

WO-107

George Washington Purnell House (Thebaud House, Maples)

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: 04-09-2003

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name PURNELL, GEORGE WASHINGTON, HOUSE

other names/site number "Maples", "River House" WO-107

2. Location

street & number 201 East Market Street N/A not for publication

city or town Snow Hill N/A vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Worcester code 047 zip code 21863

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as 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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
1		objects
2	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19th CENTURY/Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Asbestos

other _____

Narrative Description SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 1
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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WU-107

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetPURNELL, GEORGE WASHINGTON, HOUSE
Worcester County
MarylandSection number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:**

The George Washington Purnell House, located at 201 East Market Street in Snow Hill, Worcester County, Maryland, is a 2½-story side passage/double-pile frame dwelling erected around 1860. Built on a brick foundation with an excavated cellar under the main block, the exterior is clad with plain weatherboards, and the steeply pitched gable roofs are covered with asbestos shingles. The perimeter of the roof of the main block is decorated with a bracketed eave and dentiled bed molding, and delicate finials rise from each gable peak. An original mid-nineteenth century cast iron porch of grape-laden vines shelters the first floor of the main block. Attached to the back of the main house is a two-story porch and a two-story service wing trimmed with a decorative sawn fascia. The lot is enhanced by a nineteenth century cast iron fence along the East Market and Spence's Alley boundaries. Also on the property are a board-and-batten frame garage/workshop and a single-story frame guest house.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The George Washington Purnell House stands on the northeast corner of the intersection of East Market and Green Streets in the center of Snow Hill, Worcester County, Maryland. The 2½-story, side passage/double-pile house faces southeast with the gable roof oriented on a northeast/southwest axis.

Built around 1860, the 2½-story, three-bay frame dwelling rests on a fully excavated brick foundation, and the exterior is clad with plain weatherboards. The steeply pitched roof, with its extended eaves, is covered with asbestos shingles. The side passage/double-pile main block extends to the west with a shorter 2½-story, two-bay wing, and a two-story service wing extends to rear. Also on the property are two frame outbuildings, a garage/workshop and a guest house. A historic cast iron fence borders the front yard on the southeast and southwest sides.

The southeast (main) facade is a three-bay elevation with a side entrance and flanking single-pane sash windows. The elaborate arched entrance is fitted with a boldly molded and paneled door featuring two circular carved medallions on the lock rail. The door is flanked by long decorative glass sidelights and louvered shutters, and the entire entrance is framed by a wide molded surround. To the right (east) are two long single-pane sash windows in segmental arched openings. The windows are fitted with louvered shutters. Sheltering the first floor is an intricate cast iron porch of trailing grape vines. The second floor is marked by three evenly spaced single-pane sash windows framed with arched surrounds and fitted with louvered shutters. The center second floor window is surmounted by a bracketed hood which supports a small cross-stick railing. Fixed in the center of the roof slope is a large cross gable pierced by a round-arched attic window with corresponding arched shutters. The eave of the cross gable is fitted with large dentil blocks within the eave and a delicate scrollwork screen which frames the attic window and embraces the base of a wooden finial that rises above the steep roofline. Piercing the roofline is an off-center brick chimney stack finished with a dentiled cap.

The northeast gable end is two bays wide with single-pane sash

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windows framed by wide molded arched surrounds. The extended eave is fitted with brackets and a dentiled bed molding, and a wooden finial marks the gable end.

The southwest gable end is largely covered by the slightly shorter 2½-story, two-bay wing. The exterior of the wing, with a bracketed and dentiled eave and a center cross gable, mimics the main block. Finials rise at the peaks of the front cross gable and the gable end to repeat the vertical emphasis of the steeply pitched gables. Single-pane sash windows flanked with louvered shutters pierce the front and side walls, and a single-story porch supported on square posts shelters the first floor. Fixed in the eave of the side porch is a cast iron decoration that repeats the grape motif of the front porch.

