

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-543

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Willard F. Miller Cottage

Common/other name _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 5905 Fenwick Road not for publication _____

city or town Fenwick vicinity X state Maryland code MD

county Charles code 017 zip code 20616

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification N/A

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4. National Park Service Certification N/A

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes _____ Name of Listing _____

No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-543

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6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single dwelling

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7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation solid: poured concrete
roof front gambrel: asphalt shingles
walls wood frame: asbestos shingles
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

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8. Statement of Significance
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance circa 1910

Significant Dates circa 1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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.

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

Personal interview with Joseph Olcott, long time Fenwick resident and historian, April 1999. (Mr. Olcott retains numerous early photos of Fenwick places & people, as well as having completed in depth research on the residents and owners of the various early cottages).

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 7.299 acres

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is designated as Parcel 535 on Map 5, Grid 8 on the Charles County Property Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Miller Cottage has been associated with Parcel 535, Map 5 since its construction circa 1910.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-543

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian
organization Charles County Planning Dept. date May 21, 1999
street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689
city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646
=====

12. Property Owner
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name John M. & Teresa L. Homan
street & number 6035 Fenwick Road telephone _____
city or town Bryans Road state MD zip code 20616
=====

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-543

Section 7 Page 1

Miller Cottage
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

=====
This front gambrel Colonial Revival style dwelling features full-width front and rear porches, now enclosed, and dormers on either side of the roof. Standing on a poured concrete foundation, the cottage has wood frame walls now clad with asbestos shingles. A single interior corbeled cap brick chimney extends above the roof along its western face.

The house appears to retain its original 1/1 wood sash throughout, as well as an original diamond shaped window on the first story of the facade. The windows are cased in simple square-edged wood surrounds and the main doorway holds a single-leaf oval-lighted door of Victorian design.

There are no associated outbuildings. The building stands on the south side of Fenwick Road just before it turns south toward Hollis Point. The area surrounding the house is grassy and level with a wooded on the east.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Section 8 Page 1

Miller Cottage
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Erected circa 1910, the Willard F. Miller Cottage is possibly the only remaining early dwelling in the village of Fenwick that retains its original appearance. It also was one of the most substantial of the early summer cottages erected in the town starting in 1909.

The cottage, built as a summer vacation home for Willard F. Miller of Washington, D.C., is a remnant of a bustling early 20th century community that was started here around 1909 as a summer cottage resort. The building, which retains its original form, is one of the best preserved structures in the town.

The town of Fenwick began as "McGhiesport," a riverfront vacation spot developed by a Washington, D.C. real estate promoter, Layton McGhie. In 1909, McGhie purchased a tract of land along the Potomac River near what was, at the time, the Pomonkey Fishery.

The property had once been part of James Fenwick's early-19th century plantation known as "Pomonkey" or "Pomonkey Point." Deed records indicate that a house stood somewhere on the 500-acre property prior to 1844.¹ The existence of the Fenwick/Brent Family Graveyard in the present village suggests that the house was located in that vicinity (see Fenwick/Brent Family Graveyard, CH-541).

By the time McGhie purchased the property, there was a "old farmhouse" on the property, along with an "old wharf." A circa-1914 photograph in the possession of Joseph Olcott of Fenwick shows a 2-story, frame I-house with extensive wraparound porches. However, this is not likely the original Fenwick house. That house may have stood slightly farther south on the peninsula, closer to the remaining family graveyard.

In June 1909, McGhie submitted a plat of his new real estate enterprise. Named "McGhiesport," the village was divided into six unequal blocks, containing from four to seventeen lots of 25 feet by 100 feet. Five streets appear on the 1909 plat, including Park Avenue along the waterfront. Accommodation was made for parking, in various areas around the community. McGhie sold the lots for a small down payment and five dollars a month. By 1912 or 1913,

¹ See deed from Robert J. Brent to Joseph H. Bradley, Charles County Land Records, Liber WM 1, Folio 11-18, recorded January 12, 1844.

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Section 8 Page 2

Miller Cottage
name of property
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approximately thirty summer cottages had been erected in McGhiesport. A post office and general store was also established during these early years (see Fenwick Store & Post Office, CH-540).

