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The British Were Here! The War of 1812 in South Anne Arundel County

by Anastasia Poulos and John E. Kille

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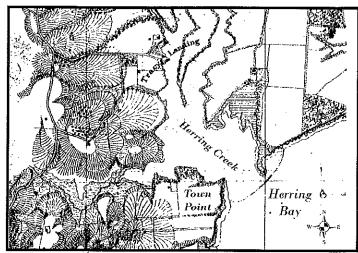


Figure 1-USGS 1846 Coastal Survey map showing Tracys Landing and Town Point.

Over the last two decades, Anne Arundel County's Lost Towns Project has conducted extensive historical and archaeological research focused on the origins of southern Anne Arundel County. The discovery of Herrington, a 17th-century tobacco port town situated on Herring Bay, and the opulent Samuel Chew mansion (ca. 1694-1720) in nearby Fairhaven, are among the fruits of this ongoing work. Most recently, the project has turned its attention to investigating the area's later involvement in a series of British attacks that took place during October 27-31, 1814 (Figure 1). This effort is tied to the bicentennial anniversary of the War of 1812 and supported by the Maryland War of 1812 Commission and Star-Spangled Banner 200, Inc.

Initial historical research establishes that on October 27, 1814, a local militia stationed at Town Point, overlooking Herring Bay, fired a single cannon upon British barges approaching from the south along the Chesapeake Bay. However, this brazen act did not have quite the intended effect, as British forces quickly swarmed the shoreline and the vastly outnumbered Americans beat a hasty retreat upon foot. A chain of dramatic events ensued over the next several days, with the British burning two dwelling houses and a tobacco warehouse, setting up guard posts in private homes and occupying a church, and later exchanging gunfire with the U.S.

Cavalry at Kirby's Windmill near Deep Creek in present-day Shady Side, just a few miles up the coast.2

It is within the framework of these military skirmishes that the Lost Towns Project launched a comprehensive study in fall 2013 to rediscover the cultural landscape of Herring Creek as it existed during the War of 1812, notably its historic roads, structures, property boundaries, and landmarks. Archaeological investigations of potential sites began in spring 2014. The project used a broad methodology that incorporated the use of primary sources, advanced mapping, and limited archaeological testing in an effort to document how, where, and why these events transpired. The ultimate goal of this ambitious undertaking is to provide a better understanding of the British military presence in southern Anne Arundel County during War of 1812 and the role that local militia forces played in this conflict. The following is a preliminary report on the findings of this ongoing investigation.

Engaging the Enemy

On October 27th, 1814, Lt. John Scrivener stood at his militia post in Town Point on his own property. just a few yards away from his tenant's home. The British Royal Navy recently set up a two-barrack camp of 1,000 men on Tilghman Island, an easy sail of just fifteen miles across the Chesapeake Bay to the

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southeast.³ British soldiers were running low on provisions, resulting in a series of raids along the coast-line of Calvert County to the south. Since tobacco warehouses were clearly among the targets of the British, made evident by the fact that several had been recently burned down, the U.S. Army and Anne Arundel County Militia were concerned that the Tracys Landing⁴ tobacco inspection warehouse could be at risk. This warehouse stood merely three-quarters of a mile away from Town Point and was under the watchful eye of Captain Jacob Franklin, who stood guard with several of his militiamen.⁵

Scrivener's property at Town Point was an ideal vantage point for a military defense, with its location at the mouth of Herring Creek and clear views to the Bay and to Tracys Landing. The post established here placed local homes at great risk of a British attack. A rudimentary bulwark defense wall (made from an earthen embankment) stood between Scrivener's house and his neighbor's, Private William Hodson. One small, nine-pounder cannon stood on this bulwark as the main defense against any British attack.⁶

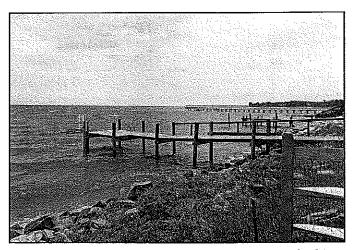


Figure 2-Present-day view of Chesapeake Bay looking southeast from Town Point.

