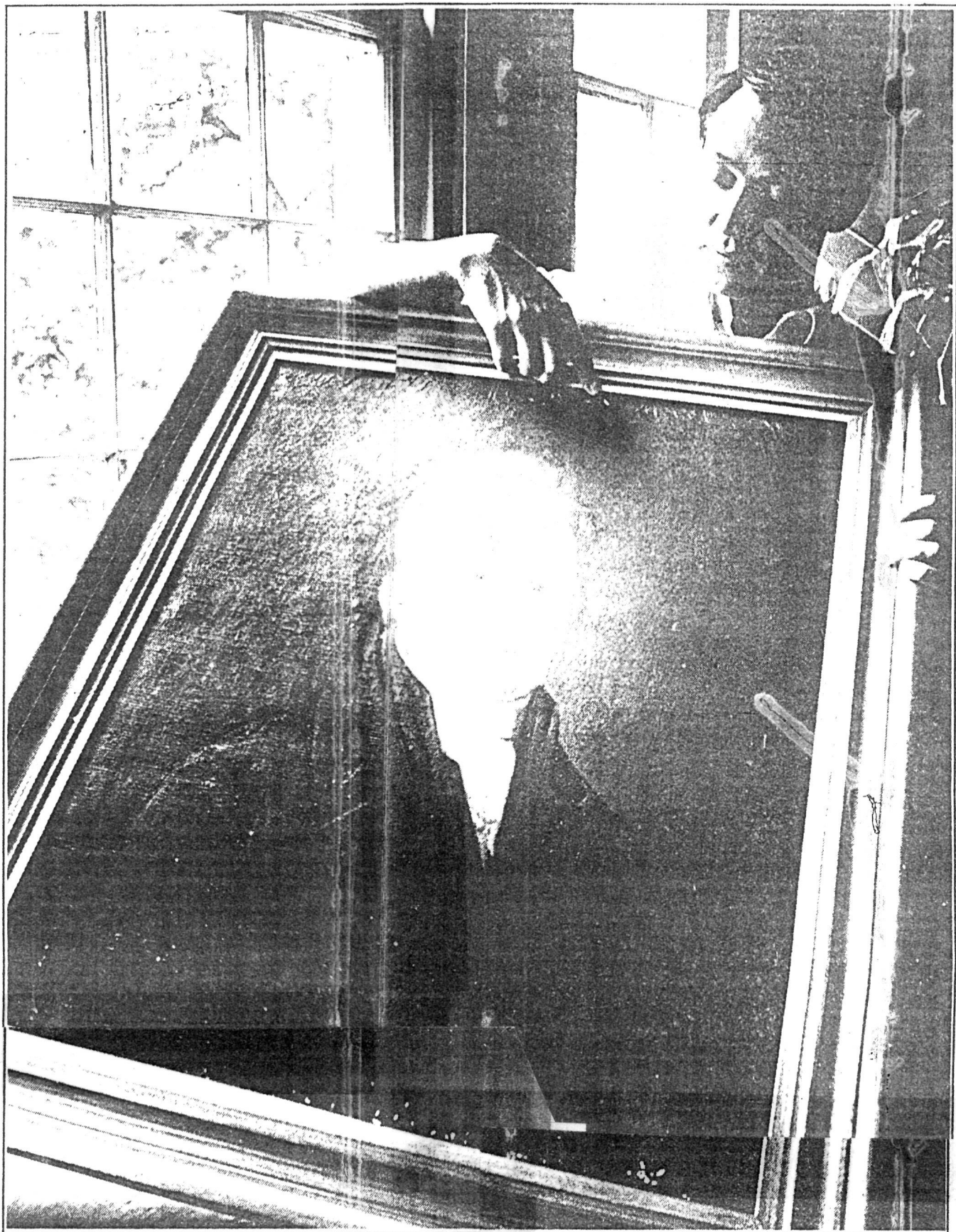
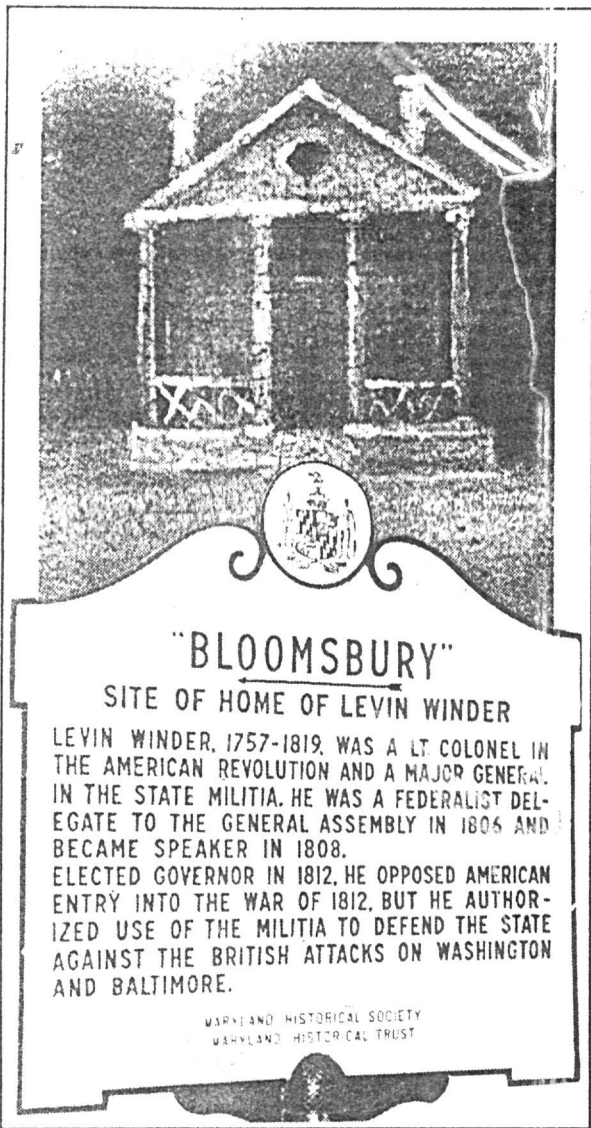


