

CH-760

1905

Bel Alton Store and Post Office

Bel Alton, MD

Private

Erected circa 1905, the Bel Alton Store and Post Office is one of a handful of surviving structures associated with the Victorian railroad village of Bel Alton. The earliest part of the structure is the front gable structure adorned with cornice returns. Several years later, the west wing, a crudely constructed former blacksmith shop, was relocated from another site and attached to the east elevation. The Bel Alton Store and Post Office is currently associated with lots 4, 5, and 6 of Bel Alton which were acquired by Robert D. Wills in 1904-1905. The Hayden Family operated the store for much of the 20th century. During the era of legalized gambling in Charles County, slot machines could be found in the store along with fresh meats and assorted groceries.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-760

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Bel Alton Store and Post Office

other

2. Location

street and number 9715 Bel Alton-Newtown Road not for publication

city, town Bel Alton vicinity

county Charles

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

name Helen and Aubrey Gragan

street and number PO Box 154 telephone unknown

city, town Bel Alton state MD zip code 20611-0154

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 55 p.86

city, town La Plata liber 165 folio 260

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report
- Other

6. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Current Function | Resource Count | |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------|
| | | | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade | 1 | buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> defense | | sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | | <input type="checkbox"/> domestic | | structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | | <input type="checkbox"/> education | | objects |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary | 1 | Total |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> health care | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> religion | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> social | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> unknown | | |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: | | |
| | | | Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory | |
| | | | 0 | |

7. Description

Inventory No. CH-760

Condition

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> altered |

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

The Bel Alton Store and Post Office is a one-story front-gable frame commercial structure with wings on either end. The building was erected in three stages. The main block includes two original 2/2 windows flanking either side of the current replacement door. Cornice returns adorn the front elevation. The rear elevation includes a single attic story 4/4 windows and a 6/6 first floor window. While vinyl siding covers the front, the rear elevation includes original weatherboarding. The front of the building is currently used as a post office. This section was remodeled with paneling in the 1970's. To the rear is what remains of the original store, which operated until the mid 1970's. Now used for storage, this room includes original beadboard matchstick paneling, laid in strips of approximately 5 inches horizontally, covering the entire wall surface. Wooden shelves are also original as well as the wood flooring.

Attached to the west end of the main block is a side gable structure of crude construction that measures 36 feet in length and 16 1/2 feet in depth. The structure includes three 2/2 windows on the south (front) elevation matched by three 6/6 windows on the north (rear). The building is constructed using post and beam construction where shaved logs are mortised into hewn posts. Empty mortises reveal that the windows were not original. The west end reveals a replacement section consisting of four studs to block what was likely an earlier large double door. The corner of this elevation are secured with diagonal braces. Principal sills are 6 inch square while whole shaved logs form the joists. Exterior siding is circular sawn. According to family tradition, this section of the store was once a blacksmith shop and was relocated to the site at an earlier date.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-760

| Period | Areas of Significance | Check and justify below | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> performing arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2000- | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> social history |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | | <input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------|--------------------------|---------|
| Specific dates | 1905 | Architect/Builder | unknown |
| Construction dates | 1905 | | |

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Erected circa 1905, the Bel Alton Store and Post Office is one of a handful of surviving structures associated with the Victorian railroad village of Bel Alton, previously Cox's Station. After the Civil War, Charles County suffered the same fate as the rest of the southern States. The introduction of a railroad in Charles County following the Civil War promised to ease some of the economic stagnation by providing efficient inexpensive land transportation. As early as 1854, a railroad through the county had been proposed, but was delayed by the Civil War. In 1872, the idea was revived, and the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad began construction of a line between Bowie, Maryland and Pope's Creek in Charles County. Later, the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the line and proceeded to connect it to Washington, DC via Bowie. The first regular daily passenger service from Cox's Station to Bowie began running in January 1873. New "railroad" towns began to spring up along the railroad's route. Each town consisted of little more than a small station, several houses, and sometimes a corner store. White Plains, Waldorf, and La Plata were all formed after the construction of the railroad, and grew up around their railroad stations.

The Bel Alton Store and Post Office is currently associated with lots 4,5, and 6 of Bel Alton acquired by Robert D. Wills in 1904-1905. According to oral tradition the store was owned and operated by Fred and Helen Hayden in the 1950's. Prior to this Morris and Mary Hayden, then residing nearby at 9035 Fairgrounds Road, owned and occupied the store, while his brother Robert Hayden ran the post office. During the era of legalized gambling in Charles County slot machines could be found in the store with carried fresh meats and assorted groceries.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-760

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1.25

Acreage of historical setting 1.25

Quadrangle name Popes Creek

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Bel Alton Store and Post Office is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 55, Parcel 86.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cathy Hardy/Historic Sites Surveyor

organization Charles County Planning

date 3/17/2003

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

city or town La Plata

state MD zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties 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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-760

