Property Address 9410 Johnsontown Road, La Plata, Charles County
Owner Name/Address Gail Fisher, 9410 Johnsontown Road, La Plata, MD 20646
Year Built circa 1800

Description:

Johnsontown was previously surveyed by J. Richard Rivoire, Architectural Historian, in November 1990 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since the previous survey there have been no changes to the house, granary or cemetery.

National Register Evaluation:

Johnsontown was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in May 1991.

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundaries of the property consist of 9.24 hectares (22.825 acres), all of that parcel of land shown on Charles County Tax Map 55, Parcel 191. According to the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, completed in November 1990, the boundaries of Johnsontown "encompass the known historic features of the property, define the historical agricultural setting of the house and granary, and constitute the extent of property protected by the historic preservation easement held by the Maryland Historical Trust."

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-348

CH-348

CH-348

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

Easement

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

ational 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 Johnsontown
other names/site number Hawksmoor CH-348

2. Location

street & number Fairgrounds Road N/A ☐ not for publication
city, town La Plata ☒ vicinity
state Maryland code MD 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)	2	buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district	1	1 sites
☐ public-State	☐ site		structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure		objects
	☐ object	3	1 Total

ne 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 4/9/91

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

CH-348

RECEIVED
AUG - 4 1991
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91000610 Date Listed: 5/31/91

Property Name:	County:	State:
Johnsontown	Charles	MD

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.

for Patrick W. Andrus — Signature of the Keeper

7/18/91 — Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

At the request of the SHPO the Period of Significance is extended to 1864 to include the contributing cemetery. The form is now officially amended to extend the Period of Significance.

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)
EARLY REPUBLIC

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation BRICK
walls WOOD
roof WOOD
other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

A two-story, two-part clapboarded frame dwelling with an east-west axis and facing south, Johnsontown represents two major periods of construction. The older part of the house is its west end section. Built between 1798 and 1818, in its original form it was essentially a one-room deep dwelling erected over a full, brick-walled cellar. The interior spatial arrangement included a large drawing room and two smaller adjacent rooms on the first floor, and two bedrooms above. The exterior featured full-width front and rear porches, and an exterior chimney flanked by one-story frame pents. The centrally positioned entrance door of the four-bay principal facade opened directly into the drawing room, while the end door of the three-bay rear elevation opened onto a small stair passage. In about 1818 the house was enlarged by a two-part frame addition to its east, chimney end. The wing consisted of a two-story, two-room section with an exterior chimney at its east end. This was joined to the original part of the house by an off-set, one-story hyphen containing a passage and a pantry. In the early twentieth century the house was extensively renovated, work that included the replacement of the roofing, exterior siding and window sash. It was at this same time that the former hyphen was raised to two full stories. Not many years later, the front and rear porches of the main block were removed. In 1980, after standing vacant for over twenty years, the house was rehabilitated. While all of the existing exterior finishes are new, they replicate known original features. The building's original spatial arrangement, woodwork and other early finishes remain preserved. Approximately 125 feet to the southeast is a multi-use agricultural building believed to be contemporary with the oldest part of the house. A heavily timber-framed structure, it originally was used for the storage of grain and whole corn in three lower rooms, while its steeply pitched loft was used for curing tobacco. The exterior of this building was remodeled in the early 1950s, but it nevertheless retains a significant amount of early fabric and carpentry details. About 75 feet from the west end of the house is the site of a small cemetery where several mid-nineteenth century owners of the property are interred. Adjacent to this is a second cemetery, relocated in 1990 from a nearby historically associated property. This cemetery consists of seven monuments, including an obelisk and ledger, a tablet and ledger, four ledgers on angled marble bases, and a large granite stone marking two graves. The graves range in date from 1859 to 1912 and are of the same family that owned the property from 1818 to 1943.

[X] See continuation sheet No. 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Johnsontown is situated about 2-1/2 miles south of La Plata, at the end of a private road approximately eight-tenths of a mile east of Fairgrounds Road. The property is largely open and has historically remained in agricultural use. The following description of historic resources is keyed to the site plan, Continuation Sheet 7.5.

1. Dwelling

As it presently exists, this two-part, frame structure reflects two major phases of construction. Other, less significant changes occurred early in the twentieth century; in the 1980s it underwent an extensive exterior and interior rehabilitation/restoration.

Built on an east-west axis, the earliest section of the house is its west end main block. Construction was initiated after 1798, when a previous dwelling that stood on the property was destroyed by fire, and essentially completed by 1818. In its original form, this portion of the house contained a full cellar, a large (19-by-19) drawing room, stair passage and small bedroom on the first floor, two second floor bedrooms, and a floored but unfinished attic. The cellar level had a single, dirt-floored room with a large, arched fireplace at one end and was probably used for storage. The high-ceilinged first floor rooms were finished with lath and plaster over fully nogged walls, molded baseboards, three-piece chair rails, two-piece window and door architraves, and bold, raised panel doors with wrought hardware. The two second floor bedrooms were similarly finished, but had batten doors rather than paneled doors. Original exterior features included simple, one-piece door and window trim, beaded clapboards, and wood roof shingles. One-story, shed-roofed porches extended the full width of the front and rear elevations. At the east end stood a brick, Flemish-bond chimney with a free-standing stack that was flanked by one-story, frame pents. Access to the cellar was by a door below the southeast pent. Facing south, the four-bay principal facade featured a central door flanked by three windows of 9-over-9 pane sash, and four second floor windows of 6-over-6 sash. The entrance door opened directly into the drawing room. Much more in character with the building's Federal period origins, the three-bay rear elevation had an end door that opened onto the stair passage. Evidence that the house was built prior to 1818 was revealed during the building's rehabilitation/restoration when initials and names of the house's pre-1818 owner and immediate members of his family were found inscribed on several clapboards, nogging bricks and pieces of interior trim.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

Following the sale of the Johnsontown property in 1818 the house was enlarged by a two-part frame addition to its east end. This consisted of a two-story, two-room structure built 12-feet from the end of the original dwelling. This was then joined to the main block by a narrow, one-story hyphen containing a passage and a pantry. Both the hyphen and the main part of the wing were sheathed with beaded clapboards and had wood shingled roofs. A common-bond brick chimney with stepped weatherings at the east end provided first and second floor fireplaces. According to an 1844 inventory, the lower room was used as a dining room; however, it may also have served as separate living quarters for the married daughter of the property's owner, who is known to have been living at Johnsontown with her children in the 1840s and 1850s. No other changes were made to the house until about 1850 when a small frame structure was moved from another location on the property and attached to the east end of the Period II wing. This was then remodeled for use as a kitchen; access between it and the wing was provided via a narrow shed.

In about 1900 the exterior of the building was thoroughly renovated, work that included the replacement of the window sash, siding and roof sheathings. At the same time, the former hyphen was raised to two full stories to match the height and depth of the outer section of the wing. Not many years later, the front and rear porches of the main block were removed. Minor changes made to the building in the early 1950s included the introduction of basic wiring and plumbing, removal of the first floor mantels and the flooring of the drawing room, and a remodeling of the interior of the kitchen wing. In the early 1960s the house was briefly occupied by tenants, but then abandoned. By 1980, when the house was sold to the present owner, the deteriorated condition of the exterior finishes necessitated their complete replacement. The existing wood shingle roofing, beaded clapboard siding, trim and window sash all date from the 1980 renovation, but replicate known original finishes. Although some structural repairs were required, the interior woodwork and spatial arrangement are contemporary with the original spatial arrangement. With the exception of the two existing first floor Federal-period mantels, which were acquired locally and are probably similar to those which formerly existed, and a ceiling cornice in the drawing room, the interior woodwork is contemporary with its Phase I and II periods of development. The new front and rear porches of the main block correspond in height, depth and roof pitch to the Period I porches. The c.1840 kitchen wing was removed due to extensive alterations and advanced stages of deterioration.

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

2. Granary

This one-story, 34-by-20-foot building is believed to be contemporary with the oldest section of the dwelling house. Although almost all of its original exterior finishes were replaced in the early 1950s, substantial evidence remains to show that its north and south elevations and both gables were sheathed with beaded clapboards, while the first floor levels of both ends were covered by horizontal planks spaced an average of 1-inch apart. The wide spacing of the original roof nailers show that it was clad with side-lapped riven boards with an 18-inch exposure. There are three doors in the south, front elevation and a single small window opening centered in the north wall. The window was unglazed and fitted with a plank shutter. Originally, there were no openings in the end elevations. When the exterior of the building was renovated in the early 1950s, the lower part of the west wall was reframed and a door and two windows installed. A gable door opening and a louvered vent near the gable peak were installed in this elevation at the same time. The lower level of the building was partitioned into three rooms. The larger, central room retains its original wall sheathing of wide, flush boards and was used for grain storage. The more narrow flanking rooms had side walls clad with riven slats, some of which remain preserved, and were used for corn storage. The building possesses an unusually high and steeply pitched roof, with the rafter trusses spaced an average of 4 feet on center. A series of tier poles attached to and contemporary with each pair of rafters indicate that the unfloored loft was utilized for the air-curing of tobacco. A heavily timber-framed structure with mortise and tenon joinery and wrought nail fasteners throughout, this building possesses many interesting carpentry features. Notable among these are lapped and pinned braces joining the end girts to the partition headers of the grain room. Also of interest are calculations for production and sales of grain spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that are inscribed on the interior sheathing boards of the grain room. Equipment sheds added to the building's north, south and east elevations in the early 1950s were recently removed. The structure is currently being stabilized in preparation for restoration to its nineteenth century appearance.

3. Cemetery Site

This site, approximately 75 feet from the west end of the house, is that of a small cemetery where several members of the Wills family were interred in the mid-nineteenth century. Two monuments recorded in the 1930s included that of John B. Wills, Jr. and his son Alexander, both of whom died in 1844. In the late-1940s these stones were removed and discarded in a nearby ravine. Fragments

See Continuation Sheet No. 4

have since been recovered. Historical records associated with the property and the Wills family indicate that there probably were at least two additional burials in this location, including that of Charles Wills in 1845 and Ann Wills in 1864.

