

K-8

Hynson-Ringgold House
"The Abbey" or Ringgold Mansion
Water Street, Chestertown
1743-1771

Nathaniel Hynson purchased lot No. 6 in 1735. Three years later he sold the western half, bordering Cannon Street and in 1743 he sold the other half, bordering lot No. 7.¹

Dr. William Murray purchased the western half of the lot in 1743 and began building a large brick residence on the corner.² The house which Murray constructed was essentially the same as now exists, a rectangular plan, two and a half story building with hip roof. Its facade, laid in all-header bond, is possibly the first use of the pattern in Chestertown. The five bay facade had 12/12 sash windows, no exterior shutters and jack arches over the first floor windows which were rubbed and gauged. The corners were slightly rubbed. Its central entrance may have had double doors originally, like the Customs House built a few years later in the same block. When built, the plan of the Hynson-Ringgold House was identical to that of the Dickinson Mansion, Kent County, Delaware. It had a central stair hall with one large parlor on the west and two smaller rooms with corner fireplaces on the east. Unlike the symmetry of the facade, the chimneys pierced the roof in atypical fashion, with the east chimney rising in the usual location on the narrow end, but the west chimney rising from the back wall, centered between the two front windows.

Kitchen and service rooms were located on the rear of the east side of the building with a short "A" roof hyphen and 1-1/2 story kitchen, both

probably frame.

In 1759 William Murray purchased the eastern half of lot No. 6 bordering his own property.³ Thus, after 21 years lot 6 was again a single property. Murray kept the house and lot another eight years before selling it to Thomas Ringgold for the sum of @800 sterling. In the deed it states "all that Brick Tenement Houses Gardens and Lott of Ground in Chester Town afs^d wherein the said William Murray lately dwelt.....,"⁴ so there can be little doubt that the tenement was not only built for, but occupied by William Murray.

Dr. Murray moved from this house into a house on Princess Street (South Queen) and within two years died. It is interesting to note that he left one of four rental houses on Cannon St., opposite his former brick house, to each of his four daughters.

Thomas Ringgold (V), son of Thomas Ringgold, Sr. (IV) had married Mary Galloway of Tulip Hill, Anne Arundel County in 1764. They apparently lived in the Murray house, for his father's will, written in 1768, states that the house in which Thomas V was living, purchased of William Murray, was to go to his wife, Anna Maria.⁵ Perhaps the senior Ringolds had planned on a more convenient house but his early death, altered his plans. It is unclear from the records when the remodeling was planned, or for whom. We know from the date inscribed in the paneling at the Baltimore Museum of Art that it was made in 1771. And we know that Thomas, V, reversed his father's will when he drew up his own will in 1774, giving the Custom House to his Mother and the Ringgold House to his wife.

His will was upheld by both Mother and Wife when they transferred their properties to Thomas VI.

Whichever Ringgold planned the extension and remodeling of the house was also responsible for tripling its original size and subsequently creating a mansion more impressive than any other dwelling of its day in Chestertown.

In reworking the house, the two original east rooms were combined into one, the old chimney was pulled down, and a new chimney was constructed in the same position as the west parlor, on the back wall. The room was paneled in the late Georgian style. The stair was removed from the center hall and the service wing removed from the back. Along Cannon Street a four-bay extension was constructed, nearly equal in size to the front. It contained a huge stair hall with "antler" stair, a passage and dining room. Built on a smaller scale, but contemporaneously, was another four-bay addition (5 on garden) two stories tall housing three service rooms and passage on the first story with bedrooms and servants rooms above. Cellars were constructed under all but the actual kitchen, which had its floor close to grade. There was a sub-cellar vault under a portion of the service wing, extending toward Cannon Street. Probably the original Murray kitchen was moved to the end of the new kitchen and served in a different capacity. The outline of the steeply pitched A roof can be discerned in the gable as well as a bricked-up door between it and the new kitchen. The result of this building project took the house out of the realm of a vernacular dwelling and placed it into the late Georgian style. The number and function of the first floor rooms was the same as Widehall, Chestertown, and Pratt Mansion in Queen Anne's County. The number of service rooms was the

same as the latter.

