

K-10

Widehall (Water Lot #16)

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 02-07-2013

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maryland	
COUNTY: Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Widehall

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Water Lot #16

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
101 Water Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Chestertown

STATE Maryland	CODE 24	COUNTY: Kent	CODE 029
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. Wilbur Ross Hubbard

STREET AND NUMBER:
Widehall, 101 Water Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Chestertown

STATE:
Maryland

CODE:
24

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS ETC:
Kent County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
Courthouse Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Chestertown

STATE:
Maryland

CODE:
24

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Maryland Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969
 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Maryland Historical Trust

STREET AND NUMBER:
94 College Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Annapolis

STATE:
Maryland

CODE:
24

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Maryland
COUNTY: Kent
ENTRY NUMBER: 24
FOR NPS USE ONLY

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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Widehall

#6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS continued

Historic American Building Survey (1969 - Federal)
Library of Congress
Washington, D. C. Code: 11

National Historic Landmark Program (1970 - Federal)
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. Code: 11

The property is within the area of Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland, as designated by the program.

National Register of Historic Places
801 19th Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. Code: 11

The property is within the area of Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland, as designated by the National Historic Landmark Program.

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE						
<p>Widehall is a large, two-and-a-half story, mid-Georgian, brick dwelling house located at 101 Water Street, Chestertown, Maryland. It occupies water lot #16 of the original town map and is within the National Historic Landmark area in Chestertown.</p> <p>The house is constructed on a high stone basement. The basement windows are protected by horizontal iron bars set in the stonework. Above the windows all header bond is used, as well as below and above the quarter-round molded water table on the northwest and southwest sides. Entrance to the house is gained up two flights of steps, interrupted by a terrace of sandstone paving blocks. Many of the original sandstone steps remain as well as a stone retaining wall, above which are brick piers with stone finials, part of an early clairvoie. The front (northwest) doorway is framed by an original, classical, Doric architrave, with fluted, engaged columns and a full pediment. The four windows of the first story and five of the second story, as well as eight on both levels of the southwest facade, have wood lintels with superimposed keystones. The windows have twelve-over-twelve sash and louvered shutters, not original to the house. The main cornice, hip-on-hip roof and dormers date from its restoration in 1910, replacing a nineteenth-century roof. A two-story brick kitchen wing on the northeast side and a two-story Ionic portico on the southeast date from 1910.</p> <p>On the first floor there is a central passage and four rooms. The most outstanding room is the stairhall located in the north corner of the building. It opens off the passage by a series of three arches, the central arch being larger and having a superimposed keystone while the arches flanking it have plain keystones. The staircase with its six-inch stair risers ascends on the opposite three walls of the hall, and is cantilevered from the wall. Its railing, fluted newels, turned balusters, three per step; rectangular step ends with half-rail and fluted pilasters on the wall, are all made of mahogany. The lowest step has a decorative scroll at the side where the fluted newel post is set and is, at that point, set with five balusters.</p> <p>The stair ascends to a large upper hall. One unusual feature of the first floor rooms is the use of a different cornice detail in each room. The stairhall has an intermittent "Wall of Troy" design featured as part of the cornice.</p> <p>Opposite the stairhall is the drawing room. Its cornice consists of courses of dentils and intermittent beading. The windows have croisettes at the top and consoles at the bottom of the trim, paneled interior shutters and pilasters beneath</p>						
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2						

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Widehall

#7. DESCRIPTION continued

the trim. The fireplace surround dates from the 1910 restoration and is a reproduction of the fireplace surround in the living room, which is original.

The central passage with a modillion cornice has an arch between the west and east end of the passage. In the southeast part of the passage a door on each side, with pediment above, opens into a living room (south) and dining room (east).

In the living room, the overmantel has a croissette trimmed panel with broken pediment, the latter repeating the designs of the cornice and overdoor. The windows have paneled shutters and croissettes at the top and bottom; and have pilasters beneath the chair rail. Original silver hardware is on the door and shutters; and the upper component part of the chair rail is mahogany; this is the only room in which these particular features are both found.

North of the passage across from the living room is the dining room, the only room having a raised paneled wainscot. The fireplace has an overmantel with broken pediment and it is flanked by two cupboards. These cupboards originally had paneled doors but these have been modified to open shelves. Slanted Greek Key design is employed in the cornices.

One unusual detail on the doors is the hinges, being one-half inch thick iron butterfly-shaped hinges mortised into the woodwork without the use of nails or screws.

The two-story Ionic portico affords a view of the Chester River and the well-maintained lawn and gardens.