4. Cemetery

This cemetery, located about 75 feet northwest of site #3, was relocated here in August 1990 from its original location on a nearby historically associated property known as Preference (CH-73), now a residential subdivision. The cemetery includes seven monuments, and the remains of eight members of the Wills family that were exhumed and reinterred. The monuments comprise four flat marble ledgers on angled marble bases, a combination obelisk and ledger, a combination tablet and ledger, and a large granite monument marking two graves. The monuments range in date from 1859 to 1912, and are those of the first wife, eldest son, daughter-in-law, and five grandchildren of John B. Wills, Jr. of Johnsontown.

See Continuation Sheet No. 5

8. Statement of Significance

CH-348

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

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ local

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	c.1800-c.1820	1800
		1810
		1818

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Johnsontown encompasses two buildings, a house and a granary, that are each of architectural significance in a local historic context. The exterior design, spatial configuration and detailing of the earliest part of the house, believed to have been built between c.1800 and c.1810, clearly reflect the dramatic change in housing forms at the middle and upper economic class levels that occurred in this region between about 1790 and 1830, especially from the one-room-deep, hall-parlor house type characteristic of the colonial period to the three-bay, side-passage houses of the Federal period. Remarkably few houses survive in Charles County that illustrate as well as Johnsontown this highly important phase in local architectural development. Although several other houses of a similar transitional design and room arrangement once existed in this area, Johnsontown is the sole surviving example of its form. Enhancing the building's architectural interest is the distinctly unusual original plan of its east wing, built about 1818-1820, which, while later altered, is clearly evident on the interior. The adjacent granary, believed to be contemporary with the oldest section of the house, is arguably one of Charles County's most architecturally significant agricultural buildings. In addition to being one of the earliest surviving agricultural-use structures of any type in the county, it is particularly important for the fact that it was carefully designed to perform several specific but separate functions: that of grain and corn storage, and for the curing of tobacco. Its age, design, function, carpentry details and known original exterior finishes combine to establish this building as one that is altogether unique and highly important among all other surviving pre-Civil War agricultural structures in this locality.

☒ See continuation sheet No. 9

For HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):
Rural Agrarian Intensification, A.D. 1680-1815
Agricultural-Industrial Transition, A.D. 1815-1870

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):
Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

Known Design Source: None

See Continuation Sheet No. 10

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

HISTORIC SETTING:

The Johnsontown house and granary were both constructed during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a period of intense building activity in this locality that occurred simultaneously with major changes in local agricultural practices and improved economic conditions. The architecture of the house represents a significant though surprisingly brief transitional phase in local building customs as traditional housing forms were rapidly succeeded by the widely popular and essentially standardized side-passage house plan of the Federal period. Similarly, the size and multi-functional design of the Johnsontown granary illustrates the shifting away from the cultivation and export of tobacco, long a staple of the local economy, to less labor intensive grain crops for which there was a ready and expanding market both locally and abroad. The several decades between Maryland's period of Rural Agrarian Intensification (1680-1815) and Agricultural-Industrial Transition (1815-1870) were ones of substantial change for Charles County, as it emerged from nearly two hundred years of semi-isolation and cultural provincialism.

RESOURCE HISTORY:

The oldest part of the existing house and the adjacent granary were built by General Caleb Hawkins shortly after 1798 when fire destroyed an earlier dwelling and ancillary structures. The house was subsequently enlarged and improvements made to the property following the sale of the land to John B. Wills, Jr., in 1818. A merchant-planter, Wills developed the property into a fairly profitable agricultural enterprise that owed a large measure of its economic viability to the cultivation of cereal grains as well as the traditional staple, tobacco. Wills died in 1844, after which his widow assumed the farm's management, but as was true of most farmers in this locality, the Civil War and the abolition of slavery had a catastrophic impact on the family's fortunes. Although the house and property remained in the ownership of Wills' heirs until 1943, it was occupied and farmed by tenants after about 1910. The original 700-acre Johnsontown tract has since been broken into several smaller parcels. Although the land remains in agricultural use, its physical complexion has changed; several new homes have been built, while all but one of the barns and other agricultural structures dating from the 1820-1900 period have been destroyed. In 1980 the historic house and granary, together with 23 acres, were sold to the present owner, who subsequently conveyed a preservation easement to the State of Maryland/Maryland Historical Trust.

See Continuation Sheet No. 11

The recorded history of the Johnsontown property begins with a patent for 700 acres granted to Daniel Johnson and Richard Morris in 1661.[1] Called "Johnson Towne," the tract was one of several in the immediate area patented by Johnson between 1661 and 1667. In 1662 Morris assigned his half-interest in Johnsontown to William Codwell.[2] The following year both Codwell's share of the land and that retained by Daniel Johnson were acquired by Francis Wine (aka Wynn), a cooper.[3] In 1665 Wine conveyed the 700 acres to Henry Hawkins.[4]

Progenitor of one of Charles County's most prominent and influential eighteenth-century families, Henry Hawkins subsequently married Wine's widow. A prosperous planter, he held extensive landholdings, largely acquired through purchase, and held various local offices, including that of sheriff and justice. Hawkins, who also served in the Lower House of the Assembly, died in 1699, apparently at Johnsontown.[5]

Following Hawkins' death, the property passed in ownership to his son Henry Holland Hawkins, subject to a life estate held by his mother Elizabeth.[6] Elizabeth is believed to have continued to live at Johnsontown until her death in 1717, by which time her son was living on a tract called "Hawkins' Purchase" located about 3 miles northeast of Johnsontown.[7] Like his father, Henry H. Hawkins (1683-1751) was a prosperous land-owning planter, member of the Maryland legislature, and a local officeholder. On his death, Johnsontown passed to his son Josias, who also held local office and served in the legislature.[8] Josias probably lived at Hawkins' Purchase until his death in 1789. Whether Johnsontown was occupied by another family member or farmed by tenants is not known. In the 1783 tax assessments its improvements were described as including a small frame dwelling with two brick chimneys "much out of repair," a kitchen and a quarter, two corn houses and stables "also much out of repair," and "a small clapboard dwelling inhabited by a tenant."[9] On Josias' death the Johnsontown lands passed to his son Caleb.

In the 1798 federal direct tax lists, the dwelling and kitchen in existence in 1783 were noted as having been recently "destroyed by fire." This house is believed to have stood about 500 yards due east of the existing house in what is now a cultivated field.[10] Hawkins is believed to have begun construction of the existing dwelling between 1800 and about 1810 when he is said to have moved to Kentucky. It was probably also Hawkins who built the existing granary, as well as a tobacco house that in the mid-1980s was moved to St. Mary's County.[11] In 1818 Caleb Hawkins, "now of Charles County," conveyed his Johnsontown plantation to John Baptist Wills, Jr.[12]

See Continuation Sheet No. 12

A merchant-planter, John B. Wills, Jr., formerly resided in the then county seat of Port Tobacco where he was a partner in the firm known as Edelen and Thompson. Wills moved to the Johnsontown farm soon after acquiring it, according to a road petition filed late that same year. It was probably shortly after moving there that he enlarged the house, and built as well several new agricultural structures that remained in existence until the late-1950s and the 1960s. The Johnsontown property has historically proved to be particularly well-suited for the production of cereal grains, which apparently constituted the principal crops raised on the farm during Wills' ownership. Wills also soon expanded his land holdings by the purchase of other contiguous properties, which together with the home plantation were cultivated and harvested by a labor force of about 40 slaves. While records indicate that Wills was a fairly astute businessman, various circumstances--perhaps aggravated by an apparently overly generous nature and a passion for foxhunting and other social activities--combined to create financial difficulties for him in the last decade of his life. When he died in 1844 his debts exceeded the value of his personal estate, necessitating the sale of his household furnishings, farm implements, part of the livestock and several slaves.[13]

John B. Wills left a will by which he bequeathed the Johnsontown plantation to his son Alexander, subject to a life estate invested in Alexander's mother. If Alexander predeceased his mother, the land was then to descend to Wills' grandson Augustin Neale.[14] In fact, Alexander Wills died nine months before his father; both were interred about 75 feet west of the house. John B. Wills' widow continued to live at Johnsontown until her death in 1864, at which time ownership was assumed by Augustin W. Neale.

Neale, a Confederate veteran, appears to have resided at Johnsontown following the end of the Civil War. Valedictorian of the 1860 graduating class of Georgetown College, he performed the office of superintendent of county schools (1882-1897) and that of a deputy clerk of the Maryland Court of Appeals, in addition to farming the Johnsontown property. In 1906 Neale moved to Washington, D.C., where he lived until his death at age 93 in 1933.

It was probably about the time of Neale's move to Washington that the exterior of the house was remodeled and the former hyphen raised to two stories. The house and farm were subsequently rented to the Jameson family, who continued to occupy the property until about 1943 when the land was sold by Neale's heirs to land speculator William Ziff.[15] Three years later Ziff sold Johnsontown to Charles Fenwick; in March 1951 Fenwick sold 100 acres of the tract to Haskell Tull, and the balance of the land to Maurice Feimster the following July. Shortly afterward, Feimster acquired the 100 acres from Tull, returning the

See Continuation Sheet No. 13

property to its boundaries as they existed during the Wills-Neale period of ownership.[16] The Feimsters occupied the house from about 1951 until the early 1960s when they built a new home on an adjacent site. The house was briefly rented to a tenant, but had been vacant for about 20 years when it was sold to the present owner in 1980. Following the sale of the property in 1980, the house was thoroughly rehabilitated, work that was largely accomplished under a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. Following the sale of the house and land it was renamed Hawksmoor to distinguish it from the balance of the original tract, which continues to be known as Johnsontown Farm and the owners as Johnsontown Farm, Inc.

NOTES:

(Unless otherwise noted, all land and probate records are at the Charles County Courthouse, La Plata. Records of the Maryland State Archives are given as: Annapolis. Liber and folio numbers are given as: XXX/000.)