The approach of a British schooner and seven barges toward the mouth of Herring Creek heralded impending attack on that day in October (Figure 2). That many barges would have carried at least 250-300 British soldiers, which must have been a daunting sight to the handful of militiamen at Town Point. Scrivener reportedly grabbed a firebrand to light the cannon, firing the first shot. However, the fiery response of cannon and musketry from the British was overwhelming and several militiamen ran off and abandoned their post. When Scrivener lit the cannon

for a third time, the cannon flashed and failed to fire, rocketing backwards and rolling over his foot. In pain, and realizing the futility these efforts, he limped away on his injured foot. In the meantime, British forces set fire to Scrivener's dwelling, as well as Pvt. Hodson's house, store, and windmill. An impassioned essay, published in 1842 to discuss Hodson's and Scrivener's petition in the late 1830s to the U.S. government for war reparations for loss of property, brings the events at Town Point to life:

This case is one of peculiar hardship, and I take the liberty to mention the circumstances without consulting Mr. Scrivener, who is a man of very respectable standing in society, remarkable for his piety and goodness - he has a wife and twelve children - The Fortification was made on his land, being a small embankment about three feet high. At the time the enemy made their attack on Town Point, Capt. Simmons, and Capt. Tillard with most of their officers and men were on duty in Baltimore, for the defence of that city. The command at Town Point devolved on Lt. Scrivener, with the few men left of Capt. Simmons' and Capt. Tillard's company were stationed there. The British approached the fortification in their barges, in such an overwhelming force, that all the men but some 6 or 8 retreated. The battle commenced - the station was gallantly defended by lt. Scrivener - his cannon was well plied - and when the match gave out, in his zeal to repel the enemy, he laid the pan of musket on the touch hole of the cannon and fired her in that way – standing too near the gun carriage the recoil of the gun ran over his foot - they were compelled to retreat through an open field, nearly half a mile, all the while exposed to the fire of a fleet of barges. All the men could run but poor Scrivener, who hobbled away as well as he could with his lacerated foot, the blood running over the top of his shoe at almost every step.9

Vivid accounts of the British attack appearing in several East Coast newspapers also provide detailed descriptions of the military conflict, including the size of the British force, the property damage that took place, and finer details about the exchange of military fire. These accounts also give a sense of both the fear and anger in the Chesapeake towards the British during the war. On October 29, 1814, the Maryland Republican newspaper carried the following report on the initial attack that exudes sarcasm and contempt of the British:

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THE ENEMY

In endeavoring to affect a landing at Town Point, Tracy's Landing, early in the morning of Thursday last, were fired on by the Fort, containing one nine pounder, and garrisoned with five men. After two fires, the enemy's force, one schooner, and seven barges carried the Fort. They then landed between 250 and 300 men, and after gallantly repulsing five Americans, had a sufficient stock of modesty on hand to give ONLY three cheers [sic]! We have but little doubt on the receipt of this glorious intelligence in England, the sides of the Prince Regent will swell wi[th] pleasing distention — the Tower guns be fired, and a general and splendid illumination immediately take place.

We are informed by an eye witness, that there were but 11 rounds of cartridge in the fort — that the first and second fires were effected with a fire chunck, and the third attempt, flashed. Shortly after landing the enemy commenced plundering the tobacco house, and were seen late in the evening near the house of Mr. Tongue.

When our informant left the neighborhood of Tracy's Landing, Capt. Franklin had about 70 men, and no doubt by about 10 o'clock yesterday, had 200 – and intended giving them battle.¹⁰

Enemy forces then moved northward to Tracys Landing, where the British burned down the tobacco inspection warehouse owned by James Tongue and established temporary guard posts in adjacent dwellings. On November 2, 1814, the Federal Republican provided expanded coverage on the events unfolding in southern Anne Arundel County, including the attack on Tracys Landing:

Baltimore, Oct. 31.

THE ENEMY IN THE CHESAPEAKE

Our readers have been informed of the enemy having landed a considerable number of his troops on Tilghman's Island, (at the mouth of the Choptank River, Eastern Shore) and commenced the erection of extensive Barracks. — This is a much more advanced position as well as a safer and more comfortable harbor than he possessed at the Tangiers. He is now within sixty miles of Baltimore. Since our account of Saturday, the enemy has dispatched several sail

from the above rendezvous across the Bay to Tracy's Landing. His naval force at and near the Landing was, on Saturday, three ships, one brig, and three schooners. Having landed a sufficient force to protect his seamen, they were busy in taking off the Tobacco. Tracy's Landing is a post town, situated on a branch of Herring Bay, eighteen miles below Annapolis.

