

The second phase of construction (circa 1680) added another downstairs room commonly referred to as the "Parlor Chamber"; however, the construction method was similar to that used during the first phase.

Original construction was a brick nogging for exterior walls extending from foundation to roof plate. Clapboard was added at a later date with a layer of mud between the brick nogging and the clapboard. Wood shingles were used for the roofing, probably replacing marsh grass covering, during the initial occupancy of the house.



The house, one part of an historical complex planned by the College, will house exhibits developed around the Colonial period and will include furnishings, dining and cooking ware, clothing, and food preparation.

#### Ed. Note:

The article on Friendship House was adapted from an article written by "Chip" Moore for the Charles County Community College publication.

For information regarding the Bicentennial Calendar of Events, please contact Barbara Couchenour, Bicentennial Coordinator, Box 1776, Port Tobacco, Md. 20677 or call: 934-8141 Ext. 203.

#### SPRING DINNER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Spring Dinner of The Historical Society will be held at 7 p.m. on Friday, May 14 at the Christ Episcopal Church in Wayside, Maryland on Route 257 (Cobb Island Road). The program will feature a film regarding the history of the American expression "Uncle Sam."

The ham and crab cake dinner will be \$5.50 per person.

Please mail your checks as soon as possible to Barbara B. Mitchell, Box 966, La Plata, Maryland 20646.

The Historical Society of Charles County  
Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677



# The RECORD

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This issue of the "Record" represents the first issue in a new series. We would appreciate any comments or suggestions that you might have for future issues.

did not appear until about the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, this particular house type is often incorrectly identified with an earlier period of our domestic architectural development.

Houses of the Mt. Pleasant type invariably possess the same basic features. One-story frame buildings with steeply pitched gable roofs, they have narrow

#### MT. PLEASANT: A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE OF LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ARCHITECTURE IN CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY J. RICHARD RIVOIRE

When the first generation of English colonists began their settlement of the Southern Maryland region the shelters they erected were often crude, dark and temporary. As time and individual economic situations allowed, these simple structures were replaced by more permanent buildings which in styling and methods of construction reflected the origins of the colonists. By the second and third generation these heavily timbered one and two-room dwellings, some with leaded windows and stair or porch towers, were themselves replaced by a new kind of architecture, one better suited to the differences in climate, terrain, availability of certain building materials, life-style and economic resources of their builders. The beginning of the eighteenth century witnessed the resultant development of several house plans completely divorced from all English precedents. Some of these plans became so popular within certain areas as to be solely identified with them.

One such house plan that attained a definite popularity throughout Charles County is that represented by Mt. Pleasant, a modest frame dwelling that formerly stood on a bluff overlooking the Potomac River near Nanjemoy. Although it evidently

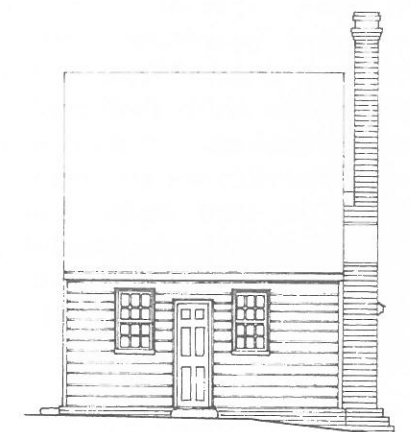


Fig. 1. East facade, circa 1790.

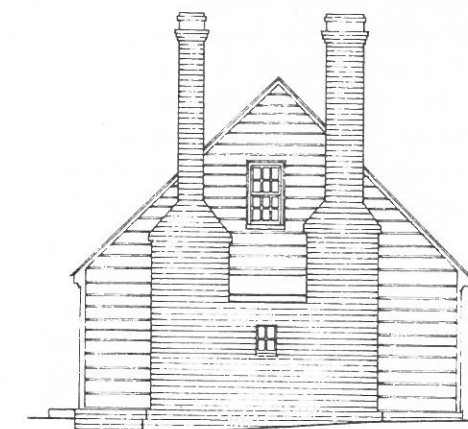


Fig. 2. North end, circa 1790.

facades that belie their greater depth, and a double chimney at one end that incorporates into its plan a small windowed closet between the two first floor fireplaces. The standard exterior plan included a centered door with one or two windows on both front and rear elevations, beaded riven or sawn board sheathing, unbroken roof lines, and, in some instances, porches across the front elevations.

