

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 Caldicott (preferred); ~~Essex Farm~~

and/or common Vessey House

2. Location

street & number ~~3.9 miles southwest~~^{SW} of U.S. 13 on Rehobeth Road n/a not for publication

city, town Rehobeth vic. vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Somerset code 039

3. Classification

<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name William G. and Nancy M. Vessey

street & number Route 1, box 214A

city, town Westover n/a vicinity of state Maryland 21871

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Courthouse

street & number Somerset Avenue

city, town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust
Historical Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1967 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

7. Description

S-72

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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Caldicott is a large frame dwelling constructed between 1784 and 1798 near Rehobeth, Somerset County, Maryland, for the locally prominent lawyer and farmer, Littleton Dennis. The house stands two stories above a raised basement of Flemish-bond brick; the exterior is sheathed with beaded weatherboards; asphalt shingles cover the gable roof. Both the principal (north) and rear (south) facades are symmetrical, five bays wide, with a fanlight entrance with nine-panel door in the central bay of the first story and a Palladian window above. The remaining bays hold 12/12 sash; the gable ends have 9/9 sash on the first and second stories with 6/6 windows lighting the attic. Most windows retain their original surrounds and sash. Corbeled brick interior chimneys rise from both gable peaks. A modillioned cornice defines the eaves. A one-bay, twentieth-century entrance porch shelters the front door, while a shed porch extends across the eastern three bays of the rear. A lower, gable-roofed, one-bay addition was attached to the east end c. 1930-1940. The interior exhibits a four-room plan unusual in a house of this date in the region; it is more typical of somewhat earlier (mid-18th century) buildings. Interior decorative detailing remains essentially intact, and includes a dogleg stair with turned posts and balusters and scroll-cut step ends; raised-paneled wainscoting, hearth walls, and doors; mantels; and molded cornices, chair rails, and baseboards. Also on the property are several outbuildings of early to mid 20th century date.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Caldicott, also known as the Vessey House (S-72) is located 3.9 miles southwest of U.S. Route 13 on the south side of Maryland Route 667 near Rehobeth, Maryland. A farm lane bordered by orchards and fields leads to the complex of buildings standing within fifty yards of the Pocomoke River.

Facing north, the late 18th century two-story, five bay, four-room-plan frame house rests on a raised Flemish bond basement and is covered by an asphalt shingle gable roof over wood shingles. Matching corbelled brick chimneys rise from each gable end. Attached to the east end is a two story frame addition, c. 1930-1940, which will be removed in preparation for a larger two story wing.

The exterior of the main house is uniformly sheathed with beaded weatherboards. A modillioned cornice stretches across front and back, while the gabled ends are finished with molded barge boards. A scrolled pattern board terminates both the cornices and barge boards. Window sash alternate from 12/12 in front and back to 9/9 on the first and second floors of the gable ends to 6/6 sash which light the attic. Most windows have survived with ovolo molded backband surrounds and early sash. A few twisted iron shutter hooks also remain in position to indicate earlier shutters. The north and south sides are distinguished by centrally placed doors with arched fanlights and nine panel doors. The front door is covered by an early 20th-century stoop, while the back door opens onto a shed porch. Above each porch roof is a well detailed and proportioned Palladian window with arched central sash. A curiosity about each window is a small black cross which interrupts the arched header moldings.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

8. Significance

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 checked="" 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 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 between 1784-1798 **Builder/Architect** Littleton Dennis, Jr.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicable Criteria: B, C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Caldicott derives significance from its architecture: having survived with over ninety per cent of its original exterior and interior fabric, it possesses a degree of integrity which distinguishes it among the Federal-period houses of Somerset County. In addition, it represents an unusually late realization of a floor plan more commonly associated with mid-18th-century houses in Tidewater Maryland; this late use of an earlier plan, as well as the overall design, closely links Caldicott with Beverly in neighboring Worcester County, the boyhood home of its documented builder, Littleton Dennis, Jr. The association with Dennis, a locally prominent lawyer, judge, and farmer, adds to the significance of the property.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

"Essex Farm," first known as "Caldicott" in Dividing Creek Hundred, belonged to Colonel William Stevens, who received a 500-acre patent on February 4, 1665.¹ Stevens actually lived on a neighboring parcel called "Rehobeth."

