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NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

CARR-53, 1290, 1291 NHL

OMB No. 1024-0018
Expires 10-31-87

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

37

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Whittaker Chambers Farm

and or common

2. Location

street & number East Saw Mill Road ___ not for publication

city, town Westminster ___ vicinity of

state Maryland code county Carroll code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	___ public	X occupied	X agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	X private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name	John Chambers	George W. Della	Ellen C. Into
street & number	446 E. Saw Mill Rd.	632 E. Saw Mill Rd.	823 Alvarado St.
city, town	Westminster, MD 21157	Westminster, MD 21157 ___ vicinity of	San Francisco, CA 94114 state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Carroll County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Westminster state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Whittaker Chambers Farm comprises three contiguous tracts, purchased separately and now separately owned. They are as follows:

1. A tract of approximately 40 acres, part of the property purchased by Chambers in 1941 and currently owned by George W. Della. The present house on this tract, a two-story gable-roofed frame structure, was built about 1960 by an architect who purchased the property from Chambers in 1957. It replaced the frame house of approximately the same configuration on the same site that was Chambers's primary residence from 1941 to 1957. A barn and several other frame outbuildings bordering the driveway to the house remain from the Chambers occupancy. A cinderblock outbuilding in the field northwest of the house postdates Chambers's ownership and thus does not contribute to the historical significance of the property. The Chambers pumpkin patch, which adjoined the north end of the house, has been obliterated. A portion of the land remains in agricultural use.

2. A tract of approximately 230 acres, the core of which was purchased by Chambers in 1946 and which is currently owned by John Chambers, his son. The two-story gable-roofed brick house on this tract, known as Pipe Creek Farm, dates from the mid-19th century and was Chambers's primary residence from 1957 until his death there in 1961. Many of his books and papers are present, as is the Medal of Freedom posthumously awarded him by President Reagan in 1984. A barn, spring house, pig house, chicken house, and two sheds stand to the side and front of the house; an artificial pond is at the rear. A portion of the land remains in agricultural use. Except for some interior renovations to the house, the property is essentially unchanged from Chambers's occupancy.

3. A tract of approximately 120 acres, the core of which was purchased by Chambers in 1947 and which is currently owned by Ellen Chambers Into, his daughter. The two-story gable-roofed frame house on this tract, known as Medfield, dates from the 19th century and was used by Chambers as a retreat for writing. During the 1950s he added a connecting link between the main structure and the adjoining summer house. The property is essentially unchanged since that time.

The rolling terrain, variously wooded and open, descends to a stream, Pipe Creek, at the north or back edge of the farm. Notwithstanding the replacement of the first house, the farm as a whole is much as it was during Chambers's years there. It has undergone no further development and retains its rural character.

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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	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	X politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1941–1961 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Whittaker Chambers Farm is nationally significant as the home of Whittaker Chambers, a pivotal figure in mid-20th-century American political history. A former Communist turned conservative and Time magazine editor, Chambers startled the nation in 1948 with disclosures that Alger Hiss, a former State Department official and pillar of the prevailing liberal establishment, had also been an active Communist engaged in espionage during the 1930s. In a highly publicized episode at his farm on December 2, 1948, Chambers retrieved from a hollowed-out pumpkin and turned over to congressional investigators microfilmed copies of secret State Department documents that he said Hiss had given him for passage to a Soviet agent. Following two dramatic trials at which Chambers was the principal government witness, Hiss was convicted of perjury on January 20, 1950, and imprisoned for denying this activity before a grand jury. Back at his farm, Chambers wrote Witness, a best-selling autobiography published in 1952 that portrayed in stark terms the contemporary struggle between Communism and freedom.

