(Tim)

# MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
# DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

**NR Eligible: yes ___**
**no ___**

AL-I-A-87

Property Name: Orleans Road, Fifteen Mile Creek Crossing Site  Inventory Number: Needs Number

Address: N/A Orleans Road  Historic district: ___ yes X no

City: Little Orleans  Zip Code: 21766  County: Allegany

USGS Quadrangle(s): Artemas

Property Owner: Allegany County  Tax Account ID Number: N/A

Tax Map Parcel Number(s): N/A  Tax Map Number: N/A

Project: Replacement of Bridge No. A-116, Orleans Road South, Fifteen  Agency: MD SHA

Agency Prepared By: Paula S. Reed and Associates, Inc.

Preparer's Name: Paula Reed  Date Prepared: 4/27/2007

Documentation is presented in: MIHP Form and Report of Findings for replacement of Bridge A-116, Orleans Road over Fifteen Mile Creek, Allegany County

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ___ Eligibility recommended ___ Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: X A ___ B ___ C ___ D  Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

*Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:*

Name of the District/Property: ___

Inventory Number: ___  Eligible: ___ yes  Listed: ___ yes

Site visit by MHT Staff ___ yes X no  Name: ___  Date: ___

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

DESCRIPTION:

Allegany County Bridge No. A-116 is a low water bridge carrying Orleans Road South across Fifteen Mile Creek just above its mouth at the Potomac River. Just after crossing the creek Orleans Road South terminates at Appel (Oldtown) Road. The crossing is a short distance northwest of Little Orleans a small village adjacent to the former Western Maryland Railway and the C&O Canal. Fifteen Mile Creek carves a hollow southward through rugged mountain ridges leaving a narrow strip of bottomland along its path for most of its course. In some places, however, the creek cuts through steep sided, narrow ravines with cliffs on either side. Between the Orleans Road crossing and the Potomac River is one of these steep ravines, making this crossing with its low, level banks and shallow water a good fording spot.

The setting is scenic with wooded ridges cut by hollows and bisected by the Potomac River. On a hilltop just north of the crossing is Saint Patrick's Catholic Church (MIHP AL-I-A-54), established in the early 19th century. Commanding an impressive vista overlooking the fording and later bridge site, the original church was an 1808 log building replaced by the present church in the mid 19th century. To the south of the crossing is the former Little Orleans Schoolhouse (MIHP AL-I-A-041). Although it stands

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

**Eligibility recommended** ___  **Eligibility not recommended** ___

**Criteria:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D  **Considerations:** ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

**MHT Comments:**

___  ___
**Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services**  **Date**

___  ___
**Reviewer, National Register Program**  **Date**

approximately ¼ mile from the crossing, the former schoolhouse is not readily visible from the bridge. The school is still recognizable, but its integrity has been compromised by extensive alterations. On a ridge above the floodplain at the west end of the village of Little Orleans is a ca. 1906 frame Queen Anne style house (12728 Orleans Road), built by Charles Callan, who co-owned and developed with his brother the Little Orleans Grocery.

At Little Orleans, Orleans Road merges with High Germany Road and makes a steep descent to its crossing of Fifteen Mile Creek. In order to make the descent, the road has a sharp curve following the contour of the hill. At the crossing, the road spans the creek with a low water poured concrete bridge dated 1938. The bridge has a gravel surface and low concrete curbs without rails or side walls. Eighteen side-by side pipes drain the creek water through the bridge. On the opposite (north side) of the bridge, Orleans Road ends at a T intersection with Appel (also Oldtown) Road which runs along the creek in the vicinity of the crossing. At the crossing point, the creek is fairly wide and shallow.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

Orleans Road and the crossing site appear to be part of the original route from Hancock to Oldtown, established before 1750. The road appears to retain its historic pathway and the current bridge appears to be at or adjacent to the historic fording place. The road is significant under National Register Criterion A for its long history and its former role as the main colonial period route to the west through Maryland bypassing mountain ridges as much as possible. The current bridge, although dated 1938, is not a particularly significant example of its type, and does not meet Criterion C for its architectural or engineering merits.

Resource Count: 1 eligible structure (Orleans Road); 1 eligible site (crossing);
1 not-eligible structure (current bridge).

