United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

| For HCRS use only | | | | | | |
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| received | FEB | 2 | 9 | 1980 | | |
| date ente | red | M | ΔY | 7 | 1091 | |

| | ns in <i>How to Complete</i> A s—complete applicable | | | | - H. T. C. |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Nan | ne | | | | |
| historic | | | | | |
| and/or common | Octorara Farm | | | | |
| 2. Loc | ation | | | | |
| street & numbe | , 5 of Con | pruesigo | _ | not for publ | ication |
| city, town | Conowingo , wc | X vicinity of | congressional district | First | |
| state | Maryland cod | le ²⁴ county | Cecil | code | 015 |
| 3. Clas | sification | - | | | |
| Category district building(s) structure site object | Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered | Status occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no | Present Use X agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military | museum park X private r religious scientifi transpor | esidence S |
| 4. Owr | ner of Prope | rty | | | |
| name | Mrs. P. R. O'Conno | r | | | |
| street & number | Octorara Hundred | | | | |
| city, town | Conowingo | X vicinity of | state | Maryland | 21918 |
| 5. Loca | ation of Leg | al Descripti | on | | £. |
| courthouse, reg | istry of deeds, etc. | Clerk of the Cir | cuit Court | ge, e | |
| street & number | | Cecil County Cou | ırthouse | | |
| city, town | | E1kton | state | Maryland | |
| | resentation | in Existing | | <u></u> , | |
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7. Description Condition excellent yellow ruins Check one yellow Check one yellow Check one yellow A original site moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

unexposed

__ fair

Octorara Farm is located on the east side of Rowlandsville Road, about one mile south of Kilby Corner (intersection of U.S.Route 1 and Maryland Route 222). The house itself, built in sections dating from the period between 1775 and 1840, is situated on a hill that commands a view of the Susquehanna River.

The main block, which faces west, is a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story, four-bay wide brick structure composed of four rooms on both the first and second floors; it was probably added to the rear section around 1830-1840. The rear section, with a principal axis perpendicular to the main block, has undergone two periods of rebuilding and alteration. The present kitchen, which constitutes the central room of the three rooms of the rear section, is the earliest section of the house. The stuccoed stone hall/ parlor structure, as originally built, was three bays across by one room deep and $1\frac{1}{2}$ stories high. A $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story fieldstone addition, three bays across by one room deep was attached to the eastern gable in the early to mid-19th century. Positioned perpendicularly to this latter additions is a contemporaneous two-bay by one room, 2-story fieldstone section joined to the latter addition at second story level with a passageway separating the sections on the first floor. This latter addition, three bays across by two deep with a medium sloped slate roof, contains an entrance in every wall except the north one where there occur two 4-pane windows similar to the small windows which illuminate the second floor.

In the second quarter of the 19th century, when the entire character and orientation of Octorara was transformed by the construction of the adjacent main block, other changes altered the configuration of the rear section including the raising of the roof of the $1\frac{1}{2}$ story kitchen section to two stories and the enlarging of the original hall of that section into a dining room by two additional bays to the west of the doorway. At this time, the rear section received two-story porches to its north and south facades.

Evidence for this building sequence occurs in the attic of the kitchen section where there are two obsolete gable-end windows which substantiate the fact that the adjacent section was previously lower. In addition, the fact that the original $1\frac{1}{2}$ stories predated that raising is indicated by the trim in the second story of the kitchen section which corresponds closely with its contemporaneous trim in the main block. The raised panel dining room door with raised reveals is an earlier version of the paneled doors in the rest of the house. Differences in the first floor joists were also an indication of a later addition. The joists under the kitchen area were left in the round while those under the present dining room were sawn. On the exterior of the kitchen wing are other indications of an earlier date: ovolo backbanded window trim and dining room door architraves and narrow 9/9 window sash.

The eight bay, stuccoed south facade constitutes the primary facade of the rear section. the third, fourth and fifth bays from the west are the earliest openings, as noted above, with narrower 9/9 sash windows and ovolo banded surrounds. The third bay served as the entrance with its early six panel door with raised reveals. The entrance probably led into a hall which disappeared when two bays were added to the west, thereby creating the dining room. The window sash of these two bays is larger, identical to the rest of the house and detailed with surrounds which are simple half round cross-sections.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

8. Significance

| 1400–1499 | community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement | X Iandscape architectur Iaw Iiterature military music philosophy politics/government | e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify) |
|----------------|--|--|--|
| Specific dates | Builder/Architect | | |

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Octorara Farm lies largely in the 19th century architectural integrity of the structure and the fine collection of the 19th century agricultural buildings. The front brick block is a pleasing mixture of late Federal and early Empire architectural styles that retains most of its early woodwork. The earlier rear sections are basically plain in detail, but add a tremendous amount to the overall impression of a bulding that has grown and transformed through the years. The outbuildings, especially the barn, are good examples of early 19th century forms that were needed for the operation of a farm.

