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7.	DESCRIPTION									
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	CONDITION	Excellent	🛣 Good	🗌 Fair	Det	eriorated	🔲 Ruins	Unexposed		
	CONDITION		(Check One)				(Check One)			
ĺ		🗌 🗋 Alter	red	🔀 Unaltered			Moved	🔀 Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Francis Xavier Church and Newtown Manor House Historic District, supported by 700 acres of farmland one hundred yards to the southeast, is located on Newtown Neck on the east side of Maryland Route 243, 1.5 mile south of Compton, Maryland.

Ist. Francis Xavier Church is a frame, rectangular building with two octagonally-shaped brick additions: one on the northwest (entrance); a second addition on the southeast (altar). The southeast addition is broader than the main body of the church and protrudes several inches beyond the exterior walls of the main block of the church. This southeast addition has three rectangular windows--each one in a separate plane of the octagon. The end plane is a blank brick wall with a brick chimney rising above the roof. On each side of this chimney is a dormer window. There is a door in the southeast octagon, the plane which is parallel to the southwest wall of the main body of the church.

The roof over the altar is several inches higher than the A-shaped nave roof which continues at the same level and terminates at a cupola marking the apex of the roof of the northwest octagon. This entrance is narrower than the breadth of the church so that the nave protrudes several feet from the place where the addition joins the main body. This end is two stories and has rectangular windows on each story on each visible exterior plane with the exception of the door on the first story at the end plane. A sacristy and confessional are located inside.

The main body of the church has an interior barrel vault ceiling supported by two sets of piers which create the nave and side aisles. There is a dome over the chancel and altar which is located in the southeast octagonal end. The church has simple Federal woodwork and a mid-eighteenthcentury reredos.

Newtown Manor House, one hundred yards to the southeast of the church, is a two-and-one-half story brick, five-bay house with a pair of enclosed chimneys on each gable end. The structure has an A roof with a jerkinhead at each end. There is a centrally placed porch on both the northeast and southwest elevations. The house sits on a high brick basement. There is a long one-story, shed-like structure along the northwest gable end.

Wewtown Manor House originally had a gambrel roof which maised and changed to its present shape in 1816.

GNIFICANCE	Appropriate)		······································
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	🔀 18th Century	20th Century
15th Century	17th Century	19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicat	ole and Known) 1766-7	(church), c.	1740 (house);
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch	eck One or More as Appropri	iste) additions 1	816 (both)
Abor iginal	Education	Political	🔲 Urban Planning
🔲 Prehistoric	Engineering	Religion/Phi-	🔀 Other (Specify)
🔲 Historic	🔲 Industry	losophy	17th century
Agriculture	Invention	Science	Maryland history
🔀 Architecture	Landscape	Sculpture	
Art	Architecture	Social/Human-	A A
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Communications	Military	Theater	The
Conservation	Music	Transportation	- NA, 1972
TATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			E ELSNA
ARCHITECTURAL S	TONTETONNOE		- Ken a

The St. Francis Xavier Church building has a barrel vault ceiling, unusual in a wood church. Architectural evidence indicates this vaulting is original (1767). The two octagonally-shaped brick ends are unusual, if not unique, features in Maryland ecclesiastical architecture.

#### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

St. Francis Xavier Church and Newtown Manor House Historic District marks a location and site important in the seventeenth-century ecclesiastical history of Maryland. From this area of Newtown Neck and from other locations in Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore, English Jesuit priests conducted missionary activities among the Indians and ministered to the needs of the settlers beginning in the 1630's and 1640's. In Maryland, as all over North America, the Jesuits were the vanguard of western civilization in the wilderness.

The combination of St. Francis Xavier Church and Newtown Manor House properties is an example of a self-contained Jesuit community made self-supporting by the surrounding 700 acre farm. This type of community was prevalent in the eighteenth century. In 1668 the Jesuits purchased the Manor of Little Bretton, covering all of Newtown Neck. The income from the farm supported the Jesuits and their activities. The actual farm work was usually done by tenants and overseers. This tradition has continued to the present day.

Jesuit activity at Newtown dates back to the 1640's. In 1649 the mission in this locale became formally established. The first church was erected in 1662 after a relaxation of the discrimination against Catholics which accompanied the Restoration. The site of the 1662 church is believed to be in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, about onethird mile to the north.

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St. Mary's

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1972

Form	10-300a
(July	1969)

#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

St. Francis Xavier Church & Newtown Manor House Historic District

## **#7.** DESCRIPTION continued

A fragment of a brick wall, located near the house, is under archaeological investigation by the St. Mary's County Archaeological Society.

#### #8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

Newtown flourished in the last decades of the seventeenth century while it was the county seat as well as a religious center. After 1695, when the county seat moved, the area played a diminishing roll in the life of overall St. Mary's County. The decline was culminated in 1868 when Leonardtown became the residence of the Jesuit priests.

St. Francis Xavier Church, as a parish church, has continued since its origin in the mid-seventeenth century to minister to the needs of local Roman Catholics.

Local tradition maintains that St. Francis Xavier Church is the oldest Roman Catholic church building in the English colonies.

In 1956 the church received the Haddock Chalice which had belonged to James Haddock, a resident of Newtown from 1699 to about 1704. Haddock had taken the small vessel with him when he left; one of his descendants returned it to the church.



# (1 of 2 continuation sheets)

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#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

St. Francis Xavier Church & Newtown Manor House Historic District

**#9. REFERENCES continued** 

Filteau, Jerome. National Catholic News Service, U. S. Catholic Conference, Washington, D. C., April 26, 1971. One of a few Pennsylvania Roman Catholic Churches may predate St. Francis Xavier as the oldest Catholic Church in continuous existence in the thirteen English colonies.

St. Mary's County Land Records. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

Federal Direct Tax Assessment 1798. St. Mary's County. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.