In 1909 the house and adjoining lots were purchased by Mr. & Mrs. Wilbur W. Hubbard who are responsible for its restoration and present appearance. "Widehall," the name adopted by Mr. & Mrs. Hubbard, is now in the possession of Mr. Wilbur Ross Hubbard who maintains the house and gardens for his residence.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian; 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1769

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Widehall is a fine example of the mid-Georgian style, and one of the finest in Chestertown, which, prior to and just after the American Revolution, was a port of distinction, rivaling Annapolis on the west side of the Chesapeake Bay. The house was built in 1769 by Thomas Smyth as indicated in the minutes of the winter term of the Maryland Legislature of that year. It later was the home of Robert Wright, Governor of Maryland between 1806 and 1809; and of Ezekiel Chambers, State and United States Senator and Judge of the Court of Appeals.

The house is architecturally noteworthy due to its unusual stair and stairhall arrangement. Also of importance is the front terrace, with the original retaining wall and piers between the street and house. Very few houses in Maryland boast a clairvoie.

Three men of distinction in Maryland history owned and lived in this house.

Thomas Smyth, the builder, was a merchant, shipbuilder and shipowner, trading with the British West Indies, and one of the wealthiest men of his time in Kent County. After the Chestertown tea party of 1774, he was elected chairman of the local Committee of Correspondence. Later Smyth became Head of Maryland's revolutionary provisional government. In this capacity he was the provisional governor of Maryland, and served in this office until 1776 when the state's first constitution was framed and its first governor elected. He was also benefactor, co-founder and the first Treasurer of Washington College when it was founded in Chestertown in 1782.

In 1801 the house was sold to Robert Wright (1752-1826), who served as a United States Senator for three terms, 1801-1806. He was educated and graduated from Washington College and began his law practice at Chestertown before the American Revolution. During the Revolution he served as Captain under

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Widehall

#8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

Colonel William Richardson's battalion of the Maryland Line. In 1784 he was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. In 1806 he was elected the Governor of Maryland and thus resigned his position with the United States Senate. He served his state as governor for three years, and between 1810 and 1817 he served as United States Representative.

In 1822 the house was purchased by Ezekiel Forman Chambers (1788-1867), who was educated at Washington College, Chestertown, and in 1808 was admitted to the Maryland Bar. In 1822 he was elected to the Maryland Senate and between 1826 and 1834 served his state in the United States Senate. In 1834 he was appointed Chief Judge of the then second Judicial District and Judge of the Court of Appeals. In 1864 he was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland. In 1867, the year of his death, he was the President of the Board of Trustees of Washington College. It was not until after his death that the house was sold.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Recorder: Michael Bourne, Maryland Historical Trust, 94 College Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

Antiques. Vol. XCV. (April 1969).

Buchholz, Heinrich E., Governors of Maryland from the Revolution to the Year 1908. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1908.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 12' 27"	76° 03' 50"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Mrs. Preston Parish, Keeper of the Maryland Register

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust

DATE

Feb. 7, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:

94 College Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland

CODE

24

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name

Orlando Ridout IV
Orlando Ridout IV

Title

State Liaison Officer
for Maryland

Date

February 7, 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Maryland	
COUNTY Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

Widehall

#9. REFERENCES continued

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Dictionary of American Biography, Vols. III, XX. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.

Drury, John, The Heritage of Early American Houses. New York: Coward - McCann, Incorporated, 1969.

Earle, Swepson, The Chesapeake Bay Country. Baltimore: Thomsen - Ellis Company, 1924.

Footner, Hulbert, Maryland Main and the Eastern Shore. reprint. Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Tradition Press, 1967.

Robertson, John W., Land of the Evergreen. Onancock, Virginia: The Eastern Shore News, 1963.

Scarborough, Katherine, Homes of the Cavaliers. New York: Macmillian, 1930.

Wilson, Everett B., Maryland's Colonial Mansions. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1965.

Wilstach, Paul, Tidewater Maryland. New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1938.

Works Progress Administration. Maryland A Guide to the Old Line State. New York: Oxford Press, 1940.

Usilton, Fred G., History of Chestertown. Chestertown, Maryland: William B. Usilton (Publisher) 1899.

Usilton, Fred G., History of Kent County. Chestertown, Maryland: William B. Usilton (Publisher) 1916.

Comstock, Helen, 100 Most Beautiful Rooms in America, New York: Studio Publications, 1958.

Reif, Rita, Treasure Rooms of America's Mansions Manors and Houses. New York: Coward - McCann, Inc., 1970.

White, Frank F., Jr., The Governors of Maryland. Annapolis: Hall of Records Commission, 1970.

K-10

Widehall
Water Street, Chestertown
1769

Sometime prior to 1769, Thomas Smyth entered into an agreement with one William Granger to buy from him Lot No. 16 in Chestertown for the sum of @100.¹ Lacking a deed of record, Smyth petitioned the General Assembly of Maryland in December of 1769 for clear title. In the act granting him such, there is clear indication that he had already begun the construction of the grand brick house known today as Widehall.