The rear elevations of the main block are entirely covered by a two-story service wing and adjacent two-story shed roofed porch that shelters the side passage/double-pile portion of the house. The porch is distinguished by a sawn baluster handrail on each floor which stretches between square posts. The eave of the porch is trimmed with a decorative sawn fascia board. The adjacent two-story kitchen wing is covered by a flat roof with an extended eave trimmed with the same decorative fascia board. The first and second floors are lighted by a combination of nine-over-six and six-over-six sash windows. Extending further northward from the kitchen is a single-story wing embellished with the same decorative fascia board. A modern exterior brick chimney stack rises against the east side of the single-story wing, and a bay window has been added to the north wall.

The interior retains the majority of its mid-nineteenth century woodwork and finishes. The side passage is dominated by the original staircase with a bold octagonal newel post with burl walnut panels. The top of the newel post features a small raised knob. A series of turned balusters, also with octagonal shafts, supports a molded handrail. The stringer is embellished with a scroll decoration. Trimming the perimeter of the room is a high ogee molded baseboard, and four-panel doors with ogee panel moldings open into the adjacent rooms. The mid-nineteenth century hardware, including hinges, locks and escutcheons, is original to the house, and the hall chandelier is original to the house as

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well.

The two adjacent parlors are separated by a large opening with paneled doors. A finely executed parquet floor extends throughout the entire space of the two parlors, and faux-marble, paint decorated mantels remain in each room. Each firebox is arched, and the mantel features a fine gold incised decoration. During the remodeling of the back parlor, the penciled signature of L. Edward Boehm and F.B. Russell, dated 1890, was found over the mantel.

The room on the west side of the hallway is the current dining room, and it features the most elaborate faux-marble mantel with a large cartouche fixed under the curved mantel shelf. The round arched firebox is flanked by triangular shaped deeply molded panels. The balance of the room is finished simply with ogee-molded baseboard and four-panel doors opening into the rear hall and a back room, which is also used for dining.

The back dining room features a faux-marble mantel, and there is a narrow closet on the left side of the fireplace. A wide opening provides access to the side service hallway which extends to the kitchen. The rear portion of the house contains a separate enclosed service staircase. The kitchen and room behind it have been remodeled during the past twenty years.

The second floor of the main block is less elaborately finished than the first floor, although faux-marble mantels are found in the three main bedrooms. Four-panel doors fitted with ogee panel moldings open into the various rooms. A small room between the two front bedrooms has been converted to a bathroom.

Access to the attic is provided by an enclosed staircase. The attic space is divided into two rooms by a plastered partition pierced by a four-panel door. A narrow vertical beaded board closet and a wooden peg rail imbedded in the wall distinguish the east bedroom space.

The second floor of the rear wing is finished in a simple fashion. At the head of the service staircase a mid-nineteenth century turned newel post and a series of rectangular stick balusters support a circular profile handrail. A four-panel door

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opens off the rear hallway into a back room now used for the laundry.

The garage/workshop is a modern single-story board-and-batten frame structure with double-door openings on the south side and a shed roofed addition to the rear. A board-and-batten door pierces the east side. This building does not contribute to the significance of the resource.

The other non-contributing building is a small single-story guest house that was originally a storage shed constructed at the turn of the twentieth century. The small gable roofed storage building, covered with wood shingles, was extended and finished inside to provide another room for guests.

