CH-229
Benedict
Benedict
Private and Public

18th century

Benedict, now a small sleepy village, played an important role in the economic and social history of Charles County throughout both the 18th and 19th centuries. It is best known, however, as the place where, on August 19, 1814, 5,000 British troops set ashore and began their march toward Washington and the Battle of Bladensburg. Unfortunately, there are no physical vestiges remaining today to remind visitors of its pre-20th century associations with the history of Maryland and the nation.

**Benedict**
**CH-229**
**Benedict**
**Private**

**1900-1940**

Benedict's recorded history began at least as early as 1683. In that year Benedict was established as one of Maryland's early colonial ports. Over the next century, the village became a noted shipbuilding center. In the 19th century, British forces successfully landed as part of the campaign to march on Washington during the War of 1812. Several decades later, during the Civil War, Benedict was the site of Camp Stanton. Here, two companies of the Seventh Regiment of Infantry, United States Colored Troops, composed entirely of black Marylanders, were stationed. Benedict was also an important steamboat landing site along the Patuxent River. Late in the 19th century, an important commercial seafood industry emerged, with several oyster shucking houses operating at once during its zenith. Finally, after the wane of the seafood industry, Benedict became a riverside resort area. Despite its long and rich history, the oldest known resources in the village today date from the first quarter of the 20th century. Most of the remaining resources are residential and consist of simple one and two story cottages with several of the more notable examples found on Mill Creek Road. Two former hotels also remain including the Messick Hotel fronting the Patuxent River at the end of Benedict Avenue and Bell's Hotel on Maryland Avenue.

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-229

## 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

| | |
|---|---|
| historic | Benedict |
| other | |

## 2. Location

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| street and number | N/A | ___ not for publication |
| city, town | Benedict | ___ vicinity |
| county | Charles | |

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

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| name | N/A | | | | |
| street and number | N/A | | | telephone | N/A |
| city, town | N/A | state | MD | zip code | N/A |

## 4. Location of Legal Description

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. | Charles County Courthouse | tax map and parcel: | 49 |
| city, town | LaPlata | liber N/A | folio N/A |

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

___ Contributing Resource in National Register District
___ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
___ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
___ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
___ Recorded by HABS/HAER
___ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
___ Other _____

## 6. Classification

**Category**
X district
___ building(s)
___ structure
___ site
___ object

**Ownership**
___ public
X private
___ both

**Current Function**
___ agriculture
___ commerce/trade
___ defense
X domestic
___ education
___ funerary
___ government
___ health care
X industry
___ landscape
X recreation/culture
X religion
X social
X transportation
___ work in progress
___ unknown
___ vacant/not in use
___ other: _____

**Resource Count**

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 37 | ____ | buildings |
| 3 | ____ | sites |
| ____ | ____ | structures |
| ____ | ____ | objects |
| 40 | ____ | Total |

**Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory** 1

# 7. Description

Inventory No. CH-229

**Condition**

| | |
|---|---|
| ___ excellent | ___ deteriorated |
| ___ good | ___ ruins |
| _X_ fair | ___ altered |

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

The maritime village of Benedict lies in a wide valley along the Patuxent River on a stretch of land between Swanson and Indian Creek. A smaller tributary known as Mill Creek empties into Indian Creek to the south, forming a partial peninsula that serves as the town's southern and western boundaries. Prince Frederick Road forms the northern boundary, while the Patuxent River serves as the eastern boundary. Beyond the natural barriers to the south and west, the town is surrounded by agricultural and State protected lands including 575 acres known as the Patuxent Vista Natural Resource Management Area on Indian Creek. Across the river lies Calvert County, reached by a low bridge directly north of the village.

Although Benedict has been an important commercial port since the 18th century, all standing structures were built in the twentieth century and largely consist of modest two story cottages and frame bungalows on small lots fronting a series of streets generally laid in a grid pattern. Today the village is primarily residential with three streets holding the highest concentration of historic resources: Benedict Avenue, Wharf Lane and Mill Creek Road. Benedict Avenue holds the highest concentration of significant resources than the either Wharf Lane of Mill Creek Road.

Beginning in the 19th century, Benedict had a large steamboat wharf located at the end of Wharf Lane. During the late 19th and early 20th century the town was largely defined by the commercial seafood industry that it fostered. Several oyster packing houses, boarding houses, hotels and shanties for seasonal workers were located throughout the village. During the 1920's the seafood industry began to decline just as tourism began to grow. Today restaurants occupy the sites of previous shucking houses. Later, Benedict was also impacted by the legalization of gambling which created additional interest in this quaint waterside community. Several small farms were subdivided, parallel street were laid and rows of bungalow style cottages were constructed.

