WI-352

Sharptown Survey District

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the "vertical files" at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

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Last Updated: 08-29-2003

WI-352 Nineteenth and twentieth centuries
Sharptown
Public and private

The facts and events associated with the early development of Sharptown have dimmed with the passage of time. For example it is not certain when or for whom the town was named. Although some have tried to associate Maryland's Governor Horatio Sharpe with the naming of the town, it is more likely that the village derived its label from the Sharp family; several members owned significant tracts of land in northern Somerset County during the second half of the eighteenth century. Two tracts, known as "Royal Exchange" and "Robertson's Delight," constitute the land on which Sharptown developed. It is also uncertain as to when a distinct village started to emerge on the south shore of the Nanticoke River, but it appears that little had begun prior to the American Revolution.

In 1792 John Robertson patented "Robertson's Delight" for 300 acres and within two years started to sell small plots to others. Listed in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Assessment is Wilson Badley, who owned a parcel of land "situate at Sharp Town on Nanticoke river about 6 miles from Vienna." Wilson Badley owned a single story frame dwelling that measured 24' by 16' and near it was an 8' by 8' frame milk house.

Like many rural towns across the lower Eastern Shore, commercial and economic success along with extensive building or rebuilding occurred during the mid nineteenth century. Reflective of Sharptown's first major period of economic success is a small collection of mid nineteenth century dwellings, a few of which stand along Main Street. Indicative as well of solid community development is the formation of churches within

the town proper. The members of the Asbury Methodist Episcopal and Mt. Vernon Methodist Protestant churches decided to locate within the town during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Mt. Vernon Methodist congregation, known as Harmony Chapel, purchased a half-acre parcel of "Robertson's Delight" in 1844 on which a single-story frame church had been erected shortly before. The Asbury Methodist Episcopal congregation acquired another parcel, a portion of "Royal Exchange," in 1832 and it was located on the east side of Main Street.

Much of Sharptown's history and economic success is tied to shipbuilding, which began in earnest during the early nineteenth century by Matthew Marine. The deep channel of the Nanticoke River and the plentiful supply stout timbers for masts and keels coupled with the need for sound ships for commerce and transportation across the Chesapeake and beyond provided the impetus for a shipbuilding concern in Sharptown. Shipbuilding in Sharptown, as a vital part of its economy, lasted about one hundred years; beginning around 1818 and ending with the bankruptcy of the Eastern Shore Shipbuilding Company in 1919.

Within this hundred-year span, a particularly prosperous period of construction and development occurred after the Civil War. The best measure of the town's expansion by the third quarter of the nineteenth century is provided through the Sharptown town map published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas in 1877. Clearly depicted on the map is a crowded waterfront and main street with the marine

railway of R. M. L. Elzey and Bro. at the east edge of the town limits and the ferry, commercial wharves, stores along with private residences mixed together within the four or five-block expanse of developed waterfront. Located back from the river along Main Street and several side streets were dozens of private dwellings along with the two churches and the town's two schools.

Representing Sharptown's period of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century prosperity are streets that are lined with Victorian dwellings exhibiting a diversity of symmetrical and asymmetrical floor plans embellished with a variety of decorative treatments. Pilastered corners and bracketed eaves distinguish several houses that date to the mid nineteenth century, while turned post porches, fishscale shingled gables, and sawnwork decorated eaves constitute much of the exterior finishes liberally used during the 1880s and 1890s. After the turn of the century, architectural taste remained tied to Victorian Queen Anne style dwellings until the late 1910s when Colonial Revival and bungalow house forms became popular.

MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: Sharptown Survey District

MHT INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-352

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s): Architecture
Commerce

2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore

3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Agricultural-Industrial Transition
1815-1870
Industrial-Urban Dominance
1870-1930

4. Resource Type(s): Single-family dwellings
Churches
Store buildings

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. WI-352
Magi No.
DOE __yes __no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Sharptown

and/or common Sharptown Survey District

2. Location

street & number ____ not for publication

city, town ____ vicinity of congressional district

state county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	X public	X occupied	____ agriculture	____ museum
____ building(s)	X private	____ unoccupied	____ commercial	X park
____ structure	____ both	____ work in progress	____ educational	____ private residence
____ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	____ entertainment	X religious
____ object	____ in process	X yes: restricted	____ government	____ scientific
	____ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	____ industrial	____ transportation
	X not applicable	____ no	____ military	____ other:

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

name Various owners

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio

city, town Salisbury state MD 21801

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ____ federal ____ state ____ county ____ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. WI-352

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	x original site
x good	___ ruins	x altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

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

Sharptown, Maryland is located in the northernmost corner of Wicomico County on a ridge of land bordering the Nanticoke River. Principal highway access to Sharptown is provided by the Mardela Springs-Sharptown Road (MD Route 313). A branch of MD 313 circles the south and east sides of Sharptown and crosses the Nanticoke River. Other less traveled routes from adjacent Sussex County, Delaware include MD Route 348 from the southeast and the Sharptown-Delaware Line Road (Wicomico County Road 479) from due east.

