Capsule Summary
SM-444
George B. Cecil House
Valley Lee
Private 1887 and earlier

The George B. Cecil House, located at the center of the Valley Lee community, is a highly significant site because of its history as a hub of both commercial and industrial activity. Now a quiet crossroads, Valley Lee was once occupied by two stores, a grist mill, and a voting house. The Cecil House is the only historic structure which marks the intersection of Route 249 and Route 244.

Based on land record research, it appears that the Cecil property may have been occupied by a mill since the late 1700s. By 1887 the parcel which included the mill and mill seat was referred to as "Valley Lee" and was the sole property of Benenia A. Thomas. The property was then improved with a dwelling house, store house, mill and fixtures, mill house, and cottage. In 1889 the property "commonly called 'Mill Seat' but now known as 'Valley Lee'" was sold to William W. Cecil. By 1894, William's son, George B. Cecil, became the sole owner of the property.

From the late 1800s until the mid-twentieth century, George B. Cecil's store stood in a grassy lot in front of the Cecil dwelling house. The store, which carried general merchandise, dry goods and millinery accessories, was also equipped with a bar, a post office and slot machines. It was demolished around 1970. Across Route 244 from the store stood Cecil's grist mill. The mill, located where the Valley Lee post office stands, burned around 1954. All that remains of the mill is the steam engine which has been placed as a monument in front of the post office.

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization:	Western Shore
Chronological/Developmental Period:	Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-1930.
Historic Period Theme:	Architecture Economic

Resource Type

Category:	Building
Historic Environment:	Rural
Historic Function and Use:	Residence
Known Design Source:	None

Survey No. SM 444

Magi No.

DOE __yes __no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Mill Seat

and/or common George B. Cecil House (pref.)

2. Location

street & number SW Corner of Rte 244 and Rte 249 ___ not for publication

city, town Valley Lee ___ vicinity of congressional district 5

state Maryland county St. Mary's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	X private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Robert Dean Sr. c/o Robert Dean Jr.

street & number Route 2 Box 1 telephone no.:(301) 994-0615

city, town Valley Lee state and zip code Maryland 20692

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber MRB 136

street & number folio 437

city, town Leonardtown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. SM 444

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 2

The George B. Cecil House is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Route 249 and Route 244 in Valley Lee. The house is surrounded by a white picket fence. Between the east elevation of the house and Route 249 is a grassy, open space where the George B. Cecil Store once stood. To the south and west of the house stands a trailer, a garage, a Delco generator house, a formerly detached kitchen, a formerly detached meathouse, two corn cribs, and two barns. On the west side of the house the property slopes dramatically towards a branch of Herring Creek. The house faces east with the roof oriented on a north/south axis.

Built by 1887, the George B. Cecil House is a two-story, frame structure with a brick pier foundation infilled with concrete. The exterior, originally covered with weatherboards, is sheathed with aluminum siding. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The east (main) elevation has an enclosed porch which extends across the full width of the first floor. The porch is pierced by a central entrance door with three-light sidelights. The door is flanked by two pairs of louvered windows on either side. The main block of the house behind the porch is pierced by a central entrance door with a four-light transom and three-light sidelights. Modern windows flank the door. The second floor of the house is lit by three one-over-one sash windows with wide, plain surrounds. The roofline is broken by a central cross gable lit by a round-head, four-light window.

The north elevation of the main block is lit by one one-over-one sash window on both the first and second floors. The eave is finished with cornice returns and lit by a round-head, four-light window. To the west of the main block extends a slightly shorter two-story wing which forms an ell. An enclosed porch extends across the first floor of this wing. The porch enclosure is pierced by a four-light-over-three-panel door and two picture windows. The second floor is lit by two two-over-two sash windows with wide, plain surrounds. A cross gable breaks the center of the roofline and is lit by a round-head, single-light window.

The west elevation of the main block is lit by one one-over-one sash window on the second floor. The enclosed porch of the slightly shorter two-story wing is pierced by a picture window. The gable end of this wing is pierced by one one-over-one sash window on the first floor and one two-over-two sash window on the second floor. The eave is finished with cornice returns and lit by a round-head, four-light window. An exterior cinderblock chimney stands against the wing. A two-story wing extends from this gable end to the south. The first story is obscured by a series of one-story, gable

8. Significance

Survey No. SM 444

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape 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	X commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	X industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates Unknown **Builder/Architect** Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ___A ___B X C ___D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

Level of Significance: ___national ___state X local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The George B. Cecil House, located at the center of the Valley Lee community, is a highly significant site because of its history as a hub of both commercial and industrial activity. Now a quiet crossroads, Valley Lee was once occupied by two stores, a grist mill, and a voting house. The Cecil House is the only historic structure which marks the intersection of Route 249 and Route 244.