Section 8 Page 1

Bel Alton Store and Post Office

name of property

Charles County, MD

county and state

Chain of Title:

- 1962 Louise W, Albrittain heirs to Helen M. And J. Aubrey Gragan
Lots 4,5 &6 of the land of Robert D. Wills, deceased, made by J.W. Wills in 1921.
165/250
- 1944 Florence L. Simms, widow to Lemuel and Louise Albrittain
TBM 80/41
- 1922 P. Reed Wills, power of attorney for Robert Wills, deceased to Florence L. Simms
Lots Number 4,5,and 6. Acquired by Wills in two separate deeds
1) October 1904, from Thomas H. Towles (or Forbes?) Et al 15/460
2) March 1905, from Samuel Cox et al 16/77
39/251

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-760

Section 9 Page 1

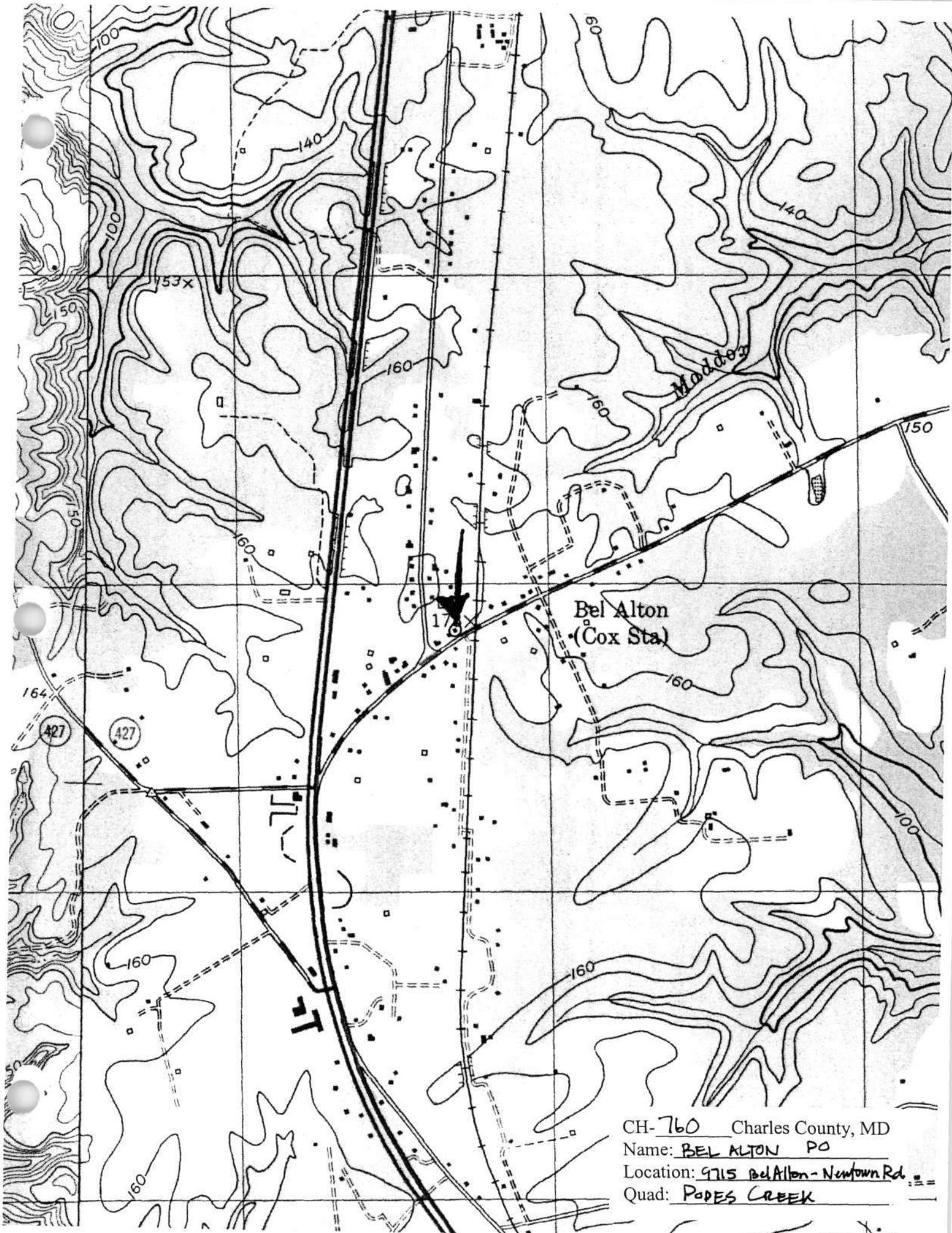
Bel Alton Store and Post Office
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

Major Bibliographic References:

Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland, A History.
Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klaphor, Margaret Brown. The History of Charles County, Maryland.
La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.