However, within two to three years (according to oral tradition) the residents and owners of lots in the town became disenchanted with Layton McGhie and his real tactics. Shortly thereafter, the residents took it upon themselves to change the village name from McGhiesport to "Fenwick" after the early owner of the property.

An attempt was made at building and maintaining a permanent Steamboat wharf in 1913-1914 by the Bellview Improvement Company. Incorporated in 1913, the company took up subscriptions and raised funds to erected a wharf. The wharf was completed in 1914, but was badly damaged by ice storms a few short years later. Lacking the funds to repair the wharf, the venture soon fell apart. The company was dismantled in 1918.

The early cottages built in Fenwick were tiny, insubstantial affairs that featured prominent porches, pier foundations, and board-and-batten exterior cladding. The post office and store was a 1-room building located along the waterfront.

Only a portion of the platted community was built as originally shown on the 1909 plat. What was once Park Avenue along the water has eroded away over the years. The resort continued to flourish as a vacation destination mostly for Washingtonians throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Slowly, the residents began expanding and winterizing their original cottages, and a year-round population appeared. Today, the population is nearly all full-time residents, and the modest summer cottages have been transformed or rebuilt as comfortable year-round houses.

There were several prominent residents of Fenwick during the early decades of the 20th century. One, Morris T. Wampler, erected a small, but lavish hunting lodge here around 1926. Wampler, an attorney by trade, served as legal council for gangster Al Capone during his famous tax evasion trial, as well as for Bruno Hoffman, the suspected kidnapper of the Lindbergh baby. Wampler was eventually also tried and convicted of tax evasion and sent to prison in the late 1930s. When he was released from prison, he built a new dwelling which still stands on a portion of his

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Section 8 Page 3

Miller Cottage
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remaining land in Fenwick.²

Another prominent resident of Fenwick was federal Judge Daniel Thew Wright who retired from the bench after being linked to illegal dealings associated with the "Teapot Dome" scandal. Around 1925, he built a small summer cottage on the point of land where Pomonkey Creek empties into the Potomac River. The cottage was reputedly designed and built by Harry Wardman, a prominent Washington, D.C. builder. Wright served as Wardman's attorney, and at the time of his death, the judge's estate included several Wardman buildings in Washington, D.C.³ The Wright Cottage has been significantly altered from its original appearance, but remains standing at the end of Fenwick Road (5610 Fenwick Road).

² Interview and research of Joseph Olcott, local Fenwick resident and historian.

³ Interview and research of Joseph Olcott, local resident and historian.

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Miller Cottage
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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-
1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

ARCHITECTURE

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Miller Cottage
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county and state

=====
Chain of Title:

March 27, 1902: Elizabeth & Henry Kintz to Samuel George
Mortgage
269 acres, 1 rood
"all that tract that was allotted to Henrietta C. Forrest by commissioners appointed by Circuit Court under a petition filed by John W. Jenkins, et al. for a division of the real estate of William H. Plowden, deceased, it being designated by the commissioners as that part of Pomonkey consisted of two separate tracts marked lot no. 1 on a plat made by James Brawner and filed with the case papers, December 1, 1869"

October 12, 1908: Samuel K. George of Baltimore City to Layton J. McGhie
2 parcels: 12 acres plus 11 acres
Charles County Land Records
Liber FDM 19 Folio 511

July 12, 1909: Layton J. McGhie of Washington, DC to Willard F. Miller of Washington, DC
part of "Pomonkey Point Farm" 10 acres plus Lots no. 11 & 12, block 3 in "McGhiesport"

May 20, 1929: F. Brooke Matthews, Treasurer of Charles County to W. Mitchell Digges
Tax sale: May 28, 1912
\$105
10 acres plus Lots no. 11 & 12 of Block 3 "McGhiesport"
Charles County Land Records
Liber WMA 50 Folio 221

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May 31, 1929: W. Mitchell Digges to Edwin J. Schuyler
Lots no. 11 & 12 in Layton McGhie's subdivision of "Pommonkey Farm"
Charles County Land Records
Liber WMA 50 Folio 224