Either at this juncture or earlier there were limestone steps at the front entrance, fragments of which remain next to Front Street and in the garden. Along Front Street, a six foot high brick garden wall was constructed to provide privacy to the garden.

Thomas Ringgold IV was listed as an attorney, in various deeds, but he was most successful in trade. He handled not only his own business, but was agent for British firms serving the needs of Marylanders, as well as the local parish of the Anglican Church. He was in business with his brother William, and later with his son and his son's father-in-law, Samuel Galloway. The Ringgolds apparently saw the benefit of advertising in the Maryland Gazette. Their names appear more frequently in the Gazette than any other Kent Countian of the period. These two gentlemen were the most successful businessmen of the pre-revolutionary period and were the most respected in their work and personal lives.

The Ringgold children moved to lands in Baltimore and Washington Counties which their father had left them. In 1808, after Mary's death, the Ringgolds sold the house and lots to Richard Snowden Thomas of Baltimore.⁶ Richard probably never resided in the house, nor at the William Ringgold house on Front Street, but rather rented them. In 1811, in the deed to Isaac Spencer, Spencer is recorded living in the house prior to the deed.⁷ Mary, his wife, was a Ringgold, but not in the line of the builders of the house (Isaac's sister Charlotte had married William Ringgold, nephew of Thomas IV). Isaac Spencer was owner of large farms

up river which his father and grandfather had acquired, as well as a store in New Market which he rented out. The Spencers are not known to have remodeled or improved the house during their twenty five year occupancy.

James Edmondson Barroll, a prominent lawyer, son of William Barroll, owned and lived at the Ringgold House for 18 years before selling it to the Honorable James Alfred Pearce in 1853.⁸ In her history of the house, Duvall states: "While occupying the Hynson Ringgold House, he (Barroll) filled in lots 20 and 21 Thereby turning an unsightly and unpleasant dock which was exposed at low tides into what was then a beautiful and attractive outlook."⁹ When U.S. Senator Pearce purchased the house it probably needed a face lift. The Pearces set about bringing a new look to the house by adding Greek Revival porches to the Front and Cannon Street entrances and a new door at Front Street. They also replaced all of the sash visible from Front and Cannon Streets on the major part of the house, replacing old sills with stone. They also installed a new mantel and/or coal stove in at least the principle parlor. Later alterations would remove the Pearce interior remodeling.

James Alfred Pearce was the most politically active of all the residents of the Ringgold Mansion, being a U.S. Senator and active in many of the nation's problems of the pre-civil war period. Despite his activities in Washington, he remained committed to his home county, his church and Washington College. After Senator Pearce's death in 1864, the house remained in the possession of the family, probably inhabited by Senator Pearce's widow and youngest daughter. It is known to have been rented between 1882-90 to Jervis and Martha Spencer, grandson of Isaac, who

owned the house earlier in the century. Senator Pearce's youngest daughter Minnie married Josiah Ringgold and purchased the house from her half brother, the Honorable Judge J.A. Pearce.¹⁰

In 1916 Minnie sold the house to Ilma Pratt Catlin and her husband Henry, who was a native of Chestertown, but had gone to New York in search of his fortune.¹¹ The Catlins began an extensive remodeling of the house that included central heat, electric wiring, and plumbing. They replaced the plaster throughout the living area and installed a lavatory in a portion of the original service passage and installed the kitchen in the central service room, turning the original kitchen into a garage. The old frame extension on the end of the kitchen was removed and in its place was built a pergola with posts set on the old limestone steps. A large porch was also constructed on the back of the house overlooking the lawn. To further enclose the yard, a brick wall was constructed along Cannon Street and across the back of the lot.

In 1932 Mrs. Catlin sold the paneling in the east room which was installed at the Baltimore Museum of Art and replaced it with a mediocre replica.