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

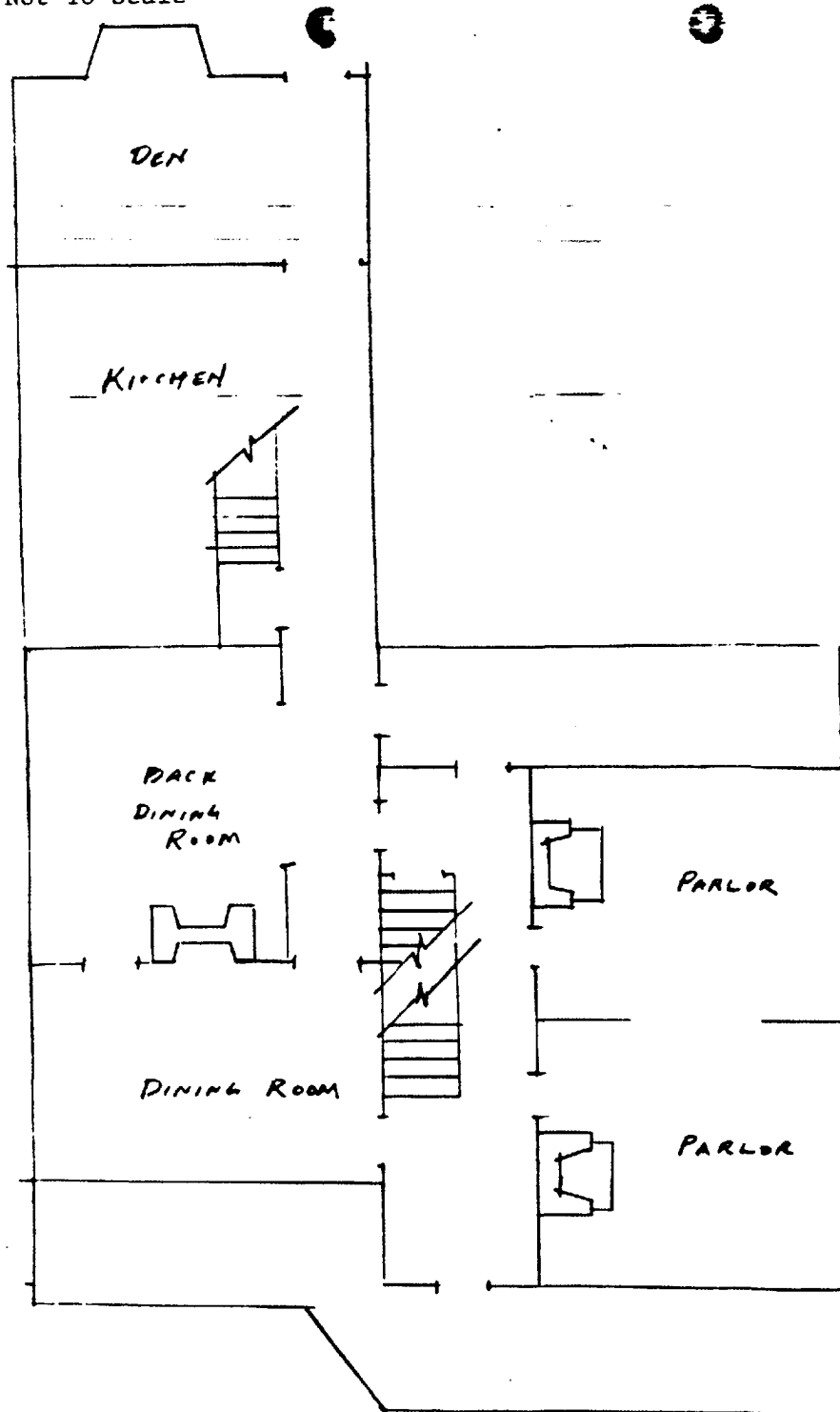
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FLOOR PLAN - Not To Scale



8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property 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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1860

Significant Dates

c. 1860

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 8

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Worcester Co. Library, Snow Hill, MD

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National Park Service

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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Eastern Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Agricultural/Industrial Transition - A.D. 1815-1870
Industrial/Urban Dominance - A.D. 1870-1930
Modern Period - A.D. 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

Known Design Source: Unknown

See Continuation Sheet No. 8

**United States Department of the Interior
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Worcester County
MarylandSection number 8 Page 8**SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:**

The George Washington Purnell House, erected around 1860, is significant under Criterion C as an outstanding example of Gothic Revival domestic architecture as interpreted and built in the lower Eastern Shore region in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The 2½-story frame house was designed with an intentional vertical emphasis with multiple steeply pitched gable roofs terminating in sharp peak finials. The exterior is layered with a variety of period embellishments including bracketed and dentiled eaves, decorative sawnwork within the gables, heavily molded window and door lintels and an elaborate cast iron front porch. All of these features contribute to the unusually well-preserved nature of the mid-nineteenth century exterior. The interior woodwork and finishes of the G.W. Purnell House survive largely unaltered as well, presenting superior examples of Civil War-era features including many paint-decorated, faux-marble mantels, an elaborate turned baluster staircase, and period hardware and lighting fixtures. While the interior and exterior embellishments point to the influence of picturesque American design trends popular during the mid-nineteenth century, the essential plan of the main block follows a side passage/double-pile plan, a traditional room arrangement which was well established on the lower Eastern Shore for a century before the construction of the Purnell House. This combination of popular taste and a conservative adherence to long-standing house forms is characteristic of lower Eastern Shore domestic architecture and is vividly demonstrated by the George Washington Purnell house. Enhancing the nineteenth century character of the property is the cast iron fence which borders two sides of the lawn.