September 1942: Will of Annie B. Schuyler, widow of Edwin Schuyler
Devised land to Carolyn Homan
Charles County Register of Wills
Liber 25 Folio 187

April 27, 1962: Cordelia E. Clark to Carolyn A. & Roy M. Homan
Parcels 1, 2 & 3 described below
Charles County Land Records
Liber 157 Folio 537

October 21, 1976: Gregory A. & Susan R. Torney to Roy M. & Carolyn A. Homan
Charles County Land Records
Liber 469 Folio 234

August 3, 1985: Philip S. Homan, personal rep. of the estate of Carolyn A. Homan to Roy S. & John E. Homan
Lot 1, Block 8 "Fenwick"
Charles County Land Records
Liber 1090 Folio 376

April 3, 1985: Philip S. Homan, personal rep. of the estate of Carolyn A. Homan to Roy & John Homan
Charles County Land Records
Liber 1090 Folio 377

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Miller Cottage
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June 27, 1989:

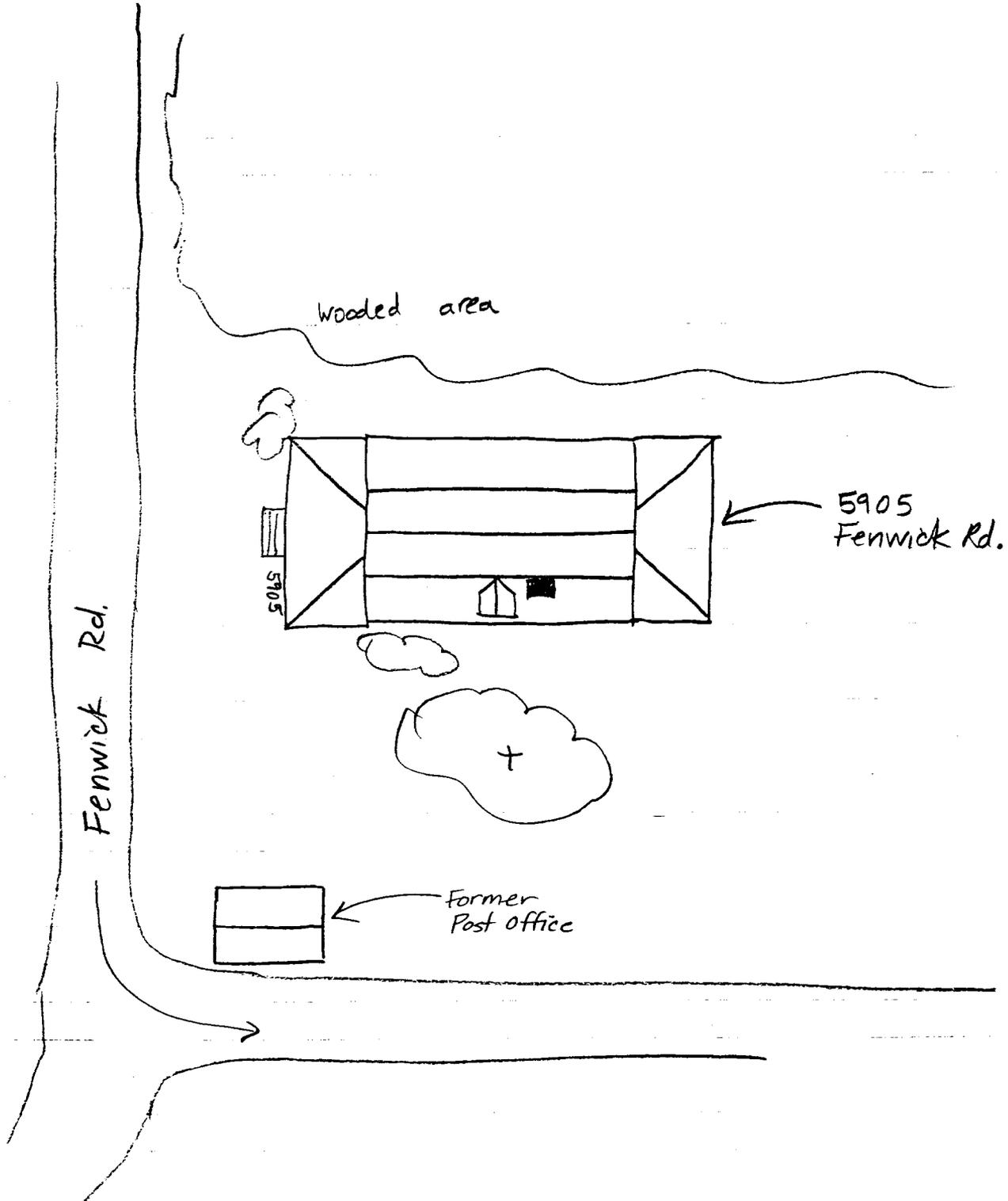
Roy S. Homan & John E. Homan to John
M. & Teresa L. Homan
Parcel 1: Lots 14 & 15, Block 8
"McGhiesport"
Parcel 2: Lots 11 & 12 in
McGhiesport
Parcel 3: Lot no. 1, Block 8 as per
plat entitled "Fenwick" Plat Book
HCC 27, Folio 369
Charles County Land Records
Liber 1392 Folio 120

RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

4/99

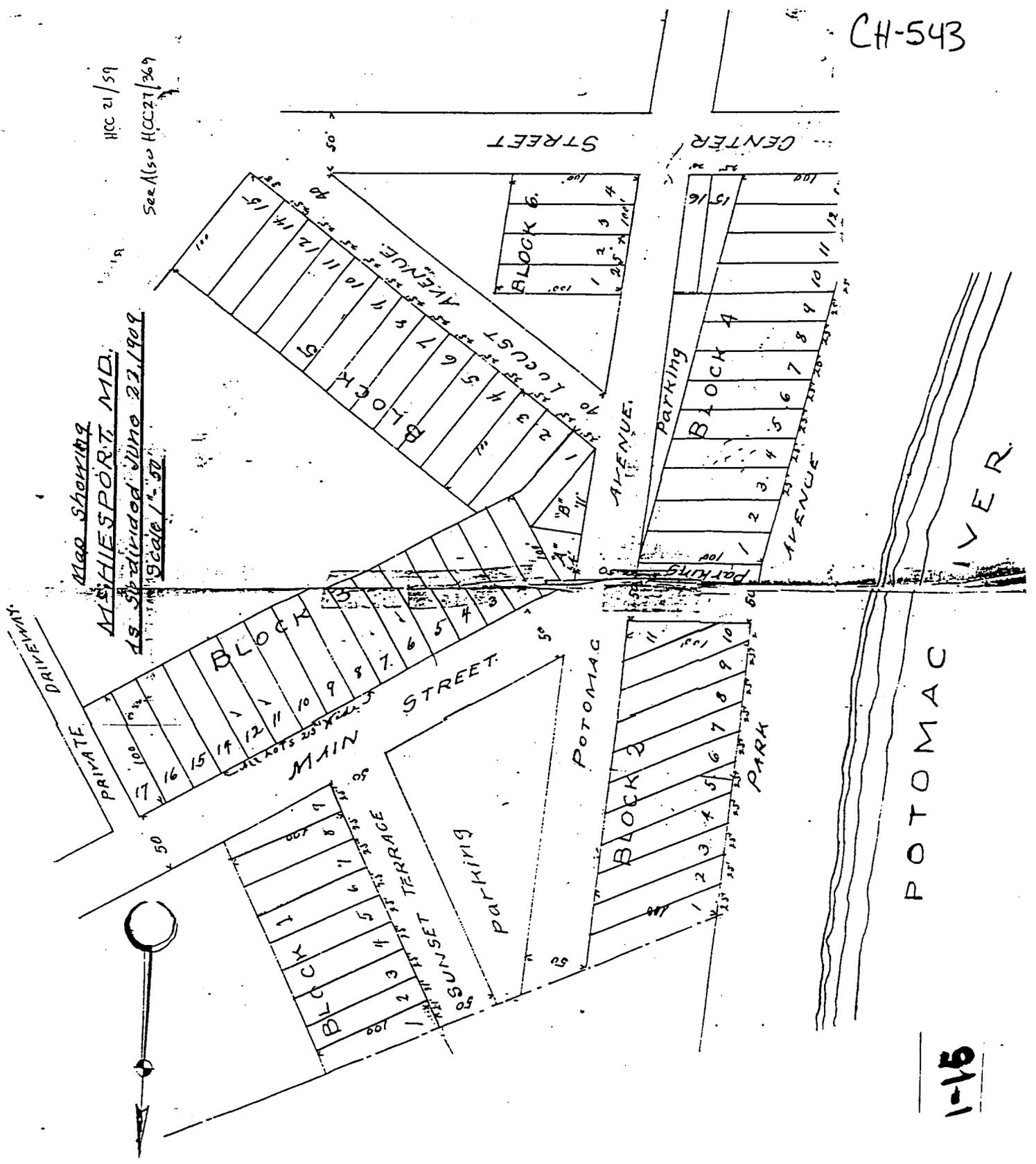
MILLER COTTAGE
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
5905 FENWICK RD.
FENWICK VIC.