Sharptown is defined by a network of grided streets with Main Street (an extension of MD 348) serving as the principal north/south avenue. Adjacent north/south streets to each side include Ferry Street, Railway Avenue, and Taylor Street on the east and School Street to the west. Oriented on right-angles to these principal avenues are a series of east/west streets. Little Water Street parallels the Nanticoke for a short distance east of Main Street, while Water Street is one of the principal thoroughfares along the entire riverfront. Other principal east/west avenues include Church Street, 4th Street and State Street.

The historic housing stock of Sharptown dates from the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century; including approximately two-hundred and fifty (250) individual resources that form a potential town-wide historic district. The oldest structures in town include a handful of modest single-story or two-story, one-room or side hall/parlor plan dwellings trimmed with distinct references to Greek Revival stylistic influence. Corner pilasters are one of the most obvious exterior references. A mixture of Greek and Italianate influence is represented by the use of neoclassical pilasters and Victorian eave brackets which frame the principal elevations. One of a handful examples representing this stylistic mixture is the Major Twiford house (WI-345) on Main Street. Another example of a mid 19th century house that was later incorporated into a major rebuilding effort is the William H. Knowles house (WI-347) at the intersection of Main and State streets. The Knowles house, one of the most elaborate in Sharptown, reflects two distinct eras in the commercial prosperity of the village; the mid 19th century (c. 1850-60) and the period stretching from 1880 to 1920.

The houses in Sharptown are generally supported on low brick foundations without cellars, and the exteriors are covered with plain weatherboard siding that in most cases has been covered with vinyl, aluminum or asbestos shingles. Roofs of varying pitches have been covered in asphalt shingles. A wide variety of eave decoration is found throughout town. The treatments range from boxed cornices trimmed with Victorain brackets to extended eaves with exposed rafter ends, to intricate or modest sawnwork decoration. Turned post porches with late 19th century decoration exist on many of the houses and represent some of the more significant surviving architectural fabric.

(Continued)

8. Significance

Survey No. WI-352

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	X religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: __A __B X C __D
and/or
Applicable Exception: __A __B __C __D __E __F __G

Level of Significance: __national __state X local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The facts and events associated with the early history of Sharptown have dimmed with the passage of time. For example it is not certain when or for whom the town was named. Although some have tried to associate Maryland's Governor Horatio Sharpe with the naming of the town, it is more likely that the village derived its label from the Sharp family; several members owned significant tracts of land in northern Somerset County during the second half of the eighteenth century. Two tracts, known as "Royal Exchange" and "Robertson's Delight," constitute the land on which Sharptown developed. It is also uncertain as to when a distinct village started to emerge on the south shore of the Nanticoke River, but it appears that little had begun prior to the American Revolution.

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[1] Ruth T. Dryden, *Land Records of Wicomico County, Maryland 1666-1810*. Family Line Publications, 1992.

[2] Federal Direct Tax Assessment, Barren Creek Hundred, Particular List of Lands, Wilson Badley, 1798.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. WI-352

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ **Quadrangle scale** _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian		
organization	Private Consultant	**date**	5/29/98
street & number	P. O. Box 5	**telephone**	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	**state**	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023
514-7600

PS-2746

7.1 DESCRIPTION
Sharptown Survey District
Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

The commercial buildings that define the former business district include four store buildings and one bank. Three of the stores are large two-story rectangular frame structures erected during the late 19th century. (See Cooper Store Building, WI-341; Bennett Store Building, WI-344; and Twilley Store Building, WI-352) Similar to the houses of the period, the stores are trimmed with modest late Victorian decoration. The old Eastern Shore Trust Company building, an early 20th-century brick bank, is one of the most distinctive commercial structures to remain in the business district.

Perhaps the best known cultural fixture in Sharptown is the Firemens' Carnival, which occupies a sizable tract of land at the south end of town at the intersection of Main Street (MD 348) and Joe Morgan Lane. The carnival complex is dominated by two large octagonal pavilions that are flanked by orderly rows of concrete block and frame concession buildings. (See WI-357)

Methodist Episcopal congregation acquired another parcel, a portion of "Royal Exchange," in 1832 and it was located on the east side of Main Street.

