# HISTORIC SOMERSET ARCHITECTURE

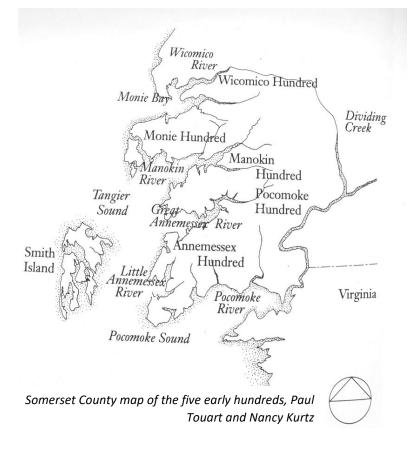
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AND BUILDING STYLES ON THE EASTERN SHORE

## MID-17th CENTURY

The first settlers arrived in the Somerset area in the 1660s, many coming from the lower Eastern Shore counties of Accomac and Northhampton in Virginia. The close economic and social ties to this area played a significant role in the history of Somerset County.

The early farming estates, or patents, were granted and later subdivided along the banks of the Nanticoke, Wicomico, Manokin, Great Annemessex, Little Annemessex, and Pocomoke rivers. Because early commerce depended on these waterways, nearly all remaining houses from this period are found near water.

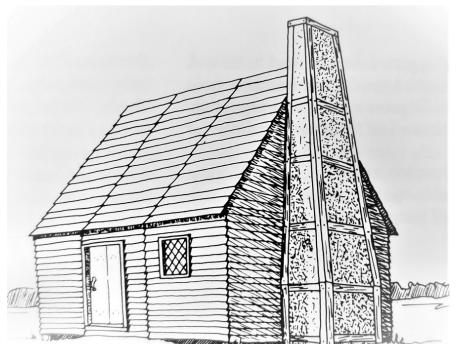
Initially, the Lords Baltimore granted a new planter 50 acres for each person that he brought or "transported" into the Maryland Colony. The process involved the planter's "demanding" a warrant for an amount of acreage based on his "headright" for the number of persons he brought in to settle the land. After the warrant was issued,



a survey of the claimed property was followed by the issuance of a certificate of survey and then a patent. Patented lands were identified by names given them by their new landlords.

For administrative purposes, the Calvert government at St. Mary's City divided the colony into Counties and then into townships called "Hundreds", where about 100 patentees had settled. Until the Revolutionary War, the land was all owned by the Lords Proprietor and each patentee paid them an annual rent of 3 shillings per 100 acres. The wealthiest merchant-planters held patents for thousands of acres, while most headright settlers held patents for hundreds of acres. The vast majority of immigrants were either family members of a landholder or lived and worked on land which was not their own.

Early settlers initially erected impermanent structures of logs and lumber. Carpenters, joiners, and-timber were available locally in the region, though some materials may have been fashioned in the Virginia counties and-transported north to Somerset by ship.



Most early 'settlement' homes were modest, single-story-and-ahalf log or frame dwellings with one or two lower rooms and a loft. Their poles were placed directly on the ground or planted into holes. Frame houses were sheathed with riven oak or cypress clapboards, 4 to 5 feet long with feathered edges for weather tightness. Clapboards provided rigidity to the light frame and were also used for interior partitions and roofing.

Conjectural drawing of an early 15 x 12 one-room frame house with catted chimney c. 1688 , Paul Touart and Nancy Kurtz

Roofs were typically very high pitched and sheathed with clapboards, although there are some references to roofs thatched with local sedge grass. First floor ceilings tended to be taller than those found in northern colonies. Most houses had brick chimneys but there are also records of wooden chimneys, built of four corner posts and horizonal timbers covered with mud daub.

Planters also constructed tobacco barns, granaries, corn cribs, stables, chicken houses, cider houses, carriage houses, smoke houses, milk houses, ice houses, cooper and carpenter shops, blacksmith shops, kitchens, slave quarters, tenant houses, and schoolhouses. This group of outbuildings created the semblance of a village in many of the larger plantation properties. Just as early settlement houses were impermanent, so too these smaller, meaner wooden outbuildings were rudimentary, unadorned, and few examples have survived.