PROPERTY HISTORY

Referenced in deeds for the surrounding properties as "Old Town Road" Orleans Road follows the path of the old road to the west mapped on Fry and Jefferson's 1751 map, and on subsequent maps up until the routing of the National Road to the north. It is also referenced in the original boundary description of the Orleans District, District No. 1 of Allegany County, as "the Oldtown Road leading from Hancock to Cumberland." The current bridge is dated 1938, and may have been the first to replace the ford. The Paw Paw USGS Quadrangle Map from 1900 shows a ford at this location.

By 1751, when surveyors Fry and Jefferson drew their map of the region (see attached copy), settlements along the upper Potomac River had progressed to the extent that a path following the river led between Cresap's Old Town and the "Medicinal Springs," now known as Berkeley Springs in West Virginia opposite Hancock, Maryland. Undoubtedly this path provided access to the two main routes to Philadelphia as well. The mountainous terrain of this section of Maryland, particularly the massive Sideling Hill ridge, precluded the development of any significant routes other than along the river valley. Bypassing the southern tip of the various ridges, the path between the Springs and Old Town crossed two major tributaries, Sideling Hill Creek (shown as Side Long Hill Creek) and Fifteen Mile Creek. The geology of the area determined the route as the path avoided not only mountain ridges but also precipitous cliffs along the curves of the Potomac. The rocky banks at the mouth of Fifteen Mile Creek similarly determined the path's crossing to nearly a half mile upstream where a shallow fording place could be found. The 1794 Dennis Griffith Map of Maryland, as well as Charles Varlé's 1808 Map of Frederick and Washington Counties (see attached copies), indicate that the early path along the upper Potomac continued in use as a primary route. However, the 1808 map, showing the "projected" route of the "Western Big Road" [National Road], indicated the eventual marginalization of the old riverside route.

The crossing of Fifteen Mile Creek was marked in 1794 by the location of a tavern under the name of King. Taverns often served

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

**Eligibility recommended** _____ **Eligibility not recommended** _____

**Criteria:** ___A ___B ___C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

**MHT Comments:**

_____ _____

**Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services** **Date**

_____ _____

**Reviewer, National Register Program** **Date**

as the anchor for village development and this location, later known as Little Orleans, was no exception. Said to be located at a Potomac River ford as well as on the road to Old Town, Little Orleans developed early as a crossroads. By 1808, enough Catholics had settled in the area to justify the establishment of a church. Constructed on land donated by Leonard Bevans, the log church was to serve "for the better convenience and advantage of the Raman Catholics residing in the neighborhood of Fifteen Mile Creek." By 1826, the Orleans Election District was formed, centered on the crossing of Fifteen Mile Creek at Little Orleans, where "the house of Isaac Osmun, near the mouth of Fifteen mile creek, [was designated] for the place of holding the election."