Since preparing the above, we further learn that the enemy's Picket Guards had been stationed as far as five miles from the Landing: they had a party at West River Church. — They burnt the Warehouse at Tracy's. Mr.----[Tongue?], just escaped them. When our troops from the neighborhood of Patuxent, appeared, the enemy fled to his ships. Capt. Heairn, of the Boat Lively, came in last night from Wye River Eastern Shore. He saw 4 ships, one brig, and two schooners between Poplar and Kent Islands—(above Tilghman's).

The Coffee house Desk has the following: accounts are received at Head Quarters to last evening from below. The enemy has returned from the expedition to Herring Bay, having destroyed the Tobacco Warehouse and carried off a quantity of tobacco. Shipping at same anchorage as evening before. They landed on Poplar Island yesterday.

Mapping the Landscape

With primary sources such as the ones above, it is possible to discern many geographic clues of the cultural landscape during the War of 1812. By using these clues and closely looking at historic maps, as well as analyzing existing historic structures and cultural resources in the study area, it is possible to delineate places of archaeological interest for War of 1812 skirmish sites. Using ArcGIS[®] 10.2 computer mapping software, the Lost Towns Project constructed a spatial database of geographic and cultural information that included historic maps, survey plats, relevant historic structures that are extant today, and historic aerials. Historic roads, structures, property boundaries and landmarks are now clearly evident through the assemblage of this data. This geographic information system (GIS) database is allowing the cultural landscape of the early 19th century in Anne Arundel County to reveal itself.

One of the earliest maps of the county, the USGS 1846 Coastal Survey, portrays a great amount of detail on topography, as well as vital information

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on the locations of extant structures in the early-mid 19th century. While it does not show us a geographic picture of the earliest part of the 19th century, an analysis of this early map along with primary sources allows for some interpretation as to settlement practices around the time of the war.

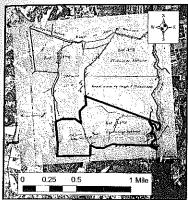


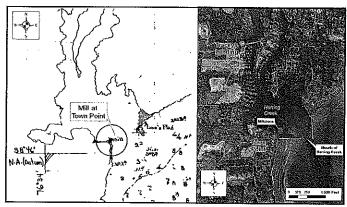
Figure 3-Example of an overlay of a historic plat on a modern aerial allowing for the determination of a historic property boundary for James Tongue's estate (part of Pascalls Purchase).

Historic property boundaries were reconstructed in the spatial database by georeferencing historic survey plats with known landmarks (e.g., historic roads, buildings, topography, etc.) to modern-day aerials (Figure 3).12 For properties that did not have survey plats, an analysis of property metes-and-bounds descriptions in historic deeds enabled the reconstruction of property boundaries through the use of deedplatter software.13 Subsequent polygons were then georeferenced into the spatial database. Through spatial analysis and this assemblage of primary source data, the early 19th-century landscape was placed within the context of our modern-day terrain. With this information, areas of high potential were selected for archaeological testing. "High potential" indicates both that a selected site is relevant to the War of 1812 as proven through historic/cartographic research, and that its terrain is undisturbed by post-19th century development.

Testing the Landscape

As a result of cartographic and historic research into these skirmishes, several sites were selected for archaeological investigation. The first was a private property on Town Point in proximity to where a cannon may have been positioned between the houses of John Scrivener and William Hodson. Court documents stipulate that both Scrivener and Hodson, who had neighboring dwellings, lost property during the

attack on Town Point. These structures were reported to have been used as barracks and storage for the militia. Scrivener lost a dwelling house and outhouse, while Hodson lost his house, store, windmill, and outhouses. ¹⁴ Although there are several other sites of interest indicated in the primary sources, this area had the highest potential for an archaeological footprint, given the amount of destruction reportedly caused by the British.



Figures 4 and 5-Closeup of 1846 USGS Coastal and Geodetic Survey Map with location of mill at Town Point (left) and aerial photo of same area (right).

The USGS 1846 Coastal and Geodetic Survey Map depicts the location of a windmill at Town Point, on a coastline that has since eroded away (Figure 4). During the Lost Towns Project investigation of the Town of Herrington in 2001-2004, long-time local resident Ned Crandell, who is now deceased, reported recovering a millstone off the coast of Town Point during a storm blowout (Figure 6). Several properties near the location millstone also clearly had historic buildings on them (see 1878 Hopkins Atlas, 1870 Martenet, 1846 USGS Coastal Survey) and are considered high potential for our investigation.

