M:24-26
(date entered 5-12-80)

ACHS SUMMARY FORM

1. Name: Riley's Lock House

2. Planning Area/Site Number: 24/26 3. M-NCPPC Atlas Reference: Map 13 D-15

4. Address: Seneca Creek at C&O Canal, at Seneca, Md.

5. Classification Summary

Category building
Ownership public
Public Acquisition N/A
Status unoccupied
Accessible no
Present use educational, government, museum

Previous Survey Recording M-NCPPC
Title and Date: 1976 Inventory of Historical Sites

Federal ___ State x County x Local ___

6. Date: 1829 7. Original Owner: C&O Canal Company

8. Apparent Condition

a. excellent b. unaltered c. original site

9. Description: This three bay, two-and-a-half story house is built into the side of a hill facing south towards the C&O Canal a short distance away. Constructed of Seneca sandstone, the stone takes on a grey color above the windows and below grade on the north elevation. There are six-over-six double-hung windows with sandstone sills and lintels. The gable roof has black asbestos shingles.

10. Significance: This stone lockkeeper's house at Lock 24 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was an integral part of the era of canal transportation, sheltering the lockkeeper and his family.

The lockkeeper's job was to work the locks in the summer and to keep them in good repair during the winter. During the winter season, from November 17 to March 1, the lock keeper's salary was $35 a month, plus firewood, the house use and about an acre of land. He earned $10 a month the rest of the year.

The John Riley family lived in the house from 1890 to 1924. Riley used his acre of land to feed his family, having a stable, hen house, spring, vegetable garden, hog pens, and cattle grazing in an open meadow. (The yard could not be fenced as the wall area had to be kept free for loading the barges.) About 25 feet north of the house was a shanty where the keeper stayed to tend the locks at night, or in bad weather. It was furnished simply with a bunk, a wood stove, oil lamp and cracker box for storing records.

The property was owned by public transportation companies even after the Canal closed in 1926. It was sold to the Seneca Hotel Corporation in 1973 and to the U.S. Dept. of the Interior in 1974. It is currently used by the Girl Scouts.

11. Researcher and date researched: Kathryn Scott - 10/79
Margaret M. Coleman

Candy Reed
Arch. Description

12. Compiler: Gail Rothrock 13. Date Compiled: 10/79 14. Designation Approval ___

15. Acreage: 1.94 acres

M: 24/26
Magi #

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Riley's Lock House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Seneca Creek at C & O Canal

CITY, TOWN
X VICINITY OF Seneca

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
8

STATE
Maryland

COUNTY
Montgomery

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
_DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	_OCCUPIED	_AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	_PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	_PARK
_STRUCTURE	_BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
_SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	_ENTERTAINMENT	_RELIGIOUS
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	_YES: RESTRICTED	X GOVERNMENT	_SCIENTIFIC
	_BEING CONSIDERED	_YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	_MILITARY	_OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
U.S. Dept. of Interior

Telephone #: 343-1100

STREET & NUMBER
C St. Between 18th & 19th Sts. NW

CITY, TOWN
Washington

_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code
DC 20240

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #: 4523
Folio #: 701

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Rockville

STATE
Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
MNCPPC Inventory of Historical Sites

DATE
1976

_FEDERAL X STATE X COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Park Historian's Office

CITY, TOWN
Derwood

STATE
Maryland 20855

M:24-26

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	X UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This three bay, two and a half story house is built into the side of a hill facing south towards the C & O Canal a short distance away.

The building is constructed of Seneca sandstone with corner quoins, the reddish color of the stone changes to a gray above the windows on the south elevation and below grade on the north elevation. There is one stone step on the south elevation in front of the vertical paneled wooden door with a brass door knob and surmounted by a three light transom. On the north elevation there are two doors: on the west side the door is vertical paneled and on the east side the door is a modern hollow core door which is padlocked shut.

There are six over six double hung windows with sandstone sills and lintels. The east and west gable ends have two small square louvered windows.

The gable roof has black asbestos shingles. There are east and west interior end chimneys.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

M:24-26

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANOSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__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	X TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1829 **BUILDER/ARCHITECT**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This stone house was built at Lock 24 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal for the lock keeper, and was an integral part of this era of canal transportation. Although it is very small by today's standards, the house sheltered 7 children and their parents from 1890-1924, the John Rileys.