1. Patents: B#1/16. Annapolis.
2. Ibid., B#1/18.
3. Ibid., B#1/231.
4. Ibid., B#1/232.
5. Edward C. Papenfuse, et al., A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), vol. 1, p. 424.
6. Wills: WK#3/227.
7. Ibid., AB#3/114; Papenfuse, et al., 1:424.
8. Papenfuse, et al., 1:424.
9. 1783 Assessments, Charles County, District 6, Land. Annapolis.
10. 1798 Federal Direct Tax, Charles County. Annapolis.

See Continuation Sheet No. 14

11. Listed in the Maryland Historical Trust's inventory as "Johnsontown Barn," CH-332, this building was moved and partially reconstructed on the property known as "Ocean Hall," (SM-111; NR), in St. Mary's County.

12. Deeds: IB#12/542.

13. Inventories: 1845/302; Administration Accounts: 1845-1851/266-; Letter from Joseph Floyd to Francis Wills, 1826, in the Wills Collection, Southern Maryland Studies Center, La Plata; J. Richard Rivoire, Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland (La Plata, Maryland: Charles County Community College, 1990), pp. 158-161.

14. Wills: DJ#16/360.

15. Deeds: TBM#79/435.

16. Ibid., TBM#84/596, PCM#91/61, PCM#97/154, 163.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS:

Improved agricultural practices and marketing conditions during the first four decades of the nineteenth century brought increased economic prosperity for Charles County. This, in turn, resulted in a dramatic surge in building activity; more than two-thirds of the county's surviving pre-Civil War houses date from the 1810-1840 period, as do more than 90% of its agricultural buildings. Of the latter, there are far more granaries and corncribs than tobacco barns, illustrating the significant increase in the production of cereal grains that occurred in this locality during those same decades.

Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the county's historic buildings are of this period, Johnsontown and its associated granary are both architecturally unique. The oldest section of the house, for instance, represents the only known extant example of its plan. While other dwellings with similar room configurations once existed--three of the most notable being Hollycut (CH-340), Charleston (CH-64) and Rock Hall (CH-85)--they have either

See Continuation Sheet No. 15

been destroyed or are now complete ruins. There are many aspects of the building's design that establish its importance as a transitional link between the hall-parlor houses characteristic of the previous century and the side-passage houses that attained such extraordinary popularity during the Federal period. The distinct, two-part design of Johnsontown's later east wing is of comparable interest in the context of local architectural development. Interestingly, Johnsontown's Period I first floor plan is nearly identical to that of Charleston, and the design of its Period II wing closely parallels that of the kitchen-service wing of La Grange (CH-3; NR). That one might have influenced the other is suggested by the fact that all were built within about 20 years, and that the owners of the three buildings (John B. Wills, Daniel Jenifer and Nicholas Stonestreet) were close friends and business associates.

The Johnsontown granary is of equal if not greater architectural interest. Not only is it one of the county's earliest surviving agricultural buildings, it is a wholly unique example of its form. While other early combination granary and corncrib buildings exist, this is the only one with a central grain room flanked by cribs that was originally designed as such and with this particular arrangement of spaces. It is also the only one whose roof was obviously designed to provide an additional area for the curing of tobacco. The building's overall dimensions and its original exterior finishes are among other important features. The architectural significance of the granary is further enhanced by the generally excellent condition of its original framing, carpentry details and interior fabric.

While not original to the site, the cemetery relocated to Johnsontown in 1990 is nevertheless of interest in its own right, having direct historical associations with the Johnsontown property as well as comprising a collection of nineteenth century funerary memorials of well above average quality. The two vertical monuments with ledgers are particularly notable, and the angled marble bases of the four remaining ledgers is a feature seldom seen in public or private cemeteries in this locality.

The Johnsontown house and granary, complimented by the relocated Wills family cemetery, constitute a combination of resources significant in a local historic context and which meet the criteria requirements for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

See Continuation Sheet No. 16

9. Major Bibliographical References

CH-348

See Endnotes, Section 8, continuation Sheet No. 13.

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

☒ See continuation sheet No. 13

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 22.825

USGS Quad: Popes Creek, Maryland

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	328370	4261780
B	18	328370	4261140
C	18	328140	4261140
D	18	328070	4261670

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Site Plan and Boundary Map

☒ See continuation sheet No. 16

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the known historic features of the property, define the historical agricultural setting of the house and granary, and constitute the extent of the property protected by the historic preservation easement held by the Maryland Historical Trust.

☐ See continuation sheet

Form Prepared By

name/title J. Richard Rivoire
organization Architectural Historian/Consultant date November, 1990
street & number P.O. Box 132 telephone (301)932-1000
city or town La Plata state Maryland zip code 20646

*U S GPO 1988-0-223-918

Easement

CHAS-348
JOHNSONTOWN
Private

18th century

Johnsontown is perhaps one of Charles County's better examples of the telescoping, three-part plan, a house type popularly associated with Southern Maryland and the Tidewater region. Although it does not appear to be as architecturally sophisticated as say, "Dent's Palace", also in Charles County, (CH-40), a closer scrutiny of the original woodwork remaining in the main, eighteenth century part of the house suggests the probability that it at one time possessed a very handsome interior. Unfortunately, all that remains are its doors with raised molded panels and an attractive corner stair with bold rail and chamfered posts.

The oldest part of the house appears to have mid-eighteenth century origins and its floor plan, consisting of two small rooms at one end and a single large room at the other, is not unlike the room configuration of two other Charles County houses, "Charleston", (CH-64), and "Rock Hall", (CH-85), although both of these date c. 1825. In the early nineteenth century the house was extended at one end by two additions, the last being a kitchen. It is believed that it was about this time that the interior of the original house was renovated.

Johnsontown offers an interesting opportunity for study, not only to determine its original appearance and how it relates to other regional examples of mid-eighteenth century architecture, but also the manner in which it evolved into its present plan, a few details of which are thought to be locally unique.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

CH-348

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY MHT #0-C-345-[illegible]

1 NAME

HISTORIC

JOHNSONTOWN

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1 MILE EAST OF FAIRGROUNDS ROAD AND THE CHARLES COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS

CITY, TOWN

X VICINITY OF Bel Alton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Charles

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X DISTRICT	_PUBLIC	_OCCUPIED	_AGRICULTURE	_MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	_PARK
_STRUCTURE	_BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	_EDUCATIONAL	_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
_SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	_ENTERTAINMENT	_RELIGIOUS
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	_YES: RESTRICTED	_GOVERNMENT	_SCIENTIFIC
	_BEING CONSIDERED	_YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	_MILITARY	X OTHER Vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Feimster, Inc., c/o Maurice B. Feimster Telephone #: 934-9751

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 584

CITY, TOWN

La Plata

__ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 20646

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Liber #: 301

Folio #: 107

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Charles County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Charles Street (P.O. Box B)

CITY, TOWN

La Plata

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

NONE

DATE

_FEDERAL _STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

CS-3-8

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
_EXCELLENT	_DETERIORATED	X_UNALTERED	X_ORIGINAL SITE
_GOOD	_RUINS	_ALTERED	_MOVED DATE_____
X_FAIR	_UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Johnsontown, a telescoping, three-part frame house, reflects three basic periods of development. The oldest section, two stories and located at the west end, constitutes the main block and is of a probable mid-eighteenth century date. Facing south, its principal facade is four bays wide at the first floor, with the transomed entrance door occupying the second bay in from the southwest corner. Fronting the door is a small, early twentieth century porch. At the second floor level there are four windows, each aligned with the openings below. All of the windows, of unusually small dimensions, frame later 2-over-2 sash. The door itself has also been replaced in recent years but retains its early trim. On the opposite side the house is three bays wide, with the transomed rear door occupying the first bay in from the northwest corner. The five windows of this elevation, three above and two below, and the five windows on the west end, two on each floor level and one in the gable, like the front, frame later 2-over-2 sash; the rear door, however, is original and has raised molded panels. The exterior German siding, eaves boxing, the tin roof, gable extensions and cornice returns are of late nineteenth or early twentieth century date. On the east end of the house, to the right of the cellar entrance, some of the original (or early) beaded board sheathing, secured with wrought nails, remains preserved. The house sits on high, English bond brick foundation walls enclosing a full cellar lighted by three windows on the south front and two on the north rear walls. The absence of cellar windows below the front and rear doors indicates that these openings occupy original locations. At the east end is a single, exterior, brick chimney with tiled weatherings and free-standing stack, partially covered by the center section of the house.

The middle block is also two stories, but lower than the main section. One half of the first story of the south wall, that part closest to the main block, is recessed back about five feet to provide a partially enclosed area sheltering the exterior entrance to the cellar beneath the original house. There is one window in the recessed area, and a window and door in the remaining half of the wall. The door occupies the second bay in from the southeast corner. At the second floor level are two windows. On the north wall the wing is two bays wide on both levels, with a first floor door occupying the second bay in from the northeast corner. All of the exterior German siding, roofing, windows and door are of about the same vintage as that of the main block. At the east end of the center section is a single exterior chimney with stepped weatherings and free-standing stack. Early in this century a wall with a door and double window was built to enclose the recessed cellar entrance, and a one-story shed roofed porch

(continued on attached sheet)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CH-343

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Johnsontown is perhaps one of Charles County's better examples of the telescoping, three-part plan, a house type popularly associated with Southern Maryland and the Tidewater region. Although it does not appear to be as architecturally sophisticated as, say, "Dent's Palace", also in Charles County, (CH-40), a closer scrutiny of the original woodwork remaining in the main, eighteenth century part of the house suggests the probability that it at one time possessed a very handsome interior. Unfortunately, all that remains are its doors with raised molded panels and an attractive corner stair with bold rail and chamfered posts.

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CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

CH-343

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Johnsontown is a 604-acre farm located east of U.S. Rt. 301, between U.S. 301 and MD. 558 (Spring Hill-Newtown Road), and bordered on the east by Clark's Run. It is identified as parcel No. 39 on Map 55 of the Charles County Tax Map (revised Jan. 1976).