By 1783 the "Caldicott" tract had been divided into three parcels and owned by William White, Thomas Buff and Susannah Dennis, widow of Littleton Dennis (1728-1774) of Worcester County.²

Susannah Dennis' son, Littleton Dennis, Jr. (1765-1833) inherited the Somerset County property in December 1784 and constructed the house between this date and 1798, when he was assessed for:

Situate on a landing of Pokomoke River in Somerset County 1 dwelling house 40 by 34 feet two story high with 8 windows 5 by 2 and 9 windows 2 by 5 feet and 10 windows 4 ft. by 2 feet and 4(?) by 2 ft with brick cellar house built of wood also 1 kitchen 19 by 18 and 1 milk house 9 by 9 and 1 meat house 12 by 12 all wood. Valued at \$1000.³

In addition, he was assessed for another tract and farm buildings, as well as a total of forty slaves.⁴ In plan form, and detailing, the Vessey House bears close similarities to Dennis' boyhood home, Beverly, constructed in 1773 in neighboring Worcester County.

Along with practicing law in Princess Anne and in adjacent Virginia, Littleton Dennis served as County Judge from 1801-1806. He also found time to manage an expanded farm which totaled close to 5,000 acres at his death in 1833.

9. Major Bibliographical References

S-72

See Continuation Sheet #4.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 12.3 acres

Quadrangle name Kingston, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
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D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #2.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>n/a</u>	code	county	code
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state		code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Touart

organization Somerset County Historical Trust date September 6, 1983

street & number Rt. 3, Box 331 (c/o H.F. Yerges) telephone 301-651-0788

city or town Princess Anne state Maryland 21853

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature] 10-31-83

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>12/22/83</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Caldicott Item number 7 Page 1
Somerset County, Maryland

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The east and west gable ends are largely alike aside from the soon to be removed east end addition. In its place, a larger wing will be built which repeats the position and size of the first east end wing. (The scar of the roof-line is clearly seen.) A separate gabled entrance provides access to the cellar.

The front door opens into a rectangular entrance hall that contains a dog-leg stair. Rising in the southwest corner, the open-string stair consists of a molded handrail supported by turned posts and balusters. The handrail terminates in a small circle at its base. The stringer is decorated with ornamental scrollwork, while the soffit is panelled. There is a four-panel door with HL hinges under the stair which opens to the cellar. Raised six-panel doors open into the adjacent rooms as well as a narrow closet on the west wall. As in the other rooms, the walls have been trimmed with raised panel wainscoting and cornice moldings.

Directly behind the stair hall is the parlor or living room, the largest room in the house. The west wall is dominated by a projecting chimney breast with raised panel over-mantel and richly detailed mantel. The mantel design consists of a plain shelf with a stepped cornice over plain frieze blocks. A narrow guilloche molding stretches across below the frieze. The entire chimney breast is framed by narrow pilasters. Raised panels cover each side of the chimney pile and encircle the room in wainscoting. A molded cornice stretches around this room, and it is enriched with a fret molding.

The southeast room was converted into a kitchen and awaits remodeling with the planned addition. A corner fireplace was covered over with kitchen cabinets and will be exposed.

The dining room occupies the northeast corner and is treated in much the same manner as the living room. A projecting chimney is fully paneled, but in this case the fireplace is highlighted by a molded surround and plain shelf. The cornice was similar to that in the living room, but the fret molding has been scraped off.

The second floor is divided by a center hall with two rooms to each side. One of the most dramatic interior features is this second floor hall since it is lighted at either end by a Palladian window. The south end window is partially obscured by a 20th-century bathroom. Also located in the hall is a straight flight of stairs to the attic. Each of the original rooms is treated with a beaded baseboard, molded chair rail and cornice. The northeast and southwest rooms have blocked fireplaces with molded surrounds. The hearth in the northeast room is flanked by closets. The other two rooms were not fitted with open fireplaces and were probably heated with iron stoves or left unheated.

**United States Department of the Interior
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Caldicott

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Continuation sheet Somerset County, Maryland Item number 7 and 10 Page 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The attic stair is detailed in the same manner as the main flight and opens into one large space. The common rafter roof is braced by half-dovetailed lap collar beams which are fastened with wrought nails. The mortise and tenon joint at the peak is pinned.