The agricultrual and county estate setting of the house and farm buildings increase the importance of the complex. The house rests on a gentle rise overlooking the Susquehanna River. Ancient beech, sycamore, yew, and boxwood gracefully complement the entire complex. The long lane is bordered with mature sycamores that provide a fitting entrance for this stately country home. Fields and woods surround the house, which is the visual center of the farm.

HISTORY

Historical associations with the property date back to the late 17th and early 18th centuries; however, the entire story remains partially obscured. Ownership and transfer of land began around 1678. In the 1658-1707 rent rolls is a survey of land for Richard Hall. The tract called "Hall's Choice" contained 400 acres bounded ont he west by the Susquehanna River and south by the Octorara Creek (Liber 20/275). In 1679 "Hall's Lot" was laid out and contained 600 acres (Liber 20/272).

The property remained under the ownership of the Hall family throughout most of the 18th century. It seems to have descended from Richard Hall to Elisha Hall and then to Elisha's son, Elihu. Elihu was born in 1692 and started a milling business along the Octorara Creek around 1744. He acquired an 80-year lease for 20 acres of land on Beeson's Run from Lord Baltimore (MB 9/332). This was described as:

Twenty acres of land lying on a run of water leading into Octorara called Beeson's Branch in the county aforesaid. Ten acres on the other side thereof together with liberty to take fall cut down and carry away either by land or by water any wood or timber fit for bulding a mill other than timbers fit to split into clapboards upon any of the lands next adjoining to the said twenty acres.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #7

| 10. G | eograp | hical D | ata | IITM | WI VE | REED | |
|----------------|---|---------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Acreage of no | ominated prope | rty | 96 acre | ACREA | E NOT | VERFED Quadrangle so | ale 1:24000 |
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| Verbal bour | ndary descript SEE CONTIN | ion and justifi UATION SHEET | _ | | | | |
| List all stat | es and counti | es for properti | es overlappir | ng state or c | ounty bou | ındaries | |
| state | | cod | de c | ounty | . , | | code |
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| 11. Fe | orm Pre | pared | By | | | | |
| | | | | | | , | |
| name/title | Paul loua | rt, Historio | : Sites Sur | veyor | | | |
| organization | Cecil Cou Historica | nty Committe | e of the M | aryland d | ate | . June 6, | 1978 |
| street & numb | per Cecil Cou | | ıse | te | elephone | (301) 39 |)8-7568 |
| city or town | Elkton | | · | si | tate | Maryland | 21921 |
| 12. St | tate His | storic F | reserv | ation | Offic | er Cer | tification |
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| 665), I hereby | ated State Histonominate this periteria and | roperty for inclu | ision in the Nat | ional Register | and certify | that it has be | |
| State Historic | Preservation Of | ficer signature | : | : The | li Ah | 2 | .27-80 |
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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MAY, 7 1980

Octorara Farm Cecil County

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PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The sixth, seventh and eighth bays define the circa 1800-1830 addition; the entrance occurs in the sixth bay, and the window sash varies from 12/6 and 6/6 in the lower stories to 6/3 at attic level. The roof conforms to the same medium slope as the rest of the rear section, and a common bond brick chimney is located in the east gable end where beehive oven is incorporated into this chimney pile.

A 20th century frame addition punctuated by randomly placed windows and doors obscures the original northern facades of the rear section and abuts the perpendicularly placed fieldstone section (labelled "storage" in the plan).

The first floor interiors of the rear wing section are reasonably plain with window and door architraves of simple half round cross-section molding. Though the easternmost room of this section once functioned as a kitchen and possesses a large cooking fireplace, it is the middle room which has been extensively remodelled and equipped with modern cupboards and appliances. An enclosed stair rises to the second and attic floors where the two bedrooms' most unusual decoration are the curved window reveals and jib doors below the windows lending access onto the second floor porch.

The main block constructed in brick, introduces a change in character and style to the Octorara complex, which represents one of the best examples of high style Greek Revival architecture in Cecil County. The western facade of the main block is laid in Flemish bond and is graced by a two story, shed roofed porch which extends across the length of the facade. The porch is supported by paneled square posts on the first story, and by thin Doric columns on the second story. The four bays of this facade are characterized by symmetrical fenestration with floor to ceiling 6/9 sash windows on the first story capped by jack arches.

Four panel exterior shutters flank each window. Those windows on the second floor are 6/6 with a jib door for access to the porch from the second floor. The window surround cross-section is a simple half round. Two arched dormers occur on the moderately sloping gable roof; their 6/6 double hung windows are flanked by fluted pilasters which support the arched lintel. The sides of the dormers, like the roof, are sheathed in slate.