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

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: J. Richard Rivoire, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Charles County Planning Department

DATE: January 1, 1978

STREET & NUMBER: Charles County Courthouse

TELEPHONE: 645-6537

CITY OR TOWN: La Plata

STATE: Maryland

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

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

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

was added to the remaining wall area.

At the extreme east end of the house is a one-story, one-room kitchen built flush to the back of the east chimney of the center block. Along its south wall is an early shed that acts as a covered passage between the center block and the kitchen. The north wall of the kitchen has an off-centered door flanked by small double windows, the latter of fairly recent origin. One original piece of beaded siding is preserved beneath the eave cornice, and there are beaded board plates secured between the exposed joist ends. The remaining wall area is sheathed with random width, lapped boards. At the east end of the kitchen stands a brick chimney with deep, stepped weatherings and free-standing stack. The batten door at the east end of the south shed is of an early design and retains its original wrought hardware.

The main, west end portion of Johnsontown has a floor plan consisting of a large room with fireplace at the east end of both floor levels and two smaller rooms at the opposite end. The stair halls occupy the rear, northwest rooms of both floor levels. Most of the trim is of an early nineteenth century profile, and includes two-piece door surrounds and chairrails; the window facings had been replaced at the same time as the sash. The mantel framing the large first floor fireplace is a replacement of the original and was probably installed in the late nineteenth century. The mantel in the room above is of a fairly simple but attractive early nineteenth century design with reeded pilasters and reeded bed molding, and is also believed to be a replacement of the original. All of this trim is basically inconsistent in profile with two distinctly eighteenth century types of woodwork found here. The original doors, for instance, have handsome raised molded panels, and the stair between the first and second floors has a heavily molded rail and chamfered newel posts. Rising in two flights in the northwest corner of the northwest first floor room,the stair is of a type one would readily attribute to the mid-eighteenth century. These and other more minor features suggest the possibility that this part of Johnsontown is in fact much earlier than most of the existing woodwork would indicate, and that the house underwent extensive interior and exterior renovations in the early and late nineteenth centuries.

The central block has interior woodwork that for the most part is of an early nineteenth century profile and similar to that of the main block. It contains one large room at the east end of the first floor that, having a wide open stair rising in a single flight to the second floor along the west wall, was apparently designed as a combination entrance hall and

dining-living area. This stair also has a molded rail, similar though not quite as bold as that in the main block. The area to the right of the stair is partitioned into a small passage and second room. On the second floor are two bedchambers. A former door, opening into the west bedchamber from the main block and later covered over by a closet, was several steps higher than the second floor level of the wing. In the east chamber is a fireplace faced by a simple, early nineteenth century style mantel. There is sufficient physical evidence to document the fact that the central block of Johnsontown was formerly a two-part building, two stories on the east half and one story in the area enclosing the hall-passage and its adjacent smaller room. The one-story part of the wing was then raised to two stories in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

The kitchen wing houses a single ground floor room with a now covered fireplace in its east end wall and a narrow corner stair in the southwest corner leading to a once plastered attic chamber. The original south wall of the wing, later enclosed by the covered passage, is thicker than the remaining three walls, probably the result of covering over the original exterior sheathing with nailing strips and the existing plasterboard. Remaining original features indicate that the kitchen was probably built in the early nineteenth century and that it was remodeled in the early and mid-twentieth century.

About 100 yards southeast of the house is a small eighteenth century building that might have at one time been a tobacco prizing house or grainery. Wagon sheds built against three walls of the building were added about twenty years ago.

CH-348

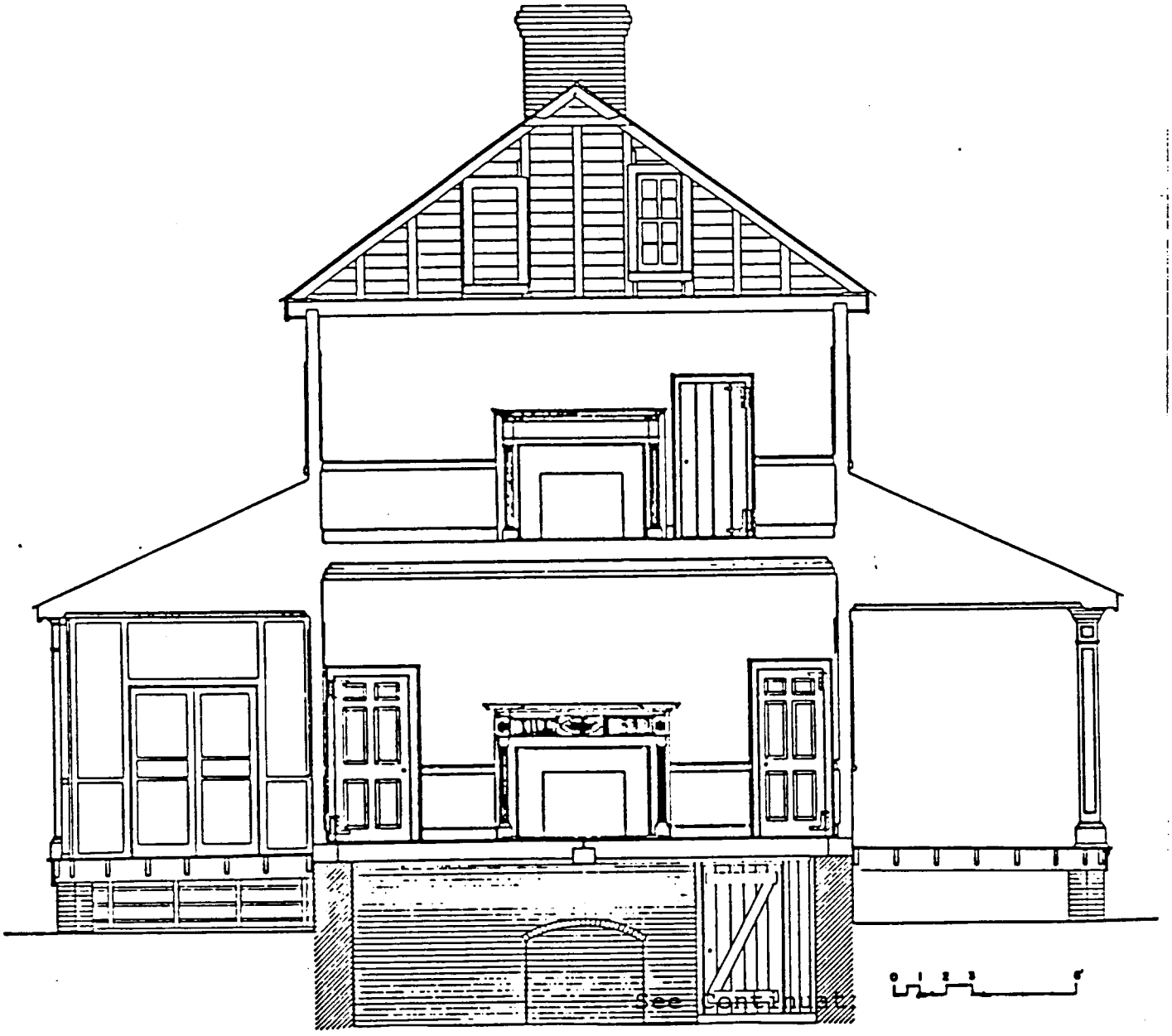
A REPORT ON THE RELOCATION OF THE WILLS FAMILY CEMETERY FROM PREFERENCE TO JOHNSONTOWN, (CH-73) (CH-348) CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

J. RICHARD RIVOIRE

3 OCTOBER, 1990

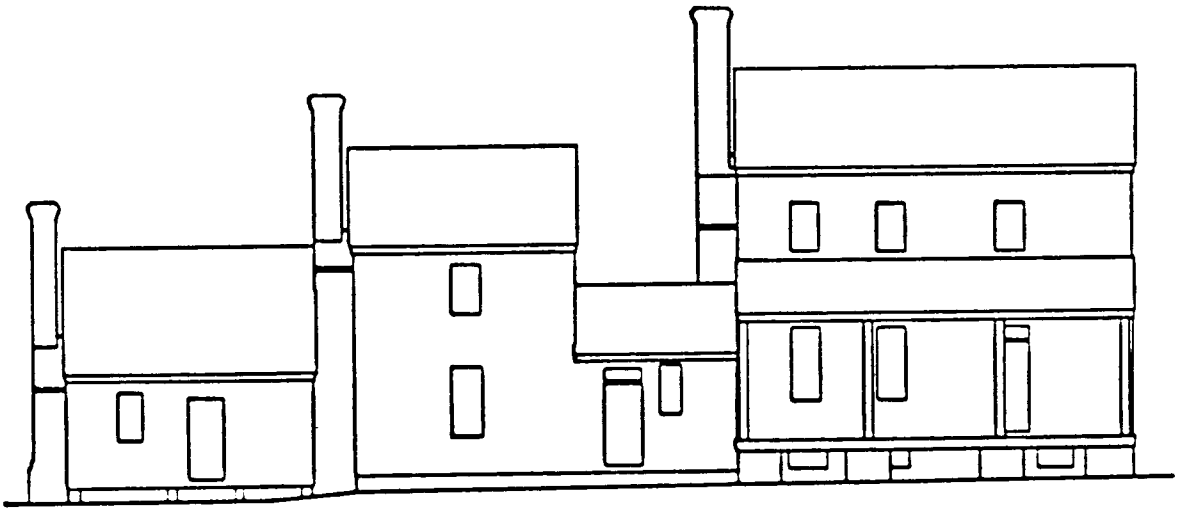
See vertical file....