Mt. Pleasant, had two ground floor rooms, commonly referred to as a hall and parlor. Both of these rooms displayed the characteristic exposed and beaded ceiling joists, three-piece chair rails, beaded baseboards, two-piece window and door frames, and paneled doors hung on wrought "HL" hinges. What made Mt. Pleasant more interesting than other houses of this type was the unusual decorative treatment of the two first floor mantles and the embellishments applied to the transomed hall-parlor door and a glazed built-in corner cupboard. As is usual in this type of house, the hall, in addition to chair rails and baseboards, had walls sheathed from floor to ceiling with horizontal, random width, flush beaded boards. A narrow, steeply angled stair stood in the southeast corner and was enclosed in a closet fashioned from vertical boards of the same design. Paint samples removed from these two rooms revealed that the ceilings were originally painted a rust red, the woodwork a gray-green, the plaster white, and the baseboards black.

The attic was divided into a small stair hall and two bedchambers. Only the ceilings and outside end walls of these rooms were plastered; the knee and partition walls were apparently of beaded boards. Light and ventilation was provided each room by a window in the outside end wall. The stair well in the southwest chamber had a balustrade composed of narrow beaded posts, a flat beaded rail and closely spaced slats. The larger, north bedchamber boasted a fireplace in the northwest chimney and, in the southeast chamber, a narrow ladder-stair provided access to a storage area between the ceilings of the bedchambers and the roof ridge. The only alterations made to the house of any significance were the addition of porches on both the front and back in the early nineteenth century, and the plastering over of the formerly exposed first floor ceiling joists in the mid-nineteenth century. A large two-story wing, added to the south end of the house in about 1880, replaced a formerly detached kitchen.

From extensive research it appears fairly certain

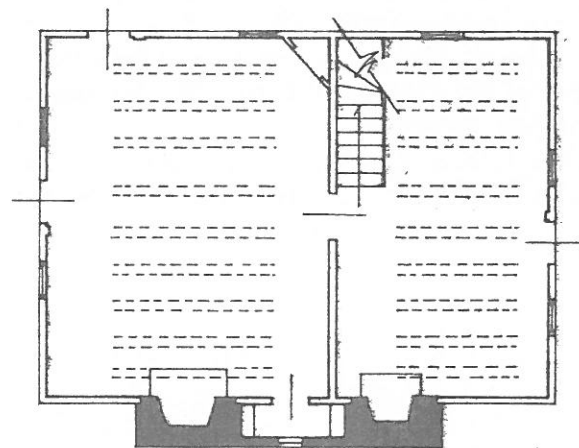
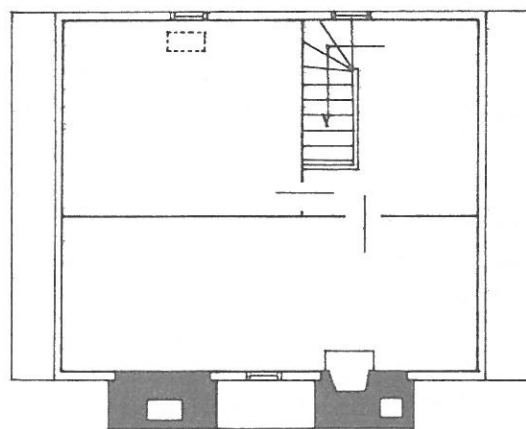


Figure 3 (top). Ground floor plan of Phase 1 (circa 1790). Dotted lines define placement of ceiling joists. Figure 4 (below). Attic plan, circa 1790.



that Mt. Pleasant was built by Francis Shepard between the years 1783 and 1798 on land inherited from his father, John Shepard. The earliest identifiable reference to the property appears in the 1783 tax assessments of Durham Parish and

Nanjemoy Hundred. John Shepard is listed as the owner of a 367 acre tract of land called "Wades Bay", improved by: "1 dwelling house, sorry; 2 huts; 1 tobacco house", and valued at 321 pounds, 2 shillings, 6 pence. In John Shepard's will, probated the same year, he bequeathed his real and personal estate to his wife, Mary Ann. Following her death the property was to be shared equally by her two sons, Francis and Thomas.