## LATE-17th CENTURY

Gradually the early settlement dwellings were replaced with similarly styled structures with timber frames, but with sills raised off the ground. They were clad with clapboards but may have had one or two gable ends made entirely of brick.

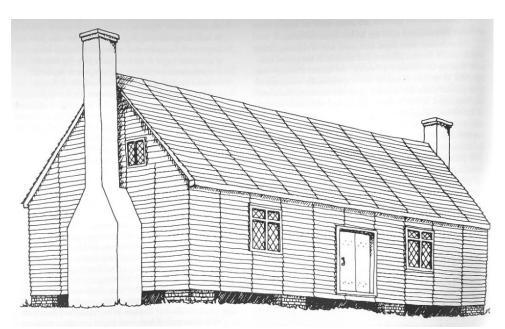
Single room houses had only a main Hall for public and private activities, and the Hall Chamber above provided additional sleeping and storage space.

The two-room layout consisted of the Hall and the somewhat smaller Parlor for more private activities and sleeping quarters for the owners. The front door most often opened into the Hall. Except



Image of Pear Valley, Eastville, VA – dating 1720-1750, one brick end laid in Flemish bond. Currently owned by Northampton Historic Preservation Society

in larger homes, the second floor was reached by a winder stair beside the Hall chimney.



Conjectural drawing of the Captain William Whittington house, 40 x 20, c. 1688 Paul Touart and Nancy Kurtz

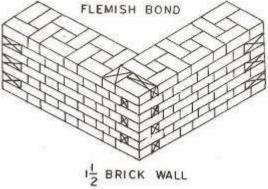
Beneath the stair and beside the fireplace, cupboards were built for storage.

Chimneys were usually on one or two of the gable end and extended high above the roof line. Where the Hall or Parlor were divided into additional rooms, corner fireplaces were created with separate flues. Larger homes had internal chimneys with corner fireplaces in more than one adjacent room.

Brick was labor-intensive,

expensive, and could be afforded only by wealthier families, but in the absence of available stone in the region, was still the most desirable material for chimneys and foundations. Masonry was typically crafted locally on site (though there are some references to imported bricks used as ballast on ships). Mortar was made with sand and lime created from burned oyster shells which were in ready supply. Bricks were made of clay and sand, hand pressed into molds, allowed to dry, and then baked at high temperature in wood-fired ovens. The

sand exposed to the greatest heat melted into a glass with green or blue-black hue, and these 'glazed' bricks were used to create geometric patterns in the exposed Flemish bond. Lower walls were 1 ½ to 2 bricks thick for stability, but upper walls required less thickness.





Brick glazed header pattern and dog-tooth bricks, Makepeace

There are some examples of larger two-room houses with a projecting 'Porch Tower', a two-story projection off the front, giving the house a T-shape. The porch tower, when enclosed, provided additional living space.



Conjectural drawing of the Francis Jenkins house, c. 1690, Paul Touart and Nancy Kurtz



Restored interior of Powell-Benston House, c 1700-1720. Stood near Rehoboth MD till 1960s. Later period casement windows and mantle shelf. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA)

The interiors of modest homes were covered with clapboard, and as economics allowed, with lath and plaster, often whitewashed. When an owner's wealth permitted, 17th and 18th century rooms were adorned with raised paneling, especially on chimney walls. Fireplaces were often 6 to 8 feet wide, 3 to 4 feet deep, and large enough for cooking cranes and kettles. They were notoriously smoky, at least until the inventions of Count Rumford and Ben Franklin made it possible to control the draft. Finer homes were provided with detailed crown molding of wood or plaster, with chair rails and wainscoting, ornate stair bannisters, and brightly colored paint.

Most 17th century brick structures no longer survive, but are found described in the public record.

- The earliest reference to a brick structure was the Dividing Creek Courthouse, 50 by 20 feet, built in 1694 with one gable brick end. No remnant survives.
- The Powell-Bentson House, built around 1700, is the closest example of a one-room plan settlement type house with a patterned brick gable end that survived until modern times. It stood until the 1960s when it was dismantled and moved by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA).
- The Andrew Jones House along the Wicomico River is inferred from a 1684 inventory a 5room house with hall, parlor, two chambers above, and a porch tower. Other hall/parlor houses with porch towers were the 1686 John Evans House, and the 1697 Colonel David Brown House.