# CLUES TO THE PAST



Times Photo by Brice Stump

**MANSION IDENTIFIED.** Research for the six-part series on the hunt for the grave of Gov. Levin Winder has produced a deed containing a sketch of the Winder home on the Bloomsbury estate, found by Princess Anne historian Shirley Richards. The sketch, made by surveyor William Miles in 1855 matches the Federal-style house (enlarged here for detail) shown in a 1793 portrait of Winder. It was the first time that the home in the painting has been confirmed as being that of the governor.

## Legend is all that remains of Winder mansion

By BRICE STUMP  
 Daily Times Staff Writer

**E**xcept for legend, little remains of the Colonial glory enjoyed by Gov. Levin Winder and his family. There are no photographs of the mansion and no written or verbal descriptions of the Winder home apart from early tax assessment records and estate inventories.

One tax assessment notes that a portion of the 50-by-36-foot house of brick was not finished in 1798 and that the brick work "was very indifferent." Of the 34 windows in the house, four were almost 8 feet high and about 4 feet wide. Not mentioned was the large oculus in the roof pediment.

Traces of what is believed to be a brick walk or terrace to the edge of Little Monie Creek is all that remains of what may have been the formal gardens of Mrs. Winder.

The houses necessary for more than 57 slaves have vanished without a trace, as have the many

**DAMAGED PAINTING.** Rob Withey, curator in residence at Poplar Hill Mansion in Salisbury examines a copy of a portrait of Gov. Levin Winder showing signs of deterioration. Painted in 1936 by the late W.F. Dieterick of an original that is in the State House in Annapolis. The copy has been on display at Poplar Hill Mansion since 1966, appropriately Withey says, since Winder's ancestors owned much of what is now Salisbury.

buildings mentioned in tax assessments records in 1798. More importantly, the home of the Winder family vanished years ago, whether by fire, storm or decay.

The long tree-lined road leading to the site of the Winder house still bears evidence of a stately approach. English ivy grows profusely, and may be a surviving remnant of the many plants in the Winder garden. Years ago, mulberry trees were plentiful and, like the ivy, they too may have been part of the Colonial landscape at Bloomsbury.