Charles County
Wills Family Cemetery



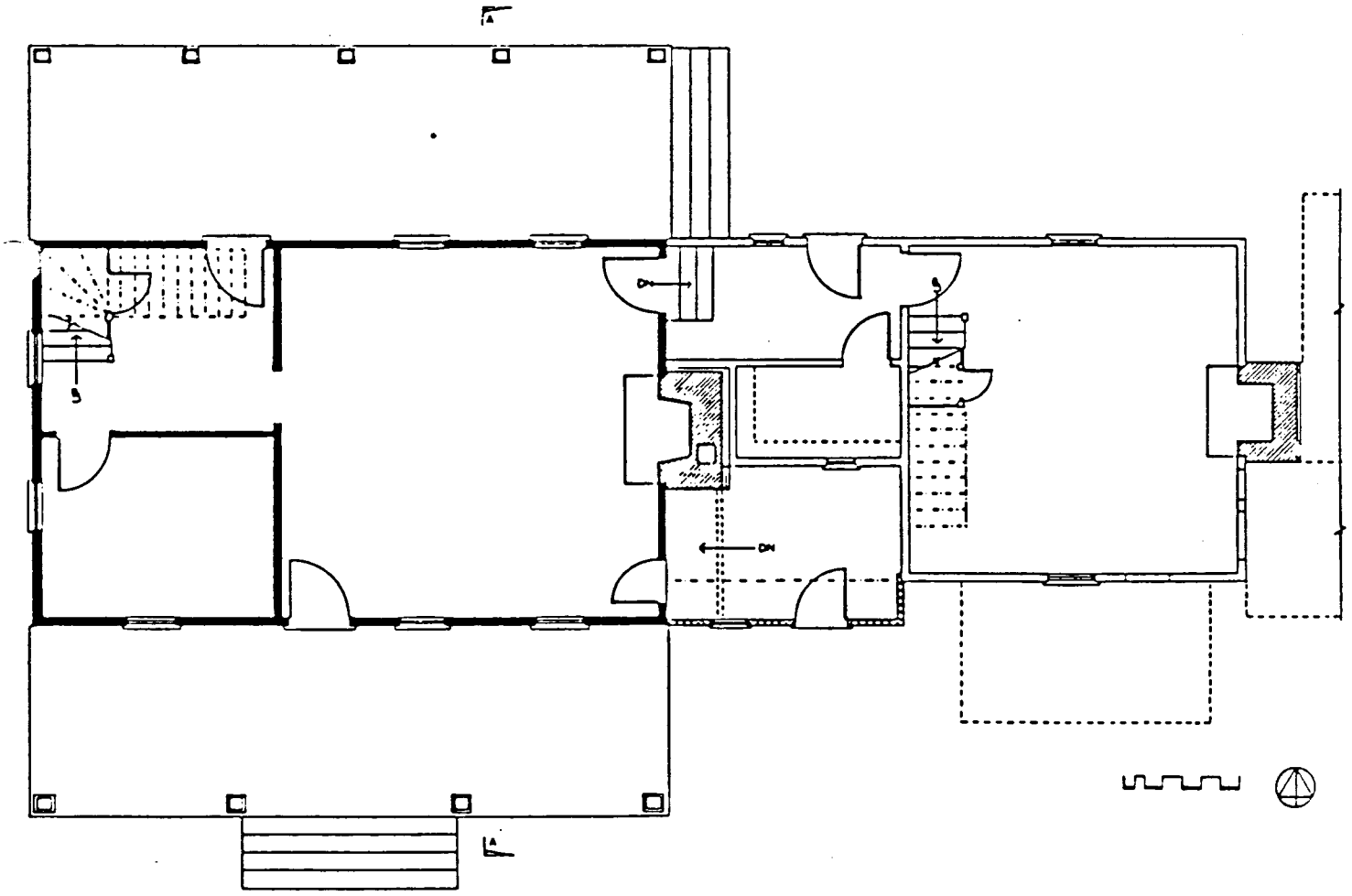
Transverse Section (A-A), Main Block.
(J. R. Rivoire)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8



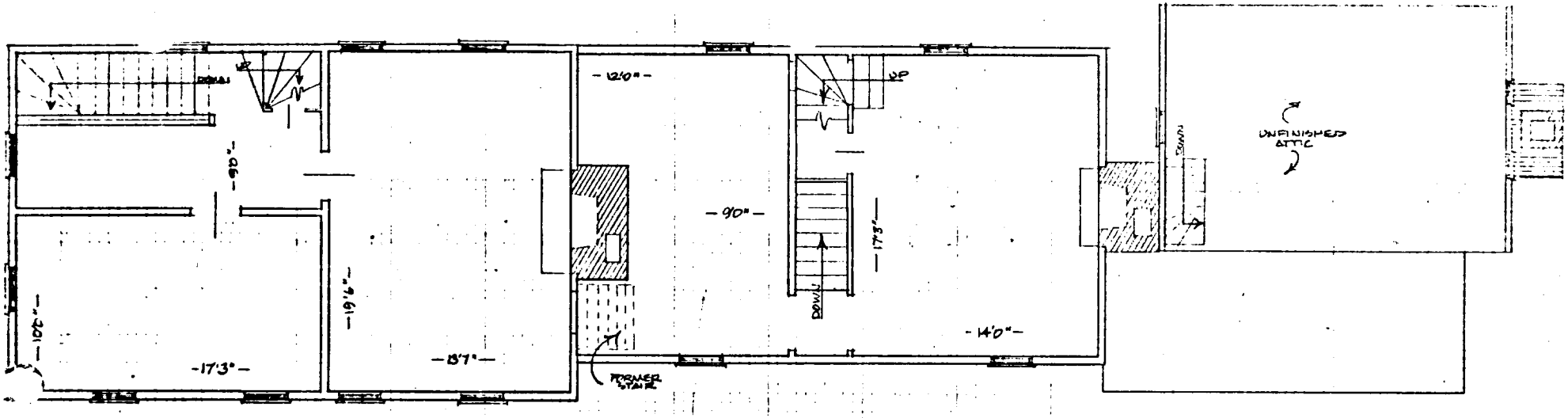
North elevation of house as it appeared ca. 1850.
(J. R. Rivoire)

See Continuation Sheet No. 9



First Floor Plan
(J. R. Rivoire)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7

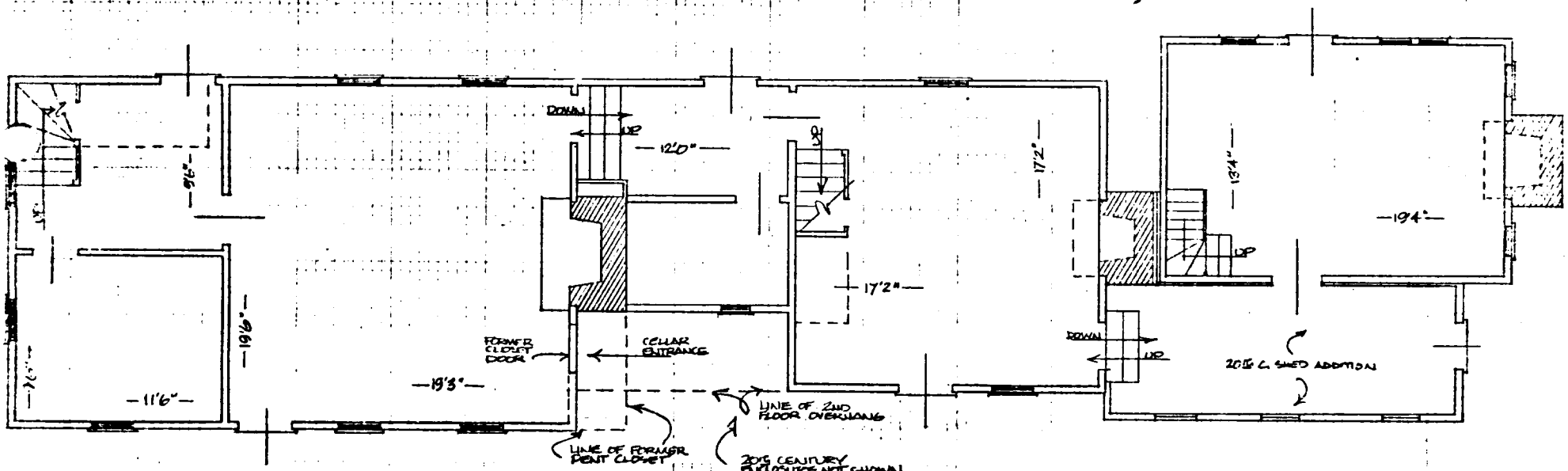


(EXISTING)
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 3/16"-1'0"

