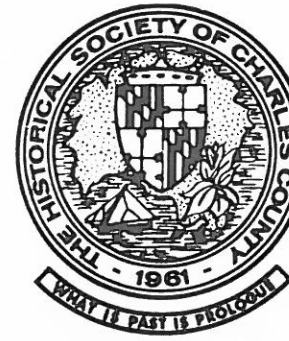


EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for possible publication in future issues of **The Record**. Please send your typewritten manuscripts and other communications to: Editor, **The Record**, P. O. Box 261, Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677.



The RECORD

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LOCUST GROVE A Newly Restored Gem for Charles County*

Description of Locust Grove

A two-story, three-bay frame house with a one-story west wing, Locust Grove is located approximately 500 feet south of Maryland Route 225, one-quarter mile west of its intersection with Mitchell and Valley Roads in Charles County. Facing directly south from an elevated situation, the house commands a fine view of the Port Tobacco Valley and surrounding farmlands.

Existing architectural evidence indicates that Locust Grove began as a small, one-story, gambrel-roofed, frame dwelling dominated by a single exterior chimney of massive proportions at the west end. This oldest portion, consisting of part of the existing west wing, contained a single ground floor room with a bedchamber above. Believed to date from the early 18th century, it was built against the side of the hill. Its foundation walls, one full story in height at the west end, enclose a full cellar room with whitewashed ceiling joists and a packed dirt floor. Although little original first floor woodwork remains there is sufficient evidence to suggest that in addition to wide-planked flooring, projecting corner posts and wall plates, and exposed ceiling joists, it had two windows and a door on the south front, a door and window on the north side, a stair to the bedchamber, and the southeast corner and a fireplace opening approximately 10 ft. in width in the west end wall. The bedchamber with the exception of its fireplace surround, retains all of its woodwork, including flooring, beaded baseboards, two-piece chairrails, window trim and sash. The exterior, three bays wide on its south front with a centered entrance door, retains its early sheathing of wide, beaded boards notched on the underside where they pass over the wall studs and posts. A significant amount of this early sheathing of white pine, secured in place with wrought nails, remains on both the south and west walls. The two windows of the south elevation occupy original locations but have been enlarged. The door opening is also original, but at one time included a transom.

In the west gable are two small windows, both original to the house. The area of the former west chimney, which was replaced by an existing stove chimney, is evident in the patching of the siding and the reworked brickwork of the cellar wall. The gambrel roof, with a high, steeply raked lower slope, was covered with butt-end wood shingles.

Architectural, archaeological and historical evidence indicates that while the gambrel-roofed west wing is undoubtedly the oldest part of the existing house, built as an independent unit in the early 18th century, it at one time had a se-

cond part of one or two rooms connected to its east end. The date of construction of this section remains unknown but an inventory of the contents of the house taken in 1755 established its existence at that time. By 1783, when a tax assessment of the property was recorded, this wing was no longer standing. Evidence of the foundations exist under the 19th century main block.

In the late 18th or early 19th century the remaining gambrel-roofed portion was extended on the north side, giving the house its present "salt box" profile. Containing a single ground floor room with a small storage area above, it had a stair in the southeast corner that presumably replaced the narrower corner stair in the older part. This addition was extensively renovated on both the interior and exterior in about 1900.

In about 1825 the house was again enlarged, this time by a two story, Federal-style, frame addition built against the east end of the initial house, covering the foundations of circa 1755 portion of the house. The room configuration of the addition includes: on the first floor, a wide stair hall at the east end and two rooms between the hall and wing; and on the second floor, a stair hall, hall chamber and two bedrooms. On the attic level only the hall was plastered; the rest of the attic, lighted by a single window in the west gable, remains unfinished.

The interior woodwork of the circa 1825 section, in profile characteristic of this period, is attractive and correctly proportioned to the size of the rooms. First floor woodwork includes two-piece window and door trim with roundels on the upper corners, and window sills bearing a narrow flush panel. All doors are of a six-panel design. The two mantels have tapered columns supporting an unornamented frieze and shaped shelf. The woodwork of the second floor is of somewhat simpler styling. One of the most interesting interior features of the house is the main stair. Rising in a series of four flights to the attic, it has a paneled first floor stair closet, shaped stepends, walnut rail, delicate but well-proportioned turned posts, and square balusters. The house also retains all of its original hardware, including brass-rimmed case locks with brass knobs on all of the doors.