Through the efforts of Wilbur Ross Hubbard, the house was purchased from Mrs. Catlin in 1944, after years of neglect, and given to Washington College. It has served as the official residence of the Presidents of the College since.¹²

1. Land Records, Lib. JS 18, fol. 220; Lib. JS 22, fol. 134.

2. Land Records, Lib. JS 24, fol. 466.
3. Land Records, Lib. JS 29, fol. 141.
4. Land Records, Lib. DD 2, fol. 453.
5. Wills, Lib. 5, fol. 73; Lib. 5, fol. 230.
6. Land Records, Lib. BC 5, fol. 258.
7. Land Records, Lib. BC 6, fol. 461.
8. Duvall, Elizabeth S., *Three Centuries of American Life: The Hynson-Ringgold House of Chestertown*, Washington College, 1988.
9. Ibid, p. 57.
10. Land Records, Lib. SB 13, fol. 72.
11. Land Records, Lib. APR a, fol. 363.
12. Land Records, Lib. RAS 35, fol. 350.

K-8 Hynson-Ringgold House

mid-18th century

Chestertown

private

A 3-stage mid-18th century brick dwelling with a classic hipped roof Georgian front section fronting on Water Street, a mid-section housing one of Chestertown's most beautiful staircases, and an original smaller rear section, which served as an office for the house's original owner, physician William Murray. The combined documentary and architectural evidence suggests the rear section was already in existence when Murray purchased the property in 1743 and that he was responsible for making it into the impressive mansion it is today. The interior once boasted a room by William Buckland (since removed to the Baltimore Museum of Art). The house is now owned by Washington College and serves as the residence for the president.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Hynson-Ringgold House

K-8

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Front Street + Cannon St

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Kent

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER: college

pres. house

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Visitors & Governors of Washington College

Telephone #: 778-2900

STREET & NUMBER

Chestertown

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Md. 21620

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

Liber #: RAS 35

Folio #: 350

STREET & NUMBER

Kent County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Chestertown

STATE

Md.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

none

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

K-8

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Abbey or Hynson-Ringgold House is a composite of three different buildings. The section which faces onto Front Street from the north corner of its intersection with Cannon Street is used as a main entrance. This part of the house is a 2½-story, 5-bay brick Georgian building laid in all header bond. It is two bays deep. The building has a hipped roof and has hipped dormers. The central door has a transom and a nineteenth century portico of fluted Doric columns. The water table jogs above the basement windows. The flat arches of the first floor windows are of gauged brick. There is a belt course on the street side only. The cornice is embellished with a dentil course, and also has a plastered cove form. The cornice extends around the house. The chimneys of the front section are located on the wall opposite the street, ~~and it is fairly clear at least one is not~~ The basement windows have segmental arches and iron bars. The upper stories also have segmental arches over the windows, which are 6/6 and shuttered. ~~In the nineteenth century there was an additional entrance and portico on the southwest elevation.~~

Behind the front section of the house there is an addition which was built to connect the two earlier houses, making them one. In this addition there is a hall and a dining room. The staircases of this hall are noteworthy. They ascend from both sides of the hall and meet above a fireplace which was originally the southwest entrance ~~referred to~~ which had a portico similar to but on a smaller scale than the main portico; the stairs continue to the second floor in a single flight.

The final part of this house is four bays long and two stories high with a molded box cornice. It has been altered for modern convenience. This part is set back from the other building by one bay. There is a high brick wall that encloses the property along the side streets. The richly ornamental woodwork from one of the rooms of this house was executed by William Buckland and was removed to the Baltimore Museum of Art.

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES mid-18th century

BUILDER/ARCHITECT one room by Buckland

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It appears from the documentary evidence that Physician William Murray had the first substantial building erected on this property, probably the front section, around mid-century, probably in the 1740's. It is possible the rear building was already on the property when he bought it from Nathaniel Hynson, but at a price of £60, this is doubtful. The evidence of the next owner's will, Thomas Ringgold's, tells us the rear section was considered an office, presumably a doctor's office under Murray's ownership, so whatever the ~~relative~~ actual dates of construction, it does appear very likely that the three sections were all up at least by the date of 1774 will. The architectural evidence suggests Murray bought the portion of Lot 6 the house is on in 1743 with the rear section already on it, had the monumental front section built, and had them connected. That put the date of the rear section back into the 1730's and get the whole thing ^{would} built by 1767.