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

**Eligibility recommended** _____ **Eligibility not recommended** _____

**Criteria:** ___A ___B ___C ___D **Considerations:** ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

**MHT Comments:**

_____ _____

**Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services** **Date**

_____ _____

**Reviewer, National Register Program** **Date**

Artmas Quad

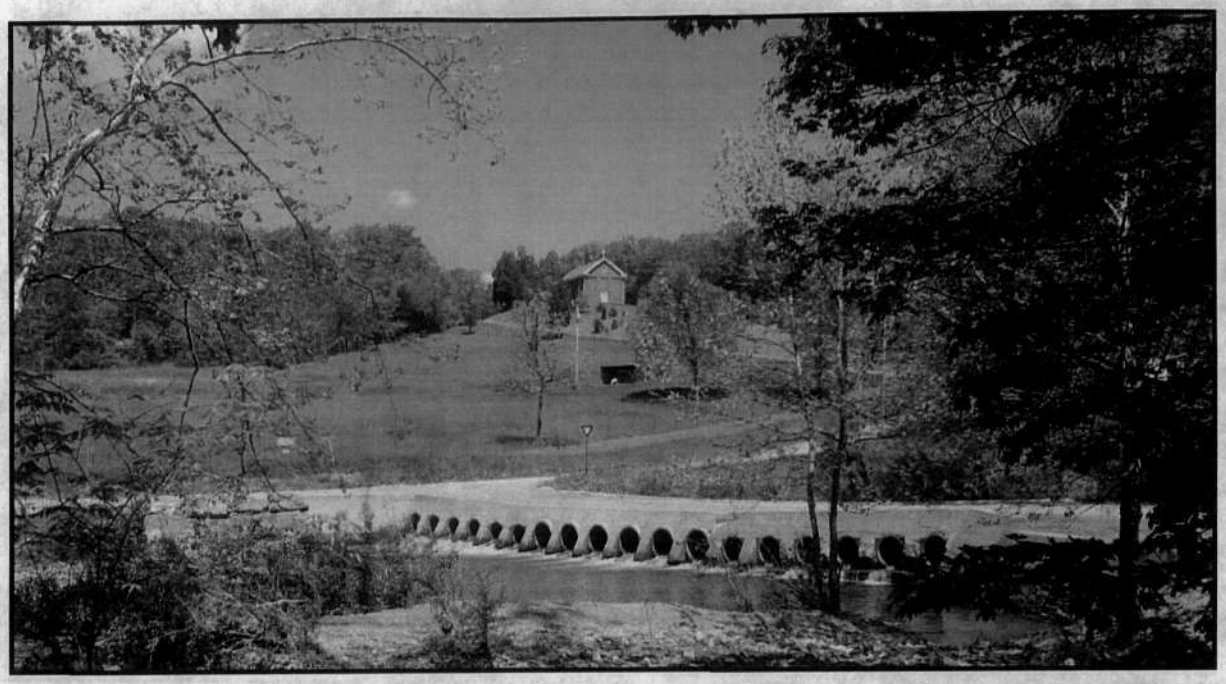
AL-I-A-87

AL-I-A-87

Figure 1.3: Bridge A-116 as Seen from East of Fifteen Mile Creek
St. Patrick's Church on hilltop in background
Photograph taken May 15, 2009, facing northwest

Figure 1.4: Bridge A-116 as Seen from near St. Patrick's Church
Photograph taken April 22, 2009, facing southeast