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RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The George Washington Purnell House is one of the two most elaborate Gothic Revival residences surviving in Worcester County. Only the George S. Payne House (WO-95), built in 1881 in Snow Hill, approaches the Purnell House in the richness of its Gothic-inspired exterior design.

Built on the eve of the Civil War, the George Washington Purnell house was constructed during a period of distinct prosperity in the riverside town of Snow Hill and across the lower Eastern Shore in general. Located at the headwaters of the Pocomoke River, the courthouse town had grown slowly since its founding in 1686. For its first hundred years Snow Hill was like many Eastern Shore county seats with a courthouse and jail, a couple of churches and a score of houses. In 1807, geographer Joseph Scott described Snow Hill with 70 dwellings, although he summarized them as mostly, "old, low wooden buildings".

As the nineteenth century reached its mid-point, however, major changes were underway that boosted Snow Hill's commerce and prosperity. While schooner traffic on the Pocomoke River had been the town's lifeline to outside commercial markets, steamboat service enhanced prospects of regular transportation to and from the remote courthouse town. By the 1850s, regular steamboat service had been established on the Pocomoke River.

The rebuilding or replacement of Snow Hill's eighteenth century housing stock occurred over the course of the nineteenth century, especially following a devastating fire in 1834 that destroyed the courthouse, two dozen dwellings, and the entire commercial district of the town. The northeast residential district suffered the most due to a stiff west/northwest wind.

Although the house is named for George Washington Purnell (1841-1899), whose association with the property stretched from 1877 until 1899, construction is credited to George Washington Purnell Smith, a town attorney, who purchased the ground, part of "Snow Hill Confirmation", from Samuel and Elizabeth Johnson in 1853. Although an exact date is not recorded for its construction, the house was standing by 1865, when a commission was formed to

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alter the course of Spence's Alley (Green Street). Surveyor William Shockley not only detailed the new line of the street but drew the houses on the affected lots; the Purnell House appears on Shockley's drawing.

George W. P. Smith is listed in the 1860 U.S. census as an attorney with personal real estate valued at \$7,000, a substantial sum that probably reflected the value of this elaborate house. He is listed with his wife, ~~Elmira~~, and young children, Georgeanna and Douglas. Smith mortgaged his Snow Hill real estate in 1869, and financial difficulties forced the property into Worcester County court. In the proceedings of the equity case, the lot containing the main house was described as

Lot No. 1 front about 107 feet on Market Street in the town of Snow Hill, Worcester County, and extends back towards the Pocomoke River about 360 feet. It is improved by a fine large frame dwelling 28 feet front with large back buildings. This is believed to be one of the best and commodious dwellings in Snow Hill. It is at present occupied by Col. Edward Dymock.

In the wake of the court settlement, the property was sold in 1875 to Snow Hill merchant George S. Payne for \$1,400. Payne is designated on the 1877 Snow Hill town map as published in the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson Atlas.

Residing next door, as indicated on the town map, was attorney George Washington Purnell, who had married Maggie Bowen in 1870 and started a law practice in Snow Hill. He worked out of a small frame office that stood on the northeast corner of the courthouse yard.

George S. Payne and his wife Lelia sold their Market Street house to George Washington Purnell in November 1877 for \$2,758. Few exterior modifications were made to the house under Purnell's ownership, however the interior was extensively remodeled in 1890 with the installation of parquet floors and new wallpaper. The dated signatures of two workmen involved with this project were recently uncovered in the back parlor under the old wallpaper; in April and May of 1890, L. Edward Boehm and F. B. Russell identified

See Continuation Sheet No. 11

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themselves as "Artistic Paste Demolishers and Paint Slingers" in penciled inscriptions on the plaster walls. A few months before his death in May 1899, Purnell had his Market Street property patented under the name "Maples", registered in the state land office on March 1 of that year.