In his definitive account of the Hiss-Chambers case, historian Allen Weinstein found that it "dramatized, . . . for millions of Americans, the emerging political and cultural implications of the Cold War."[1] Joseph C. Goulden judged that "in terms of its impact on American political life, the Hiss case stands as the most important trial in United States history."[2] Like the Sacco-Vanzetti case, it aroused and polarized public opinion more on the basis of ideology than objective analysis: such leading liberals as Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of State Dean Acheson persisted in defending Hiss despite overwhelming evidence of his guilt. The case brought national prominence to Richard Nixon, an obscure California congressman who followed up on Chambers's initial public allegations before the House Un-American Activities Committee after most of his colleagues had accepted Hiss's cool denials. Vindicated by Hiss's conviction, Nixon won election to the Senate in 1950 and the vice-presidency in 1952. The case heightened public awareness of Communist penetration in the federal government, hardened Cold War attitudes, and buttressed American conservatism after its long eclipse under the New Deal. Among those moved by Witness was a recent convert to conservatism, Ronald Reagan, who as president would posthumously honor Chambers with the Medal of Freedom. The case also inspired excesses: two weeks after Hiss's sentencing, "McCarthyism" was launched when the opportunistic Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin charged, with insufficient evidence, that 205 unnamed Communists then infested the State Department.

In Witness and a posthumously published collection of writings, Cold Friday, Chambers portrayed his farm as symbolizing his philosophical and spiritual transformation. He had renounced urban living, suggestive of collectivism, for manual farm labor in an isolated rural retreat, expressing his affirmation of free enterprise and the dignity of the individual. The farm was thus more than Chambers's last living place; it represented the final ideological journey of his life. He died there in 1961.

(continued)

General Background

Whittaker Chambers was born April 1, 1901, to a politically conservative family of intellectual and artistic achievement. From his boyhood on Long Island, New York, he went to Columbia University and there became radicalized to Marxism. In 1925 he dropped out of Columbia and joined the Communist Party. Initially employing his literary talent as a writer for The Daily Worker, he later went underground as an espionage agent. He came to Washington in the latter capacity in 1934 and made contact with several government officials identified as party members or sympathizers. His duties included obtaining information from these officials and passing it on to a Soviet intelligence operative in New York. Among his Washington contacts was Alger Hiss.

Hiss had impeccable establishment credentials. Educated at Johns Hopkins and Harvard Law, he had been or would become a secretary to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, counsel to the Nye Committee investigating the munitions industry, attorney in the Solicitor General's office, and holder of progressively more responsible posts in the State Department before leaving government service in 1946 to become president of the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace. While at the State Department he helped arrange United States participation in the Yalta Conference and organized the Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco conferences leading to establishment of the United Nations.

Influenced by Josef Stalin's party purges, Chambers defected from the Communist Party in April 1938. In September 1939, further disaffected by Stalin's pact with Adolf Hitler, he informed Assistant Secretary of State Adolph A. Berle, Jr., of Hiss's Communist affiliation and activity. Berle was slow to investigate and dropped the matter after President Franklin D. Roosevelt belittled Chambers's story and Dean Acheson and Justice Felix Frankfurter, Hiss's former law professor and friend, vouched for Hiss.[3] Discouraged by this response and wishing to build a new life for himself and his family, Chambers now sought to distance himself from his past. He immersed himself in his career at Time, where he began as a book reviewer in 1939 and rose to senior editor by 1948; in hard labor on his Westminster, Maryland, farm; and in the Quaker faith to which he converted.

As Soviet-American relations deteriorated after World War II, concerns about domestic Communist infiltration and subversion were taken more seriously. The FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began a series of investigations, during which the record of Chambers's 1939 interview with Berle was uncovered. On August 3, 1948, Chambers appeared before the HUAC under subpoena and publicly named the members of his former Communist apparatus in Washington, including Hiss. Two days later Hiss testified that he had never been a Communist Party member or sympathizer and had never known Chambers.

With his impressive background, high-placed connections, and polished, self-assured manner, Hiss made a far better impression on most committee members and observers than Chambers, a rumpled, admitted ex-Communist of dubious reputation. But a few, notably Rep. Richard M. Nixon and HUAC investigator Robert Stripling, were unpersuaded by Hiss's denials. Nixon followed up with at least two unpublicized visits to Chambers's farm the week of August 9 and became convinced that Chambers was telling the truth about his association with Hiss, with whom he claimed

a close family friendship.[4] Doubts about Hiss spread when Chambers, questioned further by the HUAC in executive session, detailed many aspects of Hiss's personal and family life that Hiss then corroborated in further independent testimony. When the committee finally brought them together on August 17, Hiss claimed to recall Chambers as George Crosley, a free-lance writer to whom he had briefly rented rooms, but continued to deny any closer association or Communist connection. He sought to discredit his accuser as mentally unstable. Asked by Nixon on August 25 about his motivations, Chambers replied,

