Survey No. T-866

Magi No.

DOE ___yes ___no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Slave Quarter at The Wilderness

and/or common

2. Location

street & number South side of Island Creek Road, 4.8 mi SE of Trappe ___ not for publication

city, town Trappe ___ vicinity of congressional district 37

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ 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	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X not applicable	___ no	___ military	X other: storage

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

name Mr. & Mrs. Earl Revenal

street & number 4439 Cathedral Avenue, NW telephone no.: (301)476-3477 (202)966-5565

city, town Washington state and zip code D.C. 20016

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talbot County Courthouse liber

street & number folio

city, town Easton state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title The Wilderness

date April 30, 1973 TA-149 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

7. Description

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

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

One slave quarter is still standing at The Wilderness plantation (TA-149) in Talbot County. The building is a double quarter with two front entrances and a shared central chimney. The slave quarter dates to the second quarter of the nineteenth century and was remodelled during the next quarter, probably after the Civil War. The building has decayed, but the two periods of construction are discernable in the interior.

The slave quarter is located at the end of a short farm drive leading from the east side of the brick main house to a point on the Choptank River. Three outbuildings (a log smoke house, board-and-batten generator house, and dairy) are clustered on the east side of the main house. The current owners of the property relate that there were additional slave quarters; these "lost" structures may have lined the drive from the outbuildings to the river bank.

The heavy timber framed quarter measures 36 by 20 feet. The building faces south towards the river; the gable end is on axis with the main house approximately 200 yards away. The one-story quarter retains much of its original weatherboarding affixed with fully mature machine cut nails, but the wood shingles on the gable roof are replacements. The eaves are enclosed by a length of tilted plank fastened to the siding and projecting rafters with fully mature machine cut nails. The weatherboards are butted against the applied door trim and the corner boards at the long wall ends. Loose siding reveals brick nogging between the framing members. The building sits on brick piers. Sections of the hewn sill have been replaced with new lumber.

The only fenestration on the south side are the two batten doors clinched with wrought nails. The doorways are positioned to open into the middle of each room within the quarter. The doors are hung directly on the framing posts with wrought strap hinges; pit-sawn planks are nailed on the outer sides of the posts to serve as architrave and jambs. Each doorway has a large field stone placed as a front step.

The east and west gable ends each have a window centered on the first floor wall and an opening for a window in the loft. Circular-sawn batten shutters with butt hinges are found on the west wall. Tapered rake boards trim the gable eaves. There are no cornerboards on the gable end corners.

The north side of the quarter faces the fields, but no doors open in this direction. Two window openings are evenly spaced along the wall, one for each unit, but the units do not survive.

See Continuation 7/1

8. Significance

Survey No. T-866

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	X agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	X other (specify) black history
		___ invention		

Specific dates circa 1830-50 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: ___A ___B X C ___D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

Level of Significance: ___national X state ___local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

1. Geographic Organization:
   Eastern Shore

2. Chronological/Developmental Period(s):
   Agricultural-Industrial Transition

3. Historic Period Theme(s):
   Architecture and Agriculture

The quarter at The Wilderness is a rare survival of slave housing in Maryland. The double quarter is significant as a building type that was once common on the Eastern Shore, but is now relatively rare. This example is particularly notable for its plan, size, and construction details. The postbellum alterations to the quarter provide a valuable record of change in black housing after the Civil War. The place of the quarter in The Wilderness farm layout also contributes to contemporary understanding of plantation landscapes.

According to the existing sample of slave houses, double quarters usually consisted of two separate units under one roof. In contrast, The Wilderness quarter had an open circulation plan that permitted, and indeed required, access between the two units. The shared, central chimney feature is also notable in an area of predominately gable end chimneys. The 36 by 20 foot dimensions are atypically large; single room quarters were often 16 by 20 feet and houses of this type rarely exceeded 18 feet in depth. Several construction details are also noteworthy. The sill-to-plate brick nogging insulation is rare even in the modest houses of middling white planters. The absence of a false plate is also unusual for Chesapeake construction; in this slave quarter the rafters are simply notched over the plate. Despite the quarter's large size and brick nogging, it was still a crude structure. The hewn beams were quickly and roughly hacked out and little time or energy was devoted to interior finish details.

