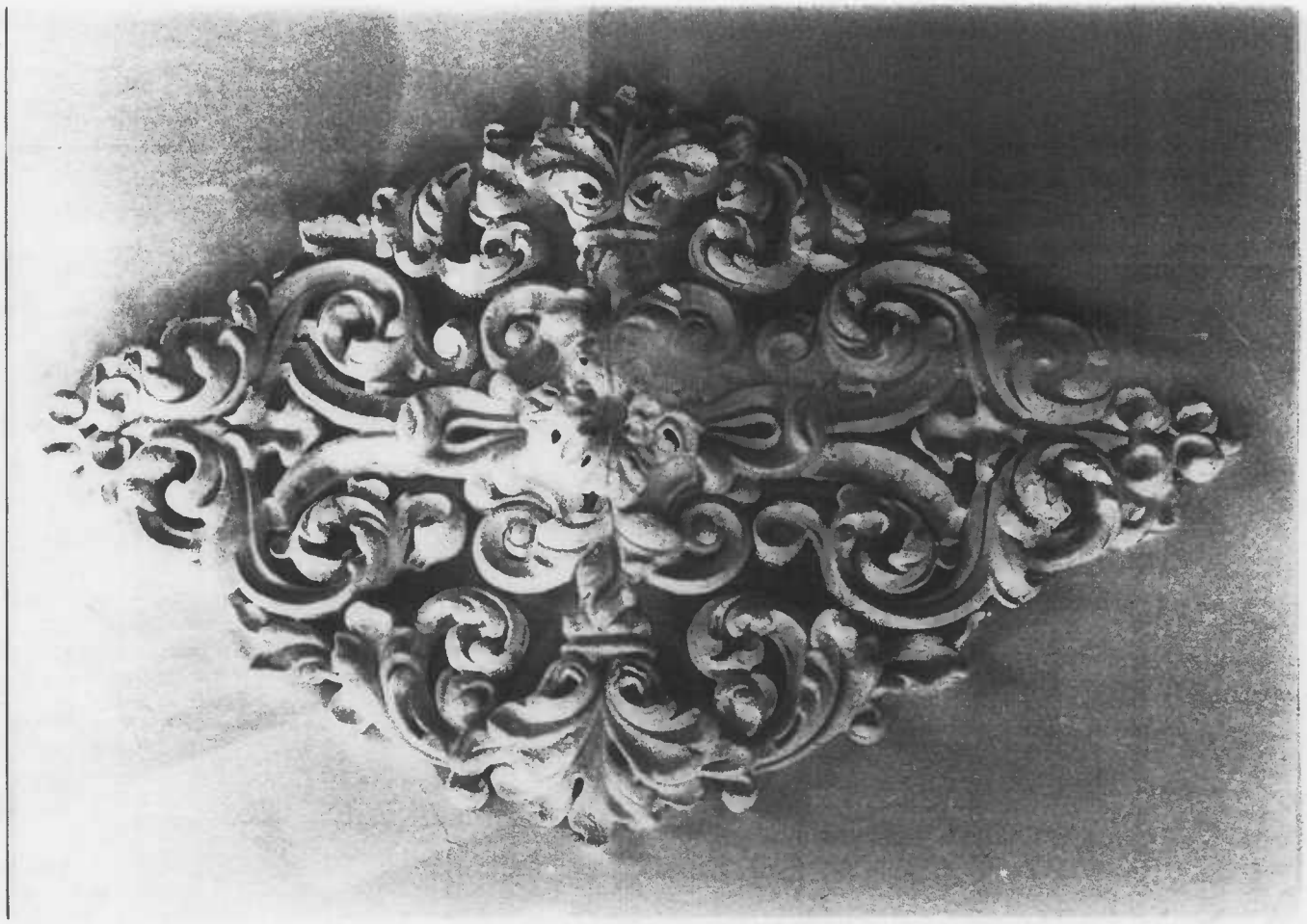
4/11

THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD.
MAIN RESIDENCE - INTERIOR
VIEW FROM E. 1ST FLOOR
ROOM THROUGH PASSAGE
TO W. ROOM.