> The story has spread that in testifying against Mr. Hiss I am working out some old grudge, or motives of revenge or hatred. I do not hate Mr. Hiss. We were close friends, but we are caught in a tragedy of history. Mr. Hiss represents the concealed enemy against which we are all fighting, and I am fighting. I have testified against him with remorse and pity, but in a moment of history in which this Nation now stands, so help me God, I could not do otherwise.[5]

Hiss challenged Chambers to repeat his accusation outside privileged testimony so he could sue Chambers for libel, and Chambers obliged on "Meet the Press." Hiss was then forced to follow through, much to his detriment. In a pretrial examination Hiss's lawyer asked Chambers if he had anything from Hiss, leading Chambers to recover and hand over State Department documents in Hiss's handwriting that he had hidden away a decade earlier. With this first clear indication that Hiss was not only a Communist but was involved in espionage, the case took on a new dimension. The HUAC quickly subpoenaed any further evidence Chambers might have, and on December 2 he produced the famous "pumpkin papers"--microfilmed copies of additional State Department documents that were found to have been retyped on Hiss's Woodstock typewriter.[6]

On December 15 a grand jury indicted Hiss on two counts of perjury for denying under oath that he had delivered copies of restricted documents to Chambers in early 1938 and that he had seen and conversed with Chambers at that time. (The more serious charge of espionage could not be prosecuted because the statute of limitations had run, but the perjury indictment incorporated espionage in fact.) The Hiss trial got underway May 31, 1949, at the Federal Courthouse in Foley Square, New York City. Chambers testified that Hiss had given him the document copies submitted in evidence at Hiss's home on Volta Place in Washington; Hiss persisted in denying the transfers and his close relationship to Chambers. The trial ended on July 7 with a hung jury divided eight to four for conviction. A second trial began November 17, and on January 20, 1950, its jury found Hiss guilty on both counts. Hiss was sentenced to five years in prison, appealed unsuccessfully to the Supreme Court, and ultimately served three years and eight months in the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

For many, however, the case did not end with Hiss's conviction. Hiss continued to vigorously assert his innocence, and although such previously sympathetic liberals as John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., became convinced of his guilt, others instinctively resisted this conclusion. As one recent writer has put it, "The case was the Rashomon drama of the Cold War. One's interpretation of

the evidence and the characters involved became a litmus test of one's politics, character and loyalties. Sympathy with either Hiss or Chambers was more an article of faith than a determination of fact."[7]

Chambers's Witness appeared in 1952 and became an immediate best-seller. Its portrayal of the inexorable advance of totalitarianism and the Hiss case had a strong influence on the resurgent conservative movement. The writer André Malraux, another convert from Communism, wrote Chambers after reading it, "You are one of those who did not return from Hell with empty hands."[8] During the same period, however, the excesses of McCarthyism lent credence to the notion that Hiss may have been framed. Chambers deplored McCarthy as "a witless primitive whose antics endangered the entire anti-Communist movement," according to Allen Weinstein.[9]

When Richard Nixon was discredited by the Watergate scandal in 1973-74, many among a new generation unfamiliar with the facts of the Hiss case were prepared to believe that any enemy of Nixon's must be innocent. Chambers had died in 1961, but Hiss survived to profit from Nixon's downfall and became a popular lecturer on college campuses. Among those inclined to his innocence was Weinstein, a Smith College history professor who embarked on a definitive study of the case. In the course of his exhaustive research he obtained previously closed FBI files and interviewed virtually everyone associated with it. The result was Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case, published in 1978. Its conclusion was all the more convincing for contradicting its author's preconception: "the body of available evidence proves that [Hiss] did in fact perjure himself when describing his secret dealings with Chambers, so that the jurors in the second trial made no mistake in finding Alger Hiss guilty as charged."[10]

The Chambers Farm

As a Communist agent, Chambers lived an itinerant existence. He and his family were residing in Baltimore at the time of his break with the party in 1938. Initially they went into hiding to escape possible retaliation, then settled in a small house outside Westminster, Maryland, that Chambers had contracted to buy in 1937. This property became a link in the chain of evidence for the close relationship between Chambers and Hiss, for Hiss had previously contracted for it, and Chambers testified to visiting it first in Hiss's company.[11]