"No. 9 An Act to secure to Thomas Smyth the Right in a Lot of Land in
Chester Town

Whereas Thomas Smyth of Chester Town in Kent County, Mary Granger Mother of William Granger and the said William Granger have by their Petition to this General Assembly set forth That the said William Granger is seised and Possessed of a certain Lot of Ground lying and being in Chester Town aforesaid known & Distinguished in the Plott of the said Town by the Number sixteen as one of the Water Lots of the said Town which of itself is not of much Value but being Convenient to the said Thomas to erect and build a House on, the said William Granger being now but Twenty Years of Age had with the Advice and Consent of his said Mother agreed and [consented] to sell the same to the same Thomas for the Valuable Consideration of one Hundred Pounds secured to be paid to the said William. In Consequence whereof the said Thomas Smyth hath erected on the said Lot a Large and Valuable Brick House and Kitchen which he was Desirous of finishing and compleating immediately but being unwilling to risque so valuable a part of his Property without securing his Title to the

said Land which could not be done whilst the said William was under Age the said Petitioners have prayed that an Act of Assembly might pass to enable the said William Granger tho' under Age to convey to the said Thomas Smyth all his the said William Grangers Right Title and Estate in the said Lot of Land in as full and ample Manner as if he was of full Age,

And Whereas Inquiry has been made into the Truth of the ffacts in the said Petition and it appearing that the Price agreed to be given for the said Lott of Ground doth Considerably exceed what the Lotts in the said Town of much Larger Contents have usually been sold it is judged that the said Sale is Advantageous to the said Minor the said Petition is therefore granted so as that the Consideration Money shall be Secured to be paid to the said William if he arrives to full Age and if not to his Heir at Law."2

The house Thomas Smyth built was an ambitious building for its day in Chestertown. There was no attempt to build onto an existing building, as was done later at the Hynson-Ringgold House, a block away, it was instead built from the ground up, possibly employing designs, if not craftsmen themselves from Annapolis or Philadelphia.

To set the house off from the street and also to make the house seem less tall, Smyth built a terrace with retaining wall and clairvoire which had four brick columns with stone finials. The center had a pair of gates and flanking it was a decorative "pailing" between the columns. From the sandstone paved terrace, a second set of sandstone steps ascended to the central entrance with a classical pedimented Doric architrave with fluted engaged columns.

The two principal walls of the house (northwest and southwest) were laid in all header bond, a uniform treatment found on many Maryland houses, but seldom in combination with rusticated wood window jack arches. For such a bold treatment over the 12/12 windows and the entrance architrave, the single ovolo molded brick watertable was understated. Two dormers were located on the front and back slopes of a hip roof. Its cornice had heavy modillion or mutule blocks.

When the petition for clear title to water lot No. 16 was granted, a "kitchen" was mentioned in the Act. That kitchen was located on the eastern side of the river facade. It was a two story three bay brick building constructed near grade level. Off the gable end of the kitchen there was a square stone smokehouse.

Originally, Thomas Smyth finished the house with the best materials and craftsmanship. Its plan was nearly identical to Henry Pratt's mansion in Queen Anne's County (built about four years before). The main entry opened onto a passage which was separated from the stairhall by a series of three arches, the center one being larger and more finished. A fourth arch separated the front and back halves of the passage. The other three rooms which were entered from the passage were finished in a similar manner - the chimney breasts having Tabernacle overmantels flanked by cabinets, bold chair rail and baseboard on wainscoting, interior window shutters and bold cornice. Each of the rooms, however, varied slightly. For example, the west parlor had window trim with crossettes at the top and rounded consoles at the chair rail, while the south parlor had squared consoles and the dining room had neither.

The west parlor had bead and reel molding on the cornice while the south parlor had none. The dining room had Wall of Troy molding cut on the diagonal and the stairhall had intermittent Wall of Troy cut perpendicular to its face. The dining room was the only room on the first story to have raised paneled dado and the south parlor was the only room to have mahogany used for the top element of the chair rail. Each of the three doors had overdoors to match the modillion cornice of the passage, while the interior overdoors matched the room cornices. The dining room, however, lacked an overdoor, due undoubtedly to the presence of a boxed stair descending from the second story to the kitchen along the passage wall.

Unlike the other three rooms, the dining room had two windows on the northeast wall only, due to the presence of the kitchen wing on the river side. From the dining room there were several steps down to the brick floor of the kitchen wing. In all likelihood, the steps entered a passage to the kitchen. A pantry opened from the passage. The kitchen fireplace was probably like that in the Ringgold House, a wide arched opening with double cranes. On one side of the fireplace was a winder stair to the servants' rooms on the second story.

The stair was a well-executed piece of workmanship, which ascended on three walls and cantilevered from the upper two. Its railings, fluted newels, turned balusters (three per step), rectangular step ends and half-rail and fluted pilasters on the wall opposite, were all made of mahogany. The bottom of the balustrade had a large volute beginning on a newel surrounded by a five turned balusters, all standing on the gracefully shaped lower step. The stair ascended to a large second story hall, the same size as the stair hall and passage below.