CH-543



HCC 21/59
See A(50) HCC 27/369

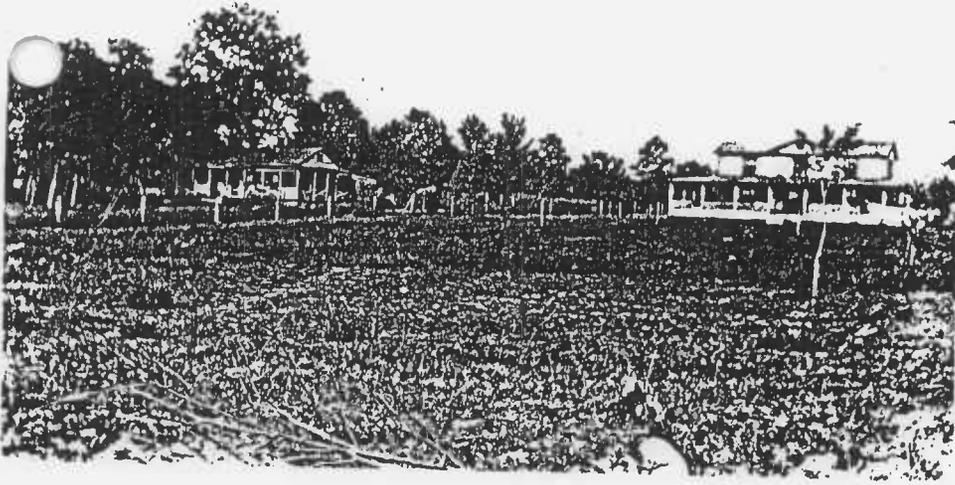
Map Showing
MCGHIESPORT, MD.
As Separated June 27, 1909
Scale 1" = 50'