In 1941 Chambers purchased and moved his family to a larger house on a small farm near Westminster--the initial tract of the farm where he spent the rest of his life. In 1946 he purchased a nearby property, called Pipe Creek Farm from the stream that flowed through it, and a year later he acquired a tract, "Medfield," that linked the other two. His combined holdings totaled some 390 acres. He and his family occupied the house on the first tract, called the "home place" or "front place," until 1957, when he sold that property and moved to the old brick house on Pipe Creek Farm, the "back place." For his writing, however, Chambers retreated to the house at Medfield, as revealed in the letter to his children with which he began Witness, written in 1951:

> I am sitting in the kitchen of the little house at Medfield, our second farm which is cut off by the ridge and a quarter-mile across the fields from our home place, where you are. I am writing a book.[12]

Chambers died of a heart attack on July 9, 1961, in the house on the "back place." He had previously deeded that property to his son, John, and Medfield to his daughter, Ellen; both retain their ownerships at this writing. The new owner of the "home place" razed the house there soon after its sale (it had been damaged by fire) and built a new one of approximately the same configuration on its site. The Chambers outbuildings remain.

Chambers commonly referred to his entire property as Pipe Creek Farm, as in the following passage from Witness that expressed his almost religious feeling for the place:

> Pipe Creek Farm is not simply a few hundred acres of dirt, some clusters of old barns and outbuildings, power machines, a herd of cattle, a few beeves and hogs or a flock of sheep.
>
> Our farm is our home. It is our altar. To it each day we bring our faith, our love for one another as a family, our working hands, our prayers. In its soil and the care of its creatures, we bury each day a part of our lives in the form of labor. . . . We believe that laborare est orare--to labor is to pray.
>
> In that sense the farm is our witness. It is a witness against the world. By deliberately choosing this life of hardship and immense satisfaction, we say in effect: The modern world has nothing better than this to give us.[13]

NOTES

[1] Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 508.

[2] The Best Years: 1945-1950 (New York: Atheneum, 1976), p. 339.

[3] Perjury, pp. 328-31.

[4] Ibid., p. 25.

[5] Quoted in Chambers, Witness (New York: Random House, 1952), pp. 694-95.

[6] Chambers had given the documents and microfilms to his wife's nephew for safekeeping when he defected in 1938, regarding them as "life preservers" against possible assassination attempts by the Communist Party. With a flair for the dramatic, he placed the microfilm rolls in the pumpkin on the morning of December 2 to set the scene for their surrender to HUAC investigators Donald Appell and William Wheeler that evening. (Perjury, pp. 184, 191.)

[7] David Remnick, "Alger Hiss Goes Urgently into that Good Night," The Washington Post Magazine, Oct. 12, 1986, p. 26.

[8]Quoted in Whittaker Chambers, Cold Friday (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 68.

[9]Perjury, p. 538.

[10]Ibid., p. 565.

[11]Ibid., pp. 53, 474.

[12]Witness, p. 3.

[13]Ibid., p. 517.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Chambers, Whittaker. Cold Friday. New York: Random House, 1964.
Chambers, Whittaker. Witness. New York: Random House, 1952.
Goulden, Joseph C. The Best Years: 1945-1950. New York: Atheneum, 1976.
Manchester, William. The Glory and the Dream. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973.
Weinstein, Allen. Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 390

Quadrangle name Manchester, MD-PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	331000	4392300
B	18	331140	4390680
C	18	330880	4390500
D	18	330220	4391060
E	18	329580	4392120
F	18	329660	4392590
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

