

HA-809

JOHN O'NEILL HOUSE
Havre de Grace, Md.

mid to late 19th century

This five bay two and a half story frame dwelling, has been altered and updated considerably, but it may contain within it the core of an early 19th century dwelling belonging to John O'Neill. O'Neill is remembered for firing on the British in an attempt to defend the town before the British landed and burned Havre de Grace on May 3, 1813. Presently the house represents a mixture of Gothic, Classical and Colonial Revival features, having bargeboards, a porch with Ionic columns and pedimented dormers.

1308094304

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

218 S. Washington St.

AND/OR COMMON

John O'Neill House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

COUNTY

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Jean Griswold

Telephone #: 939-1121

STREET & NUMBER

218 S. Washington St.

CITY, TOWN

Havre de Grace

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Md. 21078

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County

Liber #: 939

Folio #: 1121

STREET & NUMBER

Main St.

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Md.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John O'Neill house is a detached two-and-a-half story, five bay, rectangular frame dwelling, now covered with aluminum siding. The building, facing east on S. Washington St. is used as a combination residence and interior decorating shop. The house has been considerably altered in its lifetime and it may be that the stone basement and foundations under the north side are the only surviving original features.

Across the three central bays of the facade is a four bay porch with a standing seam tin shed roof over an entablature with a dentil band and a plain frieze supported by slender columns with Ionic capitals. The wooden floor of the porch is reached by three wooden steps flanked by modern metal railing. On the rear, a two story, three bay porch with diagonally placed stairs leading to the second floor extends across the south side of the rear (west elevation).

Windows having 6/1 double hung sash, are spaced evenly on the facade; those on the first floor are flanked by narrow aluminum shutters. In the roof of the facade are three pedimented dormers having 6/1 double hung sash. All of the windows in the house are 6/1 or 6/6 light sash with the exception of the eight light casement window on the west side, south elevation. The only window on the north elevation is in the attic and window openings on the rear are placed irregularly.

The entrance door, opening into a hallway, is in the center bay of the facade. The door, with glass in the upper half is framed by nine light sidelights. Other doors are on the first and second floor, rear elevation.

The house has a gable flank, asphalt covered roof with a denticulated cornice which returns and is supported by consoles at the gable ends. The house has the elaborate, pierced design bargeboards with finials and pendants on the gable ends.

Two large, brick chimneys with flaring, corbelled caps are on the roof; one near the north gable end on the east (front) slope and the other - placed with the long side parallel to the ridge - on the south side of the rear slope. According to a former owner, a chimney identical to the one near the front of the roof on the north gable end was removed from the same position on the rear slope.

The house sits in the middle of a lawn which extends from S. Washington St. on the front to Lodge Alley at the rear. In back of it is a two story frame dwelling containing rental units, built c. 1935.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1810 c. 1865 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Because of his role in the War of 1812, John O'Neill is considered to be one of the most historically significant figures in the history of Havre de Grace. In May of 1812, Havre de Grace was burned by British soldiers who sailed in from the Chesapeake Bay. At that time the town is reported to have consisted of about fifty dwellings, a church, a ferry house and ordinary, two taverns and some fishhouses. According to a contemporary newspaper account most of the dwellings were frame several respectable families resided here.

On May 3, 1813 when the British sailed from the Cecil County shore where they had burned, among other places, Principio Furnace, an iron foundry, five miles north, Havre de Grace had for defense a few cannons and some militia men. When Lieutenant O'Neill, the only officer in the area, responded to the alarm by firing on the British fleet, the men with him, hearing the British retort, fled, leaving O'Neill alone at the makeshift fortification known as the Potato Battery. The British, 400 in number by some accounts, landed, burned most of the buildings and captured O'Neill. Subsequent to his capture and incarceration aboard a British vessel (according to the popular local saga which the event shortly became), he was released by the intercession of his daughter, Matilda.

Land records and wills provide some information about John O'Neill. Like many of the early settlers in Havre de Grace, he was a merchant and owner of a nail factory (no longer standing) which was located across the street from his home. According to Harford County land records, O'Neill received the property from William B. Stokes in 1805.

A description dated February, 1814 (less than a year after the burning of the town) lists the property owned by the "brave" John O'Neill as follows: "one lot in Havre de Grace containing one fifth of an acre with one dwelling house thereon of wood of one story, 22' by 18', valued at \$ 250.00." The dimensions given conform within a few feet to those of the present basement. O'Neill became the first keeper of the Concord Point Lighthouse in 1829 and the position was held by a member of the O'Neill family up until the time when the light became automatic. In his will, dated 1837, O'Neill gives his house on lot 241 to his son, William O'Neill.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kidwiler, Elias, History of Havre de Grace, Published by the Havre de Grace Record, 1947

Wright C. Milton, Our Harford Heritage, Published by C. Milton Wright, 1967
CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marion Morton, Historic Sites Surveyor

1/6/77

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Maryland Historical Trust

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

The Shaw House

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

21 State Circle, Annapolis

Md.

