

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

For NPS use only
received MAY 1 1987
date entered MAY 29

**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 BROWN, MERCER, HOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1270 England Creamery Road N/A not for publication

city, town Rising Sun vicinity of First

state Maryland code 24 county Cecil code 015

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Edward Clark Plumstead

street & number 1416 Telegraph Road

city, town Rising Sun N/A vicinity of state Maryland 21911

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cecil County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Elkton state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1969 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources		Number of previously listed National Register properties included in this nomination: <u>0</u>
Contributing	Non contributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings	nomination: <u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites	Original and historic function and uses: residential
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total	

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The Mercer Brown House is located in a rural setting west of the village of Calvert in Cecil County, Maryland. It consists of three distinct portions: the two-story, three-bay, gable-roofed, brick part dates from 1746 and is laid in Flemish bond on all four sides with dark, glazed headers on the south and west facades. Several bricks are inscribed with the initials of local citizens and probable assistants of Mercer Brown, Jr. in the construction of his house. There is an intricately carved datestone with the inscription M B H (for Mercer and Hannah Brown) and ANNO DOMINI (sic) 1746. The interior retains its original floor plan of two rooms on each floor connected by a winder staircase and a small portion of its original woodwork. The three bay wide frame portion of the house dates from the early and late nineteenth century and is partly the work of Amassa Churchman, husband of the grand-daughter of Mercer Brown, Jr. It retains its original floor plan but has been fitted with woodwork not original to the house. Abutting the north facade of this frame portion is one half of a double-pen log barn moved to this property from an adjoining farm. Also on the property is an early 20th century bank barn, which does not contribute to the significance.

8. Significance

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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 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 1746 (brick half) **Builder/Architect** Mercer (Messer) Brown, et al., builders
(see description)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: C
Applicable Exceptions: None
Significance Evaluated: Local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Mercer Brown House is architecturally significant as an important, firmly dated survivor of the distinctive Pennsylvania Quaker building tradition brought to Maryland in the colonial period. Among the distinguishing features of this tradition are the remains of pent roofs, the elaborate use of glazed header brickwork and a highly decorative datestone. The most unusual feature, however, is the set of local initials carved into the brickwork of the 1746 half of the house; very few buildings in Cecil County offer as much insight concerning the actual building process.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 6

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5 acres

Quadrangle name Bay View, MD - PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 18 414440 4393730
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 7

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Geoffrey B. Henry

organization _____ date _____

street & number 1515 Rutledge Avenue telephone (804) 293-8006


city or town Charlottesville state Virginia

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.

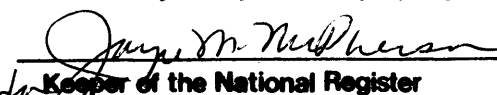
State Historic Preservation Officer signature  date 4-22-87

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date _____

For NPS use only

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

National Register

 date 5-29-87

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet BROWN, MERCER, HOUSE Item number 7 Page 1
CECIL COUNTY, MD

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Mercer Brown House is situated on a five acre tract located in a rural area of Cecil County, Maryland, approximately one mile west of the crossroads village of Calvert. The topography is characterized by gently rolling terrain comprised of cropland and pastureland drained by several branches of the North East Creek. The house faces north-south and is situated a few feet from and perpendicular to England Creamery Road which runs between Zion and the road to Calvert.

The present house consists of three distinct and easily recognizable portions. The brick part dates from 1746 and is a two-story, three bay wide, gable-roofed structure on a fieldstone foundation laid in Flemish bond on all four facades with glazed headers on the south and west facades. A diagonal pattern of glazed headers is visible on the west gable, which faces the road. Rubbed brick headers were used for the segmental arches above the first story windows and doors and for the more semi-circular arches above the cellar windows. There is a chamfered brick water table on the north, south and west facades.

A distinctive tombstone-shaped datestone is situated on the second story of the south facade directly above the center doorway. This elaborate and unusual plaque is inscribed with the initials M B H (for Mercer and Hannah Brown and ANNO DOMINI (sic) 1746, along with folk decorations of compass rose, Tudor rose, fleur-de-lis, tree-of-life and trailing vines.