3/11

CN-51

CH-51



CH-51

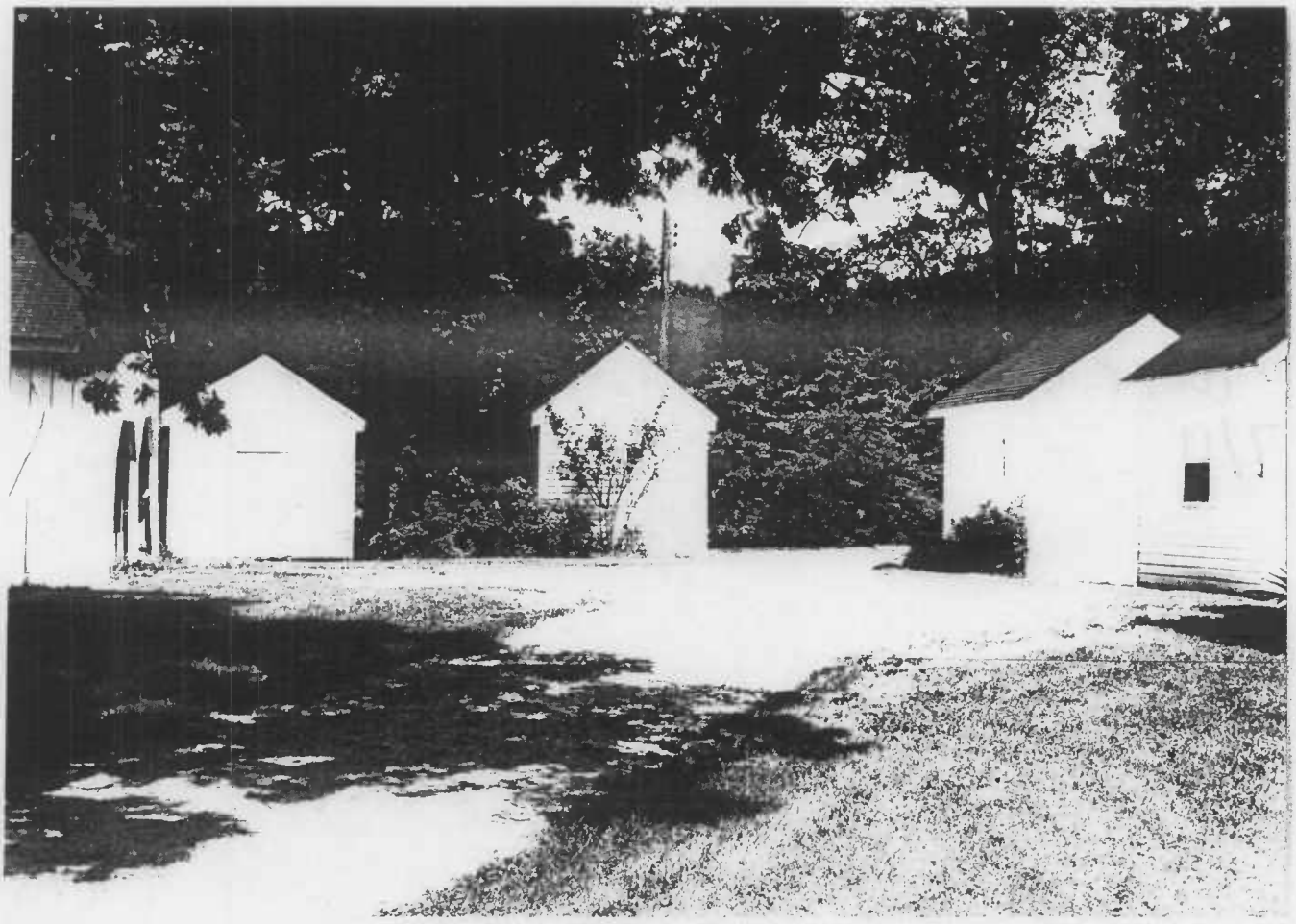
THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
MAIN RESIDENCE. PLASTER
CEILING MEDALLION, 1ST FLOOR
* EAST ROOM.