Based on land record research, it appears that the Cecil property may have been occupied by a mill since the late 1700s. The first owner may have been John Cole who was assessed for "Johns Woods and Water Mill" located in the St. George's district in the 1793 Tax Assessment. George Cole was assessed for the same between 1794 and 1801. The property then passed to John Shadrick who was assessed for "Chilton's Adventure and half of a Mill," being 9 1/2 acres located in the Poplar Hill district, between 1793 and 1801. Athanasius Fenwick later purchased the mill from Shadrick as well as the "privilege of conveyng the water from the run near Poplar Hill church to said mill land." Between 1806 and 1821, Athanasius Fenwick was assessed for ten acres of mill land and a mill in the St. George's district. His heirs were assessed for the same in 1826.

A deed of 1838 resulted in the sale of Fenwick's mill, referred to as "Cole's Mill and Mill Seat" to Benjamin Hewitt. The following year, Hewitt sold the 10 acre "Mill Land" to William Hebb. From Hebb the property passed to the joint ownership of James B. Thomas and Josiah O. Rooker in 1866.

By 1887 the parcel which included the mill and mill seat was referred to as "Valley Lee" and was the sole property of Benenia A. Thomas. The property was then improved with a dwelling house, store house, mill and fixtures, mill house, and cottage. Thomas transfered the parcel to the partnership of Brown, Graves, and Company. In 1889 the property "commonly called 'Mill Seat' but now known as 'Valley Lee'" was sold to William W. Cecil. Just seven years earlier, William Cecil had purchased the mill property known as "Clifton Factory."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM 444

Fenwick, Charles "Mill Memories in St. Mary's County, MD." Chronicles 18.11 (November 1970): 1-8

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2 acres surrounding house

Quadrangle name Piney Point

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Hughes, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization St. Mary's Co. Planning & Zoning date August 1990

street & number 328 Washington Street telephone (301) 475-4662

city or town Leonardtown, state Maryland

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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

PS-2746

end additions. The first of these additions houses the furnace and is pierced by a three-light-over-three-panel door on the north side. The second of these is a formerly detached meathouse which is blind on all three sides. Next to the meathouse stands a formerly detached kitchen (see detailed descriptions of the meathouse and kitchen below). The second floor of the two-story wing is lit by two two-over-two sash windows with wide surrounds.

The south elevation of the western wing consists of an enclosed porch which extends across the first floor and ends at a two-story, three-sided bay located at the east end of the house. The porch is pierced by five pairs of louvered windows. Behind the porch, the exterior wall of the house is pierced by a door and a window with wide surrounds which have an interior bead. The second floor is pierced by two two-over-two sash windows with wide, plain surrounds. The three-sided bay is pierced by three one-over-one sash windows on both the first and second floors. The gable end of the main block is pierced by one one-over-one sash window on both the first and second floors. The eave is pierced by a round-head, four-light window and is finished with cornice returns.

The organization of the house interior suggests that the oldest portion of the structure may be the central core of the building, consisting of a dining room and kitchen with an enclosed back stair which provides access to the second floor of the house. Attached to the eastern end of the dining room is a two-story, center hall, single pile plan wing. Two rooms and a stair hall are located on the first and second floors of this wing which appears from the exterior as the main block of the house. None of the original woodwork survives in this section of the house, although the open string stair, with its turned balusters, molded handrail, and blocky newell post, remains intact. A closet underneath the stair shows that the walls of the wing were originally sheathed with plaster and finished with a baseboard. At the head of the stairs and located above the dining room is an assymetrically shaped bedroom. A plain mantel shelf is located against the west wall of the room. A built-in closet with plain surrounds is located in the northwest corner of the room. Cut nails with machine made heads hold these surrounds in place. The interior surrounds of the bedroom door are molded and finished with bull's eye corner blocks. This bedroom has an exterior two-over-two sash window located on the south wall. A second bedroom located on the west side of this room has an identical built-in closet and a mantel consisting of plain pilasters, a wide freize, and a mantel shelf. A third bedroom, located to the south of this room, retains its original plaster walls and a plain mantel shelf with brackets supports against the south wall. A closet, raised about three feet above the floor, is located in the northwest corner of the room.