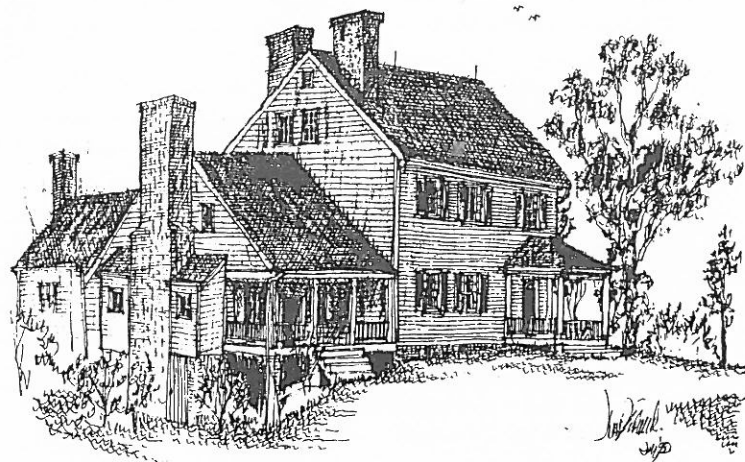
On the exterior this section, the main block, is three bays wide on the south (front) and north (rear) elevations at both floor levels, and two bays deep on the east end. The gable roof runs east to west and has two interior chimneys at the west end. The double leaf front door has a four-pane

*This article was substantially prepared by J. Richard Riviere in the nomination form for inclusion of Locust Grove in the National Register of Historic Places.

overlight and is fronted by a one-story balustraded porch with turned and tapered posts. The windows are all of six-over-six sash with louvered blinds. The house stands on brick foundations that rise an average of five courses above ground level. The walls are sheathed with lapped clapboard and the cornices are boxed and decorated with crown and bed moldings. A one-story porch on the north side of the house, extending across the full width of this elevation, is now restored.

Alterations made to the house subsequent to the construction of the main block include the covering of the roof of both parts with tin; the addition of a porch on the south front of the wing; the circa 1900 renovation of the rear north room of the wing; the cutting through of a door in the west end wall of the first and second floor southwest rooms of the main block, connecting the main block to the oldest part of the wing; the removal of the 18th century west end chimney of the wing; and the removal of the stair in the north room of the wing.

Positioned close to the north side of the west wing is a one-story dependency whose original purpose remains



undetermined. Structural features indicate that it is at least as old as the main block. Containing a single ground floor room, it has a single window in each sidewall (one of which frames sash evidently removed from the oldest part of the house) and a single door in the south end. Positioned at a right angle to the house and having a gable roof that projects beyond the south end wall, it initially occupied a position closer to the wing of the house, but was moved to its present site at a later date.

Historical Significance of Locust Grove

Locust Grove is one of Charles County's most notable examples of Federal architecture, important because it survives completely intact, unlike almost all other examples of this particular style in the county. Although lacking many more sophisticated elements characteristic of "high-style" Federal architecture, it is a very handsome house of good proportions with above average detail. Its early 18th century wing is of like significance. There is, for instance, no other known example of a one-room house having a gambrel roof in lower Southern Maryland. Neither is there another regional

example of a gambrel roof having such steeply raked lower slopes. It is one of only a few buildings in Charles County known and documented to date prior to 1750. Locust Grove, the house and immediate property, is also a prominent link in a chain of historic sites and structures extending the full length of the Port Tobacco Valley. Nearby properties include Rose Hill, Mt. Carmel and Linden, all listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and Habre de Venture, a National Historic Landmark.

The recorded history of the property begins as early as 1715 when, as part of a judgment brought against the estate of one Philip Lynes by the Provincial Court of Maryland, one-half of its 1,000 acres, known as Beech Neck, was awarded to Notley Rozier of Prince George's County, the original pantentee, and the other half to William Bladen of Annapolis. In that same year both portions of the tract had been assigned by their respective owners to Walter Pye, a wealthy and influential Charles Countian. In 1736 Pye, who had assumed full ownership of the property, sold 480 of the 1,000 acres, constituting that part of Beech Neck formerly owned by

Notley Rozier and including the "houses, edifices, buildings, fences, gardens and orchards," to Ralph Falkner of Virginia.

In 1749 Falkner sold 278 acres of the 480 bought from Walter Pye, described as "the land whereon the said Ralph Falkner lately dwelt," to Jeremiah Chase of Charles County. Chase died intestate in about 1755, leaving as his only heirs his wife Judith and a brother, Richard Chase. An inventory of the house contents taken in 1755 indicates that Chase enjoyed a rather comfortable lifestyle. Included among the many interesting items were several game tables, two large mahogany tables with "globe and clawed feet", several "carved" tea tables, a tea board and wheeled server, 48 prints, nine small needle work pictures, 5 beds with furniture, and "one trunk made in the year 1668." The number and variety of the furnishings and accessories and related household items, and the relatively high value placed on his personal estate - over 717 pounds sterling - add credence to the theory that a larger and more sophisticated dwelling existed. It is undoubtedly the foundation walls of this building that remain beneath the main block of the present house.