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(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The north gable end of the main block, also laid in Flemish bond, contains the primary entance to the house. This recessed entrance, located in the northeastern bay, is characterized by four panel double doors flanked by quarter-round Doric columns and louvered exterior shutters, surmounted by an elliptical fanlight. A hipped roof porch, one bay wide, shelters the entrance bay and is supported by square posts. A small oculus window occurs to the east of the main entrance. To the west is a false window with imitation strap hinges fashioned out of wood. On the second floor to the east, a window is defined by 6/6 sash and paneled shutters and to the west is another window, this false (with shutters closed) but installed to maintain a symmetrical design. Two four-pane attic windows flank the chimney stack, and like the other fenestration are surmounted by jack arch lintels. A simple barge board closes the gable end. Tall interior end chimneys rise out of this and the south gable ends.

The south facade of the main block is detailed like the north gable end except for a jib door which opens into the library. This entrance is approached by a brick stoop.

The junction of the main block and the rear section obscures a major portion of the east side of the main block. However, a brick stack does rise out of the southern section of the wall to accommodate a Franklin stove in the library. On the north side of the wall are 6/6 double hung windows at first and second story levels. A smaller sash is found adjacent to the second floor window to illuminate the stair.

The interior detailing of the main block is characterized by a pleasing mixture of (delicate) Greek Revival influenced woodwork (and) early Empire influenced trim. The entrance wall or northeast chamber of the first floor contains the principal dog-leg stair that leads to the third floor. The handrail is a simple oval with two rectangular balusters on each tread. The newel post is turned and swells slightly towards the bottom. The stringers are decorated with delicately scrolled trim. Door and window surrounds are fluted with plain corner blocks. The entrance hall is further distinguished by a west wall niche located immediately in front of the stair and a painted black and white diamond pattern floor.

The northwest and southwest rooms are the front parlors which are separated by floor to ceiling double doors. The parlos' mantels are identically detailed, of grey mantels and characterized by two centrally cut grooves connected by a "u" in the end blocks underneath the brackets. The brackets themselves flare towards the top to resemble consoles and project forward from the frieze which is plain except for the same double grooves. The simple shelf possesses a double half round edge. Window and door surrounds are fluted featuring plaster rosette decorations on the corner blocks. The top of the windows are further elaborated by decorative hoods.

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(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The southeast room is the library, possessing a built-in Franklin Stove and built-in bookcases to either side of the fireplace. Detached columns supporting a plain frieze and stepped shelf define the library's mantel.

The second floor is characterized by detailing which remains constant throughout the second story. The mantels in the front (west) bedrooms display a Federal influence, with fluted pilasters that support a frieze and projecting central and end blocks. Oval insets decorate each of these blocks, and the mantel shelf is elaborately molded and stepped out.

The bedroom above the library displays a similar mantel characterized by a diamond motif in the central block with four half inch holdes in each corner of that block. Built-in closets flank this fireplace.

The dog-leg stair continues to the third floor where there are three rooms containing such simple decorative elements as vertical board doors and large box locks.

Outbuildings dating from the early to mid-19th century include a large four-bay, fieldstone barn, a wagon shed, dairy, smokehouse and tenant houses. The four-bay barn is augmented by an outshut on the western side and subsequent shed extension additions to the eastern side. The end walls and outshut are constructed of fieldstone while the peaks of the gable ends and the sides are frame with board and batten siding.

A small wagon shed and storage shed located northeast of the main house, is frame-constructed with horizontal board siding. A small louvered cupola occurs on the peak of the medium pitched gable roof.

An octagonal frame smokehouse, located south of the main house but in very poor condition, possesses an octagonal cupola presently stored in the barn. Another frame outbuilding, probably a dairy, is placed to the north and east of this smokehouse. It is a square, weatherboarded structure featuring louvered ventilators in the gable ends and a plastered interior.

Two uncoursed field-stone structures stand at the southern extremity of Octorara Farm, a springhouse and a probable tenant dwelling. The springhouse is a single-story, one bay by one bay structure topped by a wood-shingled, gable roof of medium slope. Access to the interior is gained through a board door in the south gable end. A narrow, ten-pane window with a single beaded surround punctuates the east facade.

The tenant house, constructed between 1825-40 on a southern slope, is $1\frac{1}{2}$ stories high and three bays wide by one room deep. A slate roof of medium pitch covers the building whose chimneys have deteriorated below the roofline. A raised basement

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4.

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(DESCRIPTION, continued)

is exposed on three sides. The three bay north facade contains a central door distinguished by a granite sill, four-light transom and surround with small corner bead. The main door has been removed and the 6/6 sash windows have been broken out. The west gable end possesses a doorway in its northern bay which formerly led into a now collapsed frame section. The south side of the tenant house contains three windows and one door at basement level. The iron brackets which supported a single story porch still remain in place between the basement and first floor levels.

