

**Maria Bracker House      No. K-543**  
**104 Cannon Street**  
**Chestertown, Maryland    Mid-18th century**

This house was owned in the mid-19th century by Thomas Cuff, a free African-American and later by his daughter, Maria Bracker. It is a four-bay two-story frame house, with two windows on the second floor. On each gable are single windows on both floors. A lean-to porch with simple square posts runs across the front. The house presently is covered with asbestos shingles, covering wooden ship-lap siding. There is a trace of a central chimney, indicated by a plain mid-19th century style mantel on the inside wall of the second floor room on the right hand side. The chimney itself is gone. The staircase, enclosed behind vertical beaded-boards, rises along the rear wall of the first floor room on the right, and turns along the side wall of that room. After years of neglect and exposure this house is in near ruinous condition: porch floor rotten, windows broken out, and rear wing so damaged by fire as to be unsafe.

The Bracker House may be one of four houses bequeathed by Dr. William Murray to his four unmarried daughters in 1768. These included the "house on Cannon Street" where Samuel Dickey now lives." 49/ It is similar in size and style to the nearby Cuff house on Cannon Street and the Isaac Boyer House around the corner on Front Street, (S. Water Street), although lacking the traces of early interior woodwork found in those houses. In any case, the land on which it stands was purchased by Thomas Ringgold from the Murray Sisters in 1774, and remained in the Ringolds' possession until sold in 1808 to Richard Snowden Thomas, who gave it to

his daughter, Deborah Wright along with the rest of Town Lot Number Five. This property was subsequently sold to Thomas Cuff, who bought over the years much of Scott's Point, including the river front. In the 1840's and 1850's Cuff's daughter, Maria Bracker lived there and conducted an ice cream shop, advertised in the Kent County News on June 6, 1857. "Maria Bracker is now prepared to accommodate ladies and gentlemen with ice cream, cake, and lemonade, prepared every day from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. Her saloon is on Cannon St., between Queen and Water. Families can be supplied by the quart or gallon, or molds, pound or sponge cake by the pound." 50/ On Cuff's death he left it to her, but in 1866, she sold it to William Cotton.

Cotton's daughter Mary married Jonas Haughton in 1888, and they were the parents of five sons. These brothers had a successful jazz band in the 1920's, playing in Baltimore, Atlantic City, etc. The Haughton family had some education, as indicated by their books and written records. When opened in 1991 after many years of being boarded up, the family books, some dating from the 1840s and 1850s, dresses from the 1890s, china, daguerreotypes, and old photographs were still undisturbed. Also there were financial records of a part of the house they rented out, musical instruments, hand written music, scrapbooks, etc. from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unfortunately, the contents were disbursed after the house was opened. The significance of the Bracker House is in its 1850s documentation and in this record of an educated African-American family of the latter half of the 19th century. The widow of one of the brothers has been considered as the owner, but the title is in contest by other heirs.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

**K-543**  
**MARIA BRACKER HOUSE**

### **MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA**

#### Geographic Organization

- 1) Eastern Shore

#### Chronological/Developmental Period

- 10) Agricultural-Industrial Transition

#### Historic Period Themes

- 2) Architecture
- 7) Social/Cultural

#### Resource Type

Category - Building, private, occupied, public acquisition - not applicable, not accessible,  
present use - private residence unoccupied

Historic Environment - Village

Historic Functions and Uses - Dwelling

Unknown Design Source



# 7. Description

Survey No. K-543

|                                    |  |   |   |                    |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--------------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                   |  | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |                    |
| <input 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.

This four-bay, two-story frame house has two rooms on each floor. A central wall divides the house into two dwelling units. There are traces of a central chimney. The stair rises in the rear corner of the first story room on the right. The condition overall is ruinous.

The house is a four-bay, two-story frame house, with two windows on the second floor. On each gable are single windows on both floors. A lean-to porch with simple square posts runs across the front. The house presently is covered with asbestos shingles, covering wooden ship-lap siding. There is a trace of a central chimney, indicated by a plain mid-19th century style mantel on the inside wall of the second floor room on the right hand side. The chimney itself is gone. The staircase enclosed behind vertical beaded boards, rises along the rear wall of the first floor room on the right, and turns along the side wall of that room. After years of neglect and exposure this house is in near ruinous condition: porch floor rotten, windows broken out, and rear wing so damaged by fire as to be unsafe.

# 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 checked="" 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/         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                            | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                       | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications                 | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation  |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

| Specific dates | 1760-1770 | 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.