Several landscape features add to the historic character of the village. One of the most notable is the continuing use of picket fencing to enclose small house lots. Maritime features in the form of docks, piers, the appearance of a variety of sail and motor boats and a marine railway also uniquely define the village character.

BENEDICT AVENUE

Benedict Avenue is the main thoroughfare into Benedict from Prince Frederick Road. The first structure one approaches is the St. Francis de Sales Church, a stucco structure constructed around 1925 to replace an earlier 1903 chapel which had burned. It stands as an effective visual entrance to town, preceded by a generally flat grassy open area. Proceeding along Benedict Avenue, one passes a high concentration of modest structures situated on small rectangular lot. Generally, homes are adjacent to and near the road with small yards. Most of the structures on Benedict Avenue are 2 story cottages resembling I-houses. Built primarily during the 1920's they often include modest late Victorian and Colonial Revival features and all are modest in scale and ornamentation. Additions to the rear are very common as well as roof and exterior wall resurfacing.

7203 Benedict Avenue (Parcel 46) is a good example of modest two story side gable frame cottage. Constructed in 1926 and distinguished by its diminutive size and a small pedimented porch covering the main entrance, the house is situated on a small lot enclosed by an unpainted picket fence. The front elevation includes a center doorway flanked by two 6/6 windows on the first floor and two identical windows above. The off-street rear elevations include several additions that likely incorporate an original one story rear service wing. Original roof and wall materials have been replaced.

One of the most prominent structures in the town stands at 7305 Benedict Avenue (Parcel 62) and is a relatively large two-story, double-pile dwelling. Constructed in 1912, it features returning eaves and original 2/2 light wood sash windows throughout. The exterior is sheathed with replacement vinyl or aluminum siding and the roof is clad with asphalt shingles. The foundation is concrete block. A one story hipped roof porch is attached to the facade and supported on turned wooden posts. The interior was heated by two existing interior chimneys with corbelled caps. The village has several other more modest examples of the two story late Victorian dwelling with a decorative center gable including 7215 (p.48), 7217(p.49), 7229 (p. 51) .

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# Historic Properties Form

Inventory No CH-229

Name Benedict
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Number 7 Page 1

7232 Benedict Avenue is a nice example of a two story side gable Colonial Revival dwelling. As one of the more ornate structures in the village it features returning eaves, a steeply pitched roof, a balustraded single bay entrance porch and a one story side porch off the gable end. The house sits prominently in a relatively large yard which includes several mature trees. The entire yard is enclosed by a picket fence with ball-capped posts. And an inverted arch pattern.

Believed to be one of the earliest structures remaining in the village, 7206 Benedict Avenue (Parcel 3) 1 and 1/2 story hipped roof cottage was constructed in 1906. It features pedimented dormers on the front and rear elevations that hold paired double-hung windows. Historic photographs reveal that this dwelling originally included a full width porch off to the side and a single bay porch on the façade, both supported with turn posts with scrollsawn brackets.

One of the towns two surviving hotels, the Messick Hotel is located at the end of Benedict Avenue, 7383 Benedict Avenue (p. 76) This is a very large, two story six bay structure fronting the Patuxent River. It includes two high decorative gables containing a single window each. A shed porch extends 3/4 the length of the façade. During a recent renovation historic material were obscured behind contemporary exterior materials. Of note is a small single room one story building sited at the water's edge in front of and part of the Messick's Hotel lot. Local resident identified this as an ice cream parlor.

WHARF ROAD
Despite its historic association as the main road leading to the wharf, Wharf Road has a high degree of contemporary infill. Furthermore, substantial alterations to historic structures have compromised the streetscape. Of note is a grouping of four small cottages bordering "the Block", where there was once a public dance pavilion. Resembling camp meeting "tents" in their size and simplicity these cottages, which face the Patuxent River across a large open green, appear to be loosely inspired by the Craftsmen style. They were built in the first half of twentieth century and include board and batten siding, brick exterior corbel capped chimneys and shed porches. The rear, fronting Wharf Lane is defined by a picket fence.