After George Washington Purnell's death in 1899, a third interest in the property passed to Frances Purnell Thebaud, Anna Purnell Russell, and Ethel Purnell MacGregor. In 1935, MacGregor's third interest was conveyed to Frances P. Thebaud, and five years later she acquired the other third interest from Russell. The property remained in the Thebaud family until 1975. Currently the property, known as the "River House", is operated as a bed and breakfast inn.

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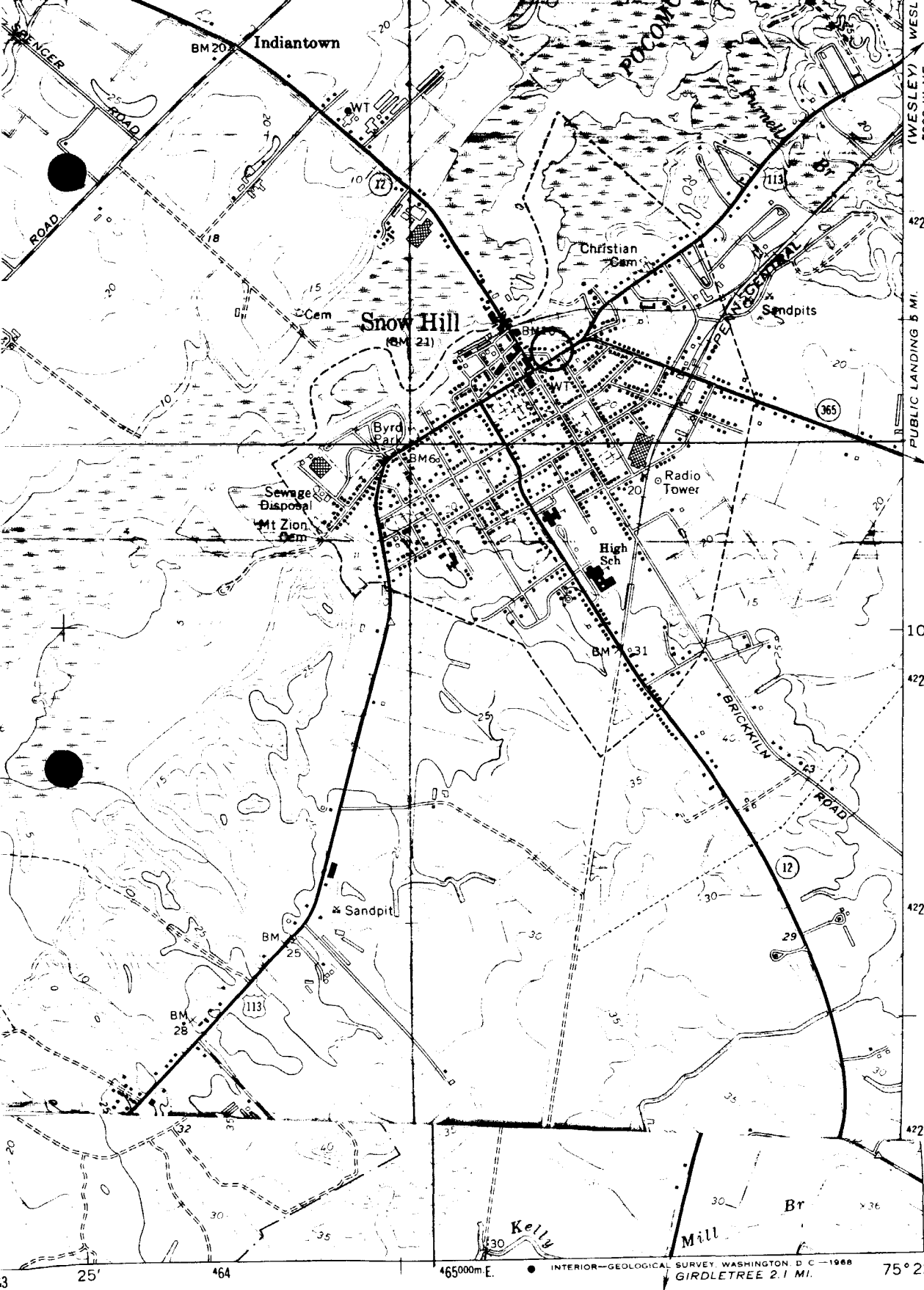
Worcester County Probate Records, various volumes, Worcester
County, Snow Hill Maryland.