Adjacent to the west elevation of the house is a formerly detached kitchen building. The one-and-a-half story kitchen is accessible from the interior of the house

by means of a door on the east elevation. This door opens onto the enclosed porch of the dwelling's south elevation. The kitchen is sheathed with a variety of exterior sidings, including the original weatherboard siding on the south side. The foundation of the kitchen, probably wood piers originally, has deteriorated. The structure's sills now rest on the ground. Like the main block of the house, the kitchen roof is oriented on a north/south axis. A six-light window is located just under the roofline of the kitchen on the east elevation. The south and north elevations are blind. The west elevation is pierced by a four-light-over-three-panel door and a window on the first floor. The loft is lit by a smaller window located under the roofline of the building. Both windows are boarded over. An interior brick chimney pierces the roof ridgeline at the south end of the building. Exposed studs and cross braces on the north side of the building are circular sawn and held in place by cut nails. The interior of the kitchen consists of one room with a plywood floor and plaster walls. A stair to the loft, probably not the original, is located in the northwest corner of the kitchen.

Next to the kitchen stands the formerly detached meathouse. The meathouse is sheathed with both aluminum and weatherboard siding. Some of the exposed weatherboards are held in place by cut nails with machine made heads. The meathouse is now accessible from the interior of the house by means of a utility room hyphen. The interior walls of the meathouse are sheathed with wide boards laid diagonally. Metal spikes with square heads, from which meat originally hung, remain imbedded in the ceiling joists.

A small frame structure built to house a Delco generator is located next to the kitchen. This building has a cement pad floor and is sheathed with both aluminum siding and weatherboard. A vertical panel door is located on the east elevation. A window on the west elevation has been boarded up.

A two-car garage located on the south side of the house was constructed in the 1960s.

Two corn cribs located south of the garage were moved here from locations elsewhere on the surrounding farmland. Both are roofed with metal and stand on cinderblock piers. Their vertical board slats are held in place by wire nails.

The outbuilding located farthest from the house is the barn. Sheathed with circular sawn vertical boards and roofed with corrugated metal, the barn also stands on cinderblock piers. The two-story main block of the barn is capped by a gable roof oriented on an east/west axis. Shed roof wings extend from the north, west, and south elevations. Three pairs of doors open on the east side of the barn. The barn is currently used for storage. A modern metal storage shed is located between the barn and the corn cribs.

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
8.4 Significance

In 1890, William Cecil deeded the 23 acre parcel to his sons John F. and George B. Cecil. In 1894, George B. Cecil purchased John's interest in the property. Today, the house lot remains in the Cecil family.

From the late 1800s until the mid-twentieth century, George B. Cecil's store stood in a grassy lot in front of the Cecil dwelling house. The store, which carried general merchandise, dry goods and millinery accessories, was also equipped with a bar, a post office and slot machines. It was demolished around 1970. Across Route 244 from the store stood Cecil's grist mill. The mill, located where the Valley Lee post office stands, burned around 1954. All that remains of the mill is the steam engine which has been placed as a monument in front of the post office.

It remains unclear when the earliest section of the George B. Cecil House was constructed, although it appears that at least a portion of the house was standing by 1887. According to one family member, the earliest section of the house is the central core which was enlarged over time by the construction of a series of additions. This theory is supported by the plaster and wood work located in the second floor rear bedrooms of the house. The attic of the house revealed circular sawn timbers and some cut nails with machine made heads, but no further information regarding constuction periods. The detached kitchen is contemporary with the earliest section of the house and may actually predate it.

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
8.1 Significance

Chain of Title

TO: Margaret C. Dean
FROM: Hazel R. Bean and George L. Bean
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber MRF 136, folio 437.
DATE:
NOTES: Transer of 315 acres more or less consisting of the "Nickle Tract" being 100 acres, and another tract being 200 acres, also the Thomas tract, originally 23 acres except 1.25 acres conveyed for St. George's R.C. Church. Including also the Jackson Watts property. Being the same as CBG 12/78 with certain exceptions.

TO: Hazel R. Bean, sole heir at law of George I. Cecil
FROM: George I. Cecil
RECORD: St. Mary's County Testamentary Record, Estate No. 765.
DATE: 1966.
NOTES: The Real Estate Inventory located at MRB 2/47 lists Cecil's estate as: the "Valley Lee Farm" consisting of the main dwelling, tool house, garage, corn house, grainary, machinery shed, livestock barn, corn house, tobacco barn (2), feeding shed, stripping Room, tobacco barn, cattle shed, tenant house.