MILL CREEK
Mill Creek contains a few of the towns earliest and most elaborate structures including "Watercolour", (p. 77) and the Horseman House (p. 89). Surrounding these pre-1920 resources are a cluster of closely spaced bungalows.

"Watercolour" at 7802 Mill Creek Road(p. 77) was constructed in 1908. This is a four-square dwelling, two stories in height facing the Patuxent River. It has wrap around porch on the north and east elevations and a hipped dormer on the with a one room deep, two story kitchen ell extending from the rear elevation. This dwelling is exceptionally well preserved and includes a fence around the rear yard.

The "Horseman Place"(p.89) constructed in 1923 is generally a three bay hipped roof I-House facing the Patuxent River with a rear kitchen ell. A full width hipped roof porch supported on turned posts with scrollsawn brackets spans the waterside elevation. A fence surrounds the rear yard.

Patuxent, Potomac, Hyatt and Maryland Avenues generally includes a number of 1 1/2 story bungalows dating from 1919 to the through the 1940's. Bell's Hotel, located at the end of Maryland Avenue, is the town's second remaining hotel. Established for African-Amercian clientele during the early 20th century, the structure is one of Benedict's most significant, although forgotten landmarks.

# 8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-229

| Period | Areas of Significance | Check and justify below | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ 1600-1699 | ___ agriculture | ___ economics | ___ health/medicine | ___ performing arts |
| ___ 1700-1799 | ___ archeology | ___ education | X industry | ___ philospohy |
| ___ 1800-1899 | X architecture | ___ engineering | ___ invention | ___ politics/government |
| X 1900-1999 | ___ art | X entertainment/ | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion |
| ___ 2000- | ___ commerce | recreation | ___ law | ___ science |
| | ___ communications | ___ ethnic heritage | ___ literature | ___ social history |
| | ___ community planning | ___ exploration/ | X maritime industry | ___ transportation |
| | ___ conservation | settlement | ___ military | ___ other: |

**Specific dates** 1900-1950 **Architect/Builder** N/A

**Construction dates** 1900-1950

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register _____ Maryland Register __X__ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

The village of Benedict is significant in its association with the commercial fishing and maritime recreation industries of the early 20th century. Additionally, the town has been a commercial center since the 18th century and because of its unique location, has been the site of military action during the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

The town of Benedict originated as a Proprietary Manor along the Patuxent River known in the 17th and 18th centuries as Benedict Hundred. This hundred stretched from Aquasco to the north, and to Bryantown and Charlotte Hall to the west and south. Early on, Benedict with its deep water forming a natural harbor, was established as a convenient port where farms within the hundred could load tobacco, as well as lumber and other raw materials on ships bound for England. During the Act for the Advancement of Trade in 1683, Benedict was officially named as a Colonial port, docks and storehouses were constructed, and a small ship building industry took hold.

Because of its commercial importance during the 17th , 18th and 19th centuries, it was the target of attacks from British and loyalist forces during the two substantial conflicts of the era, the American Revolution and the War of 1812. In 1783 the town was plundered along with two nearby plantations in 1783. During the War of 1812, British forces successfully landed at the port as part of the campaign to march on Washington. Later, during the Civil War it was the home of Camp Stanton where two companies of the Seventh Regiment of Infantry, United States Colored Troops composed entirely of black Marylanders were recruited and trained. The camp was erected in October of 1863 and was under the command of Lieutenant Evan White. Over the winter the troops recruited, drilled and prepared for active duty, and in November a detachment on board two steam tugs raided oyster fleets at the mouth of the Patuxent and in Tangier Sound eventually returning with 1309 new recruits. The regiment was activated in 1864 and was involved with all of the subsequent campaigns of the Army of the Potomac. A nearby black contraband settlement was established in old De la Brooke Manor (SM-94).

Benedict was also one of the more important steamboat ports and commercial centers along the Patuxent River. Because of its location at the dividing line between the upper and lower Patuxent River it was a natural layover point and a terminus point for shorter runs out of Baltimore. Transporting passengers as well as farm products and commercial products, steamboats provided a vital link between rural southern Maryland and the markets of Baltimore and Washington. Some of the more prominent steamboats to ply the Patuxent were the St. Mary's, Three Rivers, and the Anne Arundel, B.S. Ford and Westmoreland. After the first decade of the twentieth century, steamboat companies found it increasingly difficult to compete and service became intermittent. By the middle of the 1930's there was but a single weekly trip to the Patuxent. One incident of note was the burning of the St. Mary's on December 5, 1907 while aground on Holland Bar across from Benedict.