5/11

THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
VIEW FROM SOUTH OF DOMESTIC DEPENDENCIES.
(LEFT TO RIGHT: #2, #3, #4, #6)

6/11

CH-51

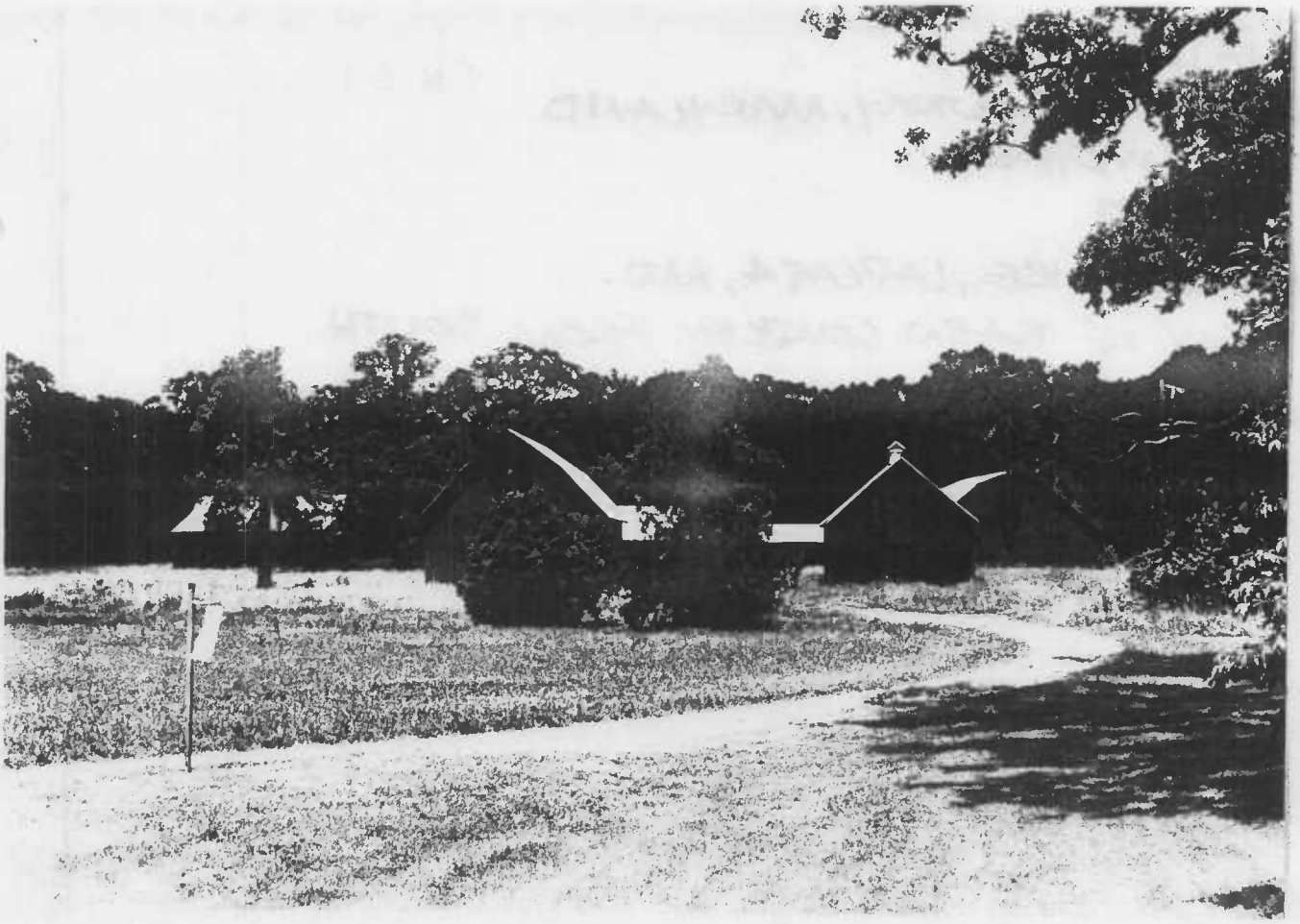


CH-51

THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
VIEW FROM WEST OF DOMESTIC DEPENDENCIES
(LEFT TO RIGHT: #4, #7, #6, #3, #2)