Three bed chambers opened onto the wide hall and passage. Like the rooms below, the fireplaces were trimmed with King of Prussia marble, but the overmantels were paneled in a less formal manner. Likewise, the window trim was plainer, the paneled shutters had raised panels and the cornices were without carving. In addition to the three large bed chambers there was a small unheated room above the back door and a stair to the third floor, as well as one to the kitchen wing. The attic rooms were probably unheated and the only finish would have been plaster with baseboard and door trim.

There is record of the birth of Thomas Smyth as occurring on 12 April 1730 at "his father's plantation." Whether he was born at Trumpington or Radcliffe Cross (his father owned both) is uncertain. When his father died in 1741, it was stipulated that Thomas was to study under James Calder, a prominent lawyer of Kent County. He married Sarah Gresham (1730-1761) at St. Paul's Church on 12 March 1752. In the following year Sarah gave birth to their first son, Thomas Jr. A second son was born in 1755 and he was named Richard Gresham after Sarah's father. After Sarah's death in 1761, Thomas remarried Margaret Hands (1745-1794), daughter of Thomas Bedingfield Hands (d.1768). They proceeded to have more children, including Maria (1784-1823) who was to reside at Trumpington.³

One year after Thomas' second marriage to Margaret Hands he purchased Water Lot No. 17 from his father-in-law. Three years thereafter he began the construction of his mansion on Water Lot No. 16. By the time he began this endeavor, he had become a very successful merchant, had been Sheriff of Kent County in 1764 and was active in political affairs of the

day. Concurrently with his building activities, Smyth was in business with Emory Sudler. In August of 1769 two advertisements in their names may be found in the Maryland Gazette, in regard to runaway servants.

In 1770 Smyth was a member of a committee set up to investigate the increase in taxation on many English imports. He appears as executor to many estates in the early 1770's. In the mid 1770's and through the Revolution Smyth was a member of the Council of Safety and supplier of arms, meat, flour and at least two galleys from his shipyard.⁴

By 1783, when the tax assessment was made, Thomas Smyth was assessed for 2354 acres of land extending from Chestertown to Eastern Neck Island. In 1784 he purchased Lots No. 12 & 13 from a Delaware merchant. Three years later he sold the same (River House), to his son, Richard Gresham Smyth.

Beginning in the late 1780's, Smyth's business began to fall off and he began to sell real estate to offset his losses. On 24 February 1790 he sold Widehall and his wharfs to Robert Anderson for @3250.⁵ Like many others in the depressed post Revolutionary period, Smyth was unable to keep up with his creditors and declared bankruptcy in 1792. His brother-in-law appears to have come to his aid by purchasing Trumpington. By 1808, however, Thomas Smyth had regained title to Trumpington and continued to live there until his death in 1818 at age 90. His body is buried in the family plot south of the house.

Widehall passed from Robert Anderson, at the time of his death, to

his brother Thomas, who was responsible for the construction of the neighboring house (the Anderson/Aldrich House).⁶ Anderson in turn sold Widehall to Robert Wright, then U.S. senator from Maryland.⁷

Wright had begun his law practice in Chestertown before the Revolution and later served as a captain under Col. William Richardson. In 1784 he was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates and in 1786 reelected to the same. In 1806 he was elected Governor of Maryland and subsequently resigned from his position with the Senate. After three years as Governor, Wright decided to return to Washington where he was a Representative for seven years.

At the beginning of his last stint in Washington, Wright sold the Smyth mansion to Elizabeth Chambers, wife of the Clerk of the Court, Benjamin Chambers.⁸ The Chambers moved from their vernacular residence on Queen Street (Buck/Chambers House) and remained in residence at Widehall until their deaths.⁹

Widehall continued to be owned by the Chambers family, passing first through the two daughters, Augusta (widow of Judge James Houston) and Elizabeth, wife of Joseph Wickes, to end up in the hands of their brother, Ezekiel Forman Chambers (1788-1867).¹⁰

Ezekiel Forman Chambers was educated at Washington College and in 1808 was admitted to the Maryland Bar. In 1822 he was elected to the Maryland Senate and between 1826 and 1834 served Maryland in the U.S. Senate. In 1834 he was appointed Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District

and Judge of the Court of Appeals. He lived in Chestertown until his death in 1867.¹¹

In his will, Ezekiel made provisions for his "unfortunate son, James" (a reference to his mentally retarded child). Another reference to the trials which Ezekiel endured is found in the diary of Martha Ogle Forman, his cousin:

"July 25, 1835 . . . we reached Chester about 6 o'clock. It was the most distressing scene I ever witnessed. The Judge with his seven motherless children round him, three of them infants. O, my god, it was heart rending, such trials make people die before their time. Of what materials can a mother be made, who could desert her infant children, her husband, and everything comfortable around her, and give herself up, to infamy, and wretchedness for the sake of an abandoned man?"¹²

A detailed description of Widehall during Ezekiel Chambers' occupancy is found in the fire insurance policy which he took out in 1842 with the Franklin Fire Insurance company:

"Survey made Nov 18th 1842 and reported to the Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia.

For the Hon Ezekiel F. Chambers

A two Story Brick Dwelling house & back Building Situated between front Street & the Chester River & East of high Street in Chestertown Kent County Maryland

Dimensions: the Mansion house is 50 feet from front & 41 ft deep having an Entry Acrofs the middle 6 ft wide with two Rooms on the right & a Hall & one Parlor on the left, in the first Story, 2nd Story divided Similarly with an

additional Small room taken off the end of the Entry, the outer walls are brick 22 in thick & the partition ones 12 in thick, Stone Cellar high Rooms all communicate with the Entries by 1-3/4 in framed doors with brass locks & knobs or handles, two stacks of chimneys in the partition walls running East & west with a fireplace to each room. Marble Mantels 1 St Story & breast frame over, & Meat Wood Mould Mantels to fireplaces in 2nd Story, Side closets by fire places both Stories, front & back Entry doors same as to the Parlors with outside Venetian doors front, wood block cornice to the Entry, & wood mould cornice to hall & Parlors with dental bed moulding, and mould cornice in 2nd Story. Cornice heads to the doors in the first Story. With 6 in plasters - 1st Story 12 feet high Ceiled, 2nd Story 10 ft. & ceiled, 13 windows to first story and 15 to 2nd 2 11 light each 10 by 12 glafs. Outside Venetian Shutters & inside folding panel Shutters with revealed frames best Carolina 1-1/4 in heart pine floors. Oak Joist & Rafters, a Barrack Cedar Shingle roof Overlaid with tin back & front tin gutters & conductors lightning rod, heavy block cornice, the Garret is divided into 4 parts by Stud partitions & framed doors. Ceiled 7 ft. in the clear, two 12 light dormant windows back & front 10 by 12 glafs; there is a private Stairs from the 2nd Story to the back kitchen below, & a boxed winding Stairs from the Entry in the 2nd Story to the Garret, & an open Stairs in the Hall 4-1/2 ft. wide quarter based, Mahogany - railing Scroll, Posts balustrades, & Yellow pine plank steps There are 3 archways from Entry to Hall in the first Story & one in the Entry Way to 2nd Story, rooms lined between the Washboards & surbaces & recefs under the windows Turned pilasters in front to entry door with Cornice head & dental block moulds, Stone Sill & Step; front Yard Walled in with pailing on top. The Mansion house is built in the best & most Substantial Manner of the best Materials & painted wood work throughout. On the South is a Piazza 6-1/2 feet wide with a Cedar Shingle Shed roof, lath

& plastered ceiling Yellow pine floor and three turned posts, Oak Sill & Joist & Stands on brick pillars, & flight of Steps to the ground.

The back building is brick two Story, 20 by 35, two rooms & a pantry in first Story & 4 rooms in 2nd plastered Ceilings two windows both sides both Stories, panel Shutters, Stud & brick partitions, a ledge door each side & to each room inside brick floor to 1st & pine plank to 2nd A fireplace in South end & Stairs to 2nd Story, loft over Not plastered Cedar Shingle ridge roof Oak Joist & Rafters,

A Stone Smoke house about 10 feet South of Kitchin, the Buildings Stand Alone, the Nearest being brick

\$3000 Insured at 3-1/2 per cent

Robt Buchman Surveyor

E. F. Chambers”¹³

After Chambers' death, the house was sold to one Robert Clay Crawford, an entrepreneur, who stayed less than two years.¹⁴ It was, however, during this time that the roof was restructured into the Second Empire style. The property was then purchased by George B. Westcott, one of Kent County's largest land owners of the time.¹⁵ Westcott never lived at Widehall, but apparently leased it to someone who turned it into "Brown's Hotel". Two years after Westcott's death Widehall became the property of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur W. Hubbard.¹⁶

Hubbard was also a substantial property owner. Besides Widehall, he owned wharf property on Lot No. 17, the Thomas Anderson House next door and the Custom House across the street. Under the direction of Howard Sill, a prominent Baltimore architect, the house was remodeled and

reoriented to the river. Part of Thomas Anderson's lot was used for a kitchen and the wharves on Lot No. 17 were demolished. Once the old kitchen was removed from the river side of the house, a Doric Portico with double porches was built facing the river. A driveway with wrought iron gates at High Street was installed for family use, the entire river side was bulkheaded and the lawn graded.

Other exterior work included the roof being changed from the mansard Crawford had installed to a hip-on-hip and refurbishing the brickwork, windows and doors. Interior changes were done with respect to the original woodwork that remained, but great emphasis was placed upon accommodating modern amenities. By 1913, the house was occupied and ready to receive guests. After a visit to Widehall (the name originating with the Hubbard's), Susan Brooks wrote in her diary:

" . . . Our literary meeting at Mrs. Hubbard's she certainly has made a lovely place out of the Chambers property. Where once stood a granary & the wharf is now in the yard. She got the Chester River Co. to paint the wharf building, has renovated the Custom House & rebuilt the houses adjoining."¹⁷

From that time until her death in 1959, Mrs. Hubbard presided at Widehall, entertaining guests from around the world and maintaining the grandeur which she and her husband had created. Wilbur Ross Hubbard, her son, became the owner of Widehall before Mrs. Hubbard's death. From 1958 until his death in 1993, Mr. Hubbard made some minor changes to the house, always trying to improve its appearance and convenience.

1. William Granger was the son of Thomas Smyth's step mother, who married William Granger, Senior after the death of Smyth's father in 1741.

2. Archives of Maryland, Vol LXII, Assembly Proceedings, 1769-70, p. 124f.
3. Brown, B. B., Biographical Sketch of Thomas Smyth and family, found in Vertical Files, Enoch Pratt Library and in Hubbard Collection, Historical Society of Kent County.
4. Revolutionary Papers, Hall of Records, Box 15, folder 8; folder 2; Box 10, folder 7; Box 11, folder 5; Box 12, folder 2; folder 34; and others.
5. Land Records, Lib EF 7, fol. 534.
6. Wills, Lib. 7, fol. 309.
7. Land Records, Lib. TW 1, fol. 658.
8. Land Records, Lib. BC 6, fol. 204.
9. Wills, Lib. 10, fol. 222.
10. Land Records, Lib TW 4, fol. 96.
11. Biographical Cyclopeda; Representative Men of Maryland, p. 97; also in the Wilbur Ross Hubbard Collection, Historical Society of Kent Co.
12. Forman, Martha Ogle, Rose Hill Diaries, p. 350.
13. Franklin Fire Insurance Co, Policy #4307, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
14. Land Records, Lib. JKH 9, fol. 202.
15. Land Records, Lib. JKH 10, fol. 302.
16. Land Records, Lib. JTD 18, fol. 565.
17. Diary of Susan Massey Brooks, (1913) Manuscript in possession of Jane Brooks Sprinkle.

K-10 Widehall

1769

Chestertown

private

Along with the Wickes House (K-39) across the street, Widehall is the largest classic gabled 5-bay brick Georgian mansion in Chestertown. Commanding a wide view of the Chester River from its Ionic portico in the rear, the building has housed one of the county's wealthiest merchants and two U.S. Senators. Architecturally, its principal virtues are its unusual stairs and stairhall and its front terrace which boasts one of the few clairvoies in Maryland.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Widehall

K-10

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
101 Water Street

CITY, TOWN
Chestertown

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
First

STATE
Maryland

COUNTY
Kent

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Wilbur Ross Hubbard

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER
101 Water Street

CITY, TOWN
Chestertown

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code
Md. 21620

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Office of the County Clerk

Liber #: WHG 53
Folio #: 446

STREET & NUMBER
Kent County Court House

CITY, TOWN
Chestertown

STATE
Md.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Maryland Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks

DATE
1969

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Maryland Historical Trust 94 College Avenue

CITY, TOWN
Annapolis

STATE
Md.

7 DESCRIPTION

K-10

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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

Widehall is a large, 2½-story, 5-bay mid-Georgian brick dwelling house located at 101 Water Street, Chestertown. It occupies water lot #16.

The house is constructed on a high stone basement. The basement windows are protected by horizontal iron bars set in the stonework. Above the windows all header bond is used, as well as below and above the quarter round molded water table on the north-west and southwest sides of the house. Entrance to the house is gained up two flights of steps, interrupted by a terrace of sandstone paving blocks. Many of the original sandstone steps remain as well as a stone retaining wall, above which are brick piers with stone filials, part of an early clairvoie. The front (northwest) doorway is framed by an original, classical, Doric architrave, with fluted, engaged columns and a full pediment. The four windows of the first story and five of the second, as well as eight on both levels of the southwest facade, have wood lintels with superimposed keystones. The windows have 12/12 sash and louved shutters, not original to the house. The main cornice, hip on hip roof and dormers date from its restoration in 1910, replacing a nineteenth century mansard roof. A 2-story brick kitchen wing on the northeast side and a 2-story Ionic portico on the southeast date from 1910.

On the first floor there is a central passage and four rooms. The most outstanding room is the stairhall located in the north corner of the building. It opens off the passage by a series of three arches, the central arch being larger and having a superimposed keystone while the arches flanking it have plain keystones. The staircase with its 6-inch risers ascends on the opposite three walls of the hall, and is cantilevered from the wall. Its railing, fluted newels, turned balusters, three per step, rectangular step ends with half-rail and fluted pilasters on the wall are all made of mahogany. The lowest step has a decorative scroll at the side where the fluted newel post is set and is, at that point, set with five balusters.

The stair ascends to a large upper hall. One unusual feature of the first floor rooms is the use of a different cornice detail in each room. The stairhall has an intermittent "Wall of Troy" design featured as part of the cornice.

Opposite the stairhall is the drawing room. Its cornice consists of courses of dentils and intermittent beading. The windows have croisettes at the top and consoles at the bottom of the trim, paneled interior shutters and pilasters beneath the trim. The fireplace surround dates from the 1910 restoration and is a reproduction of the fireplace surround in the living room, which is original.

The central passage with a modillion cornice has an arch between the west and east end of the passage. In the southeast part of the passage a door on each side, with pediment above, opens into a living room (south) and dining room (east).

In the living room, the overmantel has a croisette trimmed panel with broken pediment, the latter repeating the designs of the cornice and overdoor. The windows have paneled shutters and croisettes at the top and bottom; and have pilasters beneath the chair rail. Original silver hardware is on the door and shutters; and the upper component part of the chair rail is mahogany; this is the only room in which these particular features are found.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY ^

(continued)

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 checked="" 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 1769

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Widehall is a fine example of the mid-Georgian style, and one of the finest in Chestertown, which, prior to and just after the American Revolution, was a port of distinction, rivaling Annapolis on the west side of the Chesapeake Bay. The house was built in 1769 by Thomas Smyth as indicated in the minutes of the winter term of the Maryland Legislature of that year. It later was the home of Robert Wright, Governor of Maryland between 1806 and 1809; and of Ezekial Chambers, State and United States Senator and Judge of the Court of Appeals.

The house is architecturally noteworthy due to its unusual stair and stairhall arrangement. Also of importance is the front terrace, with the original retaining wall and piers between the house and street. Very few houses in Maryland boast a clairvoie.

Three men of distinction in Maryland history owned and lived in this house.

Thomas Smyth, the builder, was a merchant, shipbuilder and shipowner, trading with the British West Indies, and one of the wealthiest men of his time in Kent County. After the Chestertown tea party of 1774, he was elected chairman of the local Committee of Correspondence. Later Smyth became Head of Maryland's revolutionary provisional government. In this capacity he was the provisional governor of Maryland, and served in this office until 1776 when the state's first constitution was framed and its first governor elected. He was also benefactor, co-founder and the first Treasurer of Washington College when it was founded in Chestertown in 1782.

In 1801 the house was sold to Robert Wright (1752-1826), who served as a U.S. Senator for three terms, 1801-1806. He was educated and graduated from Washington College and began his law practice at Chestertown before the American Revolution. During the Revolution he served as Captain in under colonel William Richardson's battalion of the Maryland Line. In 1794 he was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. In 1806 he was elected the Governor of Maryland and thus resigned his position with the U.S. Senate. He served his state as governor for three years, and between 1810 and 1817 he served as U.S. Representative.

In 1822, the house was purchased by Ezekial Forman Chambers (1788-1867) who was educated at Washington College and in 1808 admitted to the Maryland Bar. In 1822, he was elected to the Maryland Senate and between 1826 and 1834 served his state in the U.S. Senate. In 1834 he was appointed Chief Judge of the then second Judicial District and Judge of the Court of Appeals. In 1864 he was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland. In 1867, the year of his death, he was the president of the Board of Trustees of Washington College. It was not until after his death that the house was sold.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the northeasterly line of High Street with the southeasterly line of Front Street and extending thence northeasterly along the southeast side of Front Street a distance of 201.6 feet, more or less, to an iron pipe set in concrete and planted in the south line of said Front Street; thence by and with the lands of A.S. Turner, in a southeasterly direction along a line parallel to the ~~side~~ said High Street to the Chester River; thence by and with said River to a point which is the end of the northeasterly line of High Street

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

aforsaid and thence in a northwesterly direction along said High Street a distance of 275 feet, more or less, to the _____ place of beginning.

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Michael Bourne / Robert Neill Historic Site Surveyors

ORGANIZATION
Maryland Historical Trust / Town of Chestertown

DATE
1972/1976

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

North of the passage across from the living room is the dining room, the only room having a raised paneled wainscot. The fireplace has an overmantel with broken ~~pede~~ pediment and it is flanked by two cupboards. These cupboards originally had paneled doors but these have been modified to open shelves. Slanted Greek Key design is employed in the cornices.

One unusual detail on the doors is the hinges, being one-half inch thick iron butterfly-shaped hinges mortised into the woodwork without the use of nails or screws.

The 2-story Ionic portico affords a view of the Chester River and the well-maintained lawn and gardens.

K-10



FOODS (VIEW) FARM

CEMETERY

VITA FOODS

COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

KENT

TWILLEY LANE QUEEN

WATER CANNON

HIGH STREET

MAPLE AVENUE

LYNCHBURG RD.

POPLAR STREET

KENT STREET

MILL STREET

CROSS STREET

ROW STREET

PARK COURT ST.

CHURCH ST.

STREET

PROSPECT ST.

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CALVERT STREET

SPRING ST.

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Chester

River

U.S. 213

K-10

K-10

MORGNEC

STREET

ELM STREET

GREENWOOD

VALLEY

CEDAR

SCHOOL

BROWN VIEW RD.

STREET

SCHOOL STREET

SCHOOL AVENUE

MORRIS

BYFORD COURT

RIVERSIDE TERRACE

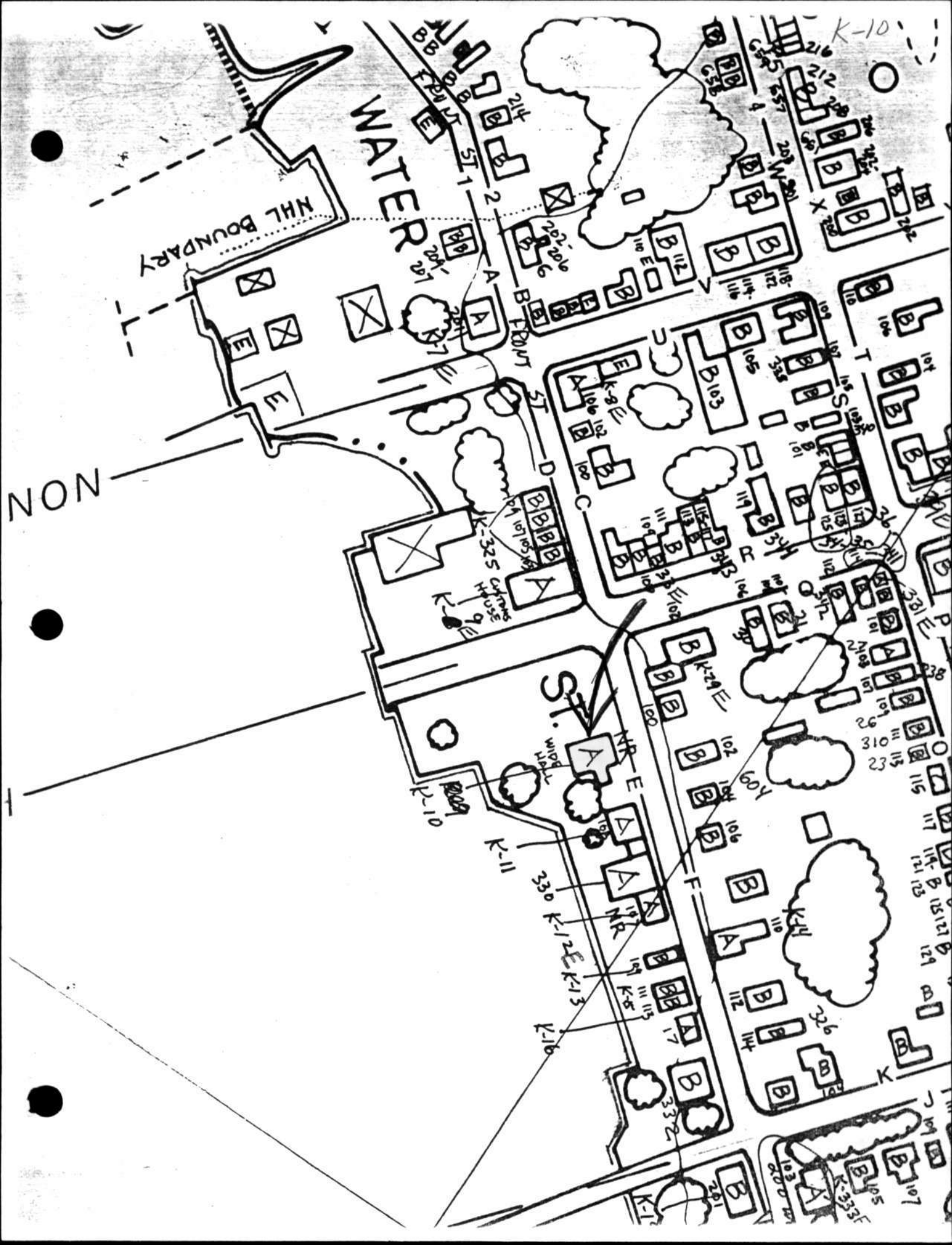
U.S. 213

K-10

NHL BOUNDARY

WATER

NON



K-10
Widehall (Water Lot #16)
101 Water St.
Chestertown
Chestertown Quad.
Kent County





K10 Wide Hall, 10 Water

1/77 E+S



K10 Wide Hall
101 Water

1/77 W