The Maryland Directory of 1880 states that Benedict had a population of 200, one church, one school, and three general stores. Craftsmen included a miller, plasterer, carpenter and blacksmith. A steamboat agent was also identified. Land was said to sell for

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# Historic Properties Form

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between 25 and fifty dollars an acre and each acre was claimed to produce 10-20 bushels of wheat, 6-8 bushels of corn and 1200 pounds of tobacco. In size Benedict was second only to Bryantown then holding 320 people. It rivaled the county seat of Port Tobacco which also claimed a population of two hundred. The surrounding countryside also had some of the most valuable real estate in the county.

Although the abundant fish and shellfish of the Patuxent, Wicomico and Potomac Rivers had been used as a source of food since the county's initial settlement, this resource was not commercially harvested until the 19th century. Crabs, oysters, and shad became important exports in southern Maryland during the late 19th century. One reason for this as the change in Maryland Law which allowed dredges, pulled by vessels under sail to be used in harvesting oysters. Consequently Maryland developed the largest sail fishing fleet in the County and the Chesapeake Bay became an epicenter of innovation in sailing craft and commercial seafood harvesting and processing. During the late 19th and early 20th century, the commercial seafood industry in Benedict and in several other locations along the Patuxent, began to flourish.

Along the Patuxent River, Solomon's Island was the site of the first large scale fishery which was established just after the Civil War in 1867. Soon after other villages developed similar industries including Benedict, and Broomes Island. Benedict, in Charles County had seven oyster packing companies in existence from 1903 to 1975, more than any other area including Solomon's. The heyday appears to have lasted from 1930 to 1945 when three packing plants, W.E. Northam Co 1913-1945, Harry Messick, Sr. 1930-1945 and Linwood T. Sollers, 1930-1967 were in operation in the village.

The close relationship of the Patuxent River villages is reflected in the religious establishment o the region. In 1882 Father Edward S. Southgate of St. Mary's Church in Bryantown was placed in charge of the Catholic missions in both Benedict and Solomons Island. Father Southgate is identified as the founding pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church in Benedict and is credited with establishing a regular service of Mass. Benedict received its own pastor in 1903, Bishop John M. McNamara who quickly built a small frame church which burned in 1924. The present stucco church replaced the frame structure soon after. Father MacNamara was also in charge of the Mission at Solomon's Island until it became large enough for its own congregation.

Once the seafood industry began to wane, Benedict continued to grow as a riverside resort. The remaining farms were subdivided into small lots and a large number of relatively simple, single story bungalow-style cottages were constructed. At the same time, earlier commercial oyster-shucking houses built along the waters edge, were converted into restaurants for the growing tourist market. During the era of legalized gambling in southern Maryland, Benedict continued to fare relatively well, offering at least one night club along the water. Although relatively quiet today, Benedict continues to be a relatively stable and fairly tight-knit community, and many of the town's most common surnames would be recognizable to Benedict's residents over a century ago.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-229

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 20

Acreage of historical setting 20

Quadrangle name Benedict Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Benedict is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 49.

## 11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| name/title | Cathy Currey/ Historic Preservation Planner | | |
| organization | Charles County Planning | date | 1/25/01 |
| street and number | 200 Baltimore Street | telephone | 301-396-5815 |
| city or town | LaPlata | state MD | zip code 20646 |

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

**Major Bibliographic References:**

Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland, A History.
Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, LaPlata, Maryland.