CH-760 Charles County, MD
Name: BEL ALTON PO
Location: 9715 Bel Alton - Newtown Rd.
Quad: PODES CREEK



CA-760

BEL ALTON STORE SPO

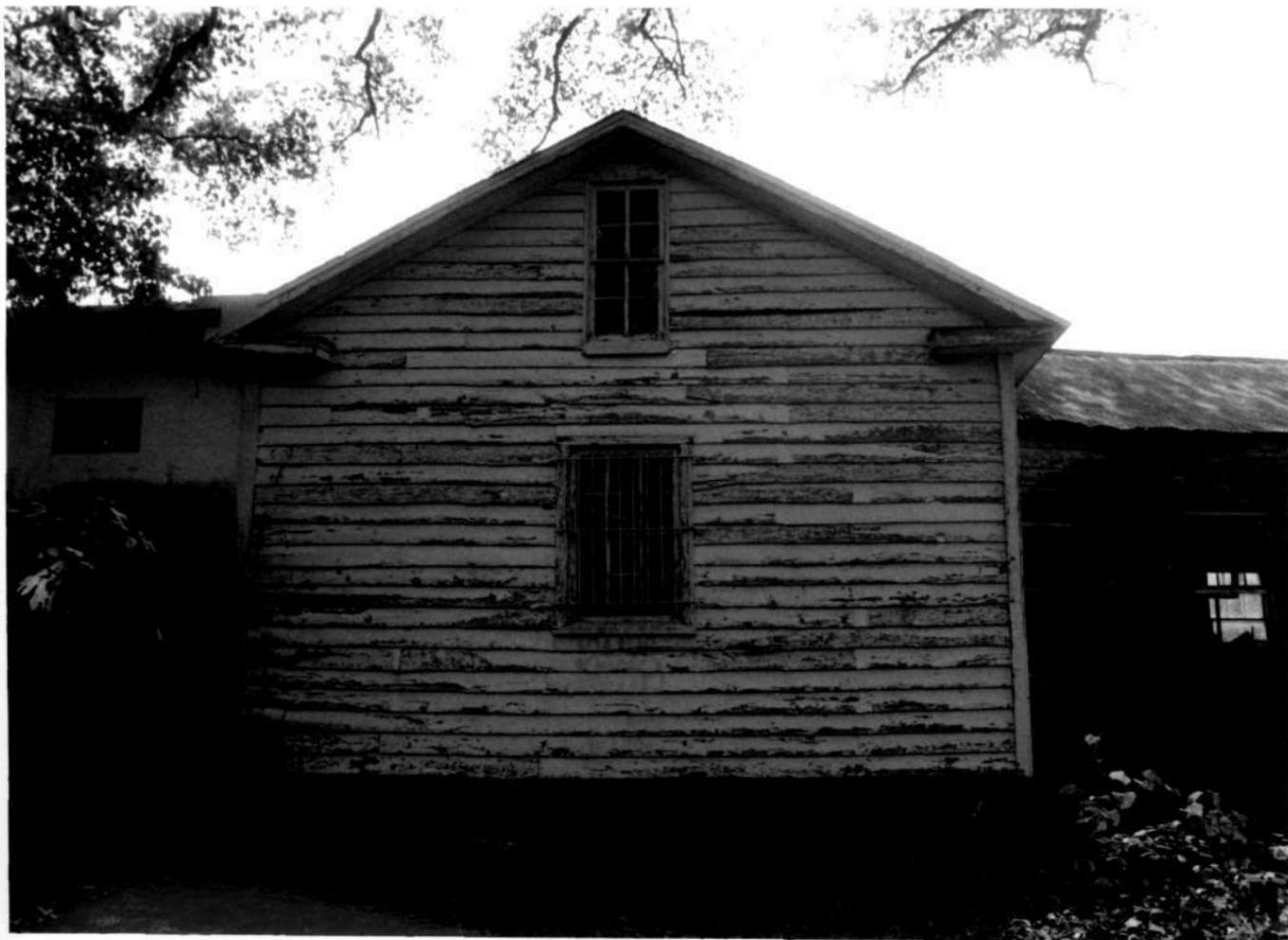
C. HARDY

10/2002

MO SHPO

NORTH ELEVATION

1 OF 4



CH-760

BEL ALTON STORE 9 P0

C. HARDY

10/2002

MD SHPO

NORTA ELEVATION

2014



CH-760
BEL ALTON STORE : PO
C. HARMY

10/2002

MD SHPO
INIRIOR
30F4



CA-760
BEL ALTON STORE 1/2 PO

C. HARDY

10/2002

MD. SHPO

INTERIOR, W. NINA

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CH-760
BEL ALTON STORE & PO

C. HARDY

10/2002

MD SHPO

LOOKING SW