

Capsule Summary
SM-473
William Biscoe House
St. George Island
Private

Circa 1925

The William Biscoe House is significant as a late, one-story variation of a particular St. George Island house type. The plan of the house, consisting of two front rooms each accessible by means of a separate entrance door, is typical of a handful of houses found on the island. The house is little altered and in good condition. The setting of the house has changed considerably over the years, as St. George's Creek eroded a dwelling lot originally located east of the Biscoe House.

The property on which the Biscoe House stands was purchased by Ephraim Chesser from Charles C. Lancaster, attorney for the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen, in 1852. The land remained in the Chesser family until the 1880s when Richard T. Ball purchased the Chesser heirs' interest in the property. It was this Ball after whom Ball Point Road was named.

Richard Ball, who is listed in the 1880 census as a sailor, was the father of Robert Sayre's wife Mary. Following Ball's death, Robert and Mary Sayre purchased the land from his heirs. Robert later deeded portions of the property to his three children: Rhona Biscoe, David Sayre, and Lettie McKay. Rhona Biscoe and her husband William "Jute" Biscoe built this home around 1925.

SM-473, William Biscoe 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

Resource Type

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function and Use: Residence

Known Design Source: None

**Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. **SM 473**

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common **William Biscoe House**

2. Location

street & number **Ball Point Road** not for publication

city, town **St. George Island** vicinity of congressional district **5**

state **Maryland** county **St. Mary's**

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name **William B. & Rhona G. Biscoe c/o Julie Petroff**

street & number **P.O. Box 270** telephone no.: **(301) 994 9280**

city, town **Piney Point** state and zip code **Maryland 20764**

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. **St. Mary's County Courthouse** liber **JMM 3**

street & number folio **83**

city, town **Leonardtown** state **Maryland 20650**

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. **SM 473**

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date of move _____

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

Contributing Resource Count: 4

The William Biscoe House is located at the end of an unpaved road off of Ball Point Road on St. George Island in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Three outbuildings stand on the property which is bordered on the north and east by Saint George's Creek. A series of piers once extended from the north side of the lot into the Creek. The remains of a paling fence that once surrounded the property survives on the north side of the house. To the south and west stand one-story houses that were built at about the same time as the Biscoe House. For much of the twentieth century, the five houses located here were inhabited by members of the Sayre family. The Biscoe House faces south with the principal gable oriented on an east/west axis.

Built around 1925, the Biscoe House is a one-story, frame structure supported by a cement pier foundation. The exterior is sheathed with weatherboard siding and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The south (main) elevation is pierced by two doors and two windows. Two five-panel doors serve as the central bays, flanked on the east and west by a shuttered two-over-two sash window. A screened porch, supported by Doric columns, extends across the first floor of the house. The roofline of this elevation is broken by a central cross gable sheathed with sawtooth shingles and pierced by a diamond shaped window. The center of the roof ridgeline is pierced by an interior brick chimney.

The east elevation consists of the gable end of the main block as the southern bay and the longitudinal elevation of the rear wing as the northern bay. The southern gable end is pierced by one two-over-two sash window and one six-over-six sash window. Both windows are shuttered. The eave is pierced by a small three-over-three sash window and a louvered vent. The longitudinal wing is pierced by a four-light-over-two-panel entrance door. An interior brick chimney pierces the ridgeline of the longitudinal roof where it joins the main block of the house.

The north elevation is a one-story gable end. This elevation is pierced by one shuttered six-over-six sash window.

The west elevation of the longitudinal wing is pierced by a pair of large shuttered one-over-one sash windows. The southern gable end of the house is pierced by two shuttered one-over-one sash windows. The eave is pierced by a small three-over-three sash window and a louvered vent.

The interior plan consists of two front rooms, each of which is accessible by means of a separate door on the south elevation. The eastern room served as a

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates Unknown **Builder/Architect** Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

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

The William Biscoe House is significant as a late, one-story variation of a particular St. George Island house type. The plan of the house, consisting of two front rooms each accessible by means of a separate entrance door, is typical of a handful of houses found on the island. The house is little altered and in good condition. The setting of the house has changed considerably over the years, as St. George's Creek eroded a dwelling lot originally located east of the Biscoe House.