Rising through the floor at each end is a massive brick chimney pile with a supportive brick arch that separates front and rear flues. A small portion of the attic has been partitioned in the northeast corner.

The basement is divided into three rooms, two with dirt floors and one paved with brick. Three arched chimney supports were built with an opening in each soffit for enhanced air circulation; a feature not normally found. The exterior walls are pierced by large window openings and an exterior cellar entrance.

Standing east of the farmhouse is a cluster of early to mid 20th-century outbuildings. The closest structures to the house include two rusticated block storage buildings and an iron framed water tower. Further east is a gambrel roofed barn and various shed.

Directly east of the house is a large orchard and to the south the Pocomoke River.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the mouth of a small run just east of Essex Farm buildings and heading due north for 900 feet to a point in a farm lane, then in a westerly direction 600 feet to a point in a field north of the entrance lane, then in a southerly direction for 900 feet to a point on the bank of the Pocomoke River, thence running due east for another 600 feet along the bank of the Pocomoke to the place of beginning, containing 12.3 acres more or less.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The 12.3 acres included in this nomination border the Pocomoke River and will insure protection of the water frontage. The acreage covers the immediate area around the house and early 20th-century farm buildings.

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National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet Caldicott Somerset County, Maryland Item number 8 Page 3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

Littleton Dennis's son, Littleton Upshur Dennis (1804-1833), inherited the property, but soon afterwards he died at the age of twenty-nine. The property then passed to his two young children, Elizabeth and George, since their mother had died the previous year.⁵ After their parents' death, the children were raised at Beverly by their uncle and guardian, John Upshur Dennis.

Finally, in 1867 George's daughter, Elizabeth Murray Rush, lost the property in a Circuit Court case in which William L. Brittingham was appointed trustee to sell the land,⁶ thus ending almost two centuries of ownership by the Dennis family.

Through the following sixty years, the property changed hands more than a dozen times before Alice Vessey bought it in 1931.⁷ Since that transfer, the Vesseys have established an extensive orchard known throughout the county.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Patents, Liber 9 Folio 219, February 4, 1665. Hall of Records.

² 1783 Tax Assessment - Dividing Creek Hundred in District #4. Somerset County

³ 1798 Federal Assessment - Dividing Creek Hundred, Somerset County Particular list of Dwelling Houses, Littleton Dennis.

⁴ 1798 Federal Tax Assessment - Dividing Creek Hundred. Somerset County Slave Schedule, Littleton Dennis.

⁵ Wills, Liber JP #4 Folio 215, Probated March 25, 1833. Last Will and Testament of Littleton Upshur Dennis.

⁶ Circuit Court Records, January 15, 1868.

⁷ Somerset County Deeds JMT #102/Folio 72, December 11, 1931.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

S-72

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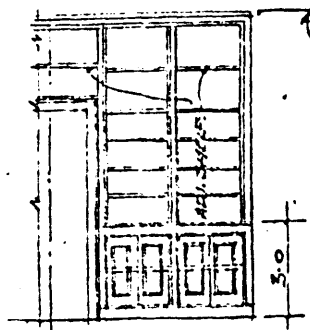
date entered