The house was built in 1829 of red Seneca sandstone, and white washed to be more easily seen by boat captains. The yard could not be fenced as the wall area had to be kept free for loading and unloading the barges. This proved to be fatally hazardous to a member of the Riley family, and three-year-old Caroline drowned.

About 25 feet north of the house was a shanty where the keeper stayed to tend the locks at night or in bad weather. It was furnished simply with a bunk, a stove, and cracker box for storing records.

The lock keeper used his acre of land. Behind the house (on the west) was a large yard which included part of the present parking lot. On the south side were a stable, hen house and outhouse. Water for the house came from a spring west of the house, and was carried into the house by hand. Across the canal from the house was a large vegetable garden, hog pens and cattle grazing in the open meadow. Thus Mr. Riley was able to feed his family from the land.

Necessary shopping was done at Frederick Allnutt's General Store, located across from the lock house until it was destroyed by the flood of 1889.

Wood stoves were used for heating and coal oil lamps for lighting.

The winter working season was from November 17 to March 1. The lock keeper worked day and night, seven days a week during this time, for a salary of $35 a month, plus firewood, the house use and about an acre of land. He did not work the locks, but kept them in good repair. During the remainder of the year he received $10 a month salary, and worked hard to keep the locks from being damaged.[1]

The property was owned by public transportation companies even after the closure of the Canal in 1926. It was sold to the Seneca Hotel Corporation in 1973,[2] and to the present owner in 1974. The Girl Scouts currently operate the lockhouse, presenting programs each weekend. They dress in authentic costumes which were researched by the leaders, and attempt to recreate a day at the lockhouse, c. 1890.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Kathryn Finch, "Riley's Lockhouse, Seneca, Md., 1890-1924", 1976.

2 Land Records of Montgomery County, Md. 4360/543 (April 11, 1973).

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

M:24-26

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Land Records of Montgomery County, Maryland
Research of Kathryn Scott, Bethesda leader of Cadette Girl Scouts.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.94 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

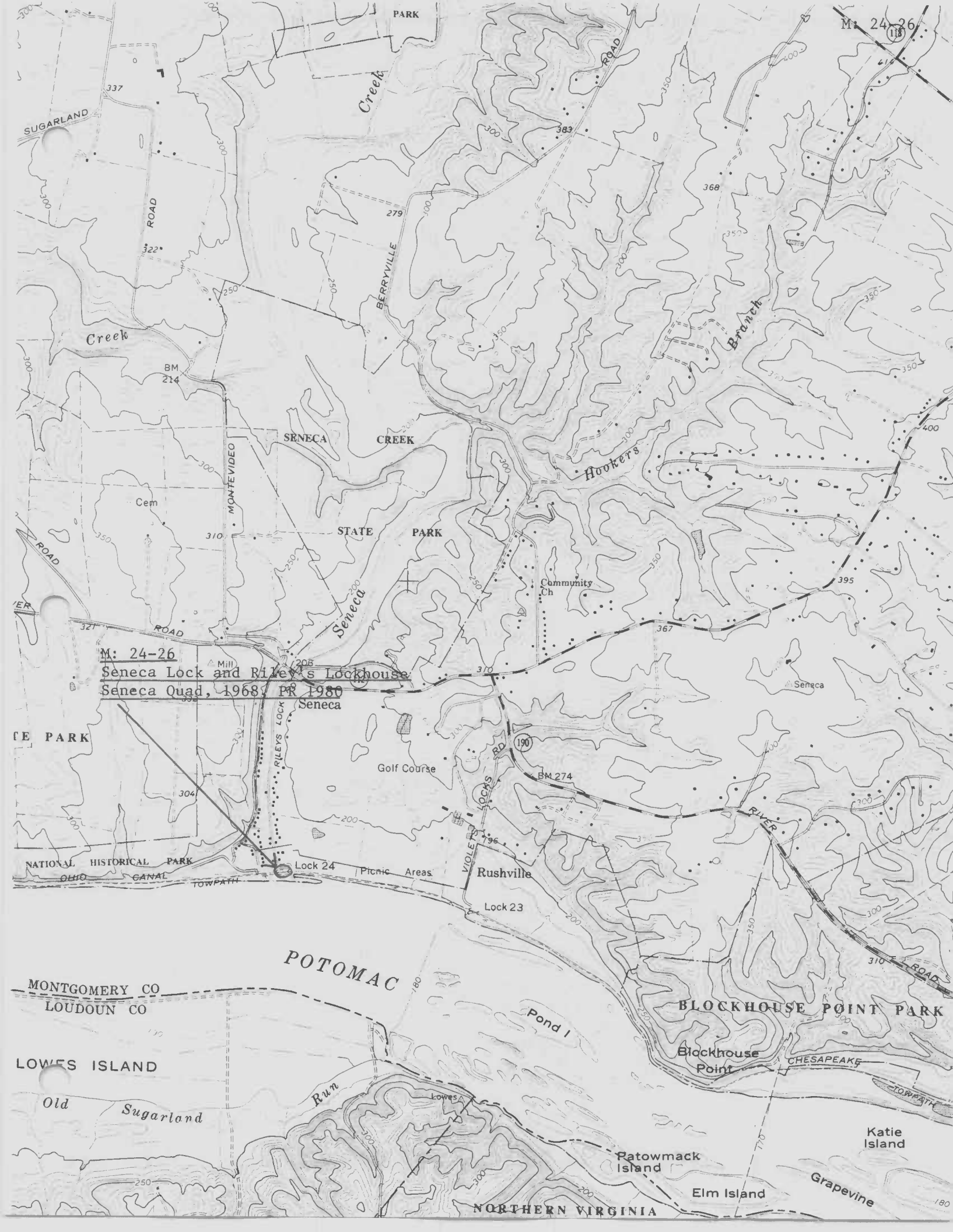
11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Kathryn Scott/Margaret M. Coleman Candy Reed - Arch. Description
ORGANIZATION DATE
Sugarloaf Regional Trails 1979
STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE
Box 87 926-4510
CITY OR TOWN STATE
Dickerson 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