The property on which the Biscoe House stands was purchased by Ephraim Chesser from Charles C. Lancaster, attorney for the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen, in 1852. By the time of Chesser's death, sometime in late 1852 or early 1853, he had already erected a dwelling on the Island property. The inventory of Chesser's real estate (GC 1/202) describes his home place as consisting of "...a small dwelling house and kitchen, a small rail fence and garden. There is about 14 acres of land uncleared except the large growth cut of a creak and marsh attached."

Following Chesser's death, the land passed to his three heirs: Ephraim Chesser, Priscilla Ann Chesser, and Susan Alice Chesser. By 1873, both Ephraim and Susan had moved to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. In that year, the Chesser heirs sold the property to Walter Chesser and Walter W. Chesser. In 1881, Walter W. Chesser sold his interest in the property to Richard T. Ball. Ball purchased the remaining half interest in the land from Walter Chesser's heirs in 1886.

Richard Ball, who is listed in the 1880 census as a sailor, was the father of Robert Sayre's wife Mary. Following Ball's death, Robert and Mary Sayre purchased the land from his heirs. Robert later deeded portions of the property to his three children: Rhona Biscoe, David Sayre, and Lettie McKay. The family of each child built a house near the home place of their father. This house was built for the family of William Biscoe around 1925. The current owner, Julie Petroff, is the daughter of David Sayre and the niece of Rhona Biscoe. She has family papers and photographs that document the history of the Sayre family and life on St. George Island.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM 473

Julie Petroff. Personal Interview, December 1994

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 4/5 of an acre

Quadrangle name St. George Island

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Hughes, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization St. Mary's County Planning & Zoning

date December 1994

street & number Leonardtown

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

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
 DHOP/BRCD
 800 COMMUNITY PLACE
 CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2022
 410-514-7600

SM-473, William Biscoe House
St. Mary's County
7.1 Significance

bedroom while the western room was used as a parlor. Notably, there is no access between these two front rooms. A chimney stack located against the east wall of the parlor was originally fitted with a kerosene stove. The parlor ceiling has been lowered and finished with acoustic tile. The dining room is located north of the parlor, through a doorway that was originally fitted with a pair of french doors. North of the bedroom is a hall that leads to the kitchen. A kerosene stove located in the kitchen is one of two stoves that originally heated the house. Hardwood floors remain in place throughout the house.

Three outbuildings are located north of the house. The first of these is a one-story storage shed sheathed with vertical board siding and roofed with tar paper. The shed faces south and is pierced by a door on the south side. A privy stands north of the shed. Sheathed with weatherboard and roofed with tar paper, the privy is fitted with a door on the south side. A garage stands north of the privy. The garage is sheathed with weatherboard siding and roofed with wood shingles. A pair of double doors pierce the west side of the building. A hand pump is also located on the north side of the house.

SM-473, William Biscoe House
St. Mary's County
8.1 Significance

Chain of Title

TO: William B. Biscoe and Rhona G. Biscoe
FROM: Mary C. Sayre and Robert E. Sayre
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JMM 3, folio 83.
DATE: April 8, 1925

NOTES: Transfer of 4/5 of an acre "beginning for the same at a post set on the line of the fence at the intersection of the property now occupied by George Ball and running northeast with the fence and the road approximately 24 feet to a stob set on the said line of the fence and being a division line between the property hereby intended to be conveyed and the proeprty of Thomas L. McKay and Lettie McKay, his wife, and running with the said McKays line in a northwest direction to a stob set on the shore of said creek approximately 24 yards to a stob set on the line of the fence of the said George Ball property thence with the division fence of the said Ball's land approximately 48 yards to the place of beginning."