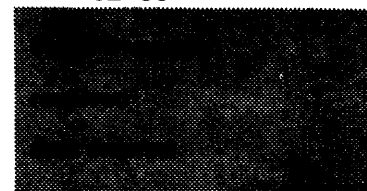
Several of the bricks are incised with the initials of local citizens and probable assistants of Mercer Brown, Jr. in the construction of his house. A few also incorporate a diamond or lozenge pattern with the initialed inscriptions. The names associated with each set of initials are as follows:

- T. W. 1746 Thomas Wilson
- W. W. William White, who is recorded on a bill of sale for "burning and setting bricks."
- S. E. Samuel England, who is recorded as supplying 500 bricks to Mercer Brown.
- J. D. John Day, a local tanner who settled in the area in 1739.
- B. Chandlee
(spelled out) Benjamin Chandlee, a well-known local clock-maker, to whom the carving of the datestone may be attributed.

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Continuation sheet CECIL COUNTY, MD

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

- H. R. (twice) Hezekiah Rowles, a local cabinet-maker who is recorded as executing the 1752 interior of the Brick Meeting House in Calvert and whose initials also appear in the woodwork of the nearby John Churchman House (1745), both on the National Register.

- J. B. 1746 Jeremiah Brown, whose nearby stone house built in 1757 is the only other building in the county possessing the distinctive carved initials of its builders.

The pent roofs across the north, west and south facades and below the west gable are restorations, but pre-restoration photographs clearly show the original wood supports and the projecting brick drip coursers.

Although the wooden window frames are original, the sashes are replacements. The door frames and three-light transoms are not original and probably date to the early nineteenth century. Evidence of a stoop and flanking hand-rails was found in the brickwork surrounding the south doorway; these have since been restored. There is a wooden cellar door on the north facade.

The brickwork of the north facade incorporates racking, suggesting that there was once a small wing, perhaps a buttery, off of the main house.

The interior retains its original floor plan of two rooms on each floor connected by a winder stairway located in the southeast corner, although the dimensions of the second floor rooms have been changed somewhat. There is a fireplace on the east wall of each level as well as a corner fireplace located in the northwest corner of the first floor.

Most of the original woodwork had been removed before the house was acquired by the present owner in 1964 but has been restored using the evidence of molding profiles imbedded in the later replasterings. This evidence revealed a high mantel shelf above the east end fireplaces and a tombstone shaped panel resembling the datestone located to the left of the downstairs fireplace.

The best surviving original woodwork is the ornamental cupboard built in above the corner fireplace. Original features include the deep cornice, grooved keystone, narrow flanking side panels with round finials, three built-in shelves and ledges and portions of the fireplace surround. The doors leading to the basement and attic are also probably original.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

Attached to and connecting with the east end of the brick half is the two-story, three bay wide, gable-roofed frame structure, part of which was built in the early nineteenth century; the rest dates from the late nineteenth century. Window and door frames are mostly original to their respective periods. The inferior quality of the brickwork visible from the interior of the frame wing indicates that some structure always existed attached to the brick house.

The interior of the frame wing has been fitted with woodwork brought from an early eighteenth century house threatened with demolition in Feasterville, Pennsylvania. There is a fireplace with fielded paneling on the north wall and a cupboard with original painted landscape on the east wall. The upstairs has retained its original floorplan of three small bedrooms.

Abutting the north facade of the frame portion and connected to it by the north door is one half of a double pen log barn brought here from an adjoining farm. The barn features V-notched logs filled with plaster and stone chinking and dates from the late eighteenth century. The gable roof has a wide overhang on the east side. The barn's interior has been re-plastered and is used as an office.