• The most outstanding 17th century dwelling was that of Colonel Francis Jenkins whose 1710 inventory described his Pocomoke River house. His 8-room residence had 4 main rooms served by a central fireplace, a 2nd floor dining room, and additional rooms on the 3rd floor.

## EARLY-MID 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Somerset planters continued to grow tobacco into the mid 1700s along with corn and wheat, and they exported flour, pork, livestock and lumber to Europe and the West Indies. The neighboring counties to the north focused on corn, and Worcester focused on cypress, yellow pine and other lumber products and the manufacture of cloth and shoes. Tobacco was used as a primary currency until about 1715, when the Pound Sterling became more accessible.

As settlement in the area became more established, privileged 2nd and 3rd generation descendants of early settlers amassed considerable property, often secured through strategic marriage and business partnerships. Individuals seized control of key state and local public offices and shaped life on the Eastern Shore well into the 19th century.

With less available land for settlement, there was a gradual shift from indentured service to the use of slave labor. Slavery became more legally institutionalized and irrevocable during this period. For blacks in society, this period marked an end to economic opportunity and for the free-black communities, the institutionalization of an oppressive system of slavery.

Large and medium-sized planters and yeoman farmers were served by a growing population of merchants and artisans (carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tanners, weavers) and the enhanced local and regional economy promoted the establishment of towns and county seats. Princess Anne was established in 1733 and by the 1740s, population increase and expansion merited splitting the county to create Worcester County, with Snow Hill as county seat, and Somerset County with Princess Anne.

Settlement style hall-and-parlor plan dwellings continued to be built during this period. Some examples that have survived include the Waddy House, Makepeace, Salisbury, Beauchamp, Williams Conquest, Sudler's Conclusion, The Reward, and Harrington.



Waddy House c 1740-60

The booming mixed agriculture economy of the mid-18th century proved extremely lucrative, and this increase in wealth allowed major and medium sized planters to make improvements to their properties and start building more elaborate, sophisticated residences in the Georgian style. These more sophisticated plantation houses represent the emergence of the full brick center-passage house, marking the transition away from the prevailing hall-and-parlor style of previous generations.

They were of grander scale, marked by symmetry, balance and formality with elaborated brickwork, larger casement windows and pseudo-classical details which included pediments, columns, quoins or corner blocks, and Palladian elements. They exhibited refined interior detailing

and a more formal plan that mediated between public and private spaces.

Some examples of these Georgian style homes that have survived are Arlington, Hayward's Lott, Waterloo, and Almodington (whose extravagant Georgian paneling was removed and then installed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art).



Almodington c1750

Photo credit: Catherine C. Lavoie

# These grander homes

were designed to be approached both from the water landing as well as the main highroad, typically with a long straight avenue lined with tall trees on both sides whose branches almost formed an arbor. Gardens were laid out on an axis between the rear of the main house and the landing on the waters edge. "Falles" was the name given to grass terraces, and "forthrights" were the straight walks through the garden. Formal trimmed hedges laid out in geometric fashion with pathways were termed "parterres", with ornamental flowers planted within the spaces. Garden design began to veer away from the geometric to more romantic naturalistic forms in the 19th century.

Many of these stately homes from this period still survive due to their superior construction and high-quality materials, but there were many smaller, average, less substantial structures that did

not endure. Most of these modest dwellings and outbuildings, built with logs or hewn and sawn lumber, have disappeared from the landscape with only a few surviving examples.



Log outbuilding on Glebe House property (example of period log structure)



Kingston Hall ice house photo courtesy of Jim & Simonne Theiss

### Late 18TH – Early 19TH CENTURY

During the Revolutionary War period, the Eastern Shore was left largely undefended with much plundering of personal property, but agricultural and minor industrial economies remained stable. The tobacco fields finally disappeared completely from the Eastern Shore landscape, being replaced by wheat, corn, oats, potatoes as well as cattle, sheep, swine, and poultry.