TO: Mary C. Sayors and Robert E. Sayors
FROM: George Ball and Estell Ball, Annie P. Smith and John Smith
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber EBA 4, folio 252.
DATE: January 21, 1905.
NOTES: Transfer of part of the real estate of the late Richard T. Ball and Elizabeth Ball being 2 6/10 acres. Price: \$150

TO: Elizabeth Ball and Richard T. Ball
FROM: Ephraim Chesser, Walter W. Chesser, Ann E. Chesser, Tyler D. Chesser, D. E. Chesser, Charles E. Henderson, John W. Henderson, Lula Henderson, Annalisa Henderson, Margaret F. Thomas, George W. Thomas, heirs of the late Walter Chesser.
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JFF 9, folio 118.
DATE: May 29, 1886.
NOTES: Transfer of "Lot No. 1" being 3 9/10 acres.

TO: Richard T. Ball
FROM: Walter W. Chesser and Ann E. Chesser
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber JFF 5, folio 291.
DATE: July 18, 1881.
NOTES: Transfer of half of the real estate being all our interest in the real estate situated on St. George's Island purchased of Ephraim Cheser, Susan Cheser, and Priscilla Cheser. Price: \$200

TO: Walter Chesser and Walter W. Chesser
FROM: Ephrim Chesser and Susanna Chesser of the Eastern Shore of MD, and Priscilla Chesser of St. Mary's County.

SM-473, William Biscoe House
St. Mary's County
8.2 Significance

RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Records, Liber JAC 6, folio 442.

DATE: June 19, 1873.

NOTES: Transfer of the tract formerly owned by our deceased father Ephrim Chesser deeded to us by his attorney Charles C. Lancaster of Georgetown in D.C. being part of a larger tract known as St. George's Island, also another piece being a part of St. George's Island; being one undivided 1/3 part of the marsh and marshy land, also one undivided 1/3 part of the eastern half of the northern prong or cove of the aforesaid Island Creek from the mouth to the head and from the Eastern Shore or bank to the middle thereof. Price: \$450.

TO: Ephraim Chesser, Priscilla Ann Chesser, Susan Alice Chesser, heirs at law of Ephraim Chesser late of St. Mary's County.

FROM: Charles C. Lancaster of Georgetown, attorney for the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen of Maryland.

RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JTB 1, folio 449.

DATE: March 22, 1853.

NOTES: Prior to his death, Ephraim Chesser purchased a part of St. George's Island from Lancaster. This deed ratifies the sale of the property. The deed describes the land as three parcels, "Beginning at a locust post set upon the shore of Saint Mary's River as a dividing boundary between the said land and another piece or parcel of land purchased by Walter Chesser and running thence by a straight line bearing about south forty six and a half degrees west for the distance of forty six and one quarter perches or there about to a locust post set up by the sides of the marsh and marked with one notch a boundary also of the said Walter Chesser's land thence running and bounding with the said marsh north forty degrees west twenty perches north thirty one and a half Degrees west twenty and one half perches to a pine tree on the shore of Saint George's River thence running and bounding with said river shore to Saint Mary's and with the said shore to the beginning, And also another pierce or parcel of land...being a part also of St. George's Island being one undivided third part of the marsh and marsh land lying within the following lines and bounds, ...Beginning at the mouth of a small stream or gut running into Saint George's River to the westward of the late dwelling of the aforesaid Ephraim Chesser and running thence with said gut in a southerly direction, the head thereof thence by a straight line bearing about south thirty eight and a half degrees east to a post set upon the marsh thence by a straight line bearing about south forty one and a half degrees west to a post on the Eastern shore of a creek called "the Island Creek" thence bounding with the said shore of the said creek to St. Mary's River and thence binding with the said river to St. George's River and therewith to the place of beginning, and also all the right to...an undivided third part of the Eastern half of the Northern Prong a cove of the aforesaid Island Creek from the mouth to the head and from the Eastern Shore or Bank to the middle thereof..."



SM-473

William B. Lee House

4 Mary, Wm.

E. Hughes

12/91

MD. STATE

Sub Elevation

1/3



SM-473

William R. Riney - 1956

of Range County

E. Hughes

MD 5110

7/1/94

1/2 1/2 1/2

1/2



SM-473

William Biscoe House

St. Mary's County,

± Hurler

MS 5412

12/14

In loco photo

7/2