Much of Sharptown's history and economic success is tied to shipbuilding, which began in earnest during the early nineteenth century by Matthew Marine.[3] The deep channel of the Nanticoke River and the plentiful supply stout timbers for masts and keels coupled with the need for sound ships for commerce and transportation across the Chesapeake and beyond provided the impetus for a shipbuilding concern in Sharptown. Shipbuilding in Sharptown, as a vital part of its economy, lasted about one hundred years; beginning around 1818 and ending with the bankruptcy of the Eastern Shore Shipbuilding Company in 1919.[4]

Within this hundred-year span, a particularly prosperous period of construction and development occurred after the Civil War. The best measure of the town's expansion by the third quarter of the nineteenth century is provided through the Sharptown town map published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas in 1877.[5] Clearly depicted on the map is a crowded waterfront and main street with the marine railway of R. M. L. Elzey and Bro. at the east edge of the town limits and the ferry, commercial wharves, stores along with private residences mixed together within the four or five-block expanse of developed waterfront. Located back from the river along Main Street and several side streets were dozens of private dwellings along with the two churches and the town's two schools.

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[3] John E. Jacob, Jr. *Salisbury and Wicomico County: A Pictorial History*, Donning Company, Virginia Beach, Va., 1981, p. 156.

[4] *Ibid.*

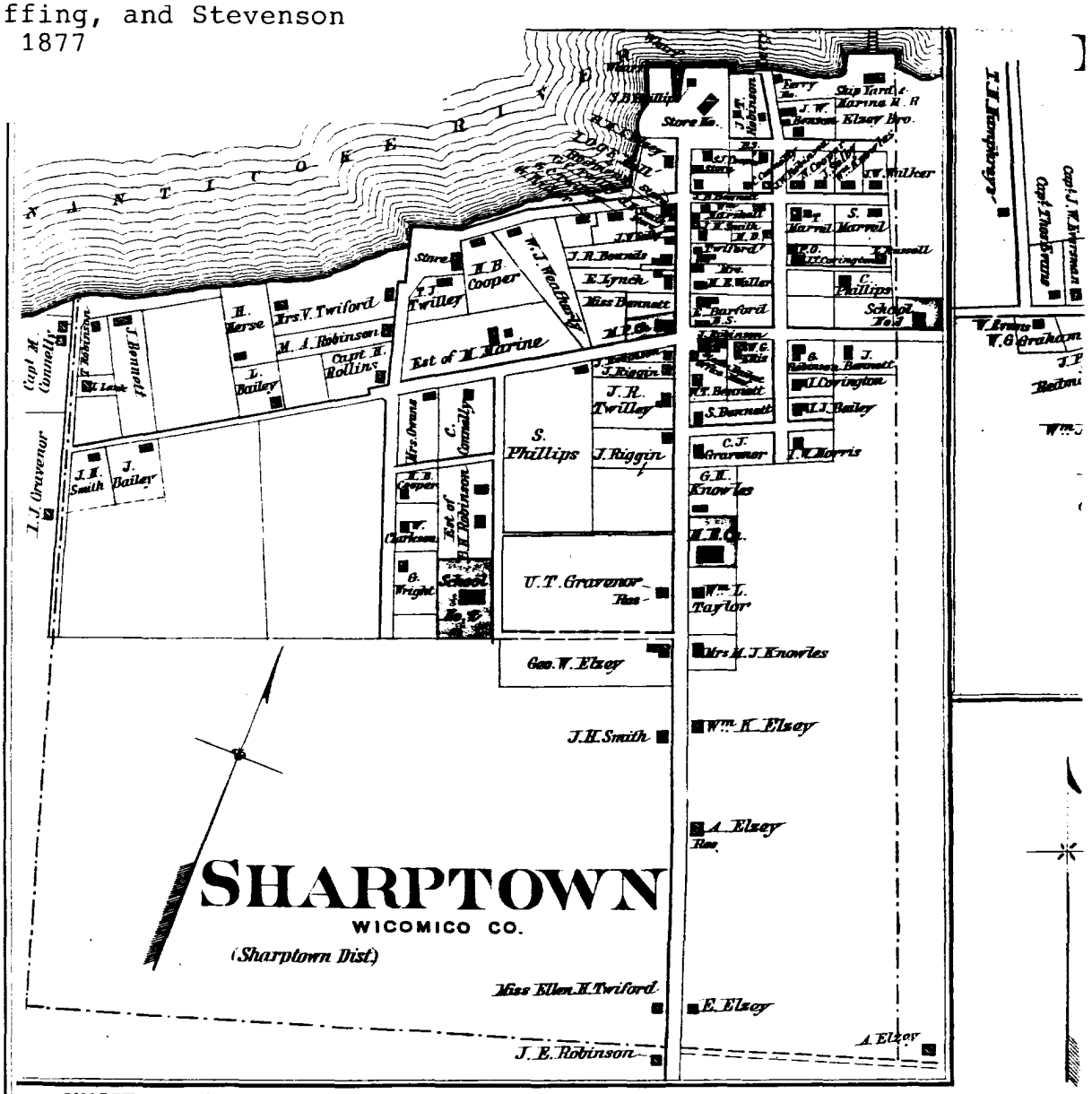
[5] John L. Graham, ed. *The 1877 Atlases and Other Early Maps of the Eastern Shore of Maryland*, Wicomico County Bicentennial Committee, p. 21.