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

Interior:

Internally the house has a center hall with a room on either side of it. An open string stair is located on the south wall of the hall. Separating the north, front room from the room behind it is a large doorway, originally containing double parlor doors. Behind the south front room (dining room) is a kitchen.

Fireplaces are on the north wall of the north room and the west wall of the south room. The mantle in the north room is quite elaborate with freestanding, fluted Corinthian columns supporting a mantle shelf with a frieze decorated with patera and rosettes.

A basement, having thick white washed stone walls, is located beneath the north front room and hall. The sills resting on the stone foundation walls are massive beams displaying mortise and tenon construction. Two openings with thick wooden sills and lintels are in the west wall. Beyond them a crawl space extends to the rear wall of the house.

The house as we see it today is the result of occupancy and enlargement by members of the O'Neill family for 158 years. Most of the wood work and trim in the house appear to date from the mid to late 19th century, while much of the exterior detail dates from the same period to the early decades of the 20th. The building has notable bargeboards with finials and pendants on the flanks contrasting with the Classical Revival porch and Colonial Revival dormers in the roof.

All along S. Washington St. are well maintained, mid to late 19th century, frame dwellings, relating to each other in size, scale, style and material. Many of them are gabled, Carpenter Gothic cottages on grassy lots that extend to the alleys behind them; built as one and two family dwellings most of them retain that scheme of occupancy. However, because Harford Memorial Hospital is one block west, the neighborhood has become vulnerable to the intrusion of buildings related to the medical profession. Displacing the old houses, these new buildings not only represent architectural intrusions but discourage buyers who are attracted initially to the cozy, homogeneous appearance of this part of Havre de Grace but fear it is changing.

Land Records

John O'Neill House

HDC 977 860

July 31, 1975

Grantor: Jean B. Griswold
lot 24i, square 252

HDC 905 344

August 21, 1972

Grantors: Harvey and Louise Hindman, attorneys for Nellie E.
Poist

Grantees: Grant Lewis and Elizabeth, his wife

GRG 631 304

October 8, 1963

Grantors: Jesse Smith, Jr. and Rossema, his wife

Grantees: Frank Poist and Nellie, his wife

SWC 242 85

August 14, 1936

Grantors: The convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of
the Diocese of Maryland the the vestry of St. John's
Parish, a corporation

Grantees: Jesse Smith and Rosemma, His wife

Will: TSB 5 326 John O'Neill December 12, 1837

" I give and devise to my son William O'Neill and to his heirs
and assigns forever the lot of ground nos. 241 and 242 fronting
on Washington St. in said town with all the buildings and improvements
thereon, one of which said lots is occupied by the above named
Parker Mitchell and on the other stands my old nail factory."