As it stands, the building is in good condition but would benefit from restoration, especially restoration of the original entrance on Front Street. It serves today as the residence of the president of Washington College.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the north corner of the building line of Water Street, being the south corner of the brick mansion standing on the lot, and running thence by and with the line of the north side of Water Street northeasterly, 109 feet, 6 inches to the line of land formerly owned by Mrs. Wescott, thence ~~west~~ with the line of the Wescott land northwesterly 179 feet, 6 inches to the land of A.S. Harte, occupied by a bowling alley, thence southwesterly by and with the line of said Harte's land to the northeast side of Cannon Street,

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES and thence by and with the northeast side of Cannon Street, southeasterly to the place of beginning.

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael Bourne/Robert Neill Historic Site Surveyors

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust/ Town of Chestertown

DATE

1968/1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

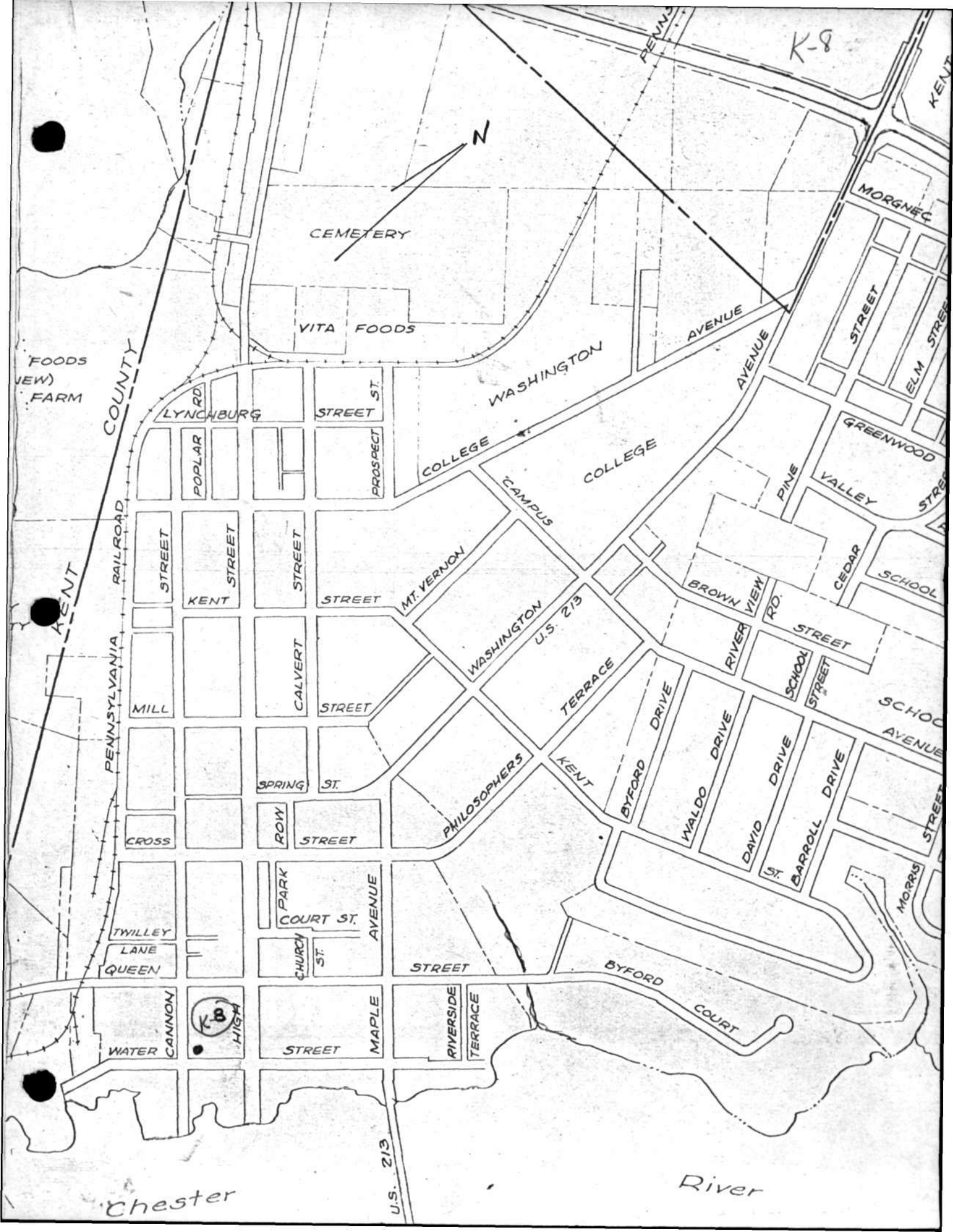
The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

