

CH-307
JANIFER HOUSE
Ironsides
Private

1924

This large, two-story frame house of late 19th century style and its numerous outbuildings were constructed by Preston Janifer in 1924. These structures and the well-tended grounds constitute one of the most handsome complexes still owned and occupied by a rural black family in southern Maryland. In terms of people's lives, the most significant aspect of this house is not visible, for Preston and Ethel Janifer have raised nineteen foster children here in the last twenty-one years.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

MAGI # 0902075704

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC THE JANIFER HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

(La Plata Road)
North side of Rt. 6, 0.25 mile West of Jct. of Rt. 6
and Rt. 425

CITY, TOWN

Ironsides

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Charles

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES - RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES - UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Preston Janifer

Telephone #: 301-246-4616

STREET & NUMBER

Rt. 1, Box 413

CITY, TOWN

Indian Head

VICINITY OF

Md.

STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE.
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Charles County Courthouse

Liber #: MAP 41

Folio #: P. 19

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

La Plata

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE NONE

DATE

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This handsome house faces south, towards Rt. 6 and stands at the end of a well-kept dirt and gravel drive that is lined with flowering shrubs and trees. The site is located near the center of Ironsides, Md. Because the grounds around the house and the large house itself have received such careful attention from the owner (Preston Janifer) and because Janifer is highly respected in the community, the place is known as the residence of the "black mayor of Ironsides", according to Janifer's wife. For many years Janifer farmed the land and worked towards being as self-sufficient as possible. Behind the house remain a number of outbuildings that resulted from that attempt for self-sufficiency: a stable, for houses, a corn crib, rabbit house, 2 chicken houses, an animal and ^{hay} barn, and others. At a distance of about 150 yards were located the pens for hogs, which Janifer raised, butchered, and cured himself for family consumption.

The house is two stories in height and consists of a principal block that is five bays in length and one in depth. To the middle of the back length was built a two story T, the downstairs of which served as the kitchen. A front porch that has now been screened runs along the facade. It is supported by turned posts with brackets, and its appearance is enhanced by the balustrade between the posts. The ballon frame is sheathed by German siding that carries a fresh coat of white paint. The roof is covered with patterned tin freshly painted silver. At each gable end the ridge of the roof is pierced by a brick chimney stack for a stove. The first and third bay contain double windows with double hung sashes on each floor. ^{5 m x 4 ft} in the cross gable pediment. Behind the house on either side of the T, rooms have been added, forming a rectangle of the original T. The overall appearance is one of order, good taste, and pride.

The interior plan is a central hallway flanked by two rooms on either side downstairs and upstairs. The doors and windows are trimmed on the inside with fluted moldings. In the hallway a single flight of stairs with turned balustrade and massive turned newel post ascends along the wall. The walls themselves were lathed and plastered, and in the living room (east) are sheathed with synthetic pine siding panelling. The house is appointed with furnishings that do not date from the time of construction but instead are fairly modern.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

CH-307

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

Black History

SPECIFIC DATES 1923-24

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This site represents the farmstead--the house, outbuildings, and grounds--of a successful black farmer in Charles County. Its history and that of the owner and his wife reveal significant aspects of black history in Charles County. Since Preston Janifer has been invalidated by a stroke, his wife has provided some of that history, which was taped. She describes some of her family's history in Connecticut as well. The following is a brief summary:

Preston Janifer was born in 1891 in this vicinity of Charles County. He served in the 372nd Division in World War I. Upon his return, he moved to New York City, worked as a waiter, and returned to Charles County and bought this land with the money he had saved. His first purchase was of 6 acres in c. 1923 from a white family (the Gilroys) for whom his mother had worked as a laundress for many years. The land which he wanted to buy occupied a prominent position near the center of the town of Ironsides and stood close by the principal road. White families in the community had protested against a black family occupying a site with high status. Since his mother had worked for so many years for the Gilroys and was respected by them, the Gilroys supported Janifer and sold him the land. The incident illustrates the prejudice against blacks entering the housing market freely, and indicates how the houses of blacks, and their locations, have been strongly influenced by the whites who have power.

When he purchased the property, the land was entirely wooded. Janifer felled the trees, hauled selected ones to the nearby saw mill (owned by the Gilroys), to be cut as lumber for the house. As payment, he gave the miller a certain percentage of the lumber; thus no cash was required to obtain the major portion of building materials for the house and outbuildings. In 1924, a year after purchasing the property, Janifer and his friends had completed construction of the house.

In later years Janifer bought adjoining parcels, bringing

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
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<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

his total acreage to c. 23 acres. He and his wife Ethel farmed the land, cultivating corn and truck vegetables and raising fruit trees. A particularly unique aspect of their farming was that they did not raise tobacco, because, according to Mrs. Janifer, her husband was a "dedicated Christian man" and did not want to raise a product harmful to a man's health. In addition to farming, Janifer worked as a skilled laborer at the Naval Propellant Plant, earning the nickname "3 in 1" because he did the work of 3 men. He was also chief of the Gethsame Lodge for 18 years.

In addition to being hard-working, the Janifers have been open-hearted to those less fortunate than they in the community. For 21 years they have been foster parents, raising 19 children on this farm as if they were their own by birth.

In the taped interview, Mrs. Janifer tells the story of her husband's father, ^{John} Janifer, who was born a slave in Charles County and who was almost sold on the auction block at Port Tobacco. According to Mrs. Janifer, John Janifer and his wife Charlotte lived in a small log house on property which he bought after freedom. That house no longer stands, but was similar to the Hancock-I ss house near Nanjemoy in Charles County, the ruins of which remain and have been recorded in this survey.

As part of this survey, photographs were taken of the family pictures of John Janifer, Preston Janifer, and the parents of Mrs. Janifer. Also photographed was the old buggy of Preston Janifer, which his children decorated and, appropriately enough, drove in the Bicentennial parade.

Mrs. Janifer is from Connecticut, and in the taped interview she relates her family history, part of which includes an Indian heritage. She has been very active in numerous public-spirited endeavors in the county and state.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George W. McDaniel, Historic Sites Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Commission on Afro-American History & Culture

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

20 Dean Street

TELEPHONE

269-2893

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis,

STATE

Maryland

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CREDIT TO
GEORGE W. McDANIEL

CH 307
Janifer House
Ironsides, Md.
Preston Janifer's buggy
GWM
3-77



CH 307

Janifer Louse
South Elevation
Greensides, Md.
GWM - 3/77



CH 307

Janifer House

Ironsides, Md.

John Janifer, an ex-slave,
father of Preston Janifer

GWM

3-77



CH 307

Janifer House

Ironsides, Md.

Preston Janifer receiving
award from Naval Propel-
lant Plant at Indian
Head, Md.

GWM

3-77



CH 307
Janifer House
Ironsides, Md.
South elevation, facade
GWM
3-77



CH 307

Janifer House

Ironsides, Md.

South elevation, facade

GWM

3-77



CREDIT TO
GEORGE W. McDANIEL

CH 307
Janifer House
Ironsides, Md.
Backyard
GWM
3-77



CREDIT TO
GEORGE W. McDANIEL

CH 307
Janifer House
Ironsides, Md.
West elevation
GWM
3-77