1-15

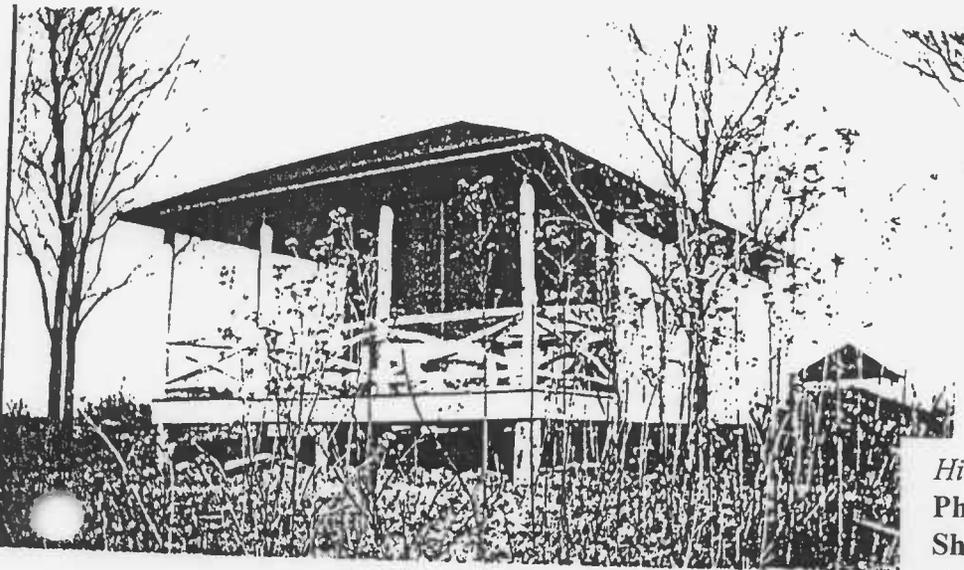
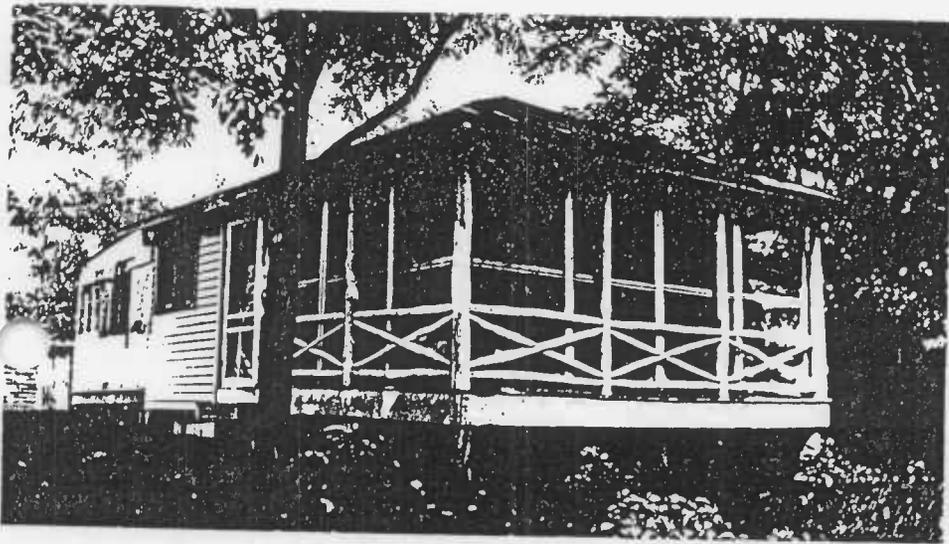
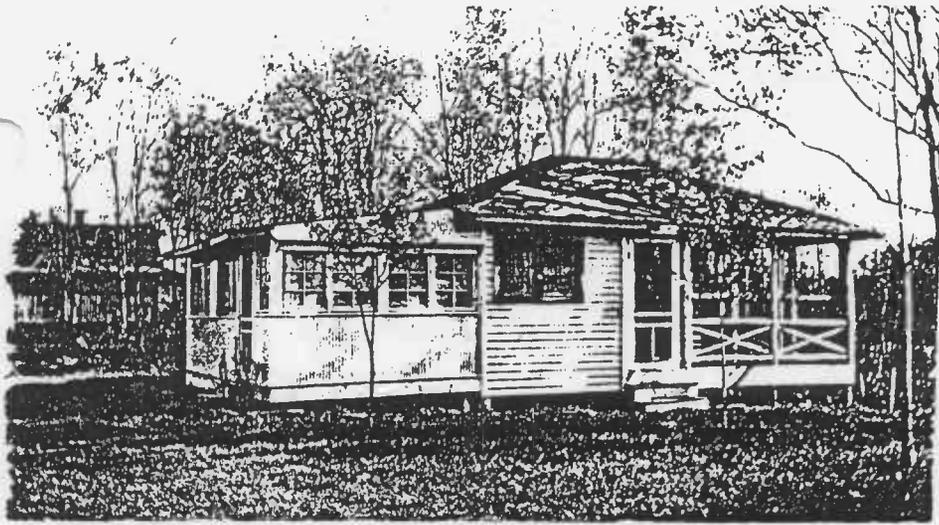
Historic Map:
Original Plat of McGhiesport, MD
(later Fenwick)
1909
Charles County Land Records
Miscellaneous Plats, M-15