TO: George I. Cecil
FROM: George B. Cecil, widower.
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber CBG 12, folio 78.
DATE: May 19, 1939.
NOTES: Transfer of 315 acres more or less consisting of the Nicle tract being 100 acres, and another tract being 200 acres, both from William W. Cecil, also the Thomas tract originally 23 acres. Also two other tracts being the Mason tract and the Jackson Watts property. Above described property includes mill, mill site, and all stock and equipment.

TO: George B. Cecil and Anne Maria Cecil
FROM: John F. Cecil and Helen Robb Cecil
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber JJG 2, folio 23.
DATE: April 25, 1894.
NOTES: Transfer of his moiety in that parcel formerly known as "Mill Seat" now called "Valley Lee," together with buildings and improvements thereon consisting of a mill and fixtures, mill house, cottage, store house, dwelling house, and other improvements. Same as JFF11/138.

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
8.2 Significance

TO: John F. Cecil and George B. Cecil
FROM: William W. Cecil and Maria D. Cecil
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JFF 11, folio 478.
DATE: February 26, 1890
NOTES: Transfer of many parcels including "Mill Seat," now called "Valley Lee," as well as the buildings and improvements thereon "including a dwelling House, Store House, Mill and fixtures, a mill house, and cottage..." being 23 acres more or less, same as JFF 11/138.

TO: William W. Cecil
FROM: Robert C. Combs, Trustee
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber JFF 11, folio 138.
DATE: February 5, 1889.
NOTES: Transfer of parcel commonly called "Mill Seat" but now known as "Valley Lee" together with improvements thereon consisting of a dwelling house, store house, mill and fixtures, mill house and cottage, being 23 acres. Same as JAC 2/341 and JAC 3/202. Sale of property result of default on mortgage executed on June 7, 1887. See Equity case 694, Robert C. Combs, attorney for Brown, Graves, and Co., vs. Benenia A. Thomas. Judgement contained in Decree Record JFF 6/215.

TO: William J. Brown and William B. Graves, Co-partners trading as Brown, Graves, and Company.
FROM: Benenia A. Thomas, widow.
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JFF 10, folio 21.
DATE: June 7, 1887.
NOTES: Mortgage for $900 on parcel known as "Valley Lee" together with improvements including a dwelling house, store house, mill and fixtures, mill house and cottage, being 23 acres. Same as JAC 3/202.

TO: Mrs. B. A. Thomas, wife of J. B. Thomas
FROM: R. A. Clarke, Sheriff of St. Mary's County
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JAC 3, folio 202.
DATE: September 28, 1868.
NOTES: Transfer of mill and mill seat being 23 acres, sale of property by virtue of execution in Circuit Court on June 3, 1868, Robert beale assignee of Robert Ford vs. A. Sappington and J. B. Thomas. Property is same as that lately possessed by Rookr and Thomas.

TO: Benenia A. Thomas
FROM: Josiah O. Rooker
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JAC 2, folio 341.
DATE: April 25, 1867.

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
8.3 Significance

NOTES: Transfer of his interest in the property with a mill and mill seat situate in the Factory district near the Oak Store...formerly the property of William H. Hebb.
Price: $350.

TO: James B. Thomas and Josiah O. Rooker
FROM: John Shadrick, Trustee
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JAC 2, folio 39.
DATE: July 5, 1866.
NOTES: Sale of property result of Circuit Court decree of June 20, 1866 John Shadrick vs. Elizabeth A. Cole et al... a mill and mill seat situate...near the Oak Store in the Factory district formerly the property of William H. Hebb deceased. See Execution Record JAC 1/16.