Holly, David C. Tidewater By Steamboat. 1991

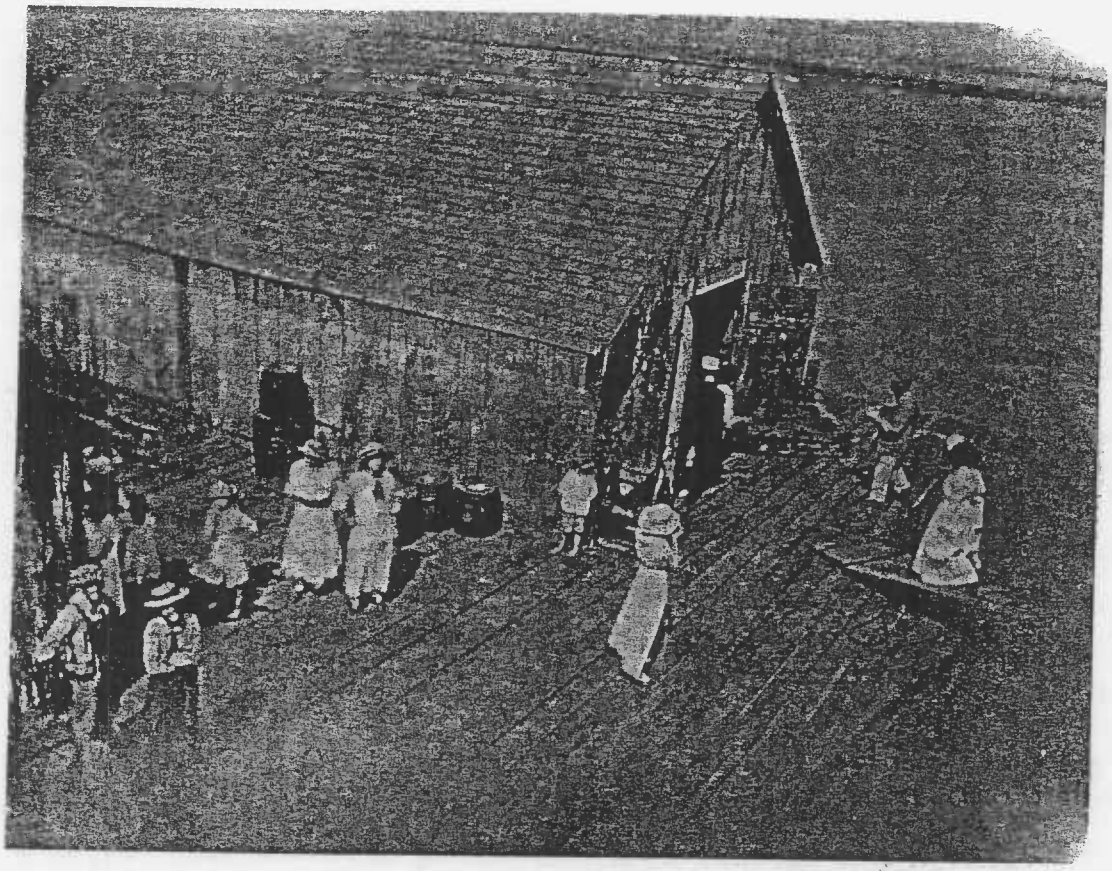
Johnson, Paula J., et al. Working the Water: The Commercial Fisheries of Maryland's Patuxent River. Charlottesville, VA: U. Press of Virginia. 1988.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. The History of Charles County, Maryland.
LaPlata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

Shomette, Donald G., Tidewater Time Capsule.
Centreville, VA: Tidewater Publishers. 1995