CH-543



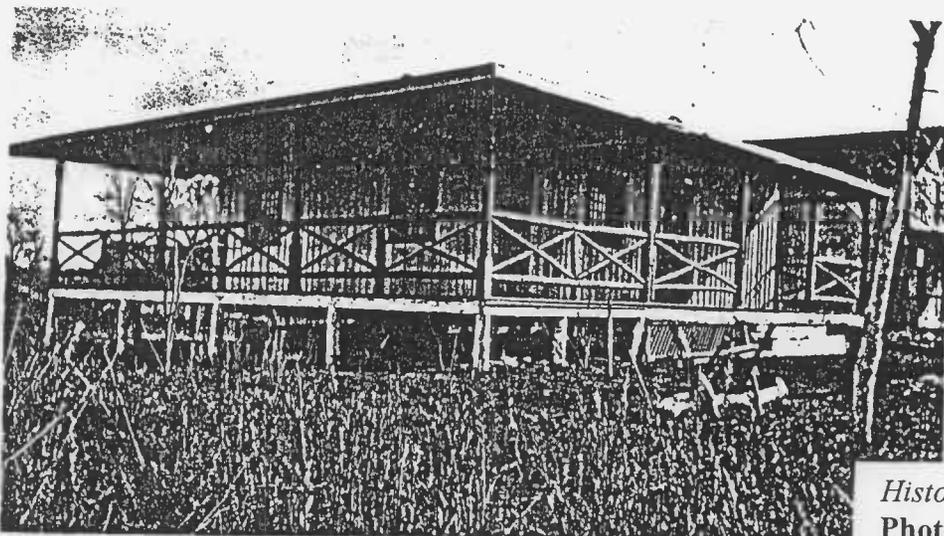
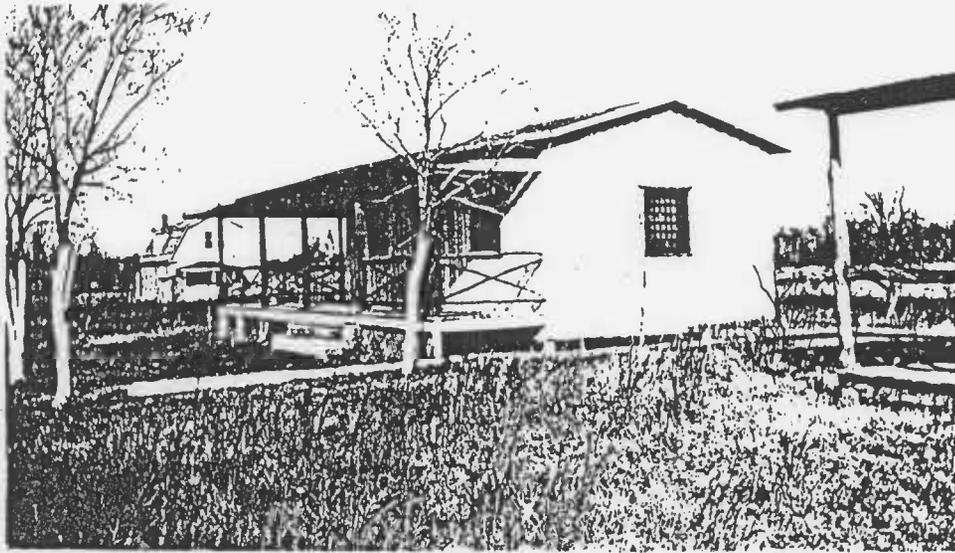
Historic Photographs:
Photos of resort community of Fenwick
Showing original cottages & landscapes
circa 1914 to circa 1920
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)