AL-I-A-87



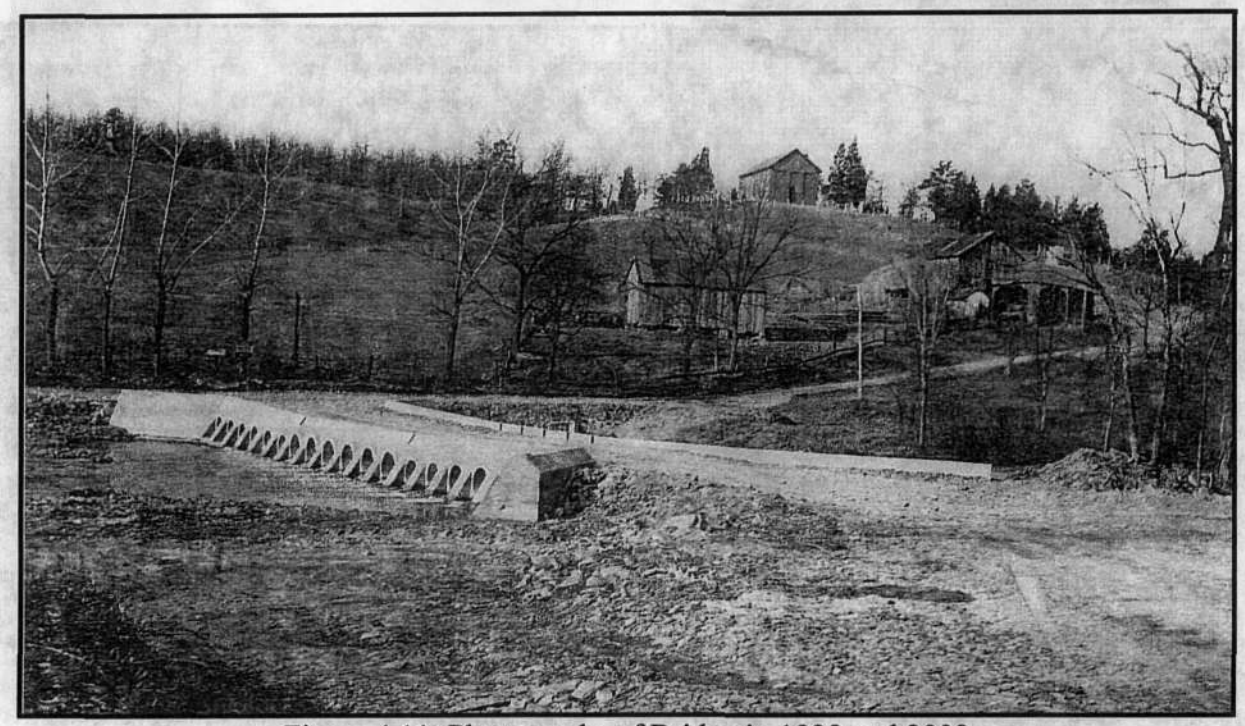
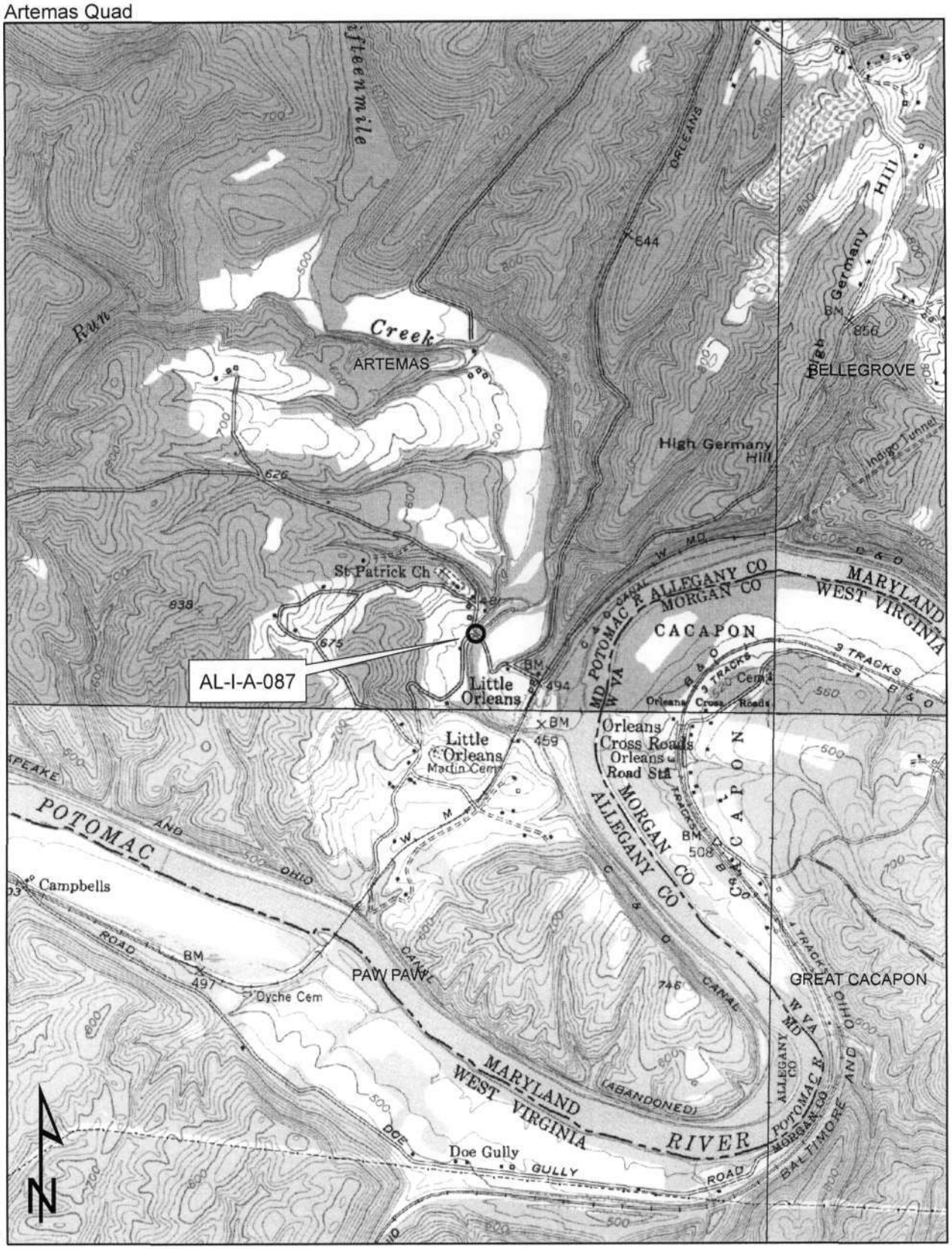


Figure 4.11: Photographs of Bridge in 1939 and 2009
Upper: Current conditions (photograph taken May 15, 2009)
Lower: Photograph taken January 11, 1939 (from Archives of the Work Projects Administration in Maryland, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries; Subseries 5.3, Project 3446)

AL-I-A-087
Allegany County Bridge #A-116
Orleans Road S. Across Fifteen Mile Creek
Little Orleans
Artemas Quad