All that real property on East Saw Mill Road near Westminster, Carroll County, Maryland, formerly owned by Whittaker Chambers and owned in 1987 by John Chambers, Ellen Chambers Into, and George W. Della. See accompanying tax map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barry Mackintosh, Bureau Historian

organization National Park Service **date** January 26, 1988

street & number P.O. Box 37127 **telephone** (202) 343-8169

city or town Washington **state** DC 20013-7127

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ **date** _____

For NPS use only

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

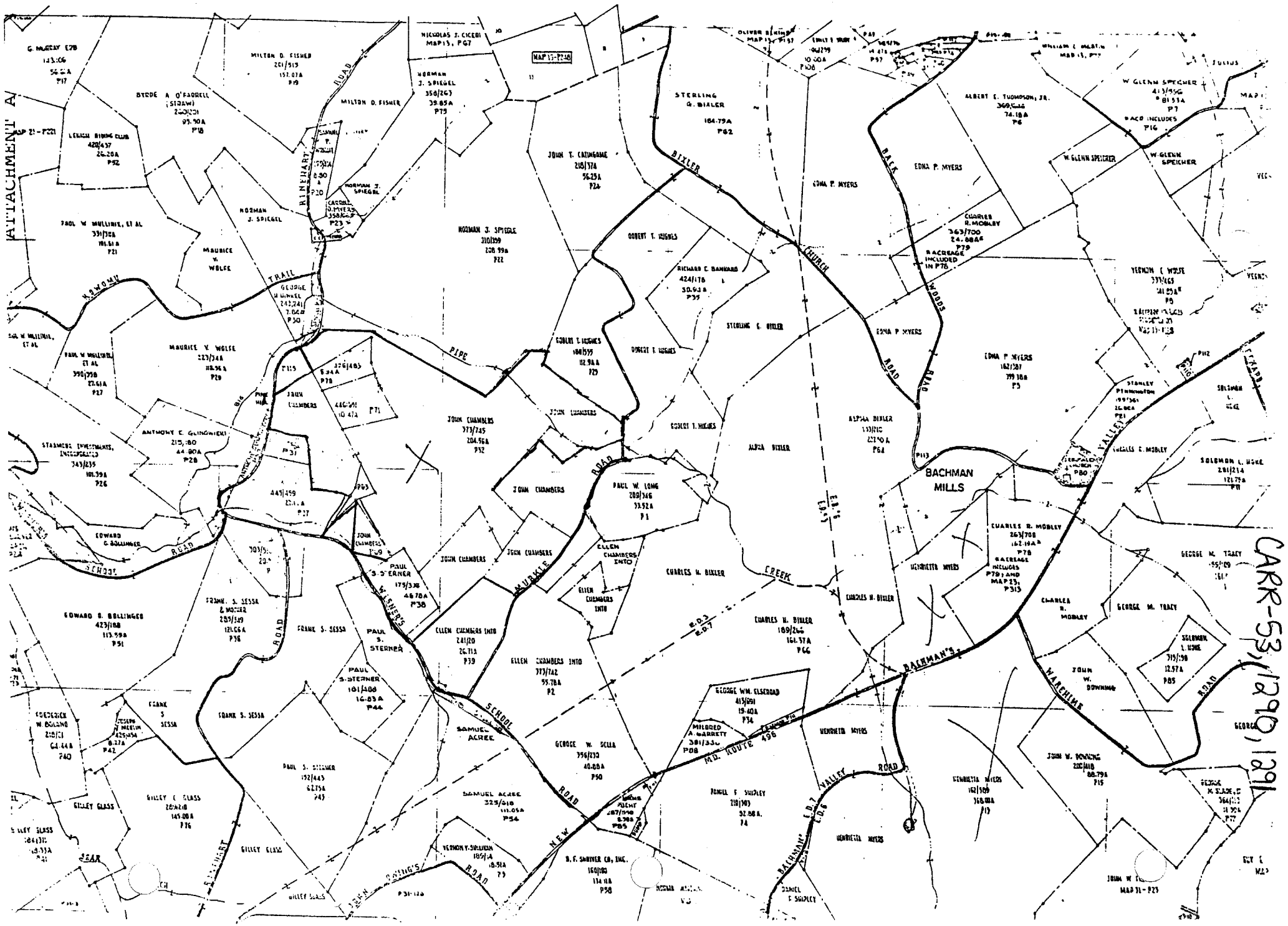
_____ **date** _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ **date** _____

Chief of Registration

CARROLL COUNTY TAX MAP (PORTION)



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The "home place": Chambers barn at left, rebuilt house on site of Chambers house at right.

The house at Pipe Creek Farm.

The house at Medfield.