HD S 50

May 17, 1805

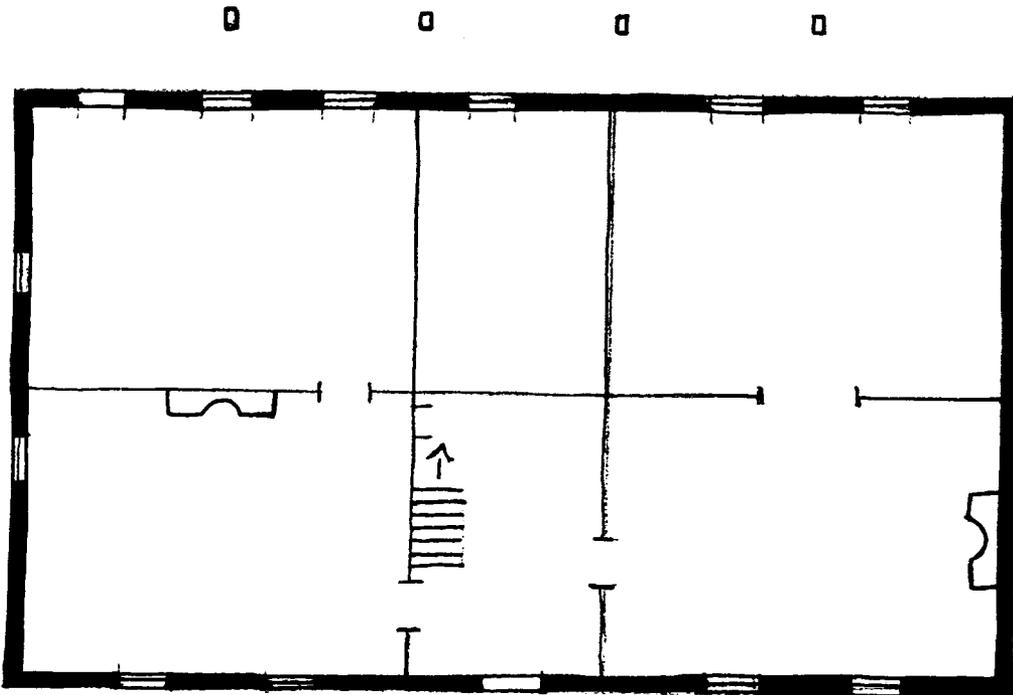
Grantor: William B. Stokes

Grantee: John O'Neill

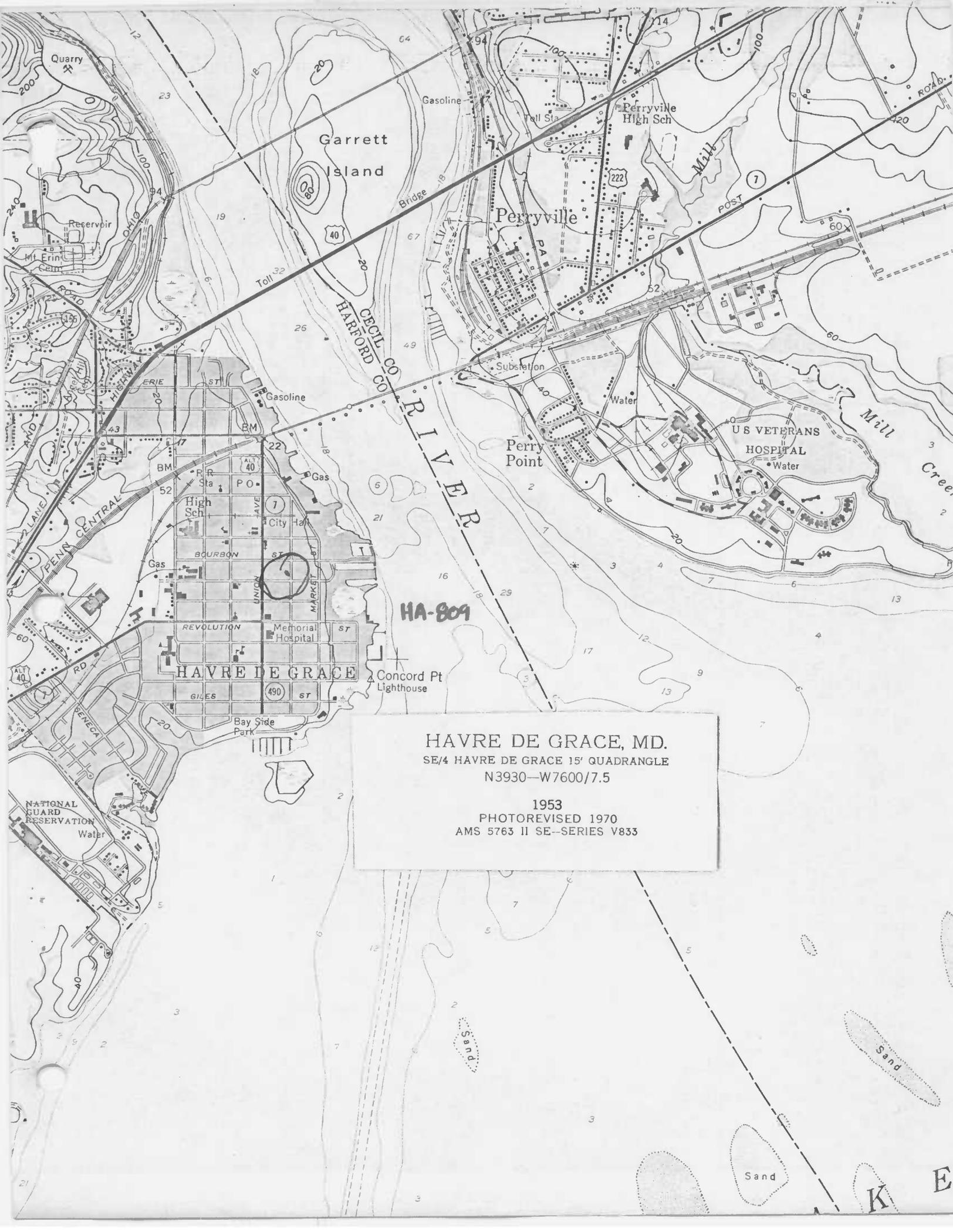
further reference: Item 14, L.W.T. - J. William O'Neill, March
20, 1928 Wills CHR 18 306.

HA-809

JOHN O'NEILL HOUSE



APPROXIMATE FIRST FLOOR PLAN
NOT TO SCALE



HA-809

HAVRE DE GRACE, MD.
SE/4 HAVRE DE GRACE 15' QUADRANGLE
N3930—W7600/7.5
1953
PHOTOREVISED 1970
AMS 5763 II SE—SERIES V833

K E



HA - 809

218 S. WASHINGTON ST

HAVRE DE GRACE EAST FACADE

Marion Morton August, 1976



FIA-809

218 S. WASHINGTON ST
HAYCE DE GRACE SOUTH ELEV.
Marion Morton August, 1976

AC