See Continuation Sheet 8/1

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

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	Diane S. Wasch, Administrator of Architectural Research		
organization	Maryland Historical Trust	date	July 6, 1990
street & number	21 State Circle	telephone	974-5000
city or town	Annapolis	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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

The interior plan of the quarter is currently one large room, but there is clear evidence of both the original and remodelled two-room plans of the nineteenth century. As originally built, the quarter consisted of two equal rooms, each with its own entrance but sharing a common central chimney. A pit-sawn plank partition wall, bisected by the central chimney, separated the two rooms. The partition was fastened to the pit-sawn ceiling joist with fully mature machine cut nails, and was likely toenailed into the flooring, which has since been replaced.

Although the southern half of the partition is missing, a pair of half lap mortises on the joist indicates that a narrow original door connected the two rooms. The northern half of the partition still stands as repositioned during postbellum remodelling.

The linking of the two rooms may have been prompted by the fact that there was only one way up to the attic. In the west room a pit-sawn ladder stair, painted green, rises in the northwest corner. There is no evidence of a first-period ladder stair in the east room.

Brick nogging runs from the ground sill to the wall plate. The nogging served as both insulation and the finish for the interior walls. The nogging and framing members reveal several coats of whitewash and later "graywash." Narrow strips of wood are inset in the brick coursing to minimize settling. Braces of flooring scraps and scantling are nailed across the studs to hold in loose nogging.

The ceiling joists, on three foot centers, are notched over top of the wall plate and are pinned. They remain exposed and whitewashed, with no evidence of plaster lath.

The interior, though unembellished, contains several devices for storing goods. A pair of rustic hooks, whittled out of forked branches, are fastened with fully mature machine cut nails to a ceiling joist in the east room. Holes are drilled into several studs and rods are inserted as hooks for hanging items.

The chimney is completely missing. A rectangular hole is cut out in the floor and ceiling. The roof has been patched where the stack pierced the ridge line. Saw-toothed steps cut into the partition wall indicate that the brick chimney corbelled in before rising to the loft.

See Continuation Sheet 7/2

The slave quarter was remodelled during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, most likely after the Civil War. A change in the floor plan suggests that during the postbellum period each half of the double quarter was made independent of its neighbor. A ladder stair was introduced into the east room, altering the previous circulation pattern only of one point of access to the loft.

The north half of the partition wall was moved several feet to the west to accommodate a new ladder stair tucked in the northwest corner of the east room, behind the chimney. The north section of the ceiling joist was removed to permit access up through the attic floor; the empty notch in the wall plate survives as evidence. A stair opening was cut into the ceiling and two joists were introduced to frame the opening. On the west side of the opening, a circular-sawn joist was nailed onto the north wall plate and the reused plank partition was reattached. On the east side of the opening a reused pit-sawn joist, complete with scribe marks and roman numerals for mortise guidelines, was notched over the wall plate. The stair opening was framed with circular-sawn lumber. The stair itself is no longer standing, but the rectangular opening shows ghostlines of the stringer. The relocated partition wall survives in place.