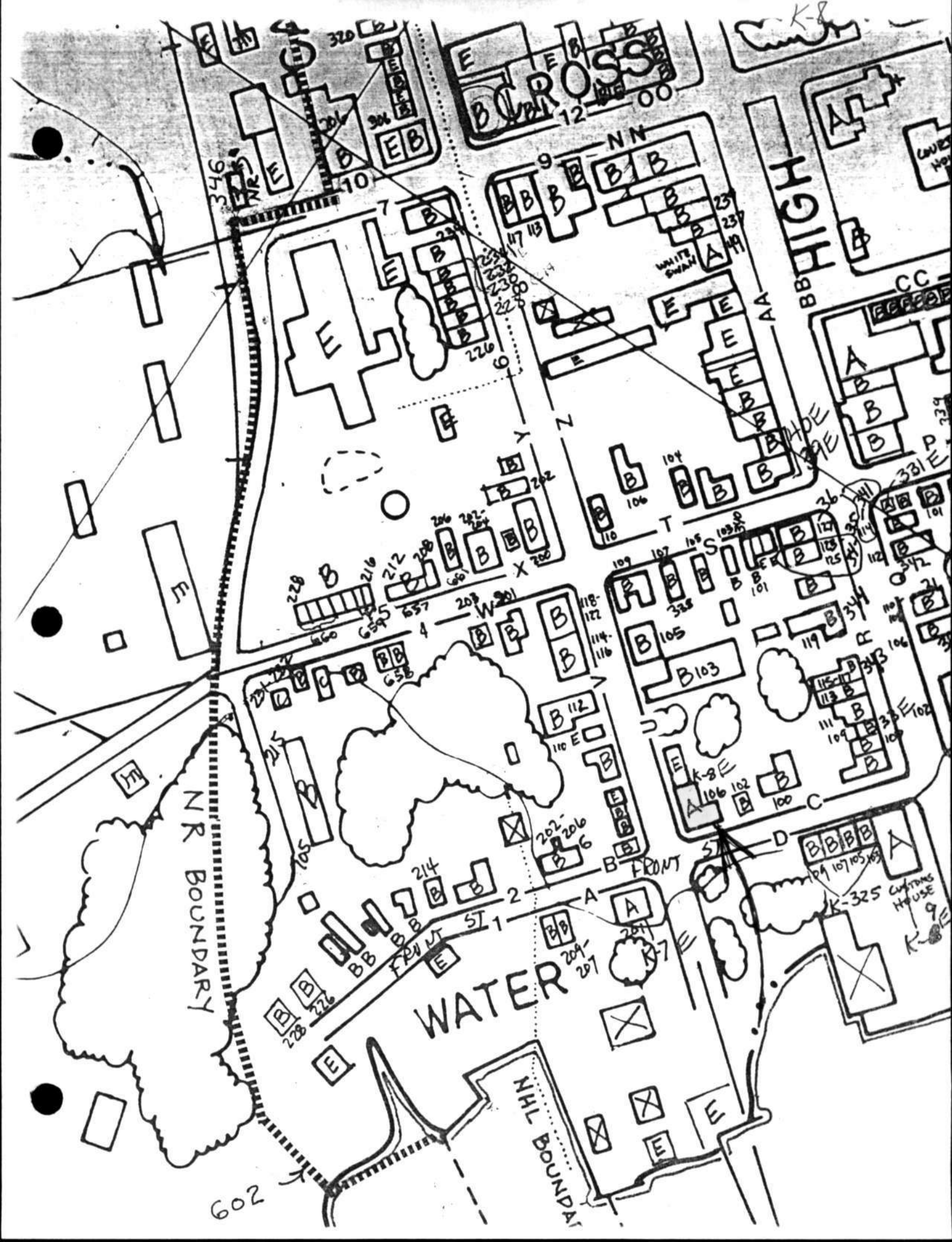
The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