M: 24-26
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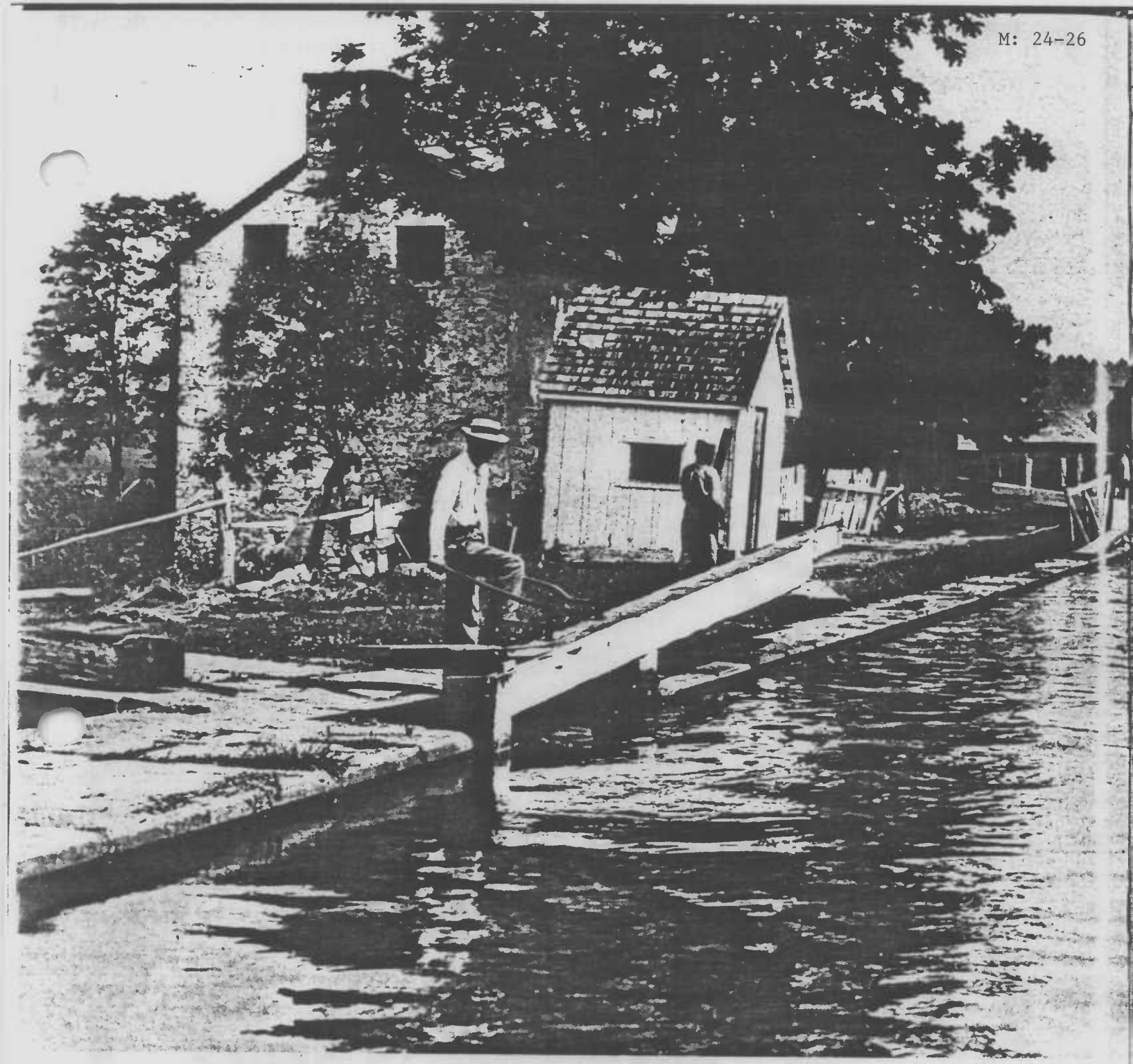
Seneca Lock and Riley's Lockhouse
Seneca Quad, 1968, PR 1980
PARK
SUGARLAND
ROAD
Creek
BERRYVILLE
Branch
Hookers
BM 214
SENECA CREEK
STATE PARK
MONTEVIDEO
Cem
Community Ch
Seneca
Mill
RILEYS LOCK
Golf Course
VIOLETTS LOCKS RD
BM 274
RIVER
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
OHIO CANAL TOWPATH
Lock 24
Picnic Areas
Rushville
Lock 23
POTOMAC
MONTGOMERY CO
LOUDOUN CO
Pond I
BLOCKHOUSE POINT PARK
Blockhouse Point
CHESAPEAKE
LOWES ISLAND
Old Sugarland Run
Lowes
Patowmack Island
Elm Island
Grapevine
Katie Island
NORTHERN VIRGINIA