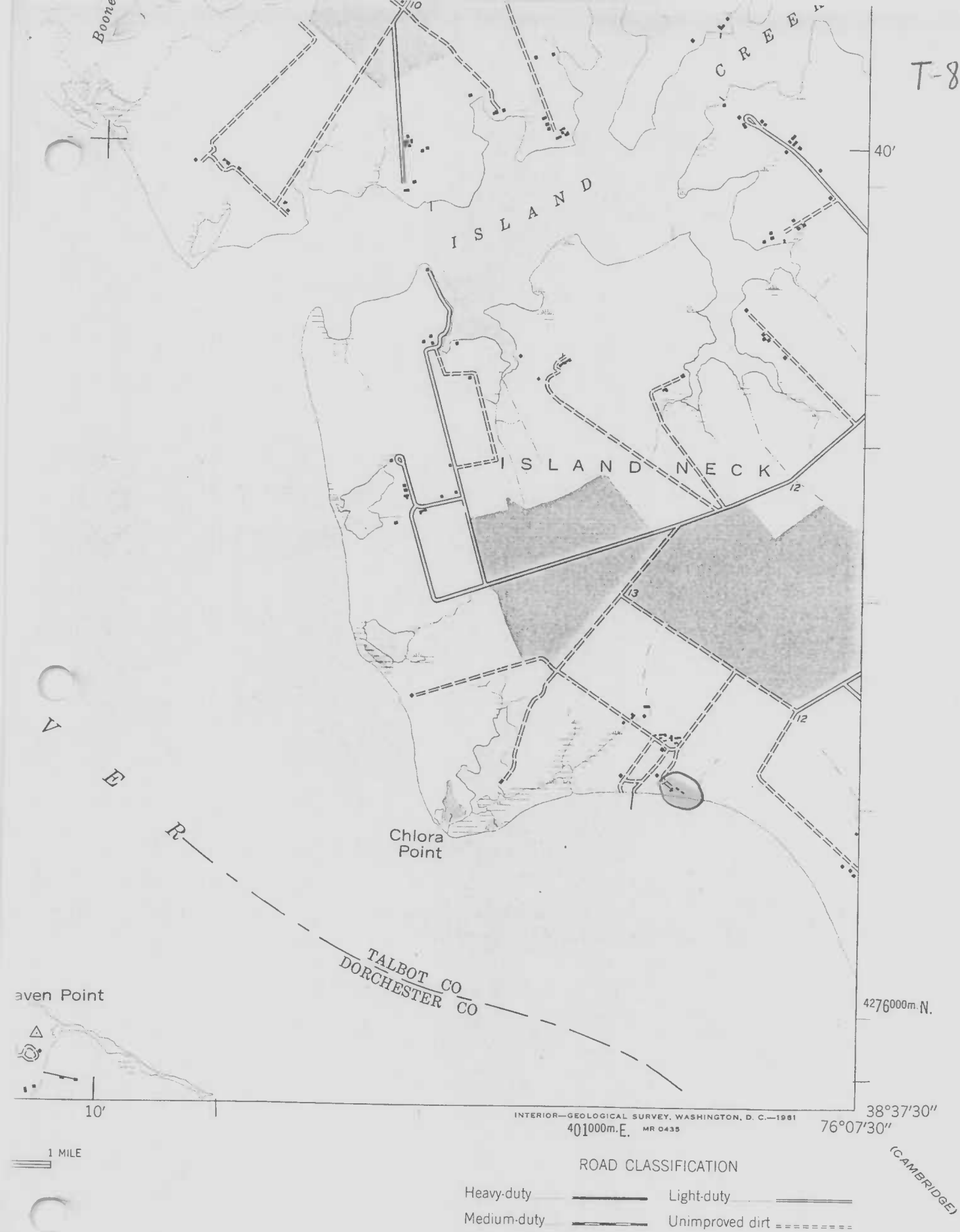
The current first floor joists and floorboards are replacements. The joists are circular sawn and dropped into notches in the ground sills; the flooring consists of narrow tongue-and-groove boards.

The loft is unfinished. The wide floor boards are a mix of early flooring with circular-sawn replacements. The roof framing consists of pit-sawn, common rafters with half dovetailed collars on alternate rafter pairs. There is no false plate; the rafters are notched over the wall plate on two foot centers. As with the first floor, the attic was partitioned into two rooms. Remnants of the plank partition remain. The pit-sawn planks were nailed at the top to rafters or nailers and were secured at the bottom by stops nailed to the floor. The windows in the gable ends have been altered. The west window has been enlarged and the wall studs cut; the east window has been covered with weatherboards. Both windows show remnants of an earlier two-part frame, formed of a squared opening stacked on top of an identically framed opening; perhaps the windows or shutters slid up to open.

After the Civil War, it appears that the quarters' occupants established their independence by sealing off the connecting door. This conjecture is substantiated by the addition of a stair to the attic in the east room and the partitioning of the attic space. The second stair would not be necessary in an open circulation plan. While the quarter's quality of construction did not change after the war, the quality of life may have improved with the introduction of privacy and increased personal space.

The quarter also contributes to our understanding of plantation complexes. A service alley ran perpendicular to the east side of the main house. The kitchen wing, smoke house, generator house, and dairy formed the head of the service drive and this slave quarter formed the terminus. There were likely other structures lining this drive that have been demolished over the years. Thus it is not surprising that the quarter faced the path and not the fields. This rational organization of service space indicates a deliberate planning of agricultural, domestic, and service districts within the plantation. Other functionally discrete zones included the house gardens on the south, waterfront side of the main house--indicated by orthogonal irrigation lines--and the livestock areas on the west side of the entrance drive--demarcated by the standing corn crib and elaborate late-nineteenth-century barn.

T-866



INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.—1981
MR 0435

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty — Light-duty
Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt
State Route

OXFORD, MD.

NW/4 OXFORD 15′ QUADRANGLE
N3837.5—W7607.5/7.5

Wilderness, Quarter

~~T-149~~

T-866

Slave Quarter at The Wilderness

S.W. elev.

M. Bourne 7/71