

S-98
Powell-Benston House
Rehobeth vicinity (site)
private

c. 1700-1725

Considered one of the oldest houses to survive to modern times in Somerset County, the Powell-Benston house exhibited several features that suggested its early age. From construction evidence discovered when the house was dismantled, the brick-ended frame dwelling was erected in two principal stages, beginning with a single-story, one-room plan structure that was later expanded by a two-room addition. The early frame house was distinguished by a carefully erected Flemish bond brick end wall with glazed header highlights. Four small windows with alternating glazed rollock arches pierced the end wall, and according to other construction features, the small openings were initially filled with casement windows. Inside the earliest section, the framing members remained exposed with decorated corners, and a large six-foot hearth framed by a wide bolection molding provided the original source of heat and cooking service. Raised-panel doors provided access to the corner stair as well as closets to each side of the hearth.

Credit for the construction of this early brick-ended house is awarded to the Powell family, beginning with Walter Powell who acquired tracts of land on the north side of the Pocomoke River as early as 1670. Walter Powell bequeathed parts of his tracts known as "Exchange," "Greenfield," and "Middle" to his son, William, in 1695, and in turn, William willed title to his property to sons, John, William, and Levin, and his daughter, Margaret, in 1715. Due to the architectural features of the early house it could have been assembled by William, Sr., or his son, William. In 1740, William Powell and his wife, Ellen, having relocated in Prince William County, Virginia, sold "Greenfield" and "Exchange" to Thomas Benston of Somerset County. Evidently, Thomas Benston remained on the Powell

plantation until his death, and the property fell to his eldest son, William, who in 1757, transferred ownership of the plantation to his brother, Thomas. Thomas Benston was assessed for the Dividing Creek plantation in 1783 and 1798. The description by the assessors in 1798 included,

Situate about one mile from Pocomoke River in Somerset County 1 Dwelling house 20 by 35 one story high with 4 windows 4 1/2 feet by 2 1/2 feet and 2 small windows 1 1/2 feet by 1/2 ends built of brick rest wood, 1 Milk house 8 by 8, 1 Meat house 12 by 12 both wood.

As indicated by the assessor's description the one-room plan house had been enlarged by that time. In the 1798 assessment the plantation, referred to as "Greenfields," was improved by a 30 by 20 foot barn, probably used for tobacco, two corn houses, and a cider house. Four years later, Thomas Benston was dead. The first item in his will directed, "I give and bequeath unto my grandson Thomas Benston all my lands which I now hold with the improvements and privileges thereunto belonging...I also give and bequeath unto the said Thomas Benston one bed and furniture, one yoke of oxen, all my ploughs and harrows, and cyder casks." The plantation did not remain in Benston family hands much longer, for the "Greenfield" tract and adjacent lands were sold to Littleton Dennis in 1810 and then left to his heirs in 1833. More recently, the farm has descended down through the Tilghman family since James R. Tilghman purchased the farm in 1883. During the 1960s the curators of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, in search of historic fabric for period rooms, transported the desired house parts to Old Salem, North Carolina.



(POCOMOKE CITY)
5860 1 SE

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Powell-Benston House (site)
Kingston, Maryland Quadrangle
1972

4211

2'30"

4210

4209

W A M P

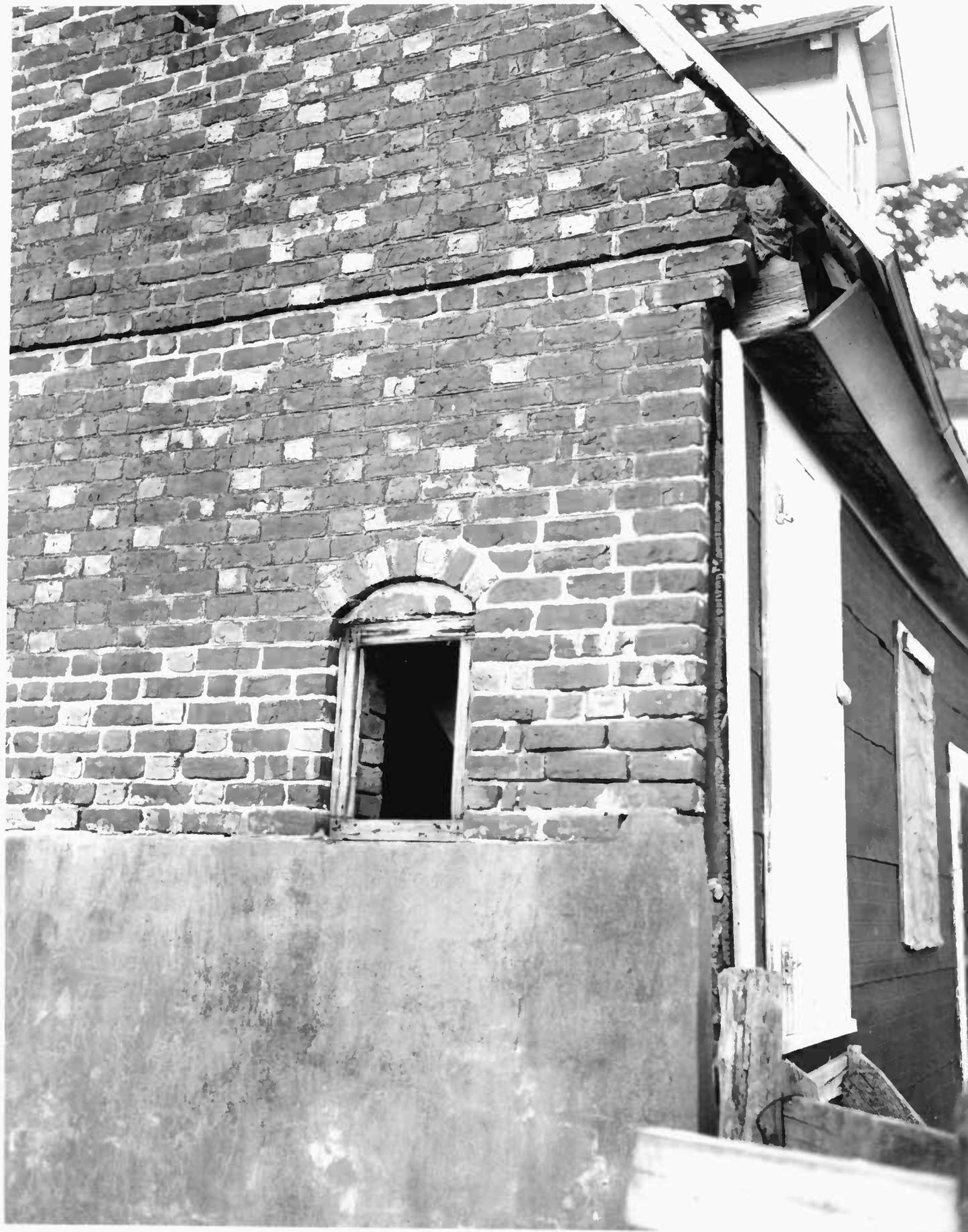


House on the Tilghman Farm S-98
Near Rehobeth, Somerset County
Documentary Photograph, c. 1964
Collection of MESDA, Winston - Salem,
North Carolina

Photo No.:

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*Courtesy, Museum of Early Southern Decorative
Arts, Winston-Salem, N. C.*



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Winston-Salem, N. C.