Judith Chase remained on the property following her husband's death and apparently never remarried. However, during her tenure she either mortgaged the property or was required to purchase her brother-in-law's share of her hus-

band's estate, for in 1771 a transaction was recorded in which she purchased from her nephew, Jeremiah Townley Chase¹ 278 acres of Beech Neck for 347 pounds.

In the 1783 tax assessments for Charles County, Judith Chase is listed as the owner of 278 acres of Beech Neck, valued at 410 pounds and improved by "a small old dwelling house with a brick chimney, a kitchen, quarter and corn house, all much out of repair, 2 tobacco houses, one of which is good the other old and leaky." (Although the architecture and interior woodwork would suggest otherwise, it is possible that the eighteenth century portion of the west wing of the present house is the kitchen listed in the 1783 assessment and that Jeremiah Chase's dwelling was still standing at this date, being the building referred to as "a small old dwelling house.")

Judith Chase either died intestate, leaving as her only heir her nephew, Jeremiah Townley Chase, or else sold him the property and moved out of the county, as no mention of her is found in the county records after 1783. In 1815 Jeremiah T. Chase sold the 278 acres of Beech Neck to Thomas A. Davis for 915 pounds.

Thomas A. Davis built the large, Federal-style part of the house, and it was during his ownership that the property acquired the name Locust Grove. He died in 1850, bequeathing to his wife and six children an equal share in his estate. An 1850 inventory of the contents of the house, collectively valued at just under 10,000 dollars, shows that it was comfortably if not elaborately furnished. After Davis' death, the property passed through a series of ownerships, although it still remained in the same family. The property is presently owned by the restorers, Mr. and Mrs. George Simms Jenkins.

Prior to its recent restoration, Locust Grove, highly visible due to its prominent hilltop situation, had stood vacant for several years, suffering some damage attributable to both exposure and vandals.

Major Bibliographical References

Land records of Charles County, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Register of Wills Office, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Inventories and 1783 Tax Assessment, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

¹Jeremiah Townley Chase was the son of Richard Chase, brother and heir of Jeremiah Chase, and one of Maryland's foremost and widely publicized Federalists.

BUS TRIP A SUCCESS

On June 19, 1983, a bus filled with some forty-five members of the Historical Society visited Baltimore. The first stop was at the Maryland Historical Society where an extensive and informative tour of the MHS's outstanding collection of Maryland produced antique furniture, paintings, silver and other artifacts was conducted by the Society's volunteer docents. Following the tour, the members were treated to refreshments, and finally a visit to the Society's Gift Shop - a worthwhile stop. Yes, they even had authentic antiques for sale - several of which are now in Charles County!

The second stop was Harbor Place, where the travellers were free to shop and dine. The trip was completed, in a drizzle, about 9 p.m. A tired but still enthusiastic group was already looking forward to another sponsored trip. Vivian Malczyk arranged the tour, and a fine job she did with nary a hitch.

SILVER IN MARYLAND

To celebrate the 350th anniversary of the founding of Maryland, the Museum and Library of Maryland History, Maryland Historical Society in cooperation with The Baltimore Museum of Art, The Peale Museum and Historic Annapolis, Inc., will present "Silver in Maryland," an exhibition of silver made and used in the state from 1740 to 1980. This major loan exhibition of approximately 350 items, will also include related materials such as clocks, swords, portraits, tools and documents. The show will focus primarily on work which influenced Maryland silversmiths, items which exhibit Maryland characteristics and on pieces which were influenced by Maryland work.

Among the major lenders for the show, in addition to the Hampton, National Historic Site; Talbot County Historical Society; Baltimore Museum of Art; Decatur House Museum and the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum; are: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; The Yale University Art Gallery; The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; The Newark Museum; The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts; The Henry Ford Museum; The Cincinnati Art Museum and The Bayou Bend Collection, Houston, Texas. A number of private collectors are generously contributing silver items to the exhibition as well.

A major publication, illustrating and describing all the items in the exhibition with special emphasis on the Society collection, will be available. This catalogue will also expand and update the published material on Maryland silver with several articles contributed by scholars in the field and with a listing of over 3,000 men who worked with silver or closely related fields such as clock and watch-making or as jewelers in Maryland before 1900.

"Silver in Maryland" will continue through February 29, 1984. Hours of opening are: Tuesday through Friday: 11:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; closed on Sunday and Monday.