

Capsule Summary  
SM-621  
Wilmer Palmer House  
Abell  
Private

c. 1928

As the home of a local boatbuilder, the Wilmer Palmer House is a one story, frame dwelling which is significant for its association with St. Mary's County dory boatbuilding and repair. Constructed in 1928 on a slight rise overlooking St. Patricks Creek near Abell, Maryland, the house is located in close proximity to other affiliated resources which include Palmer Marine Railway (SM-623), Edwin Palmer House (SM-622), and Palmer Boatbuilding Shop (SM-624).

As a master carpenter and boatbuilder, Palmer was able to prepare and cut the basic parts of the his own house -- namely the studs, sills, braces, and wall plate -- by himself.<sup>1</sup> After his initial preparations, neighbor and master carpenter Willie Thompson helped Palmer raise the frame and cut the rafters. Palmer remembered that Thompson was a local contractor of some prestige. He further noted Thompson had also built his father Edwin's house (SM-622) and during World War I worked in Alexandria, Virginia building large ships (up to 400 ft). While the house is a modest indication of their abilities, it still captures the frugal nature of domestic waterside architecture in St. Mary's County during the late 1920s. This is demonstrated by the house's use of mill sawn clapboard, narrow cement piers, and mass produced, two-over-two, double-hung sash windows.

Constructed facing St. Patrick's Creek, the dwelling symbolically conveyed Wilmer Palmer's maritime-oriented occupation. Palmer, however, was not necessarily born into a boatbuilding family. Born in 1900, Wilmer Palmer was the son of Edwin and Lydia Palmer who owned a large 175 acre farm called part of Collingwood, Farrum, Cobrum, and Bedlam Neck. While the family farming business as well as house (Edwin Palmer House (SM-622)) was oriented

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<sup>1</sup> Interview of Wilmer Palmer by Paula Johnson, April 7, 1983, Calvert Marine Museum, PRP PJR90, PJR91, PJR92.

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towards their fields of tobacco and corn, Wilmer Palmer did not embrace agricultural pursuits. Instead, Wilmer became interested in building boats. Initially building small models, Palmer moved on to building a 10 ft row boat for himself by the age of 20. While continually helping his father with the management of the farm, Wilmer continued to develop his skill and by the 1940s and 1950s became one of the most prominent fore-to-aft dory boat builders in the seventh voting district of St. Mary's County. Palmer bolstered his business by building a marine railway (SM-623) as well as a boatbuilding shop (SM-624) -- creating one of the best surviving examples of pre-World War Two, rural boat building and repair facilities in Southern Maryland. While Veronica Palmer, Wilmer's wife, died in 1983 and Wilmer Palmer died in 1986, the boatbuilding tradition was passed on to their son Creighton who remains the owner and operator of the marine railway and boatbuilding shop.

SM-621, Wilmer Palmer House  
St. Mary's County  
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation 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

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

## MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. SM-621

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

### 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Wilmer Palmer House Part of Collingwood, Farrum, Cobrum, & Bedlam Neck

and/or common Wilmer Palmer House (pref.)

### 2. Location

0.2 of a mile west of int. of Wilmer Palmer Rd. & Golden Thompson Rd., on Wilmer Palmer Rd.  
street & number not for publication

city, town Abell  vicinity of congressional district 7

state Maryland county St. mary's TM-46, G-18, P-78

### 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 Creighton W. Palmer

street & number PO Box 45 telephone no.: 301-769-2160

city, town Abell state and zip code Maryland

### 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber CBG 105

street & number folio 60

city, town Leonardtown state Maryland

### 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date  federal  state  county  local

repository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. SM-621

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

Contributing Resource Count: 1

The Wilmer Palmer House is located approximately 0.1 mile west from the intersection of Golden Thompson and Wilmer Palmer Roads near Abell, Maryland. Approached via Wilmer Palmer Road, the dwelling is oriented on an east/west axis with the primary elevation overlooking St. Patrick's Creek. The building is situated on a rise just above a small marsh and is situated near a number of commercial boat building and service facilities including Palmer's Boatbuilding Shop (SM-624), Palmer's Marine Railway (SM-623), as well as the Edwin J. Palmer House (SM-622).