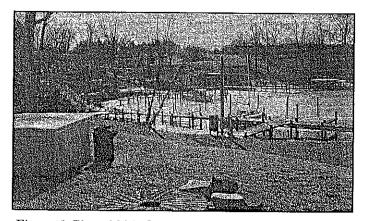


Figure 6-Circa 2001 photo of millstone recovered by Ned Crandell along shoreline of Town Point, which he repositioned at the entrance to Town Point Marina.

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Lt. John Scrivener is known to have owned property from Town Point down to Friendship.¹⁶ His father, Francis Scrivener, left most of his property to John in 1797,17 but 'Town Lands'18 was first left to John's brother, George. Town Point finally came into John's hands in 1807, when George sold his lands to him in order to alleviate financial difficulty.19 In Scrivener's petitions for war reparations after the War of 1812, he states that he "held a farm at the mouth of the Creek,"20 which we know was merely sixty yards from Pvt. William Hodson's property.21 On the day of the attack, "being a commissioned officer in the company of militia commanded by Captain Thomas Simmons," he tells of how he himself "made an attack on the British barges as they were passing at the mouth or narrows of the aforesaid creek."22

Armed with the above information, the Lost Towns Project was able to pinpoint an area of high potential for archaeological testing in the vicinity of where the millstone was found and where the mill appears on the 1846 map. On this private property overlooking Herring Bay a circa 1840s dwelling once stood, which also served as a general store. Unfortunately, the historic structure was torn down in 2007. While the Lost Towns Project was able to gain access to the property to carry out metal detector and STP surveys, it was determined that as a consequence of constructing the new house, the entire property had been disturbed. An earlier Phase I archaeological survey conducted in 2001 on adjacent coastal properties on Town Point found evidence of similar construction disturbance.

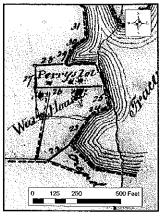
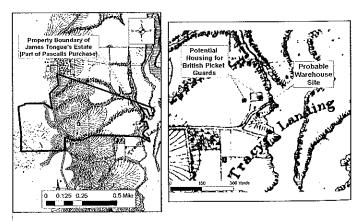


Figure 7-Detail of the Duvall Plat of Alexander , Franklin's property in 1863 at Tracys Landing.

The project also tested another area on private property in Tracys Landing, which also had a high potential as the location of the tobacco warehouse owned by James Tongue, which had been used as a munitions depot and military barracks by Commodore Barney of the Patuxent flotilla.²³ From historic survey plats, it was possible to accurately define the boundaries of James Tongue's property in Tracys Landing. An 1863 survey of Alexander Franklin's estate, the subsequent owner of Tongue's property, yielded carefully rendered plats by surveyor John Duvall.²⁴ The Duvall plat of Tracys Landing gives invaluable detail to the structures located on the shoreline (Figure 7). Of particular interest is the structure labeled as a warehouse. Although our warehouse of interest would no longer be standing, this one is likely its replacement and suggestive of the location of the past warehouse.

Chain-of-title research into this property's ownership reveals that James Tongue owned this part of the 17th-century tract, 'Pascalls Purchase.' Tongue purchased part of 'Pascalls Purchase' and part of 'Padgett,' consisting of 206 acres of Tracys Landing. from his father, Thomas Tongue, in 1803.25 James Tongue had his estate placed into a trust in 1838.26 In 1844, the estate was purchased by Alexander Franklin shortly after James Tongue's death,27 the same property that is depicted in the 1863 plat. The USGS 1846 map shows a road leading to a structure right on the water that is within the boundaries of James Tongue's known property. This road is likely the 'rolling road' for rolling hogsheads of tobacco to the warehouse, which would be conveniently placed on the water's edge for ease of transport. From the Congressional Reports of 1840, James Tongue clearly states that he was owner of a tobacco warehouse.28



Figures 8 and 9-USGS 1846 Coastal Survey map showing plat boundaries (left) and areas of interest derived from computer mapping software and historic plats (right).

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In 1838, James Tongue began petitioning the U.S. Government for war reparations due to the destruction of his tobacco inspection warehouse during the attack on Herring Creek by the British on October 27th, 1814.²⁹ Eyewitness accounts and testimonial from James Tongue himself and others are recorded in these war claims. In the appeal of 1857, John Skinner, an eyewitness and former purser in the navy of the U.S. who served in Barney's Flotilla, described the warehouse and surrounds:

"The neighborhood is thickly settled, and the residences of six respectable farmers in the immediate vicinity were taken possession of by the enemy and placed under picket guards. The two private dwellings and two stores at the landing were distant from the warehouse which was burnt, variously from forty or fifty to something upwards of one hundred yards; yet neither of these, nor of the private dwellings in the neighborhood, and in the actual possession of the enemy was destroyed."

Skinner also describes "the village of Tracey's Landing" as containing "two private dwellings and two stores for the retail of goods" that were fifty to one-hundred yards away from the warehouse.³¹ The structures circled on the *USGS 1846 Coastal Survey* map are about 40 yards to 100 yards from the possible warehouse site, which is very similar to what was reported in the court records about the layout of the warehouse complex. By transposing and spatially referencing these historic maps onto modern-day aerials, it is possible to determine the locations of these structures, where we can surmise British picket guards were staying.

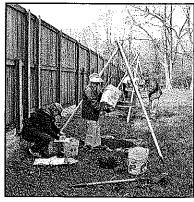


Figure 10-Lost Towns Project archaeologists and volunteers conducting shovel test pit survey at a house site in Tracys Landing associated with a British guard post.

The Lost Towns Project conducted a targeted shovel test pit survey in proximity to where the tobacco warehouse and two dwellings were projected to have stood within the boundaries of property owned by James Tongue. This effort yielded a significant number of artifacts, including architectural materials, spanning the late 18th-century to the 20th-century (Figures 10, 11). While none of the finds point specifically to the War of 1812 skirmish (i.e., no cannonballs or grapeshot), there is clear evidence of long-term occupation and artifacts that are relevant to the time period of the War of 1812.

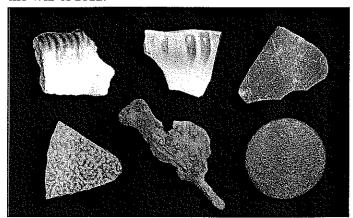


Figure 11-Artifacts recovered from shovel test pits excavated on War of 1812 period house site in proximity to tobacco warehouse. Clockwise from top left: Fragments of green and blue Neo-Classical Edgeware (1800-1830), Astbury earthenware (1725-1750), well-worn English Georgian half penny (late 1700s-early 1800s), rose head wrought nail with spatula tip (pre-1800s), and English Brown stoneware (1690-1775).

According to long time Deale residents Dick and Marjorie Johnson, the two houses associated with these Tracys Landing sites survived into the mid-20th century. Marjorie grew up in an old farmhouse and general store across the street from the two dwellings. She and her husband stated that both of these wood frame houses could have been built in the early-19th century or earlier. Their eye-witness accounts emphasize the long-term occupation of the landing and the continuity of its character over a long period.

Continuing Investigations

As part of this on-going investigation, the project has plans to search for two other sites in southern Anne Arundel County, including the location of "West River Church" occupied by the British and Kirby's Windmill in Shady Side, where U.S. Dragoons and THE BRITISH WERE HERE (CONT. FROM PAGE 9)

British invaders exchanged gunfire on October 31. The following *Daily National Intelligencer* newspaper report describes the skirmish that resulted in the eventual retreat of British forces.

November 4, 1814

ACTION AT KIRBY'S WINDMILL34

When Capt. Burd with his dragoons charged on the enemy on Monday last, they were on their retreat towards their barges; the charge was made with so much spirit, that a number of the enemy had actually laid down their arms preparing to surrender, and it is probable that the whole of the party would have been captured, if the troop had continued to press on them with the same spirit and energy with which the charge had commenced. ---Unfortunately, some miscreant called loudly to the troop to retreat, which they mistook for an order from their officer and obeyed.--- Captain Burd succeeded in rallying a part of his troop as soon as he discovered the mistake and was returning to the charge - but the enemy in the mean time recovering from their consternation, had rallied behind a fence which served them as a protecting breast work, enabled them to pour a very galling fire on the part of the troop which were pursuing, and finally to effect their retreat without much loss.