M: 24-26



From 1890 until the canal closed in 1924, John Riley kept the Seneca lock. From the canal company management, he received a house; adjoining land for raising vegetables, pigs, cattle, chickens, and horses; and a salary of thirty-five dollars a month from April through October, and ten dollars a month when the boats did not run but the lock needed repair.

He married Roberta Jane Ricketts on October 22, 1890, and their seven babies were born in the two-bedroom house built of native sandstone. They named the children Cleveland, Upton, Raymond, Ernest, Katherine, Mervin, and Helen.

When the children were little, Bertie Riley was always very fussy about keeping the gate to the tiny yard in front of the house closed. She realized that the canal was a hazard for toddlers, but the canal could not be fenced in because the space was needed for people and produce. The day this photograph was taken, the gate was left open. This would happen again, with tragic consequences. On September 23, 1905, three-year-old Katherine Riley fell into the six-foot-deep canal and drowned.

Bertie was uncomfortable living on the canal after this accident, and she persuaded her husband to buy a house on River Road. She collected her other daughter and five sons and walked up the road, but John remained behind and tended his lock.

Coleman, Margaret Marshall and Anne Dennis Lewis M: 24-26
1984 Montgomery County: A Pictorial History. Norfolk: Donning Co.

John Riley continued to work his lock until the canal closed in 1924. From a tintype belonging to Riley's daughter, Helen Riley Bodmer

Courtesy of E. B. Thompson, historic negative collection; original negative in Thomas Hahn collection, from *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Old Picture Album,* by Thomas F. Hahn; National Park Service photograph

John Riley's wife, Roberta Ricketts Riley, bundled up her remaining children and left the stone lockhouse after her baby fell into the canal and drowned. She found a little house for her family on River Road, and there today, hanging on the wall, is a picture of the little girl, Katherine. Courtesy of Helen Riley Bodmer