

M-12-42-²¹~~30~~

1873

Owens-Diggins House
Big Woods Community
Private

This two story log house was one of the first built by black landowners in the post-Civil war era in Montgomery County. Several of its outbuildings and fenced yards remain, indicating how families used their land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Until recently, the house was occupied by descendants of the original owners. Today the house is abandoned.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The Owens-Diggins House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

North side of Big Woods Road

CITY, TOWN

Poolesville

VICINITY OF (Big Woods)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Montgomery

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Woods

NAME

L.E. Owens c/o Jessie A. Diggins Telephone #: Not listed

STREET & NUMBER

20935 Big Woods Road

CITY, TOWN

Dickerson

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 20753

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #: EBP 12

Folio #: 15

STREET & NUMBER

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:12-42-29

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This two story log house is now abandoned and its once well-kept grounds have grown up in underbrush. Fortunately, the fences and out-buildings which once surrounded this house have survived and show how the land around the house was used. The dwelling stands on the crest of a plateau which slopes off sharply in front of the house (east). Directly in front of the house was planted grass and flowering shrubs. At the foot of the hill was a large hog lot and shelters. The house itself was surrounded by a fence which enclosed the privy, storage shed, and small dog house -- all located in the northwest corner of the fenced yard. In the southwest corner was a frame meat house resting on hewn log blocks. The farm lane which came from the Owens-Diggins property to the south of this tract passed through the fence in front of the meat house. Behind this fenced yard was a larger fenced area which probably had been used as pasture. Along the south side of that area was a wagon shed and two stalls for horses. Behind the house were also old apple and pear trees which many black families planted.

The house is similar in form to the log dwellings of other black families in landowning communities in upper western Montgomery County. Its hewn logs were exposed and whitewashed along the front and back lengths and weatherboarded on each gable end. A shed porch extended around the front length and southern gable end. The facade contained three bays, a front door flanked by a window on either side.

In plan the house contained two rooms down and two rooms up with a stove flue centrally located. A large shed room was attached to the back of the house. Some of the old artifacts and personal possessions of its most recent resident, Jess Diggins, remain in the house; but the house has been thoroughly vandalized and these objects broken.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

M:12-42-29

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 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) Black History Local History	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1873

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This land and the house on it are among the oldest of the post-Civil War black community of Big Woods. According to the deed EBP 12/15 this tract of six acres was purchased by Isaac Owens in 1873. It was a part of the Hempstone estate. The house was probably constructed soon after the purchase.

The property became a part of the holdings of the extended family of the Owens and Diggins. They were important members of the Big Woods community. According to the family Bible of the Owens and Diggins family in custody of Fred and Jane Stearns, Isaac Owens was married to Louisa Owens (1837-1896). Three of their children figure in the history of this site. Louisa Owens married Jesse Diggins, who was the son of Dan Diggins who lived nearby. Louisa's brother, John C. Diggins purchased land just to the south of this tract. A sister, Martha Owens, married James Lee who owned property just south of John C. Owens. Thus three adjacent parcels were occupied by the children of Isaac and Louisa Owens.

The children of Louisa Owens and Jesse Diggins were raised in this house. Jesse Diggins (their son) continued to live here throughout his life and was the last resident of the house. Until his death he continued to live a traditional life-style in many respects, raising his own crops,

plowing the earth with horse and plow and indeed travelling sometimes by horse and wagon. Fred and Jane Stearns who were his neighbors and friends fondly recall the fine character of Jesse Diggins.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Land Records of Montgomery County, County Courthouse, Rockville, Md
 Deeds: EBP 12/15.
 Oral interview with Florence Hallman (not taped) July-August, 1978.
 By George McDaniel, Big Woods community.

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

8/78

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



Owens - Diggins House

S. W. Length

M-12-42-~~30~~29

Big Woods Community
Photograph by Anne Lewis
5/79

ADZ 190502-1 #22