The next reference to the property appears in the 1798 tax assessments for the same area listing Francis and Thomas Shepard as owners. Since the total number of buildings listed in the 1798 tax assessment is five, as compared to four listed in the 1783 assessment, and a substantially higher valuation is given to the half of the property owned by Francis Shepard it seems evident that the house recorded here had been built and was being lived in by him.

Francis Shepard died intestate in 1806 and shortly afterwards his brother assumed full ownership of the property, including the house. Thomas, who increased the size of the property to 500 acres during his short term of ownership, died in 1815. It is interesting to note that the number of curtains and andirons used in the inventory of his personal estate corresponds exactly with the number of windows and fireplaces (including that of the kitchen) in the house.

The next reference to the property appears in 1849, the year that Reverend William J. Chiles, who had married Jane Shepard, a daughter and heir to Thomas Shepard, bought out the interests of his wife's brothers and sisters. William J. Chiles died in 1874 and, with his wife and several of his children is buried in the family cemetery located on the property.

At the death of William J. Chiles, ownership of Mt. Pleasant passed to his son William Shepard Chiles. It is probable that William S. Chiles was responsible for the construction of the South wing, as well as the renovation of the original house. William S. Chiles died in 1883, leaving his property to his wife, Matilda M. Chiles. She in turn sold the property in 1906.

Mt. Pleasant then passed through a series of ownerships by land speculators. By the 1950's the house had been abandoned and when Mt. Pleasant was acquired by the Potomac Electric Power Company several years ago the house was a complete ruin. In 1973, PEPCO and the Maryland Historical Trust sponsored an extensive examination of the remaining fabric, including a detailed written record supplemented by photographs and measured reconstruction drawings. Since that time the site has been cleaned of all debris, although the original chimneys and foundation walls have been preserved. These are now the only surviving vestiges of a house that was indeed an interesting cultural artifact, one that reflected, in its architecture, a portrait of its builder and early occupants and the socio-economic history of the region which produced it.

#### Ed. Note:

The author, J. Richard Rivoire, a Charles County native, has recently resigned his position of Chief Architectural Historian for the Maryland Historical Trust, a State preservation agency, to free-lance as an architectural historian and restoration consultant.

In addition to private contracts he has also written and/or consulted for the National Endowment for the Arts, The National Park Service and the North Carolina Department of Archives and History. He is currently engaged in the preparation of a book on the architectural traditions of Southern Maryland, focusing on the architecture of Charles County from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

#### "FRIENDSHIP HOUSE"

The process of reassembling "Friendship House" on the campus of the Charles County Community College has commenced under the supervision of the President of the Charles County Historical Society, Watson Perrygo, and George Dyson.

The home was disassembled in 1968 by the Society to prevent planned destruction by the owner. Disassembly was a very careful, timber-by-timber technique, with all pieces marked for reassembly to its original structure.

"Friendship House" is an original medieval-styled cottage, a typical Tidewater settler's home, constructed in the 17th century. The construction is well preserved and can be reassembled utilizing the original structure for the majority of the reassembly. Construction methods used are long forgotten, with quaint gable ends, picturesque chimney and brick pent.

"Friendship" was constructed in two phases, with the first phase providing a Hall which served as a living, dining, and perhaps bedroom. Above the Hall was a hall chamber to provide an additional bedroom. A stone-walled, earth floor cellar was immediately beneath the "Hall." Dimensions of the Hall (original construction) are 19' long by 15' 6" wide.