NOTE: 20TH C. CLOSETS NOT SHOWN

JOHNSONTOWN - CHAS. CO.
APPENDIX TO NR FORM

J.C. Riddle
SEPT. 1976

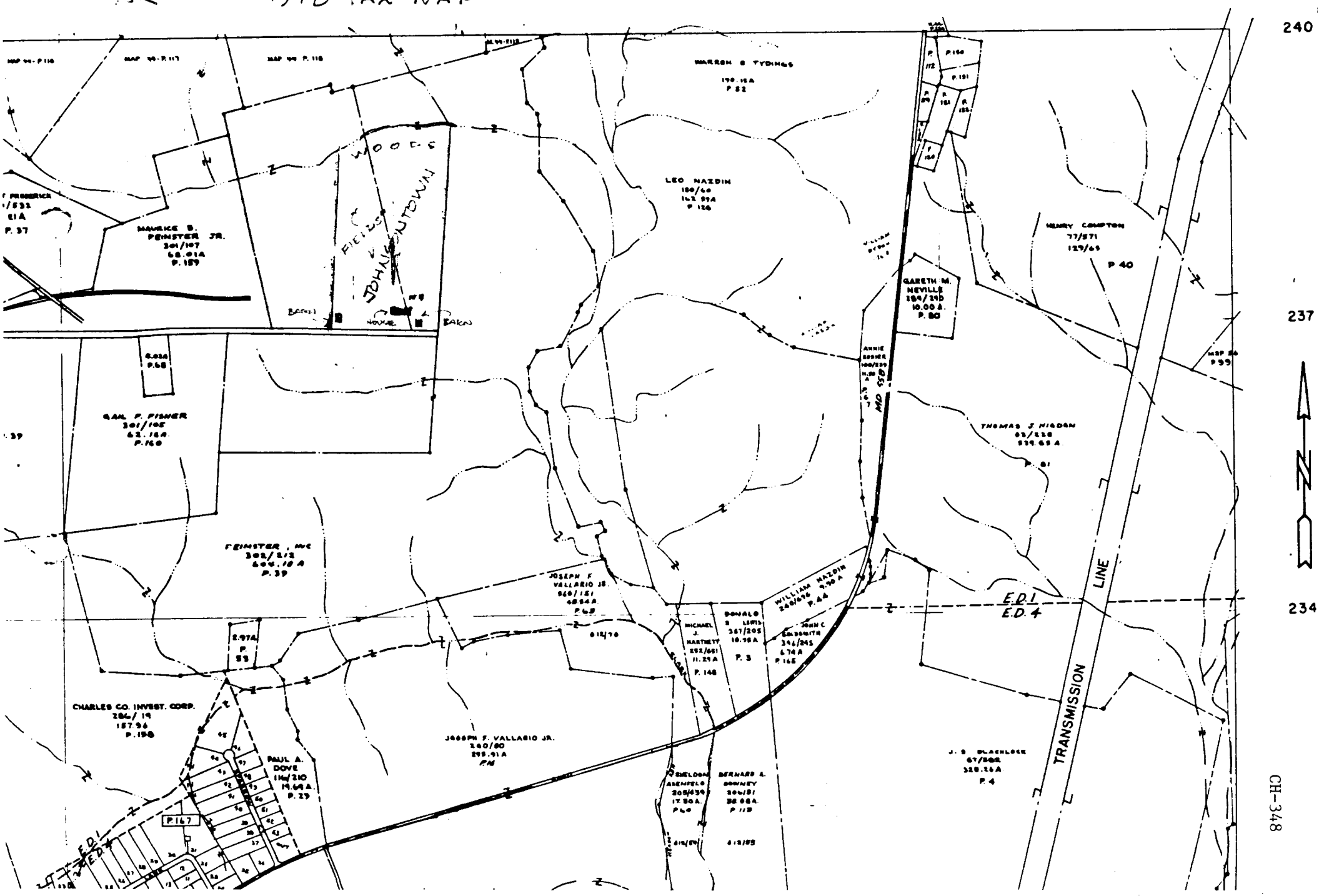


(EXISTING)
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 3/16"-1'0"

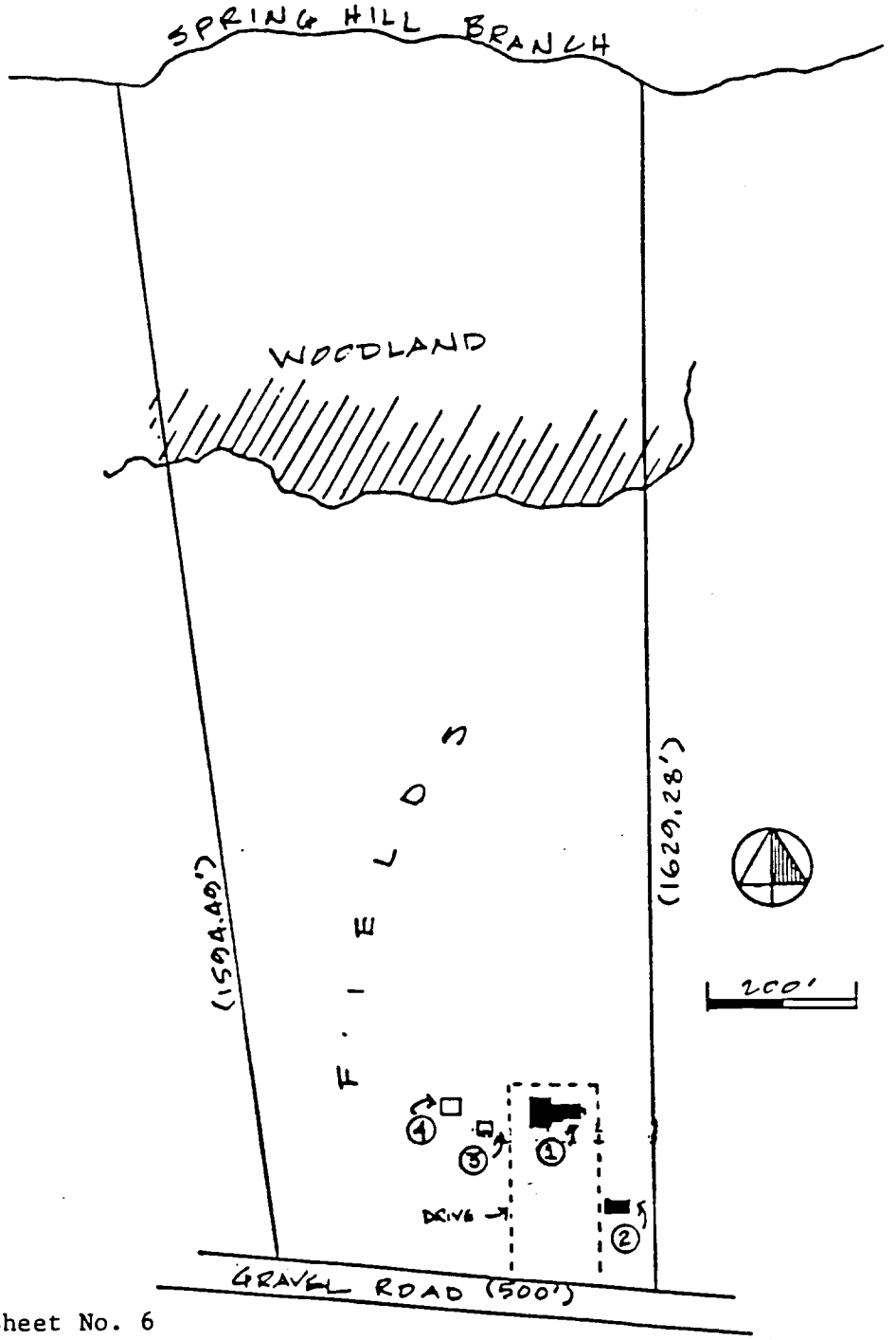
NOTE: 20TH CENTURY PORCHES NOT SHOWN

CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN, CHAS. CO. MD.
NR 1978 TAX MAP

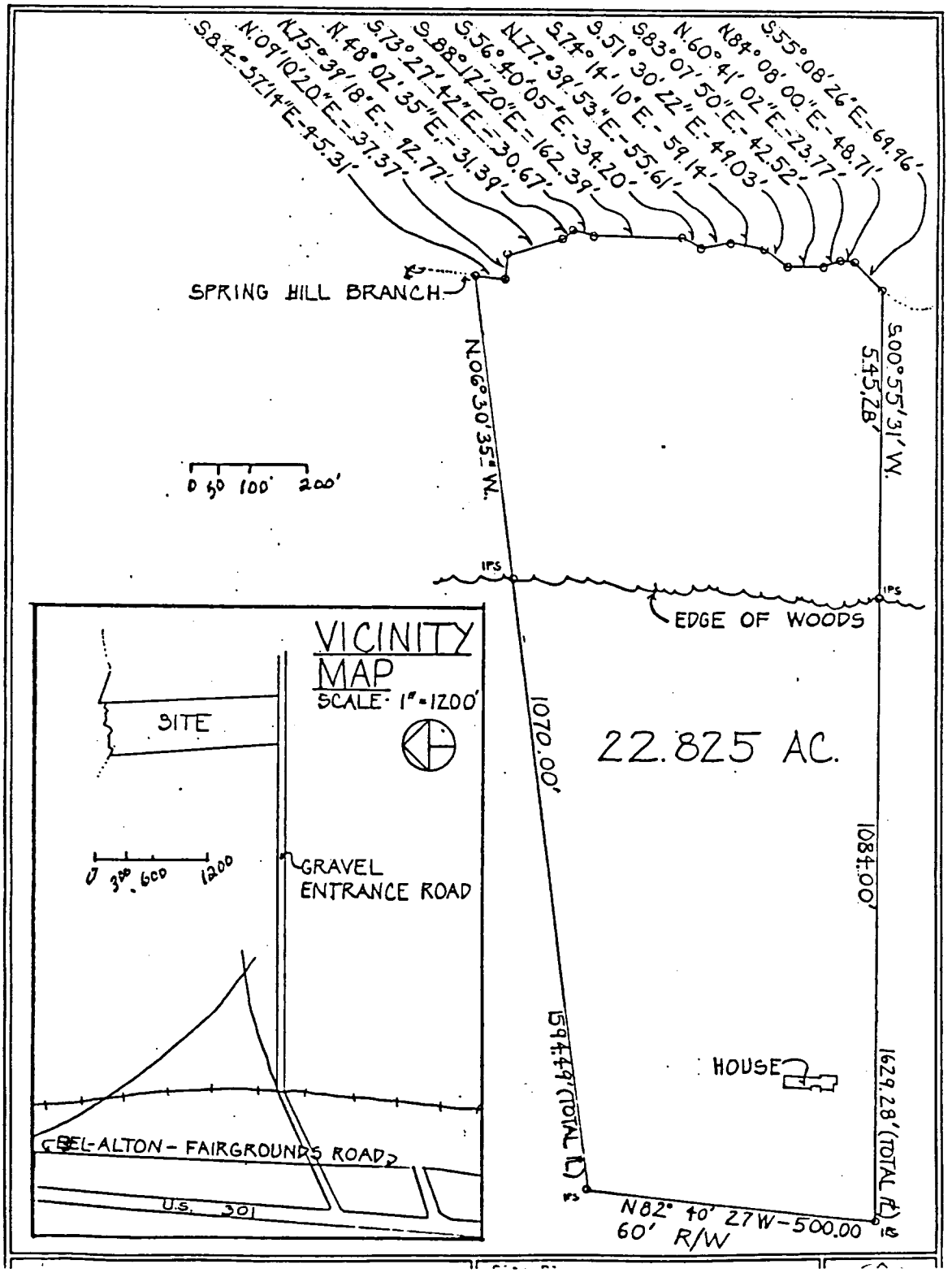


SITE PLAN
From Charles County Land Records,
Liber 750, folio 247.
22.825 acres



1. house
2. granary
3. cemetery
4. cemetery

See Continuation Sheet No. 6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N.84°-08'-00"E.-48.71'
S.83°-07'-50"E.-23.77'
N.60°-41'-02"E.-42.52'
S.74°-14'-10"E.-49.03'
S.51°-30'-22"E.-59.14'
N.17°-39'-53"E.-55.61'
S.56°-40'-05"E.-34.20'
S.88°-17'-20"E.-162.39'
S.73°-27'-42"E.-30.67'
N.48°-02'-35"E.-31.39'
N.75°-39'-18"E.-92.77'
N.09°-10'-20"E.-37.37'
S.84°-37'-14"E.-45.31'
SPRING HILL BRANCH
N.06°-30'-35"W.
S.00°-55'-31"W.
545.28'
0 50 100 200'
IPS
IPS
EDGE OF WOODS
VICINITY MAP
SCALE: 1"=1200'
SITE
0 300 600 1200
GRAVEL ENTRANCE ROAD
BEL-ALTON - FAIRGROUNDS ROAD
U.S. 301
1070.00'
22.825 AC.
1084.00'
HOUSE
594.49'(TOTAL ℄)
1629.28'(TOTAL ℄)
N82° 40' 27W-500.00
60' R/W