The Wilmer Palmer House, constructed in 1928, is a decoratively modest, one story, frame, single-pile dwelling with a gable roof and rear ell. The foundation consists of slender brick and concrete piers. The walls are sheathed with clapboard fastened to the circular sawn frame with wire nails. The intersection of the walls and roof features a boxed cornice. The roof is covered with raised seam metal and is pierced by two interior brick chimney flues and an exterior end flue.

The fenestration of the west or primary elevation consists of a fifteen light door flanked to the north by two, two-over-two double-hung sash windows and to the south by a single two-over-two window (All windows are two-over-two, double-hung sash unless otherwise noted.). A vertical seam located between the two north bays suggests two building periods, but the similarities in materials and construction point to one construction campaign.

The north elevation features the main block's gable end and a rear shed addition. The main block is pierced by a window and exhibits an exterior brick chimney flue. The rear shed addition is pierced by a window.

The east elevation features the rear of the main block, the gable end of a rear ell, and the rear of the shed addition. The shed addition is pierced by two large, single light windows. Between the shed addition and the ell is a one light-over-three-panel door shaded by a shed roof porch. This porch also shades a window on the north side of the ell. The gable end of the ell does not feature any openings. An interior end flue pierces the roof line. Just to the south of the ell is another porch that shades both the ell and main block. The porch shelters a window on the main block.

The south elevation consists of the main block's gable end and the rear ell's side. The rear ell is pierced by a five panel door and a window. These bays are sheltered by a wrap around porch that connects the ell and main block. The gable end is pierced by a window.

The interior was not accessible at the time of the visit. Judging from the fenestration and location of chimney flues, the interior appears to contain four rooms and a rear storage area encompassed by the shed addition. The rooms do not feature much embellishment and are covered with wall board.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. SM-621

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** \_\_\_\_\_ **Builder/Architect** Wilmer Palmer, builder

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.

As the home of a local boatbuilder, the Wilmer Palmer House is a one story, frame dwelling which is significant for its association with St. Mary's County dory boatbuilding and repair. Constructed in 1928 on a slight rise overlooking St. Patricks Creek near Abell, Maryland, the house is located in close proximity to other affiliated resources which include Palmer Marine Railway (SM-623), Edwin Palmer House (SM-622), and Palmer Boatbuilding Shop (SM-624).

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<sup>1</sup> Interview of Wilmer Palmer by Paula Johnson, April 7, 1983, Calvert Marine Museum, PRP PJR90, PJR91, PJR92.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM-621

Interview with Creighton Palmer, February, 1998.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Stratford Hall

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"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

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

Same as per deed description.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk E. Ranzetta, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization St. Mary's County Dept. of Planning & Zoning

date 4-27-98

street & number 22740 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

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
 DHCP/DHCD  
 100 COMMUNITY PLACE  
 CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023  
 514-7600

SM-621, Wilmer Palmer House  
St. Mary's County  
8.1 Significance

Chain-of-Title

(All deeds are located at the Land Records Office, St. Mary's County Courthouse, Leonardtown, Maryland unless otherwise noted.)

Reference: Liber CBG 105, Folio 60

Grantee: Creighton W. Palmer

Grantor: Wilmer E. Palmer, et al

Date: December 31, 1962

Notes: This one acre parcel on St. Patrick's Creek was once part of Collingwood, Farrum, Cobrum, and Bedlam Neck.

Reference: Liber CBG 87, Folio 414

Grantee: Margaret Palmer Kelly, et al

Grantor: Wilmer E. Palmer, et ux, et al

Date: April 25, 1960

Reference: Liber JMM 2, Folio 493

Grantee: Edwin J. Palmer

Grantor: Ellen D. Palmer, et al

Date: September 20, 1924

Reference: Liber JJG 3, Folio 354

Grantee: Edwin J. Palmer

Grantor: Samuel E. F. Palmer, executor of John Palmer

Date: February 17, 1896

Notes: Here the parcel includes 175 acres.

Reference: Liber JFF 9, Folio 464

Grantee: John Palmer

Grantor: George R. Gaither, Jr.

Date: March 27, 1887

Notes: The property is listed as containing 440 acres.