Somerset planters and merchants continued to enjoy lucrative profits from the agrarian economy of the Eastern Shore. The area was well-linked by water to growing population centers such as Richmond, Norfolk, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, and poor harvests in southern Europe and demand in the Caribbean spurred exportation of local grain and produce. Development of steamboat traffic in the 1830s and stagecoach service to Baltimore and Philadelphia in 1835 further facilitated transportation.

Tax records dating to 1800 reveal that there were few wealthy Somerset planters with over 500 acres. The majority of plantations were medium-sized estates of 100 to 500 acres with smaller yeoman farmers owning less than 100 acres. Vast amounts of acreage remained in virgin wilderness. By 1790 the number of enslaved were 7,000 out of total population of 15,610.



Sudler's Conclusion (early brick structure, later frame addition) Library of Congress image: ttps://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/md0789.photos.081572p/



Most planters occupied modest sized houses of between 500 and 1,000 square feet with one, two or perhaps three rooms on the first floor. Few of these smaller houses have survived as they were usually modified, replaced or moved to become wings for newer dwellings. One surviving example is the Glebe House, built in 1784 on the banks of the Manokin River in Princess Anne, with three frame walls and one of brick.

Glebe House c 1785

The most prosperous planters reworked or rebuilt their earlier family residences in the new Federal or Greek Revival styles. Federal style had many of the same elements as Georgian but with more delicate ornamentation and sophisticated details, such as circular, elliptical or Palladian windows, semicircular fanlights over entries, recessed wall arches, ovalshaped rooms, and decorative elements such as garlands, swags and urns.

The Greek Revival style became popular around the War of 1812 when Americans shunned all things British and turned



Detail from front facade of Kingston Hall c 1780

towards designs in the classic Grecian style. This style exhibited strict symmetry, with features such as heavy cornices, wide plain friezes, simple moldings, a columned or pillared entry porch and narrow windows around the front door.

Whether entirely or partially of brick, these Federal and Greek Revival houses have survived in large numbers in Somerset County as private residences. Some examples are Tudor Hall, Kingston Hall, Liberty Hall, Beverly, William Adams House, and Workington (which burned in 1922).

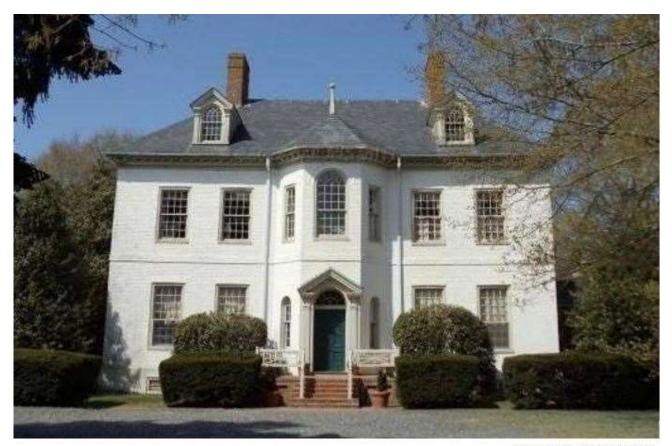
Kitchens were originally set away from the main house, but in early 19<sup>th</sup> century one-story covered colonnades were constructed to join to the main house, and many of these later became fully enclosed.



Kingston Hall c 1780-83 photo courtesy of Jim & Simonne Theiss



Workington, built c 1793, Westover vicinity, documentary photograph c. 1918 Courtesy of Mrs. Charles Wainwright



Beverly c 1785-1796 Photo: Newhoudl - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47346853

Within the towns, local craftsmen and tradespeople constructed primarily frame houses, covered with beaded, plain or flush weatherboards, and with interior or exterior brick chimneys. In Princess Anne, prosperous planters built townhomes while stores, warehouses, tanning yards, and workshops lined both sides of the Manokin River. Eventually and likely related to human activity, the Manokin River silted in and river traffic ceased, leading to a gradual economic decline.



There were two prominent properties in Princess Anne of this period constructed entirely of brick. Beckford was erected by John Dennis around 1802, exhibiting Georgian symmetry but with the more restrained and finely detailed features of the Federal style.

Adjacent to Beckford, Littleton Dennis Teackle constructed his ambitious estate dwelling he called 'Teackletonia', now known as the Teackle Mansion.