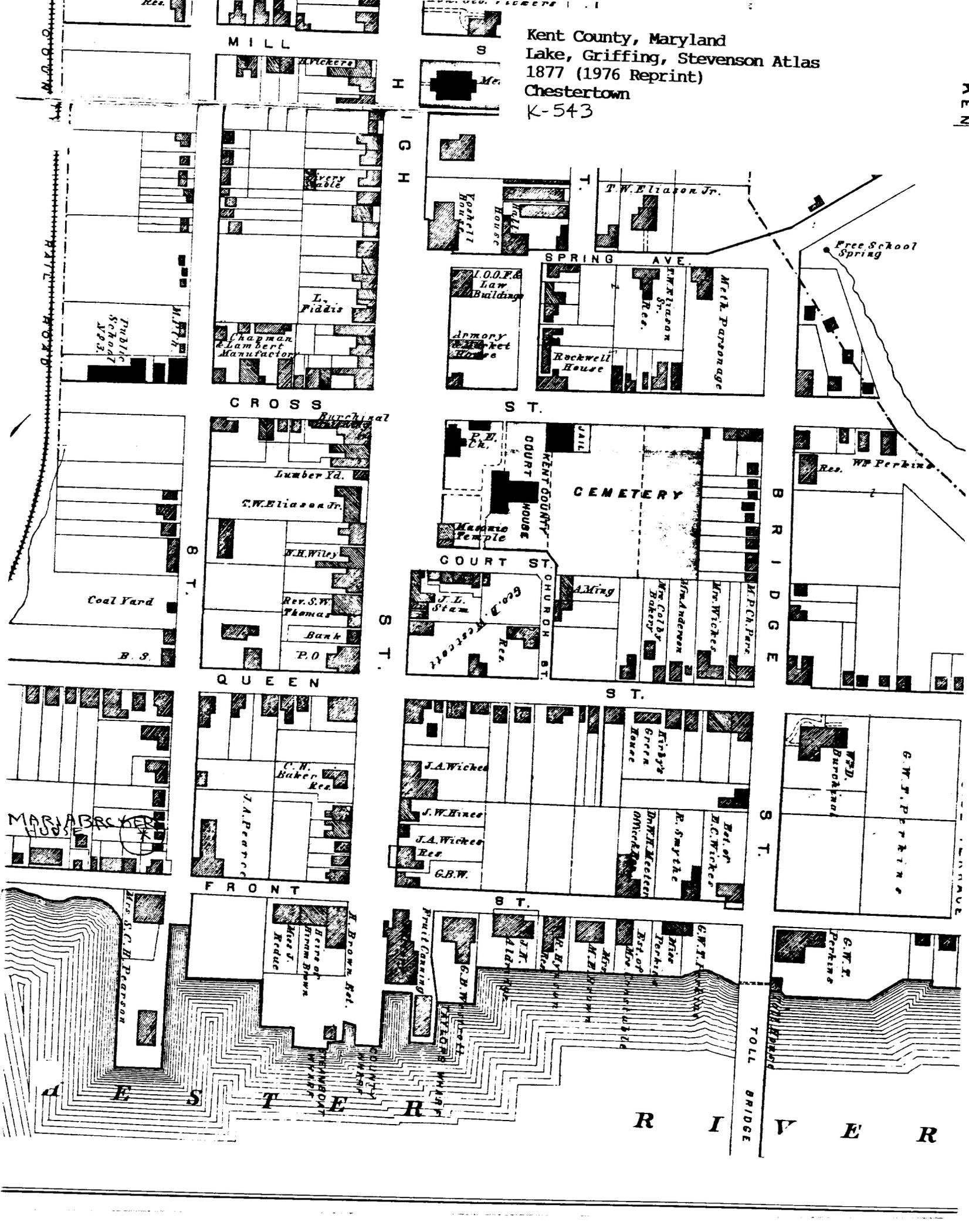
The Bracker House is possibly an 18th century structure, but certainly dates from the 1840's, when Maria Bracker operated an ice cream shop there. Bracker was the daughter of Thomas Cuff, a free African-American who owned substantial property in the Scott's Point section of Chestertown. The Cotton-Haughton Family, who have owned it since 1866, left in the house a remarkable collection of books, clothes, rent records, musical instruments, and furniture chronicling the life of an educated African-American family in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Bracker House may be one of four houses bequeathed by Dr. William Murray to his four unmarried daughters in 1768. These included the "house on Cannon Street where Samuel Dickey now lives." It is similar in size and style to the nearby Cuff House on Cannon Street and the Boyer House around the corner on Front Street, (S. Water Street) although lacking the traces of early interior woodwork found in those houses. In any case, the land on which it stands was purchased by Thomas Ringgold from the Murray sisters in 1774, and remained in the Ringgolds' possession until sold in 1808 to Richard Snowden Thomas, who gave it to his daughter, Deborah Wright, along with the rest of Lot Number Five. This property was subsequently sold to Thomas Cuff, who bought over the years much of Scott's Point, including the river front. In the 1840's and 1850's Cuff's daughter, Maria Bracker lived there and conducted an ice cream shop, advertised in the Kent County News on June 6, 1857. "Maria Bracker is now prepared to accommodate ladies and gentlemen with ice cream, cake, and lemonade, prepared every day from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. Her saloon is on Cannon St., between Queen and Water. Families can be supplied by the quart or gallon, or molds, pound or sponge cake by the pound." On Cuff's death he left it to her, but in 1866, she sold it to William Cotton.

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Kent County, Maryland  
Lake, Griffing, Stevenson Atlas  
1877 (1976 Reprint)  
Chestertown  
K-543



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Kent County, Maryland

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K-543

CROSS

S T.

QUEEN

S T.