Reference: Mortgage Record, Liber JFF 5, Folio 196

Grantee: Thomas H. Gaither

Grantor: Sarah A. Long

Date: September 12, 1881

Reference: Will Record, Liber JTMR 1, Folio 358

Grantee: Sarah A. Long

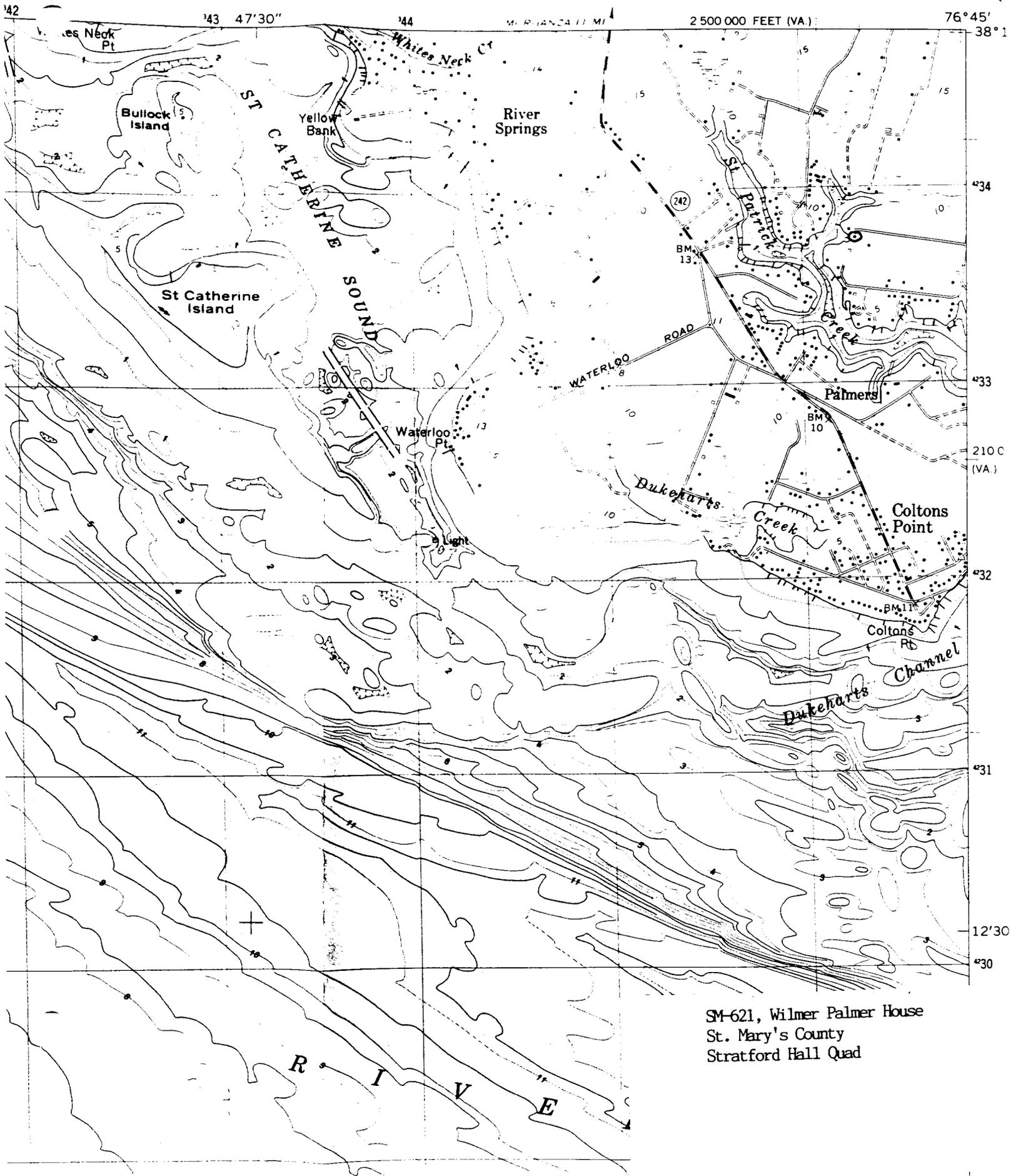
Grantor: John B. Long

Date: May 13, 1874

Notes: No previous deed is listed.

VIRGINIA  
MARCES

STRATFORD HALL QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA - MARYLAND  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC - BATHYMETRIC)





SM-621

Wilmer Palmer House

St Mary's County

Kirk Ranzetta

April 92

AD EHO

W + N elevations.

1 of 2



SM-621

Wilmer Palmer Texas

St. Mary's County

Kirk Ranzetta

April 78

-4d SFPD

S+P observations

inf 2