CH-543

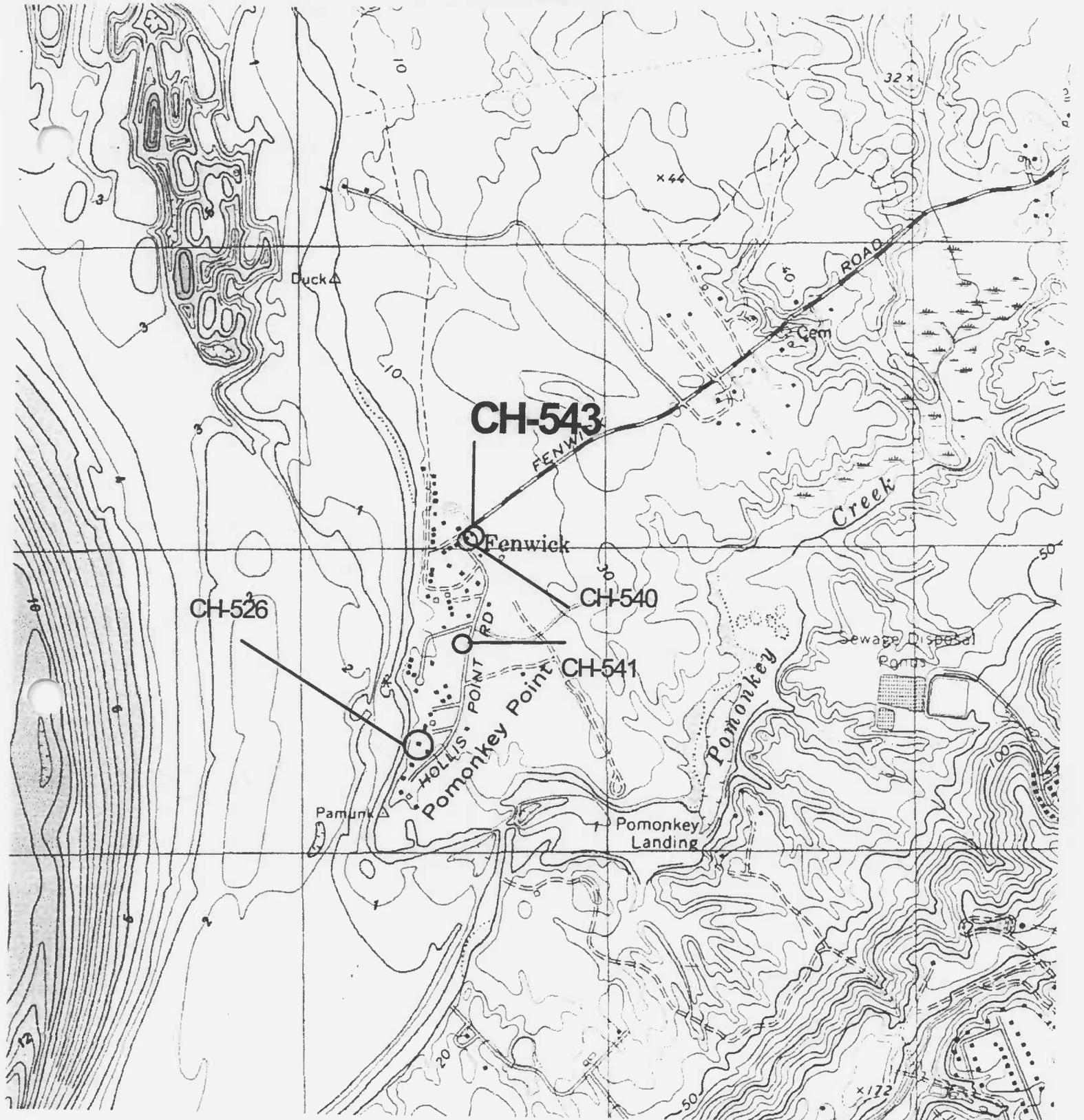


Historic Photographs:
**Photos of resort community of Fenwick
Showing original cottages & landscapes
circa 1914 to circa 1920
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)**

CH-543



Historic Photographs:
Photos of resort community of Fenwick
Showing original cottages & landscapes
circa 1914 to circa 1920
(collection of Joseph Olcott, Fenwick, MD)



Miller Cottage
Charles County, MD

CH-543

MOUNT VERNON, MD-VA QUAD



CH-543

MILLER COTTAGE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

4/99

MD SHPO

LOOKING SE

1 OF 1