Popes Creek

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5561 II SE
(PORT TOBACCO)

Johnsontown
CH-348
Charles Co.
Maryland

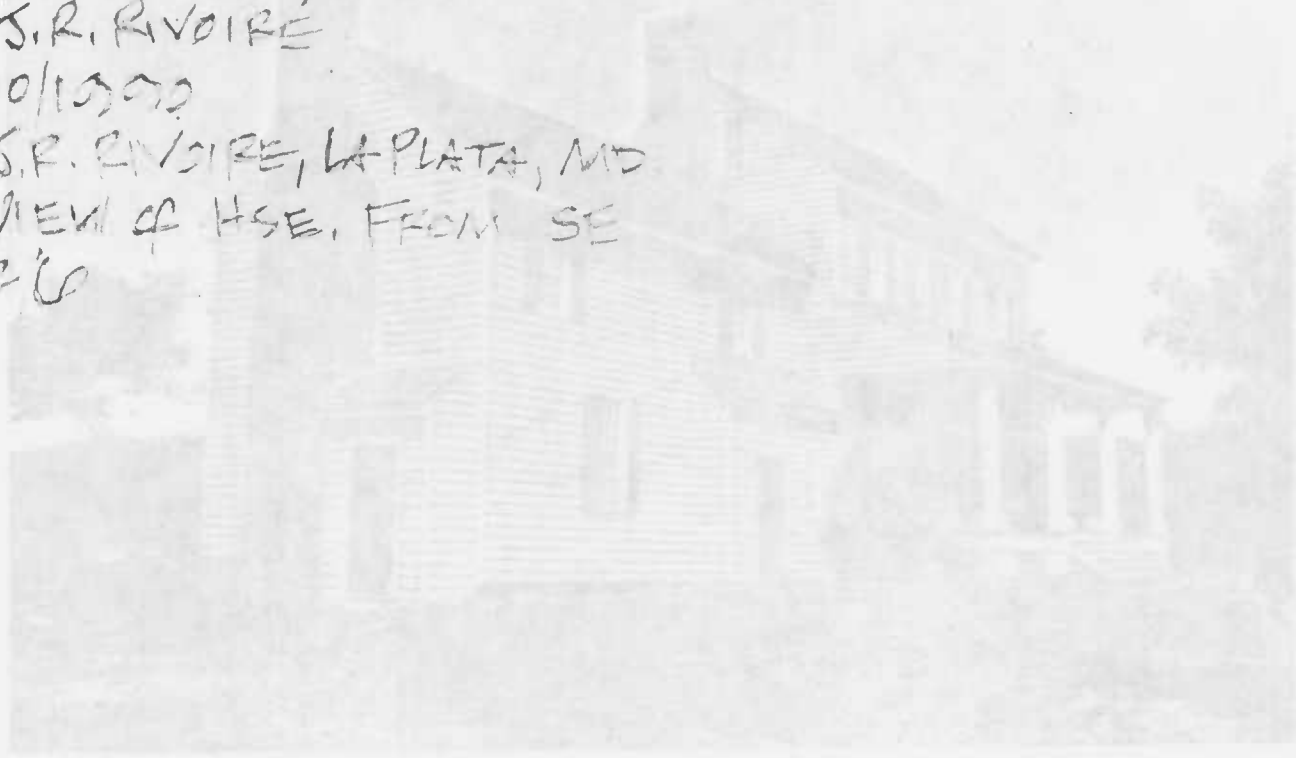
A 18/328370/4261780
B 18/328370/4261140
C 18/328140/4261140
D 18/328070/4261670

CH-348

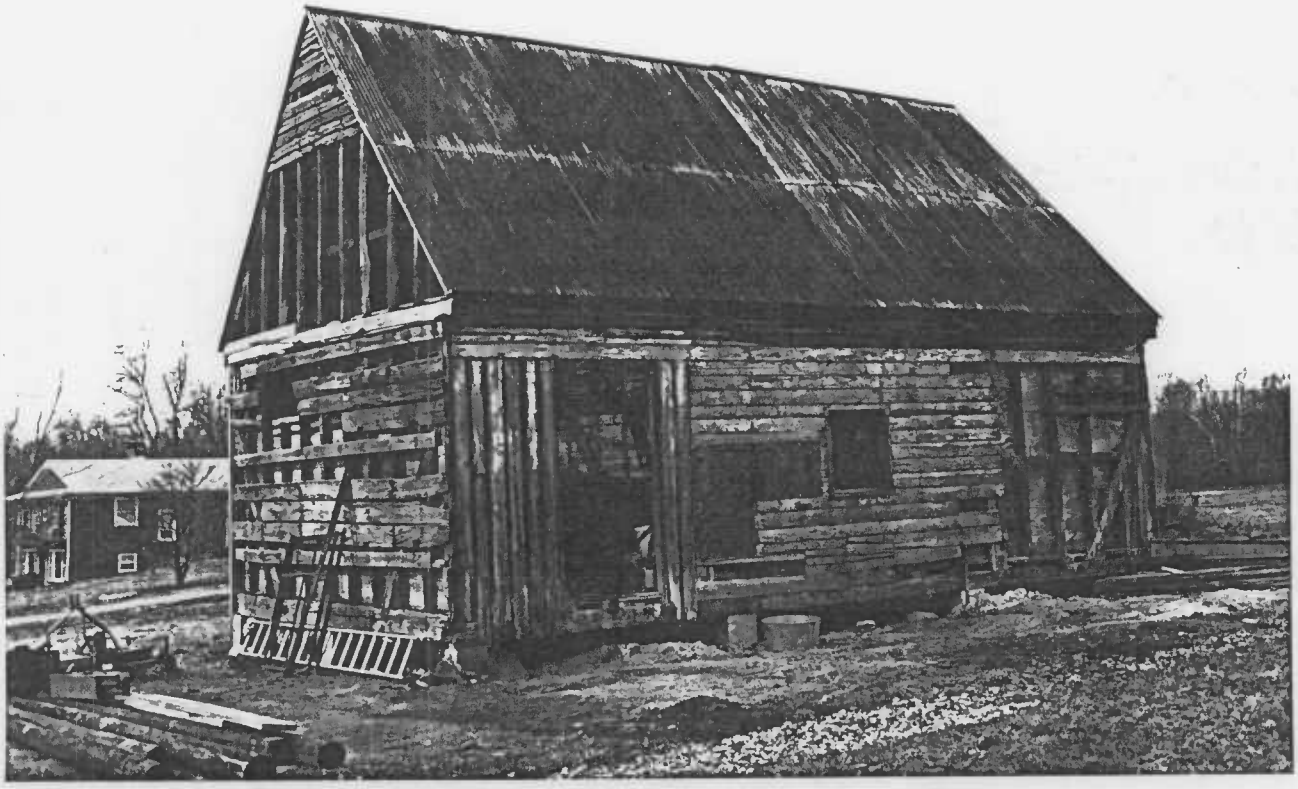
CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
J.R. RIVOIRE
10/1999
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD
VIEW OF HSE. FROM SW
1/6

JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES CO., MD.
J.R. RIVOIRE
10/1999
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD
VIEW OF HSE. FROM SE
2/6