FRONT

S T.

SPRING AVE.

I.O.O.F. Law Building

Armory

Rockwell House

Mark Parsonage

CEMETERY

Kent County House

St. L. St. M. Res.

Mr. Anderson

Mr. Wickers

Mr. Ch. Pars

J.A. Wicker

J.A. Wicker

G.B.W.

Mr. Green

Mr. Swythe

Mr. Wickers

Mr. Perkins

Mr. Perkins

Mr. Perkins

Mr. Perkins

Mr. Perkins

Mr. Perkins

Free School Spring

Res. W.P. Perkins

G.W.T. Perkins

G.W.T. Perkins

G.W.T. Perkins

G.W.T. Perkins

G.W.T. Perkins

Public School

Coal Yard

MARIA BRUCKER

Mrs. S.C.H. Pearson

Home of Mrs. Brown

Home of Mrs. Keene

Home of Mrs. Keene

Home of Mrs. Keene

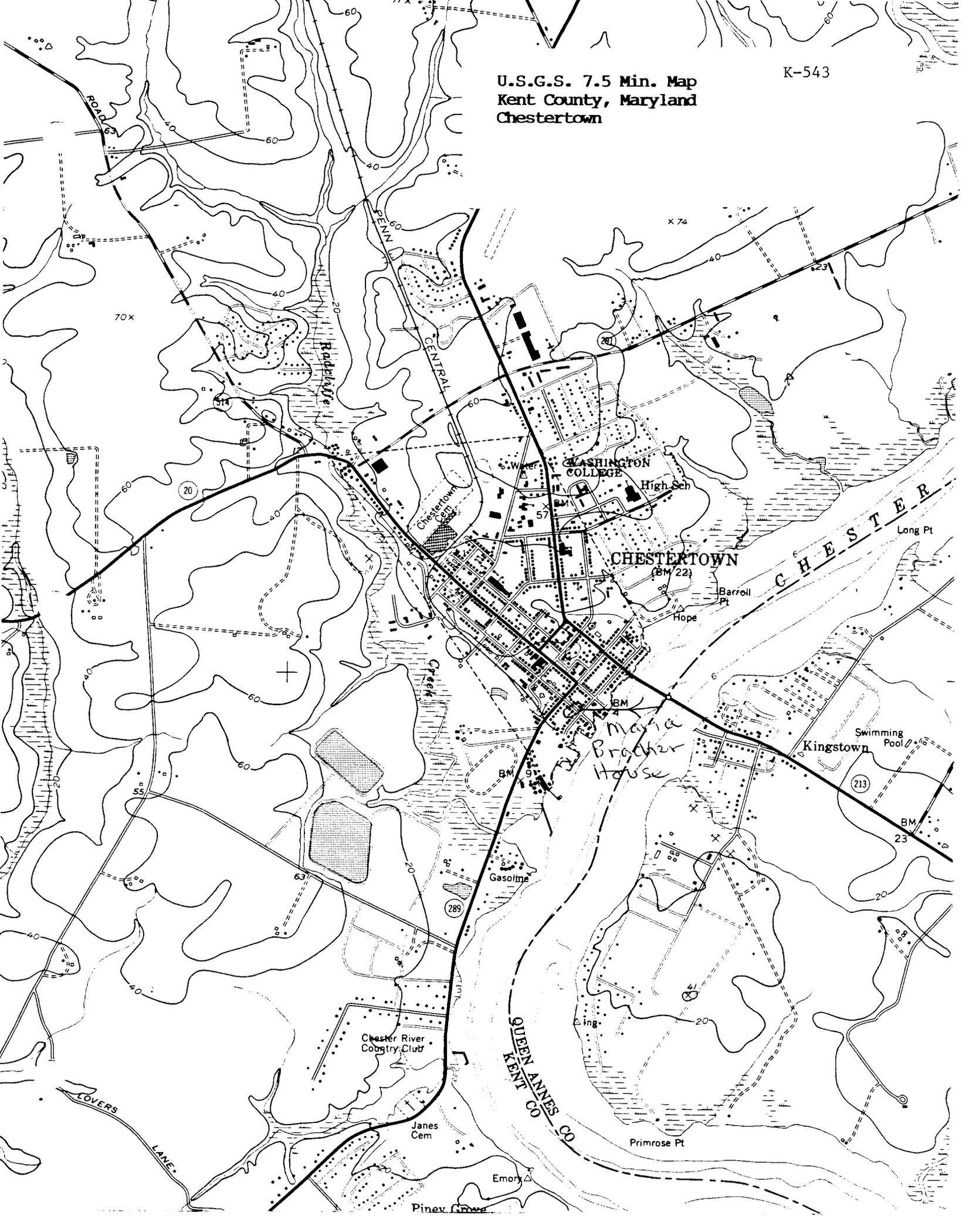
Home of Mrs. Keene

TOLL BRIDGE

RIVER

U.S.G.S. 7.5 Min. Map  
Kent County, Maryland  
Chestertown

K-543





María Bracker House - K-543

102-104 Cannon Street

Chestertown

Northeast facade

M. Bowne

March 1996