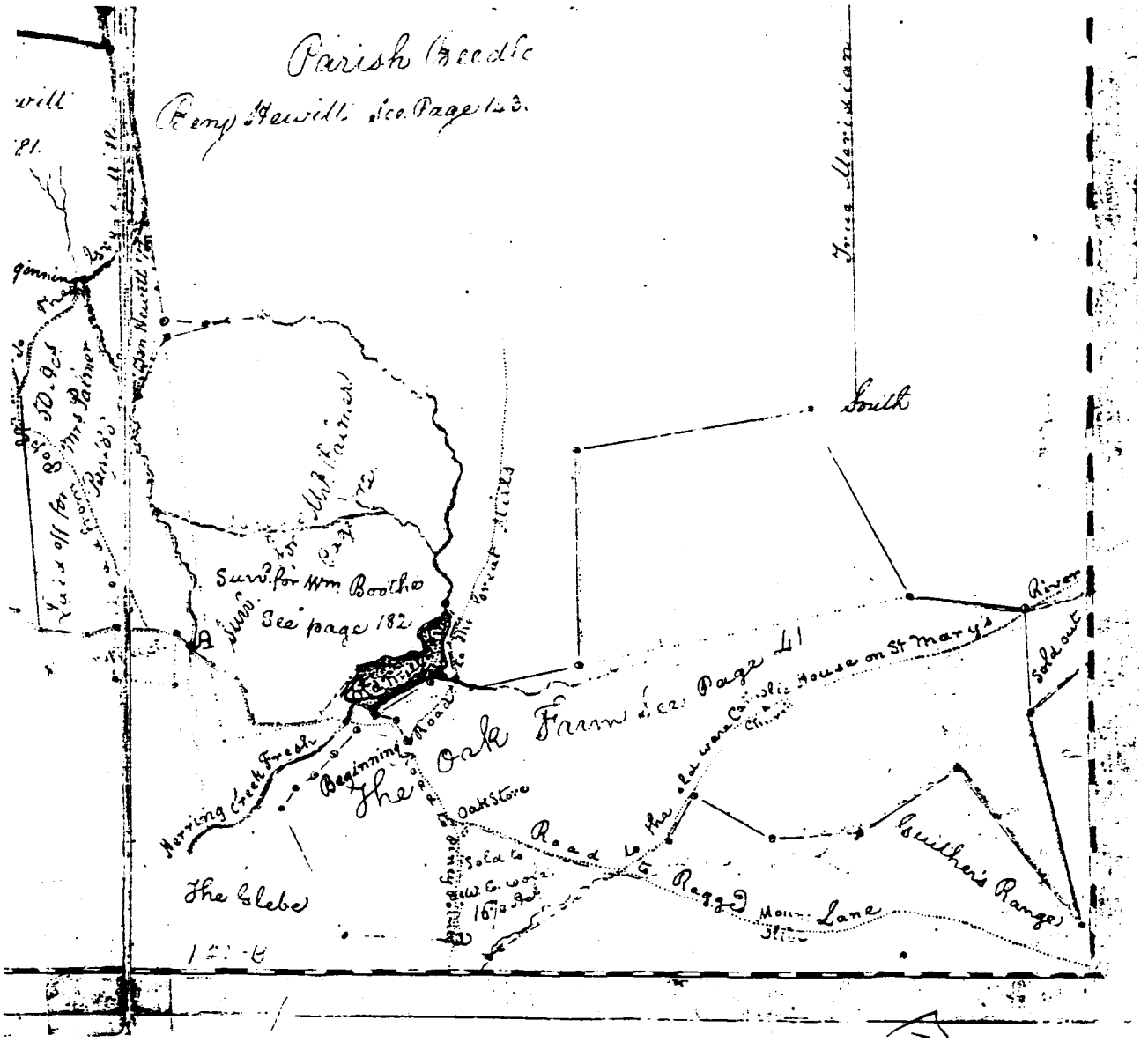
TO: William E. Cole and John Shadrick
FROM: William H. Hebb adn Caroline P. Hebb
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JTB 3, folio 478.
DATE: May 31, 1860.
NOTES: Transfer of "Mill Land" being 10 acres; parcel called "Hammett's Outlet" being 12 acres; "Jones Woods" being 1.25 acres, being a total of 23 and a quarter acres. Also the privilege of conveying the water from the run near Poplar Hill church to said mill land which privilege A. Fenwick purchased of John Shadrick Sr.

TO: William H. Hebb
FROM: Benjamin Hewitt and Elizabeth Hewitt
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JH 11, folio 389.
DATE: April 3, 1839.
NOTES: Transfer of parcel "Mill Land" being 10 acres; parcel called "Hammett's Outlet" being 12 acres; "Jones Woods" being 1.25 acres, being a total of 23 and a quarter acres. Also the privilege of conveying the water from the run near Poplar Hill church to said mill land which privilege "Arthernatious Fenwick" purchased of John Shadrick Sr. Price: $900