The support of the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission has made it possible to carry out this ongoing investigation to rediscover the cultural landscape of southern Anne Arundel County during the War of 1812 and to document the events surrounding this conflict. Ruth Hazen and Bill Johnston with the Deale Area Historical Society conducted important historical research that helped initiate this comprehensive study. Hamilton Chaney, President of Herrington Harbour North Marina, also lent much appreciated support for field work associated with this project, as did local property owners in the Town Point Area.

Footnotes:

- 1 See "How to Lose and Find a 17th-Century Town: The Cultural Landscape of Herrington" by John E. Kille, April 2006 and "Rising Up from the Ashes: Reconstructing the Lost Grandeur of the Samuel Chew House" by John E. Kille and Al Luckenbach, Winter 2014.
- 2 "The Enemy in the Chesapeake," Federal Republican (Georgetown, D.C.), Nov. 2, 1814, page 3.
- 3 Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer, Oct. 27, 1814.
- Originally known as "Tracey's Landing" in the 19th-century.

- 5 Wright, F. (1981), Maryland Militia War of 1812, Vol. 4: Anne Arundel & Calvert: 19, 22; Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.350, 1840: 12.
- 6 Maryland Republican (Annapolis), Saturday, October 29, 1814.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 The Claim of James Tongue, John Scrivener, and William Hodson's Representatives. Washington D.C., 1842: p. 2. see http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t4hm59j9w.
- 9 $\it Ibid.$
- 10 Maryland Republican (Annapolis), Saturday, October 29, 1814.
- 11 Same text in Alexandria Gazette, November 3, 1814, Vol. XIV, Issue 4232, Page 3; also in Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.), Nov., 3, 1814, Vol. II, Issue 571, Page 3; also in National Advocate, Nov. 4, 1814, vol. II, Issue 584, page 2.
- 12 See the Lost Towns Project's website page focusing on our War of 1812 project for a webmap of historic property boundaries, as well as a timeline map of the events at Tracys Landing, Town Point, and Shady Side: www.losttownsproject.org/TracysLndg/intro.html.
- 13 http://www.genealogytools.net/deeds/.
- 14 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No. 146, 1840: 2.
- 15 Moser, J. and Kille, J. (2002) Seeking Herrington: In Search of a Lost Seventeenth-Century Town.
- 16 William Hodson does not appear in either land or tax records as a property owner.
- 17. MDHR, AA Co Wills Box S f. 22; Agee, Anne S. (1994) The Scriveners of Anne Arundel County, MD. Crofton, MD: 19. John received the following tracts: Carter Bennett (Francis Scrivener's dwelling place), Wells, and West Wells. George received Kirketons Choice (aka. Kickattam, Kicquatan, Kickalan, etc. in the sources) and Evans Purchase (Town Point).
- 18 Francis Scrivener is noted in the 1798 tax assessment as being the owner of 'Town Lands' in the Herring Creek area.
- 19 Ibid; MDHR AACo Deeds NH #14 f. 238 and NH #15 f.329.
 20 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.350, 1840: 7.
- 21 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.146, 1840: 2.
- 22 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.350, 1840: 8.
- 23 Congressional Serial Sets: 1840, Report No. 146:2; 1857, Report No.50: 9.
- 24 MSA Equity Papers, MdHR 40, 215-258.
- 25 MDHR AACo Deeds NH 11, f. 673.
- 26 MDHR AACo Deeds WSG 23, f. 441.
- 27 MDHR AACo Deeds WSG 27, f. 359.
- 28 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.350, 1840: 2.
- 29 Congressional Serial Set, 26th Congress, 1st Session, Senate of the United States, Report No.146, 1840.
- 30 Congressional Serial Set, 34th Congress, 3rd Session, House of Representatives, Report No.50, 1857: 11-12.
- 31 Congressional Serial Set, 34th Congress, 3rd Session, House of Representatives, Report No.50, 1857: 11.
- 32 Personal Communication, May 8, 2014. Both Dick and Marjorie Johnson serve on the Board of Directors for the Anne Arundel County Trust for Preservation and the Deale Area Historical Society.
- 33 A photo of this house and general store appears in Lois Nutwell, A Ripple on the Wind: Down the Creek and Along the Shore in Deale, Maryland (Harwood, Md: Sundogs Studio), 2004, p. 25.
- 34 Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.), November 4, 1814, Vol. II, Issue 572, page 3.