1. STATE Maryland COUNTY Kent County TOWN Chestertown VICINITY STREET NO. Front & Cannon Streets ORIGINAL OWNER Thomas Ringgold ORIGINAL USE Dwelling PRESENT OWNER Washington College PRESENT USE President's residence WALL CONSTRUCTION Brick NO. OF STORIES 2-1/2		HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY K - 8	
2. NAME Abbey or Hynson-Ringgold House DATE OR PERIOD 1735 - later STYLE Georgian ARCHITECT One room by Wm. Buckland BUILDER		3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE	
4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION OPEN TO PUBLIC <u>NO</u>			
<p>"The Abbey" or Hynson-Ringgold House, is a composite of three different buildings. The Front Street portion is used as the main entrance. This part of the house is a 2-1/2 story brick building laid in all header bond. It is five bays wide, two bays deep with a hipped roof, and has hipped dormers. The central door has a transom and a portico of fluted Doric columns. The water-table jogs above the basement windows. The flat arches of the first floor windows are of gauged brick. There is a belt course on the street side only. The cornice is embellished with a dentil course, and also has a plastered cove form. The cornice extends around the house. The chimneys of the front section are located on the wall opposite the street. The basement windows have segmental arches and iron bars.</p> <p>Behind the front section of the house there is an addition which was built to connect the two earlier houses, making them one. In this addition there is a hall and a dining room. The staircases of this hall are noteworthy. They ascend from both sides of the hall, and meet above a fireplace which was originally a door, and continue to the second floor in a single flight.</p> <p>The final part of this house to be described is four bays long and 2 stories high with molded box cornice. It has been altered for modern convenience. This part is set back from the other</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(continued on reverse side)</p>			
5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered Interior Exterior			
<u>Good condition</u>			
6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)		7. PHOTOGRAPH	
8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages) INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC. Bairne & Scarff, Wm. Buckland, Md. Historical Society, Baltimore, 1953, page 79 (floor plan)		9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER Michael O. Bourne Maryland Historical Trust DATE OF RECORD February 6, 1968	

building by one bay. There is a high brick wall that encloses the property along the side streets. The richly ornamental woodwork from one of the rooms of this house was executed by William Buckland and was removed to the Baltimore Museum of Art.





K-8

Hynson-Ringgold House (The Abby, Ringgold Mansion)

W. Water St.

Chestertown

Chestertown Quad.