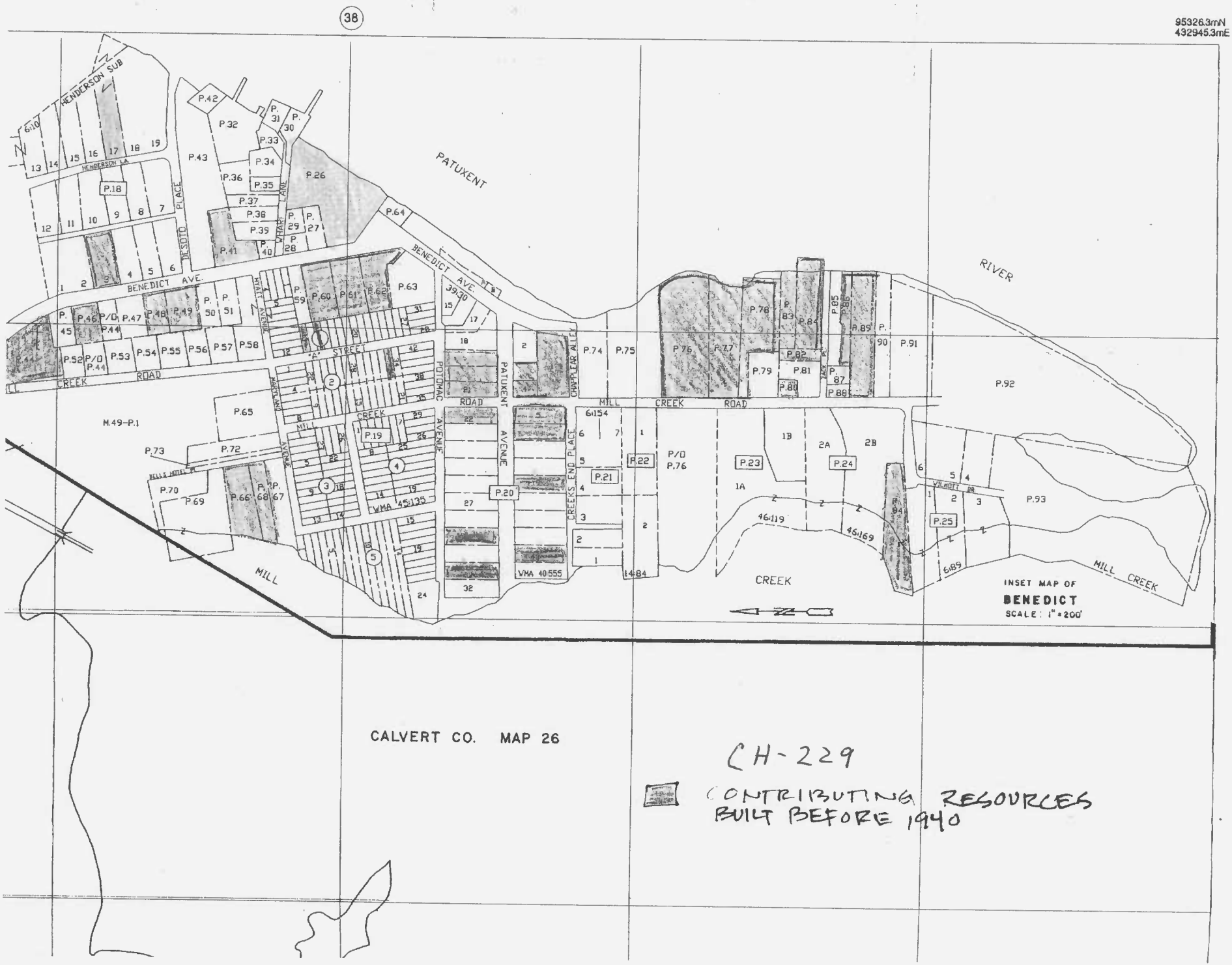
George Howard Post Collection, Southern Maryland Studies Center,
College of Southern Maryland, LaPlata

CH-229



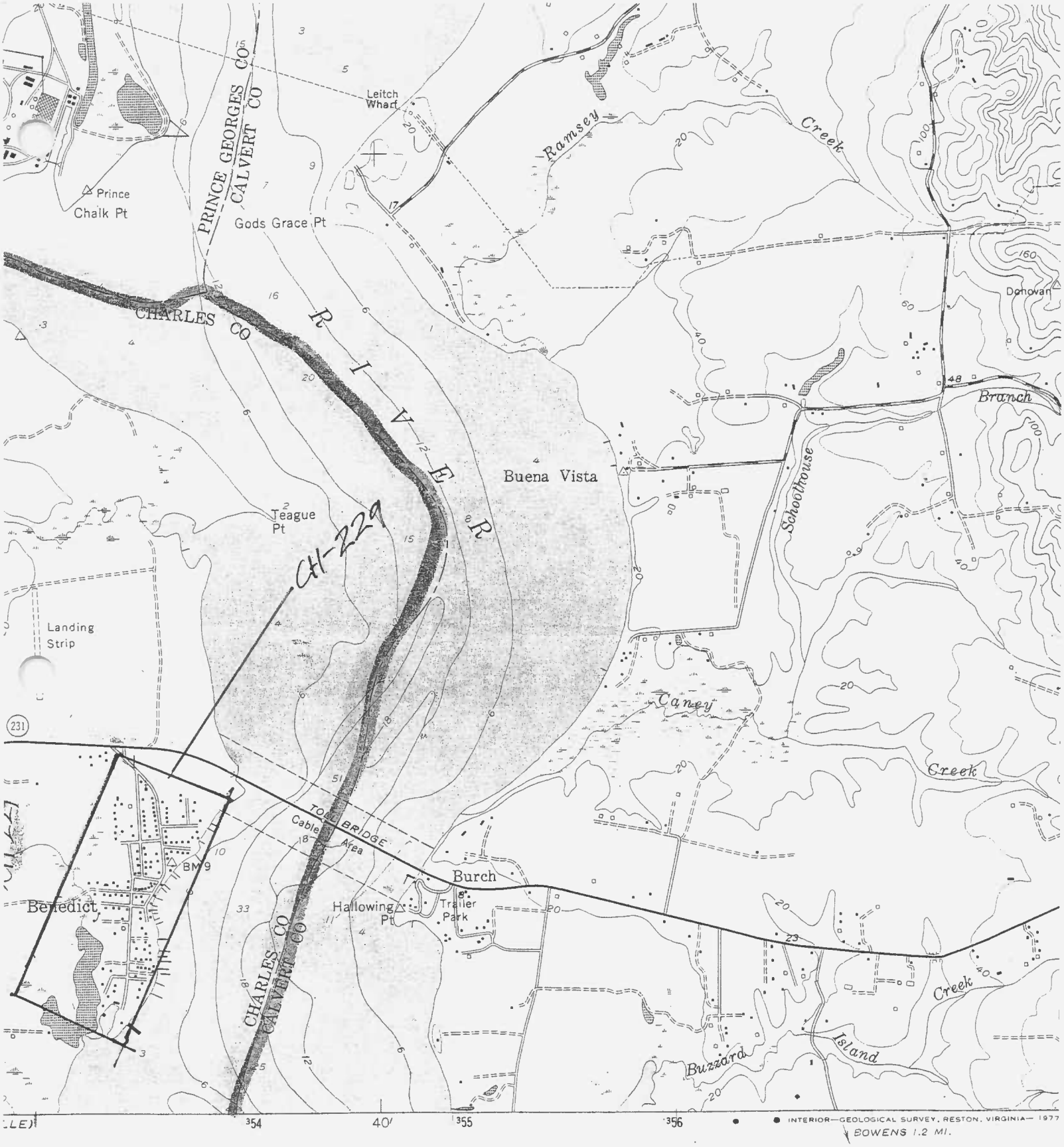
BENEDICT WHARF, C. 1920 POST COLLECTION, SOUTHERN MARYLAND STUDIES CENTER, LA PLATA