It has never been determined what happened to the Winder mansion. A section of a brick wall is

known to have been standing in the early 1900s, and as late as 1928 visitors to the plantation looking for the graves of the Winder family noted that the outline of the foundation of what they thought was the house was still visible. Considering that the house is believed to have been built in the 1790s and that the house was occupied at least up to the Civil War, it may have been a fire or a hurricane that ruined the home.

The site of the Winder home is still owned by descendants of Nathan Langford who purchased See BLOOMSBURY, page E9

# Legend is all that's left of Winder mansion

**BLOOMSBURY**, from page E1

Bloomsbury for \$5,500 at public auction in 1855 from the Holbrook family, which had purchased the house and estate from the Winder heirs following the death of Gov. Winder's wife in 1822. Though the house and dependencies disappeared during the years they have owned Bloomsbury, there is apparently no family tradition accounting for the complete destruction of the Winder home.

There were at least three houses on or near the site of Winder's home. The second house is said to have been built directly over the remains of the Winder house, but eventually fell into ruin. A third house that has all but collapsed may have been built in the 1930s. It was in this house that Somerset County Commissioner Clarence Laird lived. Prior to his parents moving into this house, they lived in the old house on the Lewis Farm, a farm that adjoins the land of Samuel Langford Anderson and was once part of Bloomsbury. Laird said he knows nothing about the fate of the Winder home.

When Pennsylvania artist William Clarke came to Bloomsbury in 1793 to paint the portraits of Levin Winder, then 36, and his wife, he captured what was thought to be the only known rendition of the house.

According to Sona K. Johnston, curator of painting and sculpture at the Baltimore Museum of Art which owns the portraits, "In the background the artist has apparently included a partial view of the Winder property ... Behind the figure is a large willow tree and beyond the formal gardens for which the estate was known. Standing on the opposite bank of the creek is a two-story residence, seemingly of brick, with a giant portico and an oculus in the center of the pediment, and to the left of this dwelling a smaller, one-story structure. Although the remnants of the gardens including the impressive avenue of trees which formed to entrance to the estate may be seen, the house is no longer extant."

Until the most recent investigation began of the location of the lost grave of Gov. Levin Winder, it was

never confirmed whether the house shown in the Winder portrait was in fact the Winder home. Historian Shirley Richards of Princess Anne located an 1855 court record noting the division of the property by heirs of Samuel Holbrook, owner of the plantation, who died in 1854 without a will. In a plat of the property made to settle the estate, surveyor William P.W. Miles sketched the Winder house, the sketch being smaller than a dime. Enlarged, it roughly matches the house in the portrait, confirming that the rendition of a house in the portrait is in fact Winder's home at Bloomsbury.

By 1855 there were apparently two families living at the house. When Holbrook died, he left nine children, three under the age of 21.

The heirs, led by son William L. Holbrook, wanted their portion of the estate as Samuel Holbrook died without a will in 1854. A commission was appointed and the case was handled by John W. Crisfield, the man for whom the town of Crisfield is named.

Of the 404 acres, 26¼ acres were set aside as the "widow's dower" adjoining the Winder house.

According to the commissioners, "We also allotted to the said widow one-third part or a common privilege to the woodland, marsh land, yard and garden, it being all that

part of the garden east of the main walk which leads from the gate up to the graveyard. We also allocated to the widow the east end of the dwelling house, it being all that part east of the middle passage both below and above stairs and a right to pass through the north or back room which leads to the kitchen. This being thought by us more than one-third of the dwelling house. We therefore determine that the said widow pay to the other party or parties entitled an annual rent of five dollars. This is in our opinion the only division of the dwelling house which can be made consistent with the privacy and convenience of two families. We have also allotted to the said widow one-third part or common privilege in the kitchen, meat house, and other outhouses, tenants houses on the County road excepted."

The land was offered at public sale, after weeks of advertising in the *Eastern Shoreman* at the Somerset County Court House on Sept. 18, 1855. Nathan Langford was the top bidder with \$5,500. He got the farm (subject to the dower right of Maria L. Holbrook) by putting down \$772.85 and "five-sevenths of a cent."

Apparently the widow was not pleased with the living arrangements, and in 1856 Maria Holbrook bought the house on the north side of the Teackle Mansion in Princess Anne, living there until her death. It is now the home of Omar Carey.