This sophisticated design consisted of a central raised two-story section with a temple or gablefront with a decorative center window. When completed in 1819, the house had two large rooms at the north and south ends connected with long enclosed colonnades.

The distinctive gable-end style of the Teackle Mansion was an influence for many other more modest dwellings subsequently erected in Princess Anne. Also popular was the 'transverse hall' layout with a wide hallway running across the full width of the front with generous doors at each end to provide air circulation. Some examples are the Old Episcopal Parsonage (1816), Elmwood (1820) Sarah Martin Done House (1823), Littleton Long House (1830), and the William Johnston House (1834).



Teackle Mansion c 1802 Photo credit: Catherine C. Lavoie



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Examples: Old Episcopal Parsonage (1816), Elmwood (1820) Sarah Martin Done (1823), Littleton Long (1830), William Johnston House 1834

Transverse hall of Littleton Long House, c1830

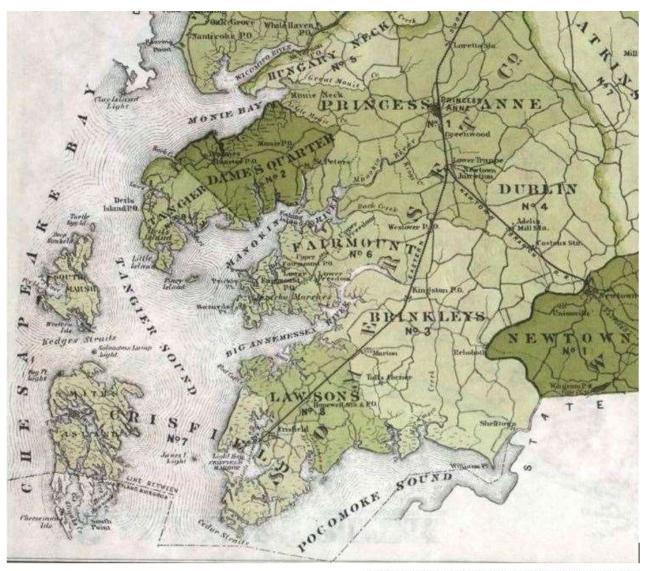
Concurrent with construction of Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival style buildings was the development of a strictly regional form known as the stepped or "telescope" house. A large main house is connected to sections each smaller than the other, often referred to as a "big house, little house, colonnade and kitchen" (in three, sometimes four sections). It evolved from the practice of connecting the external kitchen to the main house with a colonnade, but now a style resembling this configuration was built all at one time.



Old Cullen House, c 1837 Photo by Randy George

## Mid-Late 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The Eastern Shore region entered a distinct period of economic, social and political change during the middle of the 19th century that reshaped the agrarian and minor industrial society of Somerset County. Prior to the Civil War, the area continued to be prosperous and benefited from introduction of steam power technology, methods of preserving and canning fruits, vegetables and oysters for shipping and establishment of a railroad connecting the county to major urban areas rather than relying on water transportation.



Portion of map 1877 Atlas of the Eastern Shore Source: http://www.mdgenweb.org/somerset/images/lwrshore.jpg

During the Civil War, Maryland was considered a border state with divided loyalties, but with its essentially Southern plantation economy the lower Eastern Shore generally aligned with the Southern cause. During the war, there were no battles directly fought here but the region was considered strategic.

One year after the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves were officially freed in the state of Maryland in 1864. Somerset County was split again in 1867 to create Wicomico County, but despite this reduction in size the area continued to prosper with expanded markets and improved transportation. The former enslaved workers became tenants or sharecroppers, who were given a portion of the yearly harvest or a house on the property.

The oyster industry began to greatly expand in the Chesapeake region in the 1880s as a response to depleted oyster beds in New England and the invention of the dredge. With the advent of commercial canning, Crisfield developed numerous fruit and oyster packing houses supplying goods by rail and steamboat, and became one of the fastest growing cities in Maryland.

Princess Anne was no longer on navigable water but was served by the railroad and the town was able to expand. The Beckford and Teackle acreage was partitioned into numerous building lots and by the end of the 19th century the population of Princess Anne had reached 1,000.

