

M:12-42-23

Henry T. Onley Log House (site)  
Big Woods Community  
Private

c. 1783

This one and a half story log house was built as the home of the Black landowner, Henry T. Onley, with the assistance of his neighbors several years after emancipation. Like most other houses built by the first generation freedmen, it contained two rooms down and two up. In the 20th century the house was occupied by Onley's granddaughter, Florence Hallman, who remembers much of its history and that of the Big Woods community.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
The Henry T. Onley House (site)  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
East side of Big Woods Road

CITY, TOWN  
Dickerson  
VICINITY OF  
8  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE  
Maryland  
COUNTY  
Montgomery

**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 type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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  
Florence Hallman, et. al. Telephone #: 301-349-2269

STREET & NUMBER  
21045 Big Woods Road

CITY, TOWN  
Dickerson  
VICINITY OF  
STATE, zip code  
Maryland 20753

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
STREET & NUMBER  
Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #: 4125  
Folio #: 859

CITY, TOWN  
Rockville  
STATE  
Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
None

DATE  
\_FEDERAL \_STATE \_COUNTY \_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN  
STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

M:12-42-23

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Florence Hallman recalls that this house was built by her paternal grandfather, Henry Thomas Onley. It was pulled down several years ago, and the logs pushed down into a deep hole dug for the purpose and covered over. Little remains of the site today. Florence Hallman does however have two pictures of the house during her occupancy. These have been copied as part of this survey.

From the photograph and Mrs. Hallman's recollection, the following description has been obtained. The house stood on the slope of a hill and faced the west, towards Big Woods Road. The house stood one and a half stories in height. Its facade consisted of three bays, a front door centrally located flanked by two windows on either side. The windows contained double hung sashes with 6 x 6 panes. There was no covered front porch, but there was a raised platform in front of the house.

The house contained two rooms down and two up. The downstairs was heated by a wood stove; a large wood stove was used in the kitchen Mrs. Hallman recalls. The interior and exterior of the house were whitewashed.

In the 20th century, the exposed logs on the outside of the wall were covered with asphalt sheathing for insulation. As the house began to deteriorate, Mrs. Hallman moved a small trailer to the site and now lives in it. Eventually, the old log house had to be pushed down, she recalls, because the foundation had given way, and there were other structural problems. But after the house was pulled down, many of the upper logs were just as sound as the day they were hewn out, Mrs. Hallman says.

For her description of how her grandfather and others in the community built and maintained these houses, see the inventory forms of the log houses of Louis Brown and Fred Hamilton in the Big Woods community. Mrs. Hallman points out that all the log houses were pretty much the same, so these houses are described in more detail since they are available for investigation.

The outbuildings around the Henry T. Onley house were the usual ones around the farm houses: a hen house (where ducks were also raised too); a privy; a stable for horses; a meat house; and hog pens. Her grandfather had planted many fruit trees on the property, which provided the family each fall with a bountiful harvest. They included sweet apple and peach trees. The fruit was canned and put up for the winter. There was also a large vegetable garden. The entire homestead -- with the hen house, hog pen, meat house, garden, and fruit trees -- was a representative example of a rural Black homestead in the Big Woods community and elsewhere in Montgomery County, homesteads where the families raised much of their own food for themselves and depended on themselves and the help of their community for the significant basics of their livelihood.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

M:12-42-23

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

*Black History; Local History*

SPECIFIC DATES

*c. 1873*

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Henry Onley purchased this tract of 5.92 acres in 1873 from the trustees of the Hempstone estate according to deed EBP 10/859. This establishes him as among the earliest of the Black settlers in Big Woods after emancipation.

This house was most likely built soon after the purchase of the land by Henry Onley in 1873. Florence Hallman recalls that it was built by her grandfather with the help of the community. It was among the first of the log houses to have been built in the postbellum Black community in Big Woods.

Though the house is not standing, the recollection of it is important because it allows us to see the progression in housing in this community and in others in Montgomery County. It is similar in plan and design to the log houses in the Martinsburg and Sugarland communities. See the photographs of it that have been copied that were in the possession of Florence Hallman and see the photographs of the log houses in Big Woods -- the Fred Hamilton, Lewis Brown, and Jess Diggins houses -- that are still standing. According to Florence Hallman, all log houses in Big Woods were more or less alike, so those houses still standing convey the general appearance of the log house of Henry T. Onley.

Florence Hallman recalls that her grandfather said that he paid twenty dollars an acre for this tract, making a total of \$120 for the six acres. This figure could be compared with other land prices in the area to determine if this was a low, average, or expensive price for such land. In addition, it would be important to know Onley's income as a farmer and farm laborer to determine the proportion of his income that the cost of his home accounted for.

Florence Hallman has been a remarkable informant. Her mind is clear, and she recalls with considerable accuracy the houses and life styles of families in her community in the early 1900s.

NOTE: According to Mrs. Hallman, her grandfather "was a boy during slavery". His wife's name was Flora, and she was named after her.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Land Records, Montgomery County Courthouse, Rockville, Md.: EBP 10/859.  
 Oral interviews, not taped, with Florence Hallman, Big Woods, July-Sept. 1978  
 By George McDaniel and Ida Hallman.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

George W. McDaniel, Surveyor

ORGANIZATION

Sugarloaf Regional Trails

DATE

Jan. 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Box 87

TELEPHONE

926-4510

CITY OR TOWN

Dickerson

STATE

Maryland 20753

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 Snow House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438~~

SUGARLOAF REGIONAL TRAILS  
 Box 87, State Circle  
 Dickerson, Md. 20753  
 (301) 426-4510



~~Faci~~

Mobile Home of Florence Onley  
Hallman

Facade : East

M-12-42-23

Big Woods Community

Photography by Anne Lewis

5/79

2# 1-20506L 101



copy of photograph of log house of  
Henry Thomas only  
(original is fuzzy)  
House is to the right.

M-12-42-23

Big Woods community  
photography by Anne Lewis  
5/99

AD-790502-1 #4