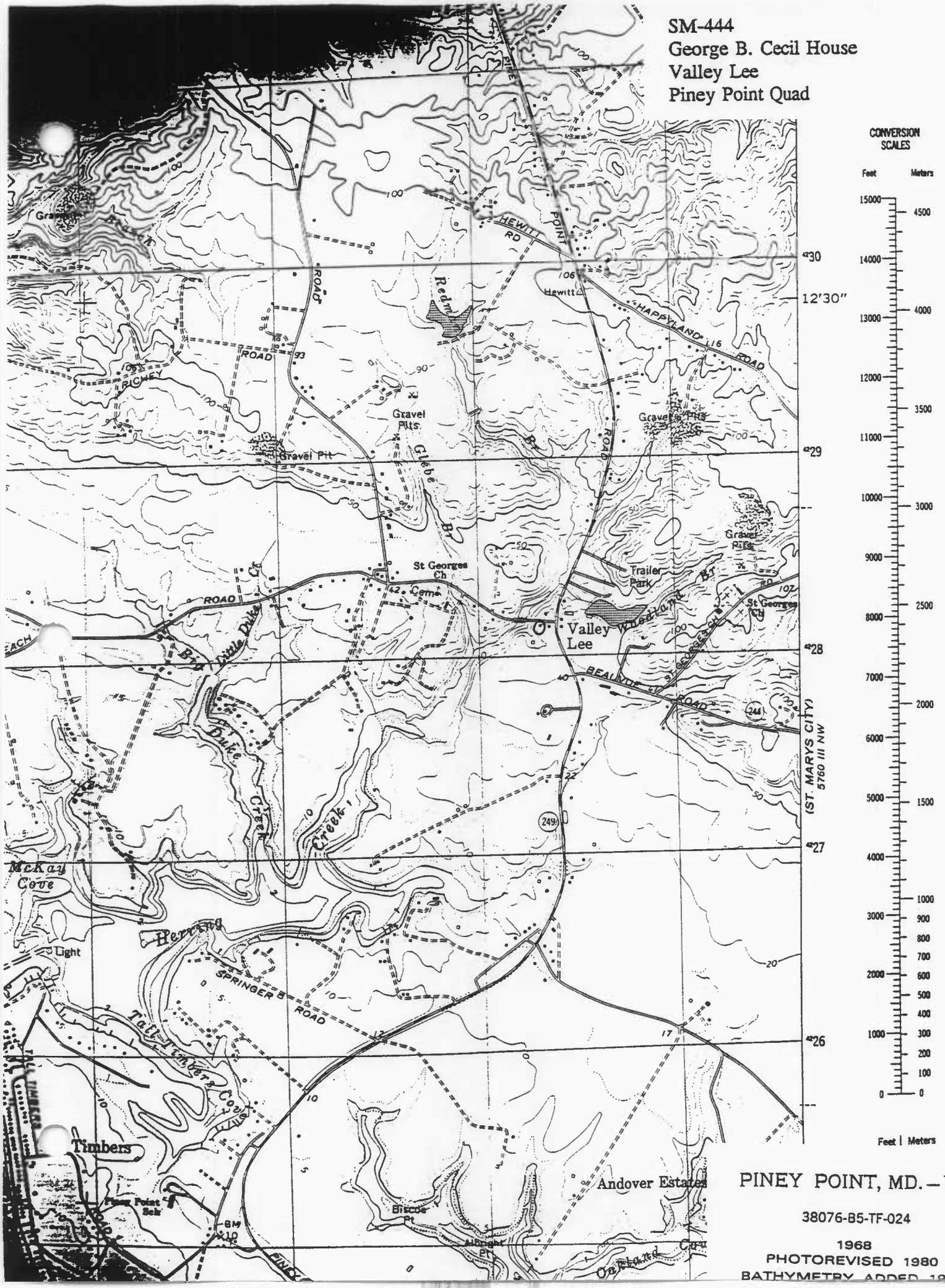
TO: Benjamin Hewitt
FROM: William Coad, Trustee
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JH 11, folio 389.
DATE: December 24, 1838.
NOTES: Sale of property as result of Equity Court decree in case Peter V. Thompson and Matthias Clarke vs. Colonel Athanasius Fenwick, deceased. Sold on July 28, 1826, "Cole's Mill and Mill Seat." Price: $201

SM-444, George B. Cecil House
St. Mary's County
10.1 Geographical Data

Below is a portion of Benjamin Tippett's "Plat of Sundry Lands Lying Between Saint Mary's River and Blake Creek" located in Surveyor Log Books: Vol. A 1836-1856 which shows the "old Mill Pond" in the same location as the George B. Cecil mill pond.



SM-444
George B. Cecil House
Valley Lee
Piney Point Quad



PINEY POINT, MD.—VA.

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PHOTOREVISED 1980
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982

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Cecils Mill, Valley Lee, Md.

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