Smaller villages evolved to serve the surrounding agricultural communities, such as Upper Fairmount. Two small black communities of Upper and Lower Freetown expanded between 1865 and 1877, and the watermen's villages of Frenchtown and Rumbley developed during this period. In the northern part of the county, Mount Vernon was founded on the Wicomico River and other towns grew along the rail line, such as Eden, Loretto, Westover, Kingston, Marion and Hopewell.

During the second half of the 19th century, new popular styles of architecture were introduced and more standardized mass produced building materials became widely available. In spite of these new trends, Somerset tended to hold onto its conservative and long- standing traditions of vernacular building. Construction and design manuals were readily available with the latest

Victorian styles - Italianate, Gothic Revival and Queen Anne Revival styles but local builders typically stuck to more familiar house designs with perhaps some trim or other details in the new styles. Only a few Somerset residents were adventurous enough to build an entire house wholly in one of the new styles.

Seth Venables was a mid-19th century house builder who constructed many of the houses on the newly divided lots surrounding the Teackle Mansion. The William Lecates home is built in a typical vernacular style of the mid 19th



William Lecates House c 1852-53 photo credit: Paul Touart

century – a two story, narrow three bay rectangular house with central hallway - but has Greek Revival exterior and interior details. Many of the building elements were manufactured and supplied rather than handmade by the builder. Venable's own home just north of the Teackle Mansion used another vernacular side hall/parlor plan with a mixture of late Federal and Greek Revival woodwork. Another similar home is the Levin

T.H. Irving house with similar side hall/parlor plan but with the temple or gable-front design and decorative central window influenced by the Teackle Mansion design.

In addition to the numerous Federal and Greek Revival examples in Princess Anne, there are also several homes of Italianate Style – the Rufus Parsons House and the Dennis Dashiel House. The Italianate style based on an idealized vision of an Italian villa - was popular in England in the 1840s and reached the United States twenty years later modified to suit local interests and aesthetics.



Judge Levin T.H. Irvin House (Episcopal Rectory) c1850



Rufus Parsons House, c 1858

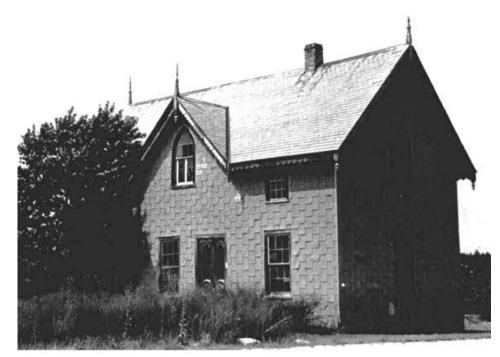
Less expensive building materials and mass production of cast-iron and press-metal decorative details allowed even modest buyers to now own an Italian villa. Italianate style homes are characterized by these elements: low-pitched or flat roof, rectangular shape of two or more stories, overhanging eaves with brackets and cornices, square cupola, tall, narrow, double-paned windows with moldings, double and pockets interior doors, and arches above windows and doors.

There are also several examples of the Second Empire style – characterized by a distinctive mansard-style roof. Another home built by Seth Venables in 1853, the Levin Woolford House exhibits a mansard roof but in every other way is a typical side hall/parlor vernacular style. Another example is the Noah Webster Homeplace, built in Deal Island later during the 1880s.



Levin Woolford House, c 1853 photo: Michael O. Bourne

Gothic Revival, a style imitating medieval castles or churches, is seldom found in our area. The Francis Barnes Farmhouse (now destroyed) was a very humble example with a bit of elaborate trim and gothic arched windows used only in the gable peaks.



Francis Barnes House c 1860 (no longer standing) Photo by Daniel Church dated 1967

Of all the popular styles, perhaps Queen Anne had the greatest influence toward the late 19th century. The most extensive collection can be found on the streets of Crisfield. Known for its asymmetrical forms and eclectic use of decorative and exuberant features such as towers, wraparound porches, patterned shingles and tall multi-faceted chimneys. The Pauline Crockett house in Crisfield is perhaps the best example, exhibiting most of the features associated with this style.