An early 20th century bank barn stands southwest of the house, across England Creamery Road; the building is open on the east side, with its roof ridge running north-south.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Architecturally, the Mercer Brown House is significant for three reasons: it is an important survivor of the distinctive Pennsylvania Quaker building tradition brought to colonial Maryland by William Penn and his followers; the brick section is an early, dated building located in a section of Cecil County, the Nottingham Lots, unusually rich in examples of eighteenth century architecture, thus giving important clues to the history of architecture in the county; and the house possesses a distinctive set of carved local initials in the brickwork, offering unusual insights into the building process. Only one other house, the nearby Jeremiah Brown House built in 1757, possesses such a collection of initials.

The house stands on a portion of Lot 28 of the Nottingham Lots laid out in 1701 by William Penn. This eighteen-thousand acre tract, spanning parts of both present day Pennsylvania and Maryland was laid out by Penn to attract settlers to territory disputed between him and Lord Baltimore. Among the first settlers was William Brown who bought Lot 28 for his son Mercer (also variously spelled Messer) Brown, Sr. After his death in 1732, the land passed to his son Mercer Brown, Jr., the builder of the brick half of the house. Both men were ironmasters (receipts for bar iron from as far away as Cumberland Forge still exist) and Mercer Brown, Jr., was probably responsible for the decorative iron hinges, ghosts of which were found on doors of the house.

The early settlers of the Nottingham Lots brought with them the building traditions they had known elsewhere in Pennsylvania and the brick half of the Mercer Brown House possesses several important characteristics of Pennsylvania Quaker architecture. Among these are the remains of pent roofs, elaborate glazed header brickwork and the carved datestone.

Pent roofs are a distinctive feature of seventeenth century architecture in Pennsylvania and at one time were a common sight in this section of Cecil County. Nearly all have been removed due to deterioration or changing tastes. Although this occurred at the Mercer Brown House, the joist holes and brick drip course were still visible and guided the restoration of the present replacement pent roofs. Originally the Mercer Brown House had pent roofs on two levels, a variation often seen in Cecil County.

The Mercer Brown House is an important contribution to the character of the Nottingham Lots, one of the most important collections of eighteenth century architecture in the county. It is one of eight early, definitely dated buildings in this area, thus providing important clues to the architectural history of the county. Most of these houses, although smaller and less pretentious than the Georgian mansions built by the English settlers

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #5)

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

to the south, are notable for their sophisticated construction, expert brickwork and interior woodwork. The use of Flemish bond brickwork with glazed headers can be found not only at the Mercer Brown House, but at the John Churchman House, Knightsfield, and the Cross Keys Tavern. Datestones, such as that found on the front of the Mercer Brown House are common on many houses in the area, including one with a similar rose pattern carving salvaged from the now- demolished 1761 Miller Sidwell House.

The carved initials of the brickwork are seen at only one other house in this county. Several of the initials belong to individuals famous in their own right, such as the clock-maker Benjamin Chandlee and the cabinet-maker Hezekiah Rowles. Descendants of several of these families still reside in this area.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Gifford, G. E., Jr. **Cecil County Maryland, 1608-1850, As Seen by Some Visitors** (George Gifford Memorial Committee, Calvert School, Rising Sun, Md. 1974)
- Johnston, George **History of Cecil County Maryland** (Elkton, Md., 1881)
- Touart, Paul **Building Traditions of the Nottingham Lotts** (Maryland Historical Trust, 1981)
At the Head of the Bay, Maryland Historical Trust unpublished manuscript)
- Cope, Gilbert **Browns of Nottingham** (unpublished pamphlet, 1864)

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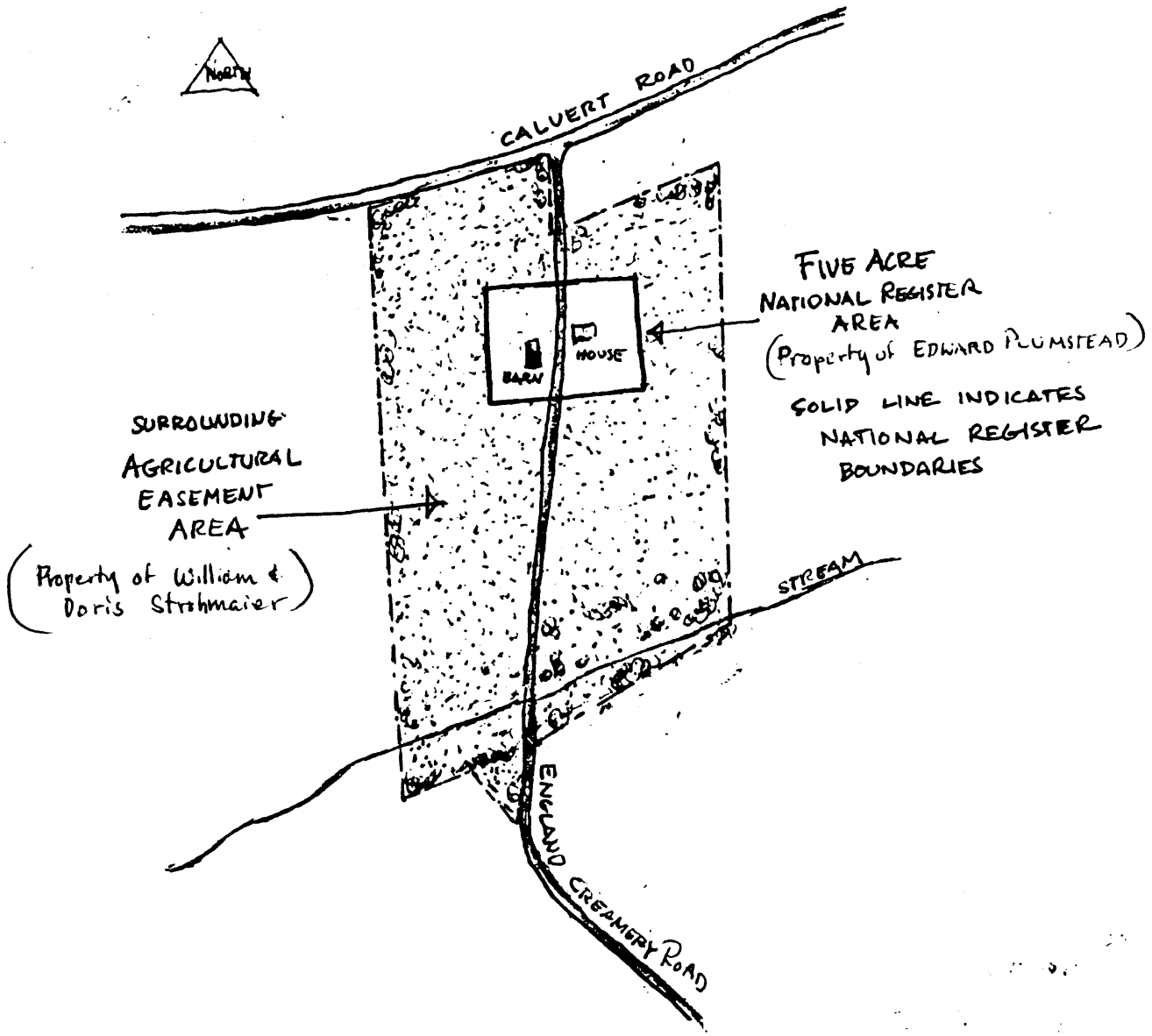
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The Mercer Brown House property is a five acre rectangle depicted on the attached sketch map. The lot is bisected by England Creamery Road and the Mercer Brown House is situated a few feet to the east of this road. The lot is part of the original lot 28 of the Nottingham Lotts laid out in 1701 by William Penn. The nominated property thus represents the remnant of the land historically associated with the house, and contributes to the resource's integrity of setting. The surrounding farmland, which is owned by others, is protected from development by a permanent agricultural easement.



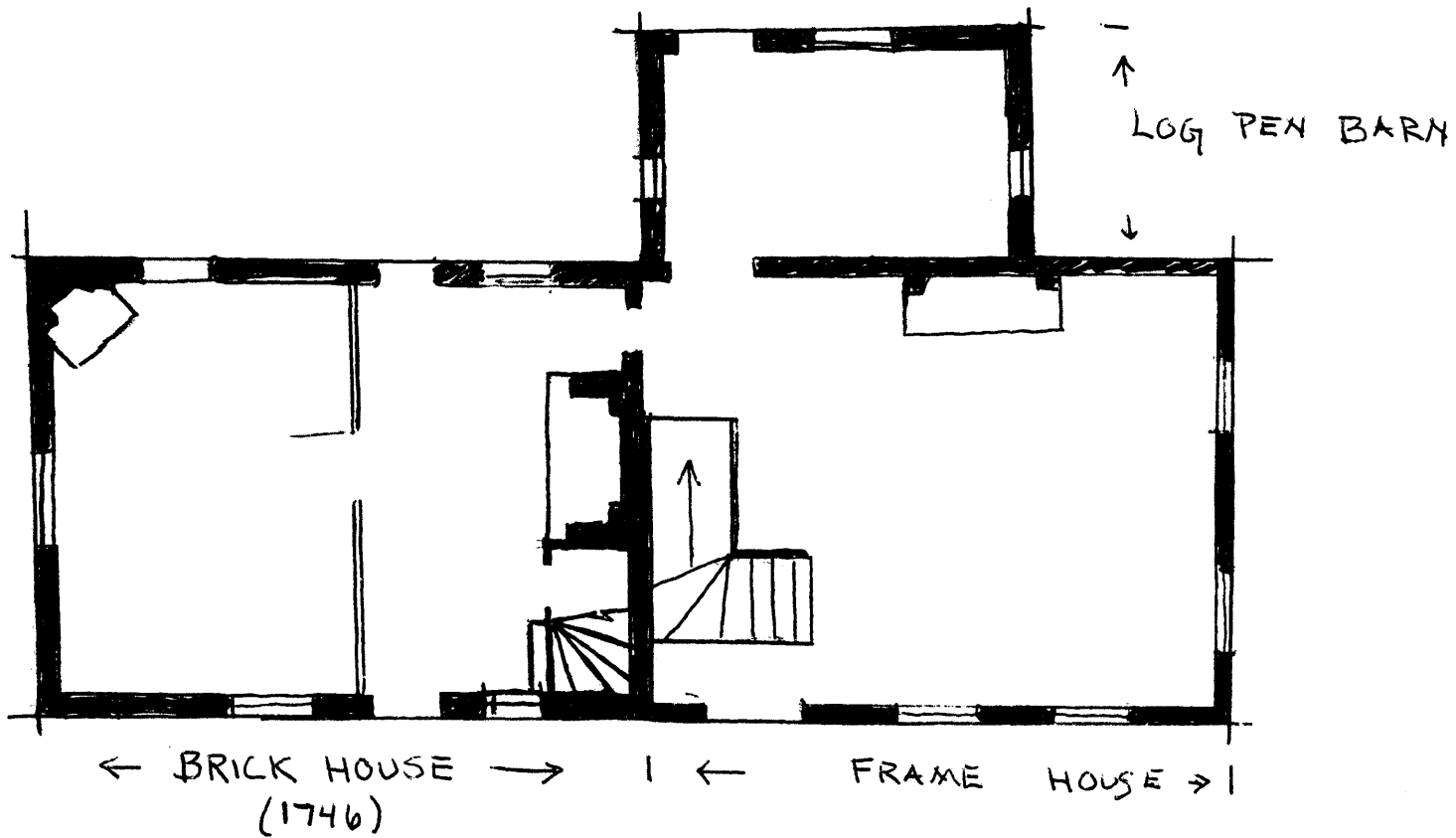
SKETCH SITE PLAN

MERCER (MESSER) BROWN FARM
 CELIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

SCALE 1" to 660'

1986

(IMPROVEMENTS NOT TO SCALE)



MERCER BROWN HOUSE
 CALVERT, MARYLAND
 CECIL COUNTY

SKETCH PLAN
 Approx. Scale only
 1986