Kent County





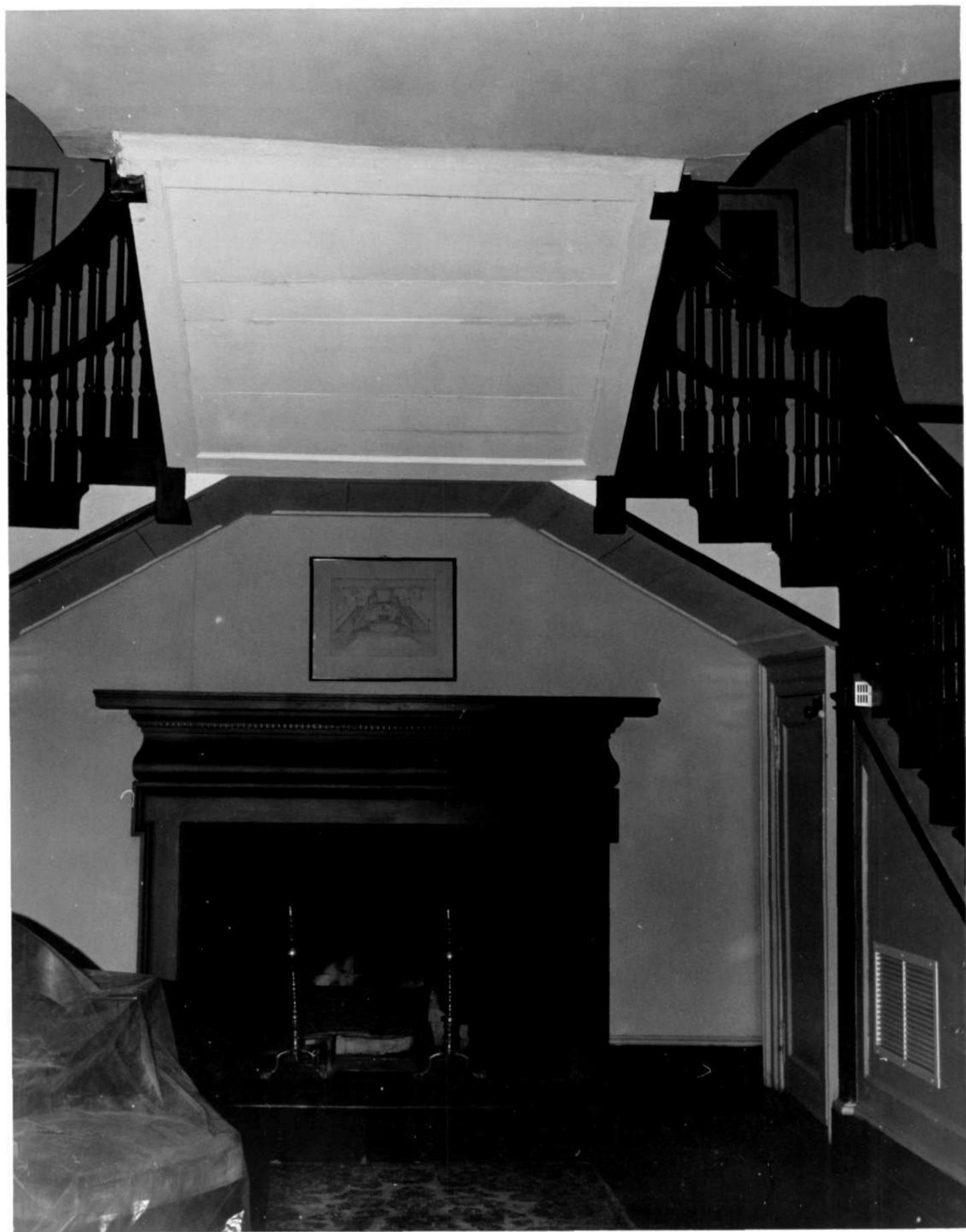
K-B Hynson-Ringgold House
106 S. Water

E & S 1/77



K-8 Hyson-Riggall House
100 S. Water

1/77 E + S



K.-8

J.M.K. 1175

Stain Hall



K-8 HYSON-RINGGOLD HOUSE

J.M.K. 12/79



Hynson-Ringgold House
Chestertown

K.-8 5/74

JMK

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
THE SHAW HOUSE
21 STATE CIRCLE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401



The Abby, Kent Cty

K-8

MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
BOX 1704
ANNAPOLIS, MD. 21404

X KW

1403 3/68

LEG



Hynson-Ringgold House, Chestertown, - K-8 EASTERN SHORE - KENT
COUNTY

Kent Ct

B-39

127

MEB



Museum Interiors

Chestertown Room

B-1-3

N.E.

K-8

Hynson-Ringgold
House, Chestertown

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