8.2 SIGNIFICANCE
Sharptown Survey District
Sharptown, Wicomico County, Maryland

The boundaries of the Sharptown survey district are coincidental with the town boundaries, which incorporates an area that includes approximately two-hundred and fifty (250) historic resources that define the district. The boundary was extended south to the edge of MD Route 313 so that the complex of the Firemen's Carnival Grounds would be included. The survey district is potentially elligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

WI-352
Sharptown Survey District

Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson
Atlas 1877



SHARPTOWN BUSINESS REFERENCES.

JOHN H. SMITH, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and a General variety of Goods.

THOS. J. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.

J. R. TWILLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions, and a variety of Goods too tedious to mention.

S. J. COOPER, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country town.

JNO. ROBINSON AND BRO., Manufacturers of Fruit Crates and Baskets, Grape and Peach Baskets and Boxes, Deck Plugs, Trunnel Wedges, &c. Also Wood and Iron Turning, Scroll Sawing, Surface Planing, &c., done to order.

EDWARD BURFORD, Blacksmith. Ship and Country Smithing done to order.

WESLEY CLARKSON, Dealer in Groceries and Whiskies at the Wharf, Sharptown.

JOHN B. TAYLOR AND SON, Dealers in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and general Merchandise, Riverton Wicomico Co., Md.

JOHN W. ROBINSON, Ship-carpenter and Proprietor of Smith-shop. All kinds of work both ship and country, done to order.

R. M. L. ELZEY AND BRO., Proprietors of the Sharptown Marine Railway. Ship-building, Repairing, Graving, &c., done at the shortest notice. All kinds of Material furnished at reasonable rates.

C. J. GRAVENOR, Ship-carpenter and Sail-maker.

W. I. J. PHILLIPS, Ship-carpenter.

JOSEPH H. MANN, Physician and Surgeon.

RICHARD P. DARBY, County Commissioner, Riverton.

J. B. & J. E. TAYLOR, Dealers in Dry Goods, [illegible] General Merchandise, at [illegible]

BARREN CREEK BUSINESS REFERENCES.

LEVIN M. WILSON, Farmer and Tax Collector for Wicomico Co.

THOMAS B. TAYLOR, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries and all Kinds of Goods usually kept in a Country Store.

J. B. ARMSTRONG, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, &c.

L. M. VINCENT, Wheelwright. All Works in his line done to order.

E. S. BOSTON, Blacksmith. All Work in his line done neatly and to order.

JOHN H. BACON, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Notions, and all goods usually kept in a country store.

J. W. PHILLIPS, Proprietor of "Barren Creek Springs Hotel."

W. C. MARSTERS, Physician and Surgeon.

W. J. WEATHERLY, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.

THOS. J. WINDSOR, Carpenter, Contractor and Builder.

A. E. ACWORTH, Teacher and Farmer.

A. H. CALLAWAY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.

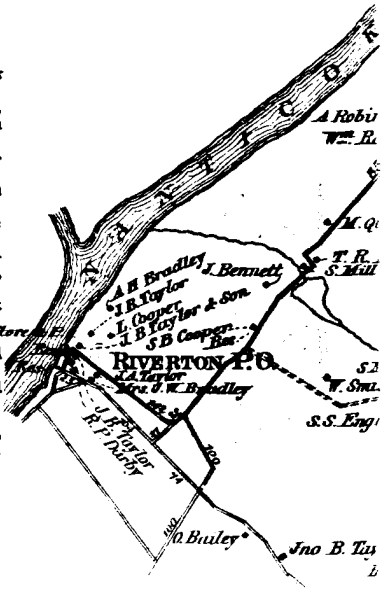
J. W. BRADLEY, Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries Notions and all Goods usually kept in a country store.