Continuation sheet Caldicott Item number 9 Page 4
Somerset County, Maryland

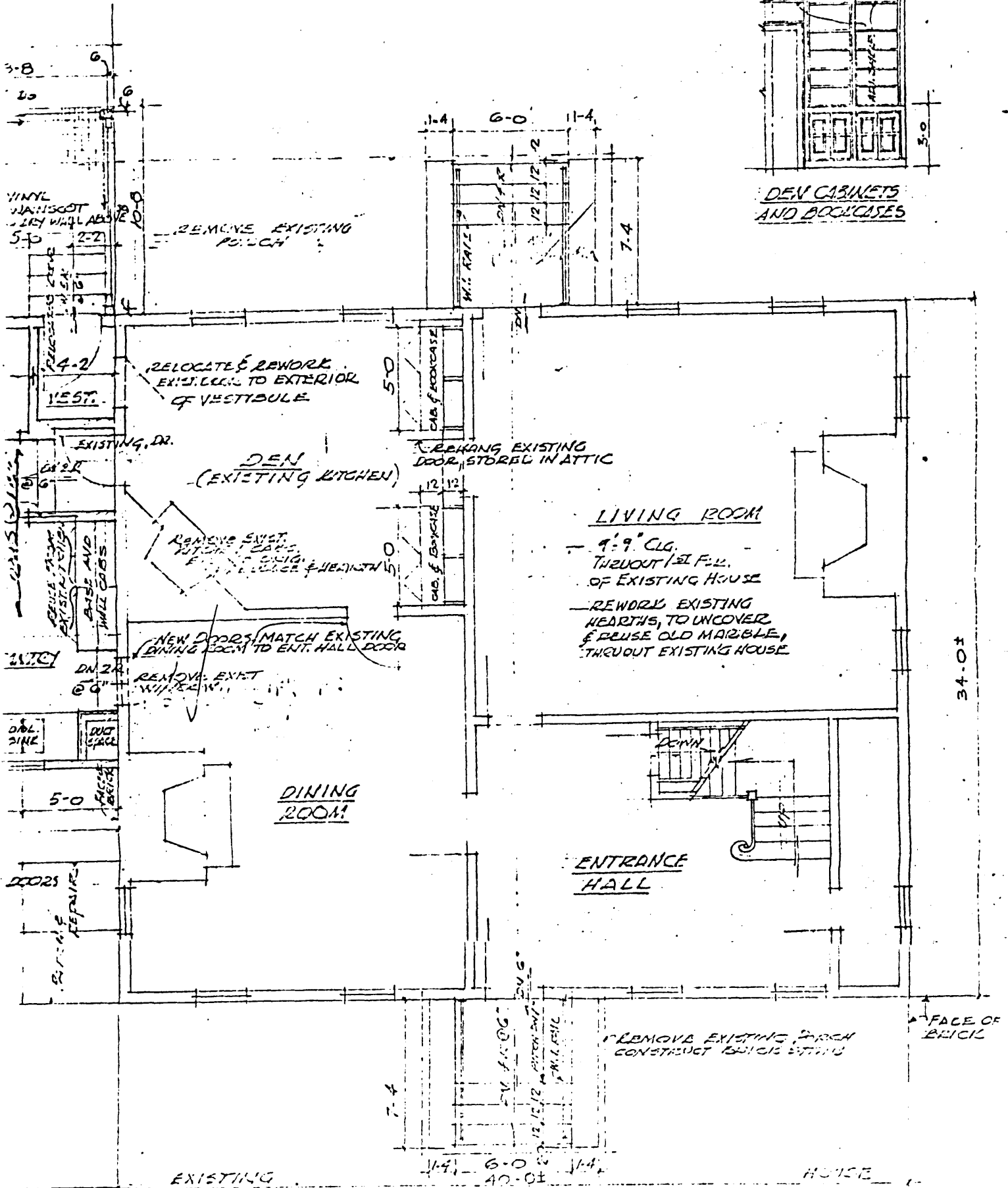
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- 1798 Federal Assessment, Microfilm, Somerset County Library.
Dividing Creek Hundred, Littleton Dennis.
- 1783 Tax Assessment, Dividing Creek Hundred. Somerset County, Hall of Records.
Somerset County Circuit Court, Register of Deeds, Somerset County Courthouse.
Somerset County Land Records, see specific reference in footnotes.
Somerset County Wills, Register of Wills, Somerset County Courthouse.
- Torence, Clayton. Old Somerset on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Baltimore
Maryland: Regional Publishing Company, 1966.

FLOOR



DEN CABINETS AND BOOKCASES



FIRST FLOOR PLAN — ADDITIONAL NOTATIONS — THE VESLEY HOME, REHOBETH, MS



VESSEY HOUSE

SOMERSET CO
WORCESTER CO

NORTH

S-72

667

667

Creek

CORNSTACK

ROAD

Frogeye

Ebenezer Ch

ROAD

SHELLTOWN

SHELLTOWN

POCOMOKE

Grave Pit

Rehobeth

Ruins

Cem

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BM 6

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SCALE - 1 = 600'

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