Pauline Crockett House c 1890 photo credit: Paul Touart

In Princess Anne, the Joshua Miles House (now the Hinman Funeral Home) dated 1890 is the most prominent example of this style, particularly its three story polygonal topped with a bell-shaped roof. This popular style was also used in more rural farmhouses, such as the Adams farmhouse just south of Princess Anne where an existing house was remodeled with Queen Anne features.



Joshua Miles House c 1890 photo credit: Paul Touart

What became very common was the modest, cross-gabled vernacular farmhouse, the main section a two-story long narrow rectangular shape with a one or two-story service wing off the back

(forming a T-shape). These were built repeatedly across the entire Eastern Shore in the last quarter of the 19th century into the early 20th century, occasionally attached to earlier dwellings, and are commonly seen throughout the area.

In some cases, the families have moved from the original farmhouses into trailer homes located directly next to the older home. Often those that continue to function as



Fred Henss Farmhouse

residences have been substantially altered.



Although conservative residents adhered to long-standing ideas of how to plan and build a house,

Jack Jones House c 1880-1900

most did incorporate some more modern ideas and conveniences, such as the use of iron cooking stoves in the kitchen area, and more domestic services were incorporated within the house, such as a pantry, laundry area, and nearby well. This somewhat reduced the number of outbuildings, however there was still need of the dairy, smokehouse and privy. Barns, granaries, and corn cribs continued to be built with some adaptations and perhaps decorated with stylish trim of the period. And the obsolete tobacco barns were commonly refitted for use as granaries.

Other types of utilitarian buildings were built, such as oyster and fruit packing

warehouses and worker housing, but most have burned or were demolished, with only a few examples surviving. Other industrial and commercial buildings and mills were built along the railway lines, and a few local 19th century railway stations can still be seen.

## GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

Hall, Great Hall, Great Room: Large/main room on lower floor, unlike our modern term for passageway.

Parlor: Second room on the lower floor, typically smaller in size than the Hall.

**Chamber**: The room on the floor immediately above another room (ex: Hall Chamber was the room over the Hall, Parlor Chamber the room over the Parlor).

Garret, Loft: The attic area.

**Chimney, Chimney Piece**: The fireplace. Early builders would state that "to each room was to be a chimney of brick".

**Beams**: The room features had their own vernacular. The "summer" was the great beam or girder which usually crossed the middle of a room, and "joists" were the small beams.

**Windows**: In the 17th century, the standard window was a wood casement on hinges, which swung outward. By the 1680s, the "sash" or sliding window was just coming into fashion. Because these windows had no weights and pulleys, they are sometimes referred to as "guillotine" windows. But casements were not totally abandoned and hung on in isolated spots in Maryland through the early 18th century.

**Doors**: The batten door was called a "plank door" because it was made up of boards without panels. A "bolectioned door" was one having panels and raised moldings around the panels.

**Clapboards, Weatherboards:** Wooden boards used typically for exterior horizontal siding that has one edge thicker than the other and where the board above laps over the one below. Clapboards are short boards of hardwood that were split or riven, rather than sawn, and this vertical straight grain resists warping and twisting. Weatherboards are of soft woods and sawn rather than riven, tapered in section and normally about 8 inches wide and 10-20 feet in length.

**Plantation**: The farm was "the plantation", meaning the place for planting. When the owner's home was situated on the property, it was called "the dwelling plantation" or "the home plantation".

**Landing**: A wharf on Chesapeake Bay or tidal tributary from which tobacco or other staples were shipped out and goods received.

**Outbuildings, Dependencies:** The numerous subsidiary buildings, sometimes forming a small village.

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**Kitchen, Kitchen House:** Usually a separate one room outbuilding away from the main house, often with a Kitchen Chamber room above.

**Kitchen Buttery**: The Buttery was not named for butter -- but for bottles. In large houses and mansions the bottlery, or boterie, was presided over by the butler or bottle-bearer – the bouteillier. The buttery is the progenitor of the pantry.

**Colonnade:** A long covered walkway, supported by a series of columns, borrowed from classical Greek design. The colonnade typically connected the separate kitchen to the main house, and was often later enclosed and became a more permanent part of the house.

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