7/11

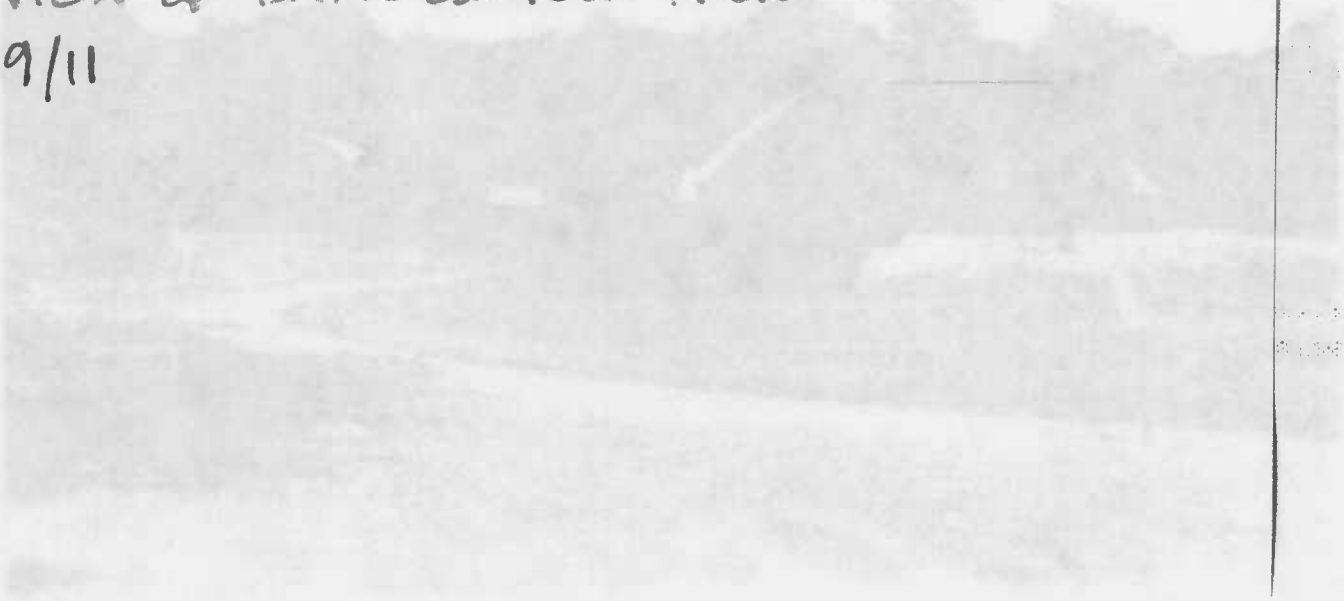
THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
VIEW OF MAIN RESIDENCE & SETTING
FROM SW
8/11

CN-51



THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
7/1089
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
VIEW OF BARN COMPLEX FROM SOUTH
9/11