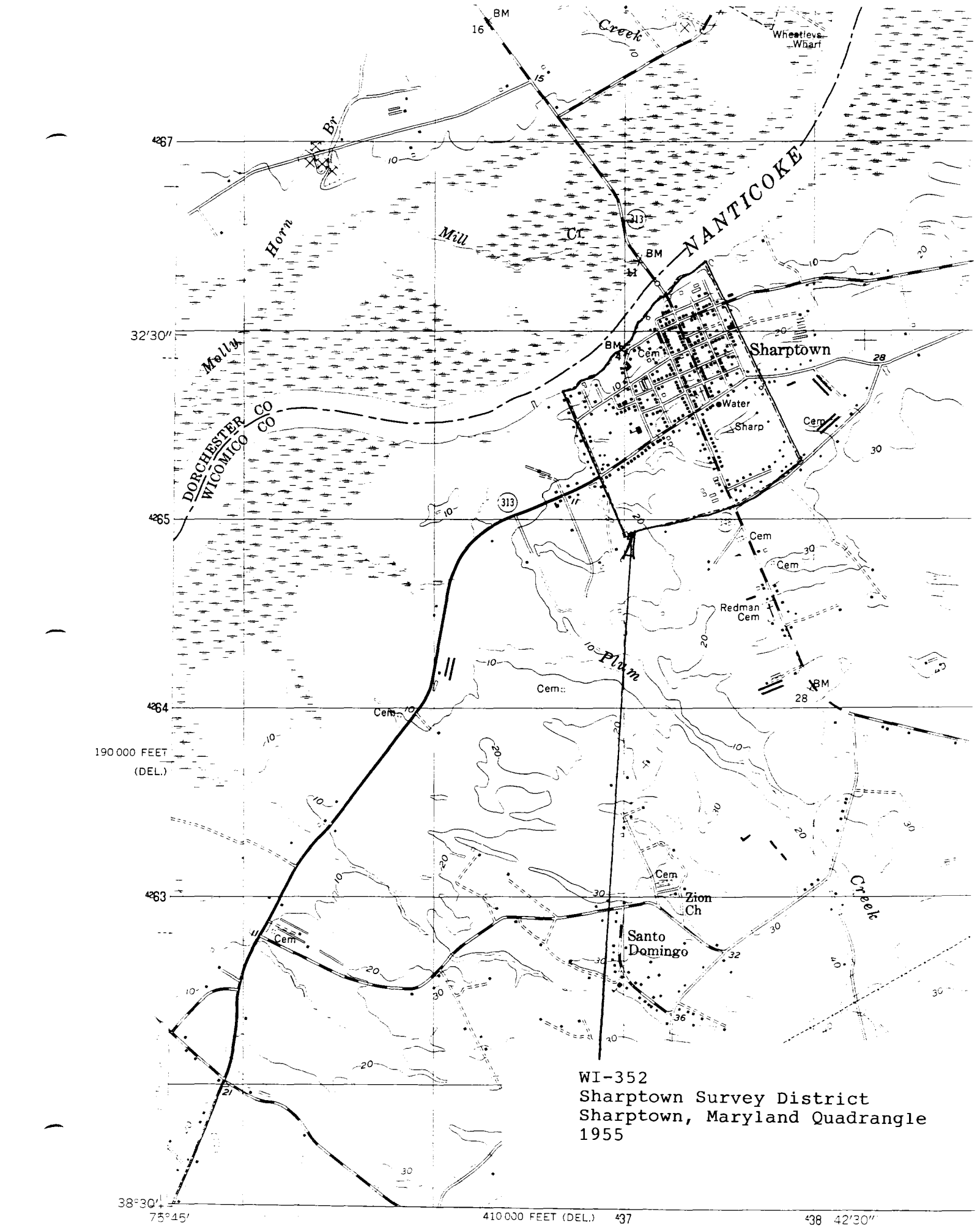
ISAAC L. ENGLISH, Teacher and Farmer.

ALBERT M. BOUNDS, School Commissioner.

ROBERT L. LLOYD, Ship-Carpenter.

ROBERT W. HOWARD, Saloon-Keeper.





WI-352
Sharptown Survey District
Sharptown, Maryland Quadrangle
1955

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey