

PH0665380

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 22 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUL 21 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Locust Grove; Beech Neck

AND/OR COMMON

Locust Grove (preferred)

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

on the south side of Maryland Route 225, approximately
one-quarter mile west of its intersection with Mitchell
and Valley Roads

CITY, TOWN

La Plata

VICINITY OF

Port Tobacco

First

STATE

Maryland

CODE

024

COUNTY

Charles

CODE

017 ✓

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- BOTH
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

W. Mitchell Digges

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Avenue

CITY, TOWN

La Plata

VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland 20646

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Charles County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box B, Charles Street

CITY, TOWN

La Plata,

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

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 in the southeast corner and a fireplace opening approximately ten feet 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. The shingles covering the south side of the roof remain preserved under the present tin covering of the upper slope and, on the lower slope, by the roof of a full length porch added in the late 19th century.

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 second 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 establishes its existence at that time. By 1783, when a tax assessment

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
X1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
X1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1739-1749 c. 1825 BUILDER/ARCHITECT 1, Ralph Falkner
2, Thomas A. Davis

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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 needlework 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

See Continuation Sheet #3

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Land records of Charles County, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.
 Register of Wills Office, Charles County Courthouse, LaPlata, Md.
 Inventories and 1783 Tax Assessment, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,8</u>	<u>3,2,3,7,2,0</u>	<u>4,2,6,7,7,1,0</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

njm

NAME / TITLE

J. Richard Rivoire

ORGANIZATION

Architectural Historian

DATE

August 1977

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 132

TELEPHONE

(301) 870-3318

CITY OR TOWN

La Plata,

STATE

Maryland

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

John N. Pence 3/16/78

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Shirley A. ...
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

7-26-78
 DATE
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: William Cole
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 7-5-78

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Charles County,

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

DESCRIPTION (continued)

of the property was recorded, this wing was no longer standing. Evidence of the foundations exist under the 19th century main block, but a more complete archaeological examination would have to be conducted to establish its dimensions and basic plan.

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 the 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 overlight and is fronted by a one-story balustraded porch with turned and tapered posts. The windows are all of six-over-six

See Continuation Sheet #2

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

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 once stood on the north side of the house, extending across the full width of this elevation. It was removed early in this century.

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. Remaining outbuildings include two 20th century frame sheds located about 100 feet north of the house and a small barn standing about 100 yards to the southwest.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

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 husband's estate, for in 1771 a transaction was recorded in which she purchased from her nephew, Jeremiah Townley Chase, 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 present owner, W. Mitchell Digges, is a descendant of Thomas Davis on his maternal side.

Locust Grove, highly visible due to its prominent hilltop situation, has stood vacant for several years, suffering some damage attributable to both exposure and vandals. However, stabilization and other protective measures have recently been taken as part of a planned restoration.

See Continuation Sheet #4

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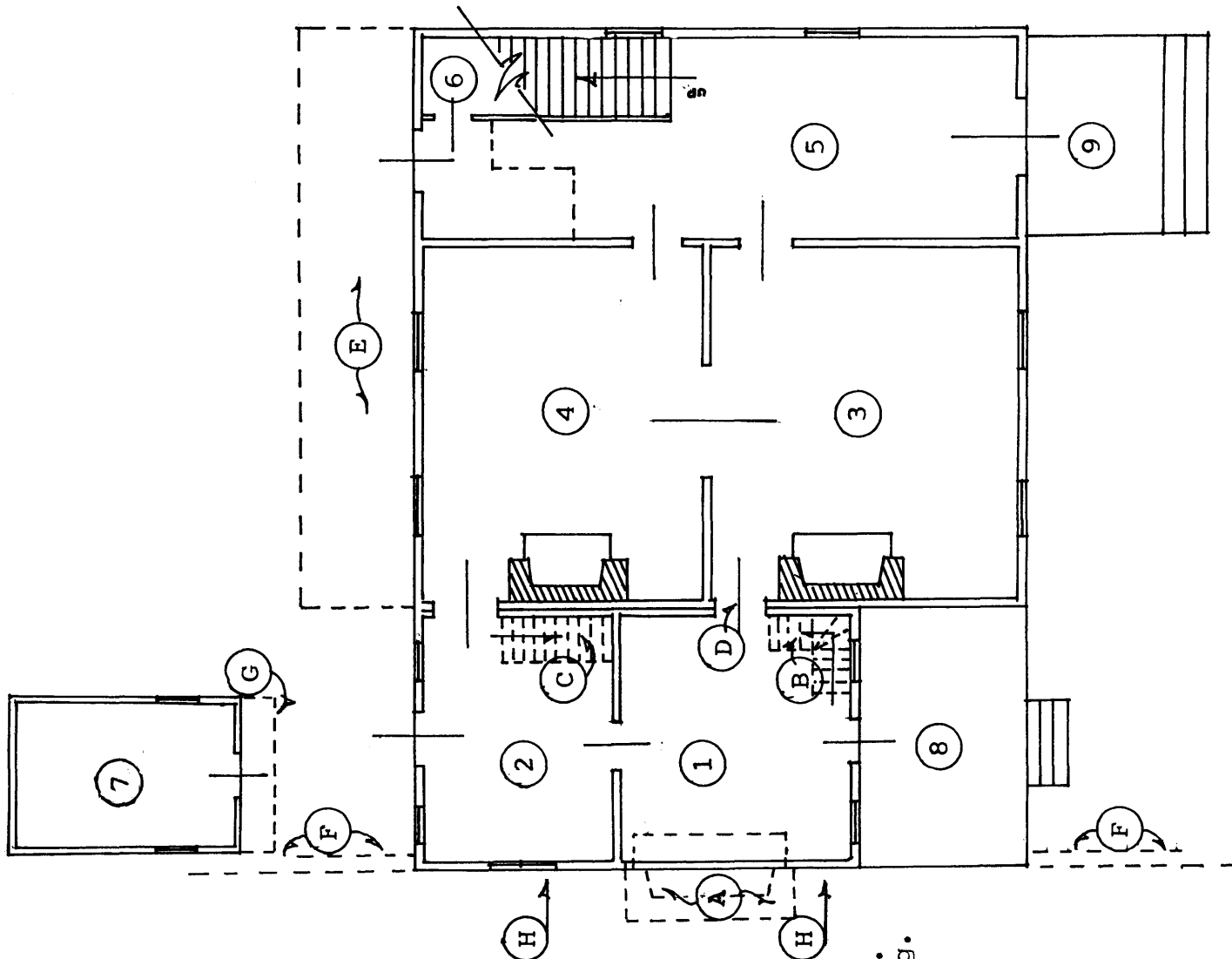
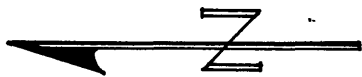
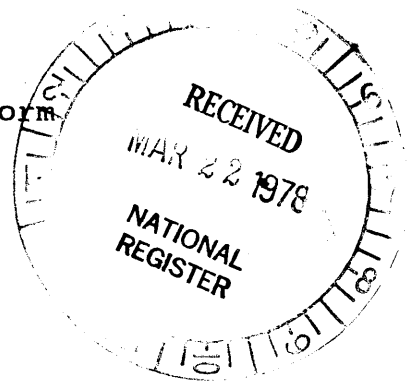
Locust Grove
Charles County,

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued - footnote)

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

APPENDIX # 1:
 #7 (Description), National Register Nomination Form
 LOCUST GROVE, Charles County, Maryland.



LEGEND:

- 1. Room; Phase 1.
15'6" x 15'3"
 - 2. Room; Phase 111.
15'6" x 12'0"
 - 3. Parlor; Phase 1V.
20'6" x 16'9"
 - 4. Parlor; Phase 1V.
20'6" x 16'5"
 - 5. Hall; Phase 1V.
10'9" x 35'6"
 - 7. Dependency; c. 1800.
 - 8. Porch; 19th c.
 - 9. Porch; Phase 1V.
 - A. Former Phase 1
Chimney.
 - B. Former Phase 1
stair.
 - C. Former Phase 111
stair.
 - D. C. 1900 door.
 - E. Former Phase 1V
porch.
 - F. Brick retaining wall.
 - G. Line of roof overhang.
 - H. Exterior cellar
entrances, Phases
1 and 111.
- Phase 1: 1st ½, 18th c.
 Phase 11: not appl.
 Phase 111: c. 1800
 Phase 1V: c. 1815-25.

First Floor Plan, LOCUST GROVE, Charles County, Maryland.
 Prepared by J. Richard Rivoire, LaPlata, Maryland
 August, 1977