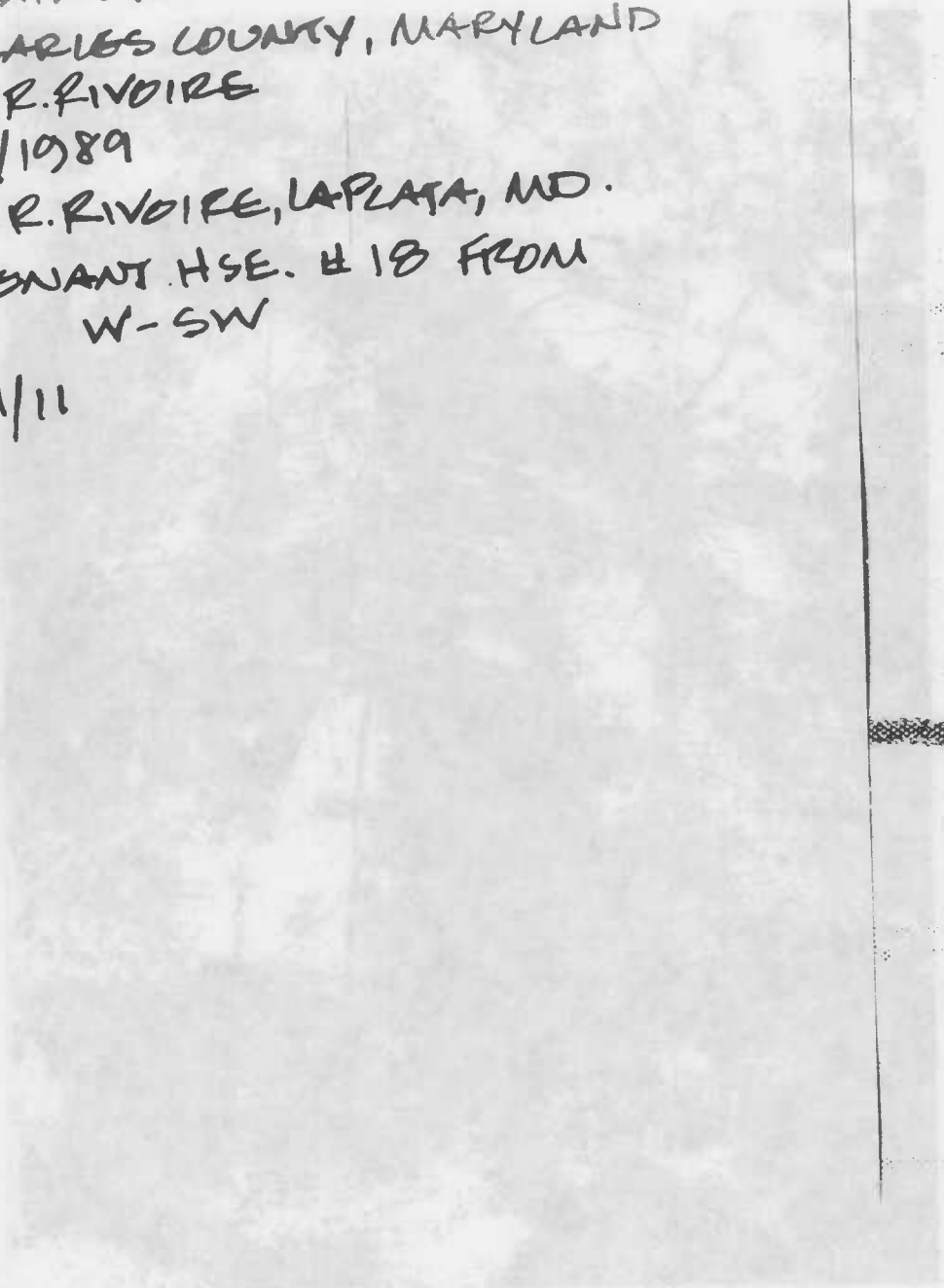
CH-51



THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
4/1080
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
VIEW OF BARN # 27 AND SITE # 28
FROM EAST
10/11

CH-51

CH-51

THAINSTON
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND
J.R. RIVOIRE
4/1989
J.R. RIVOIRE, LAPLATA, MD.
TENANT HSE. #18 FROM
W-SW

11/11