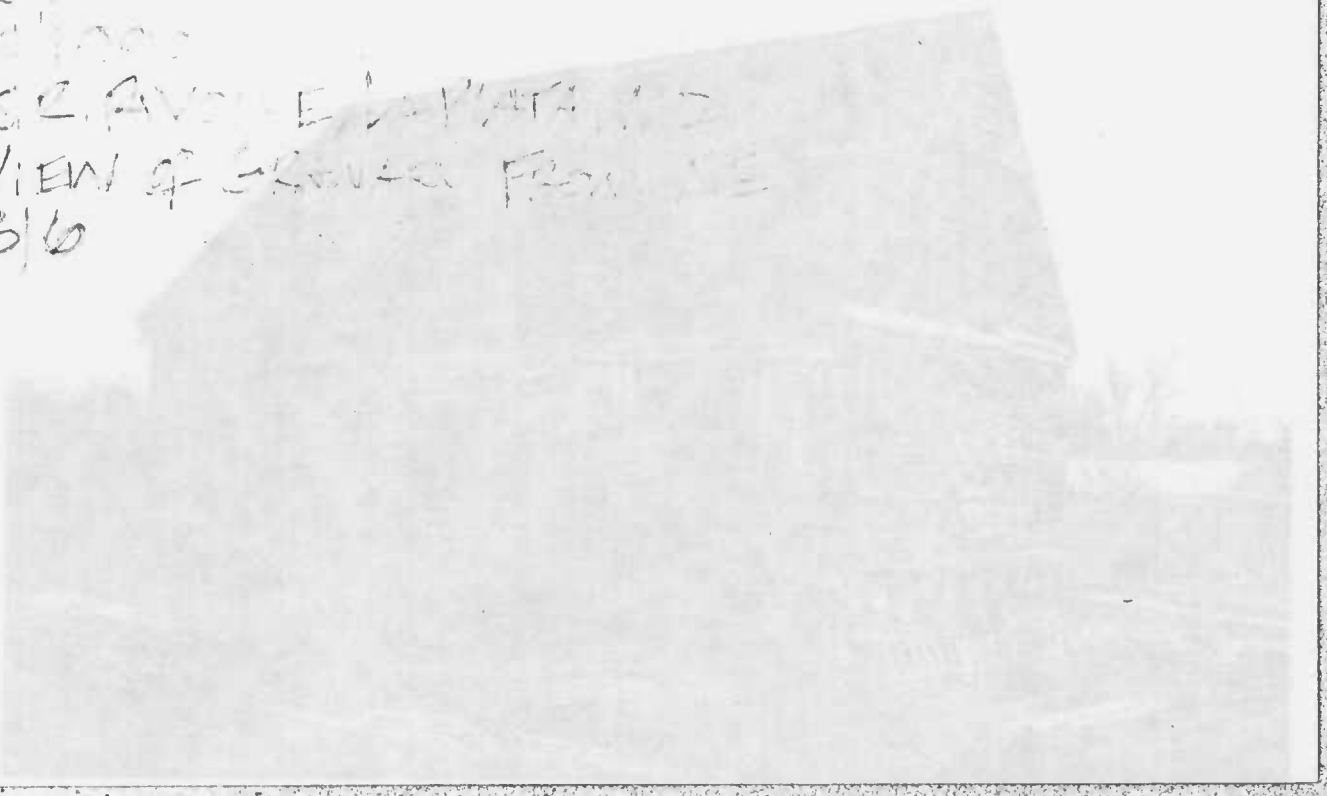


CH-348

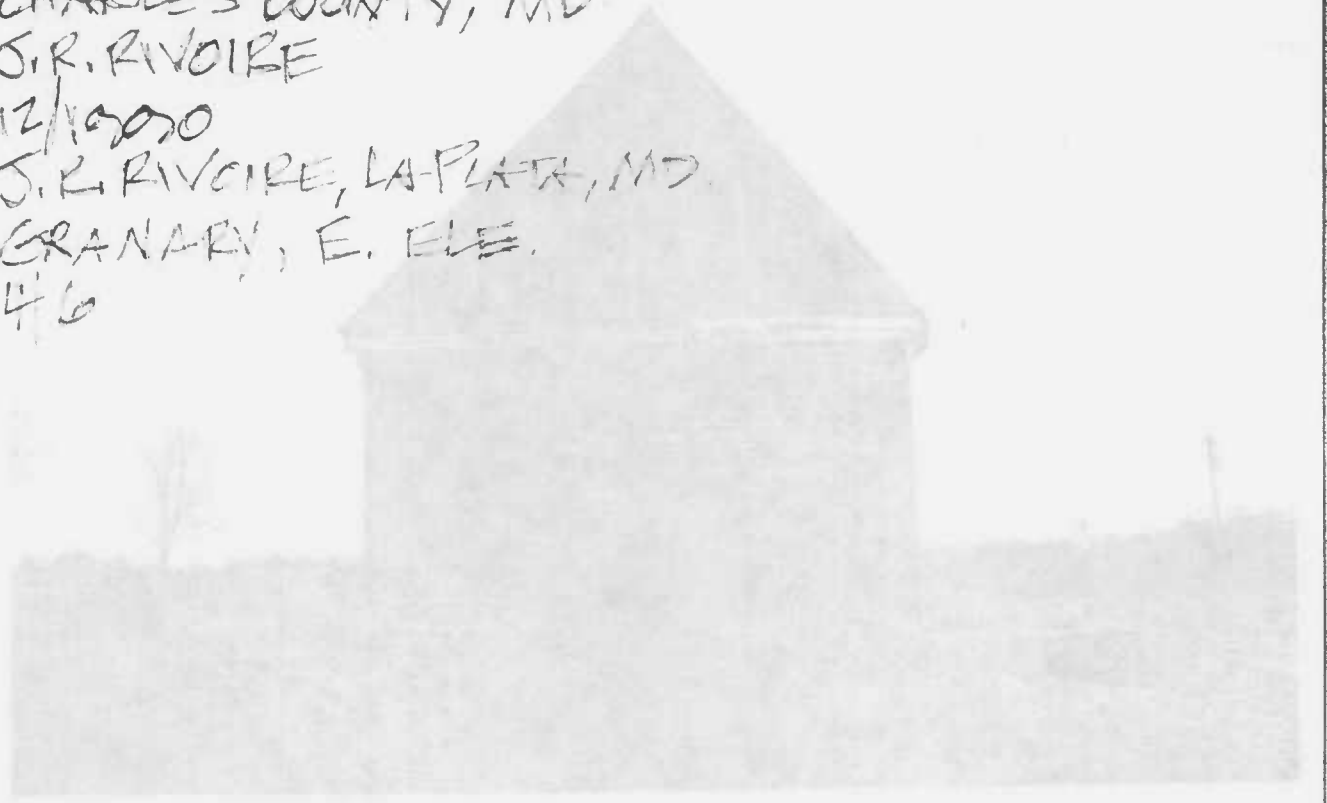


CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
J.R. RIVOIRE
12/1930
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD
GRANARY, E. ELE.
4/6



JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
J.R. RIVOIRE
12/1930
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA-PLATA, MD
GRANARY, E. ELE.
4/6

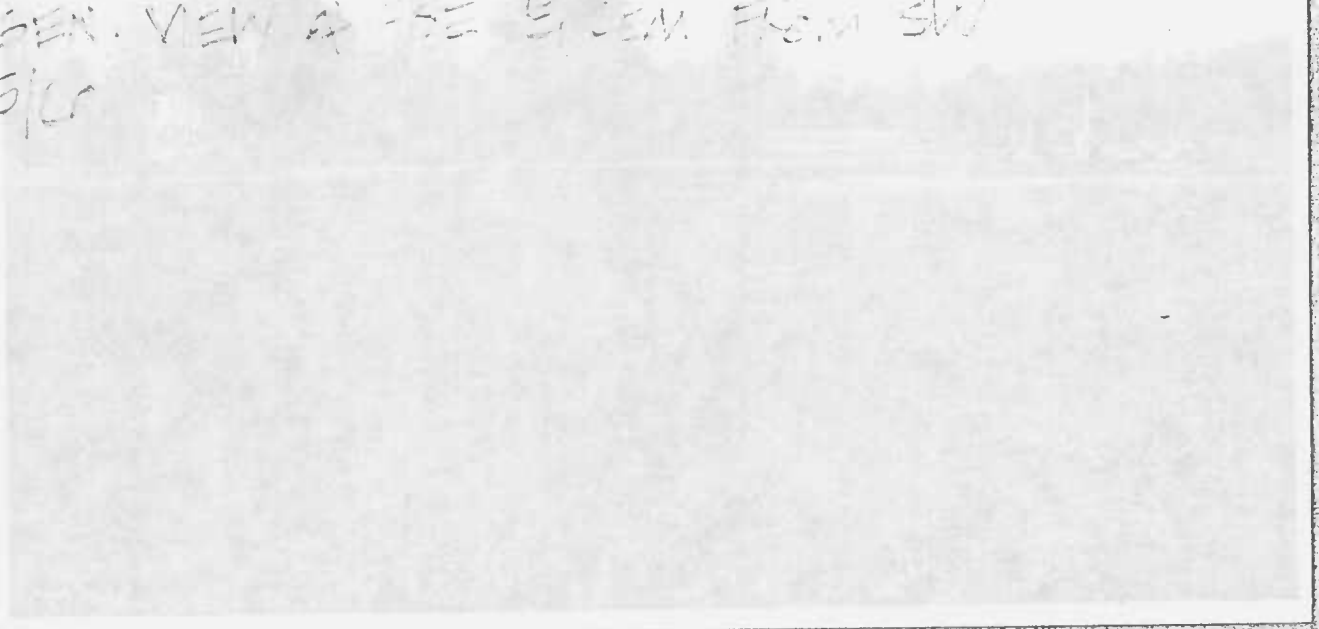


CH-348

CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES CO., MD
J.R. RIVOIRE
12/1990
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD
GEN. VIEW OF SE 3 SEM. FROM SW
5/C

JOHNSONTOWN (CH-348)
CHARLES CO., MD
J.R. RIVOIRE
12/1990
J.R. RIVOIRE, LA PLATA, MD
WILLS CEMETERY, FROM SE
10/C



CHAS-348
JOHNSONTOWN; View From East
J.R.Rivoire, 1978

JOHNSONTOWN, Chas. Co., Md.
View of hse. from SE. JRR, 1978

CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN, Chas. Co., MD.
View of hse. from E. JRR, 1978

CH-348

HAVO

CHAS-~~344~~ 348
JOHNSONTOWN; North Door,
Main Block. Rivoire, 1978

CH-348

Post Card

JOHNSONTOWN: View from SW
J.R. Rivoire, 9/1978 CH-348

PLACE

AUG., 1978

Bigshots

★★☆☆ FEB., 1978

PLACE STAMP HERE

Post Card

JOHNSONTOW, Chas. Co., MD. CH-348
Large tobacco barn. JRR, 1978

JOHNSONTOWN: W. end of CN-348
small barn. JRRivoire-9/1978

PLACE STAMP

AUG., 1978

Bigshots

CH-348

JOHNSONTOWN: View from NW
J.R. Rivoire, 9/1978

PLACE STAMP HERE

BigShots
AUG., 1978

☆☆☆☆ FEB., 1978

PLACE STAMP HERE

Post Card

JOHNSONTOW, CHas. Co., MD. CN-348
Lg. tobacco barn: riven clpbds.
and tilted false plate. JRR