Photos by Barry Mackintosh
National Park Service
December 1987

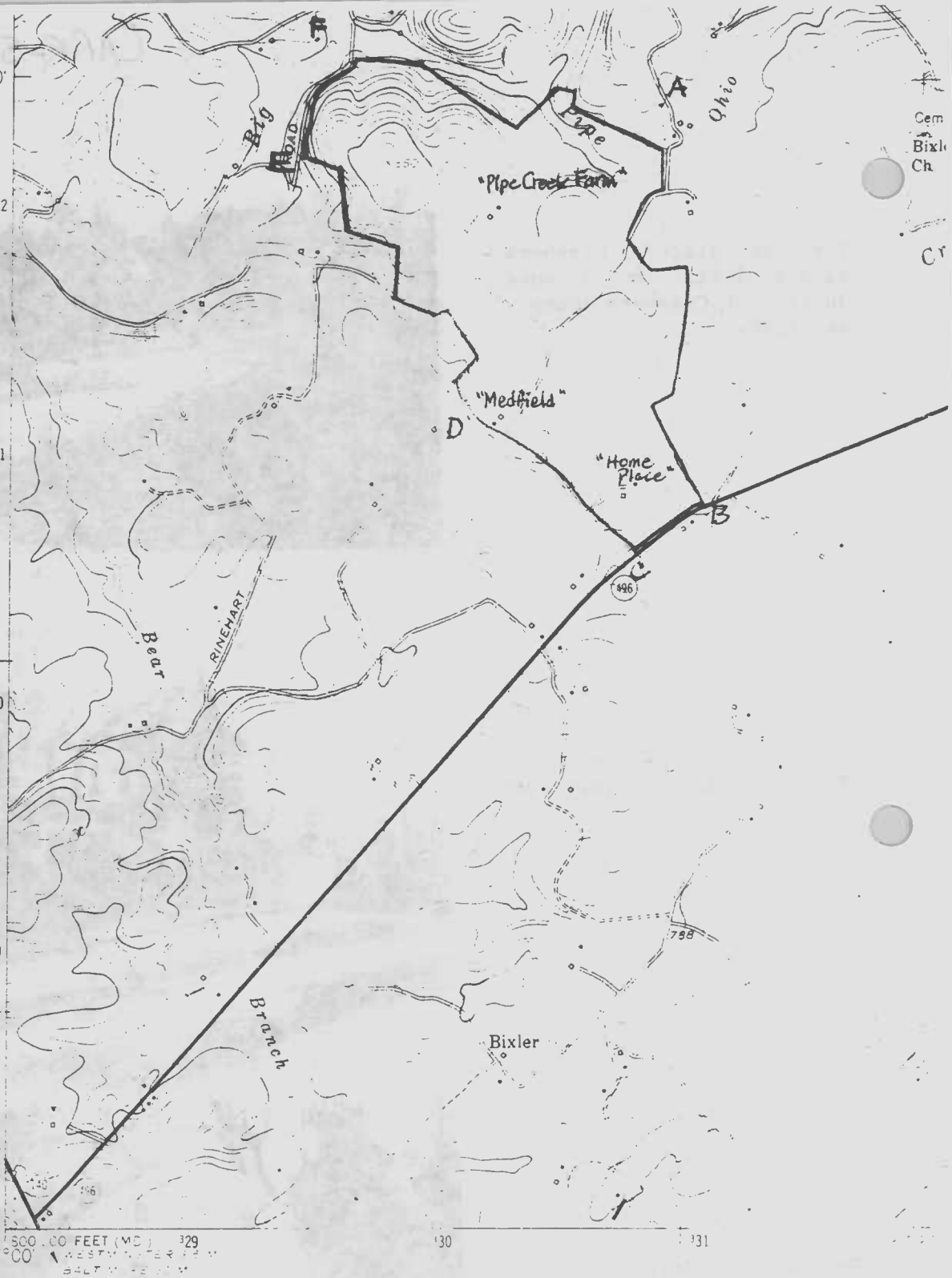
CARR-53, 1290, 1291

WHITTAKER CHAMBERS FARM

UTM REFERENCES:

A: 18/331000/4392300
B: 18/331140/4390680
C: 18/330880/4390500
D: 18/330220/4391060
E: 18/329580/4392120
F: 18/329660/4392590

(MANCHESTER, MD-PA QUADRANGLE)



(NEW WINDSOR) 5563 II SE

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