CHARLES COUNTY F[illegible]RTY TAX MAP #49, 1999




CH-229

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES
BUILT BEFORE 1940




:24000

1 MILE

5000 6000 7000 FEET

1 KILOMETER

RVAL 20 FEET
RTICAL DATUM OF 1929
FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
PROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
F TIDE IS 1.6 FEET

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty — Light-duty

Medium-duty — Unimproved

U. S. Route — State Rout

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

MD-229
BENEDICT, MD
BENEDICT QUAD

BENEDICT, M

N3830—W7637.5

CH. 229
BENEDICT, MD
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING EAST
#1

CH-329
BENEDICT, MD
1303 BENEDICT AVENUE (p. 46)
1/2001
C. CURRIEY
MD SHPO
LOOKING SOUTH
#2

#3

CL-229
BENEDICT, MD
7215 & 7217 (p. 48; 49) BENEDICT AVENUE
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING SE #4

SPEED
LIMIT
25

CH-229
BENEDICT, MD
7229 BENEDICT AVENUE (P-51)
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING SE #5

CH-229
BENEDICT, MD
7305 BENEDICT AVENUE (p.41)
1:2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING N/DIRT 1/2

CH-229
BENEDICT, MD
7206 BENEDICT AVENUE (p.3)
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING NW #1

CH-221
BENEDICT, MD
7206 BENEDICT AVENUE (p. 3)
HISTORIC PHOTO, BY OWNER - C. 1920
1/2001
C. CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING NW

CH-229
BENEDICT, MD
"THE BLOCK" WHARF ROAD (p.26)
1/2001
C. CURLEY
MD SHPO
LOOKING N.W.
#9

CH. 227
BENEDICT, MD
"THE BLOCK" (p. 24) WHARF ROAD
C. VERLEY
1/2001
MD SHPO
LOOKING SOUTH
#10

CH 227
BENEDICT, MD
'WATERCOLOUR' 502 MILL CREEK LP. 77
1/2001
CURREY
MD SHPO
LOOKING NORTH #11

CH 227
BENEDICT [illegible]
"PERSIL MANUPLACE" [illegible] MILL CREEK RD
1/2001
C. CURRY
MO SHPO
LOOKING SOUTH
#12

CH-221
BENEDICT ND
BELLS HOTEL 0.68
1/2001
C. CURRY
ND SUPO
LOOKING SOUTH #3