United States Department of the Interior
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Worcester County
MarylandSection number 10 Page 13**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**Worcester County Land Record RHO 1712/227
Worcester County Tax Map 200, Parcel 47

Beginning at a stone and running thence with a fence line (1) South 23 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds East 332.43 feet, passing a stone at the end of 332.32 feet, to an iron fence on the northwesterly side of Market Street; and thence with it (2) south 63 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds west 122.30 feet to an iron fence on the northeasterly side of Spence Street; thence with it (3) North 25 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds west to the end thereof; thence (4) north 41 degrees 15 minutes 00 seconds east 13.43 feet to a cement monument; thence (5) north 23 degrees 41 minutes 00 seconds west 168.55 feet to a cement monument, thence (6) south 69 degrees 22 minutes 00 seconds west 67.75 feet to a pipe found on the northeasterly line of land conveyed to the Mayor and Council of Snow Hill thence (7) north 25 degrees 38 minutes 00 seconds west 347.75 feet to a pipe on the bank of the Pocomoke River and thence with the river (8) north 80 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds east 105.15 feet to a point, thence (9) north 54 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds east 99.22 feet to a pipe, thence leaving said river and running in part with an iron fence (10) south 22 degrees 30 minutes 00 seconds east 267.96 feet to the beginning, containing 2.15 acres more or less.

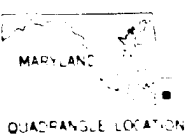
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property, 2.15 acres, encompasses the single lot historically associated with the resource. The south boundary line coincides with Market Street, and is marked by a decorative iron fence, as is the short section of the property that borders Spence's Alley, also known as "Spence's Street". The east and west boundaries follow property lines, and the north boundary follows the course of the Pocomoke River.



PURNELL,
 GEORGE
 WASHINGTON,
 HOUSE
 WORCESTER
 COUNTY, MD

18-465620-
 4225410
 WO-107



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty		Light-duty	
Medium-duty		Unimproved dirt	
	U. S. Route		State Route

SNOW HILL, MD.
 NW/4 SNOW HILL 15' QUADRANGLE
 N3807.5—W7522.5/7.5

(WESLEY) WEST
 5960 III NE
 PUBLIC LANDING 5 MI.

(BOXIRON)
 5960 III SE

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.—1966
 GIRDLETREE 2.1 MI.



NU-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARNER HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORLESTON CO., MD.

SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

NEE. / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST



WU-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARNER HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

NORTHWEST ELEVATION

1999, PAUL TOWNT, PHOTOGRAPHER

NET. (M.D. HISTORICAL TRUST



W0-107

George Washington Purner House

Snow Hill, Worcester Co., MD.

GUEST HOUSE, SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

11/99, PAUL TOWART, PITUITARY CAPITEX

NEZ. / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST



W0-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARNER HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORCESTER CO., MD.

GARAGE (WORKSHOP - NORTHEAST ELEVATION

10/94, PAUL THURAT, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEE. / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

See Room was papers

April 30 1890

By
L. Edw. Peckham and P. B. Russell,
Artistic Photo-Dupliques
and

Paint Slings



W0-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PURNELL HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORLESTER CO., MARYLAND

INSCRIPTION ON WALL

"THIS ROOM WAS PAPERED APRIL 30, 1890
BY L. EDW. BUEHN AND F. B.
RUSSELL, ARTISTIC PASTE DEMOLISHERS
AND PAINT SLINGERS."

NEH. J. MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

PHOTOGRAPHER 10/94, PAUL TOWERS



WU-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARNER HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORCESTER CO., MD.

DINING ROOM MANTEL

10/94, PAUL TOWART, PITTSBURGH

NEH / M.D. HISTORICAL TRUST



WV-107

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKER HOUSE
SNOW HILL, WORCESTER CO., MD.

PARLOR MANTEL

10/94, PAUL TONART, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEG. MD. HISTORICAL TRUST



W 0707

George Washington Purnell House

(Thebaud House, Maples, River House)

201 E. Market street, Snow Hill



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