On the interior of the tenant house, the large fireplace in the west room of the basement indicates that the basement level constituted the cooking area. A smaller basement occurs in the east basement area. The first floor is divided into three rooms with an enclosed central stair that rises from the basement and then continues to the attic. The principal room on the first floor is approximately square, its fireplace located on the west wall and elaborated by a mantel with molded architrave with projecting blocks at the ends of the frieze that support a molded shelf. A paneled side closet flanks the fireplace to the left. Two rooms occupy the other half of the first floor, both of which are very plain although the southeast room possesses a small Empire mantel. The wide floorboards have been partially removed. The center stair rises to the unfinished third floor.

ACREAGE JUSTIFICATION

The one hundred <u>+</u> acres associated with Octorara Farm is bordered by a dry laid fieldstone wall that probably dates from the mid to late 19th century. The cohesive farm unit on the northern part of the tract commands an important view of the descending terrain and the Susquehannah River. Located on the lower section along the Octorara Creek is an operating spring and pump house and the ruins of a previous tenant house. The present farm, therefore, cannot be sectioned off for a partial nomination without omitting an important aspect of the property.

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SIGNIFICANCE, continued

Elihu Hall, Sr. died in 1753 (Will BB2/127). In his will he divided his property between his two sons, Elisha and Elihu, Jr. Elisha and his wife, Ruth, received part interest in the grist and saw mill and part of "Hall's Lott." Elihu Hall, Jr. received part of Hall's lott, part interest in the mill, and part of another tract called "Baldwin's Dispatch."

It is believed that the present Octorara Farm was built on the property willed to Elisha and Ruth Hall in 1753.

Elihu, Jr., Elisha's brother, died in 1790 and due to numerous heirs his property had to be sold so his estate could be divided equitably. A newspaper clipping dated 1806 describes the property, "as comprising two tracts of land called, "Mount Welcome" and part of "Town Plantation"-"350 acres on the Susquehannah formerly the place of residence of Elihu Hall...a brick dwelling house in good repair with a good barn and necessary outbuildings...a good fishery on the Town Plantation and the Susquehannah Canal runs through that tract." This property as advertised only contains 350 acres and could not involve the property in question if it bordered on the Susquehannah and Octorara. Furthermore the present brick structure dates from the second quarter of the 19th century while the newspaper clipping describes a dwelling house in 1806 as being in "good repair" which would indicate that the structure was at least 50 years old. The 1783 Tax Assessment lists Elihu, Jr. as owning land on the Susquehannah with 1 house, 2 barns, 7 outbuildings etc. and Elihu Hall of Elisha as owning 1 house, 1 barn, 4 outbuildings on the Octorara and valued at £750. This proves definitely that there were at least two Hall houses, and that the house in question is not Colonel Elihu Hall's home of "Mount Welcome" which had been generally thought.

Elisha and Ruth Hall owned the property together for only a short time because Elisha died in 1757. His will was proved in that year (BB 2/175) and Elihu, his son, inherited the dwelling house and the land was divided amongst his six children. Elihu, however, proved insolvent around 1787. (Land Records BW 214/215). He relinquished his approximately 480 acres to his trustees James Hunt, John Stump, and David Smith. The property passed out of the hands of the trustees when Henry White Physick bought the property in 1807. (JS 2/507) Henry Physick may have been responsible for some of the earlier alterations to the rear section. The largest addition, however, was probably added by Dr. Philip Syng Physick about 1834. Dr. Physick acquired the property from John Lightner, a trustee for Nathaniel LIghtner in 1823. Nathaniel bought it from Henry Physick in 1820 (JS 17/251). The metes and bounds described, in the deed that transfered the land from John Lightner to Philip S. Physick (JS 19/446) correspond partially to the present day tax map boundaries.

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SIGNIFICANCE, continued

Dr. Physick bought the property with 201 acres for 11,016.40 in 1833. The 1833 Tax Assessment valued the property at \$3,660.00 with 306 acres. In the following year the acreage dropped to 201 acres but the valuation jumped to \$8,400.00. Due to the stylistic features in the brick block that date from the same period it can be assumed that the front section was added about 1834, this being the reason for the increase in valuation.

Dr. Physick was a prominent and respected physician in Philadelphia. Some historians credit him with being the "Father of American Surgery." He was well-known for inventive modernizations in the field of surgical equipment. He was elected to the staff of the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1794 and held it until 1816. (Dict. of Amer, Bio. VII, pp. 554-555) Dr. Physick died in 1837 and willed his "Octorara Farm" to his daughter Susan Dillwyn Conner, the wife of Commodore David Conner, U.S.N. (Will L 19/87). Octorara Farm styled in the Conner name until the early 20th century. The present owner, Phyllis Reeve O'Connor acquired the house with 103 acres in the early 1960s. (Land Records WAS 289/66, WAS 162/581/ WAS 204/365.

ACREAGE JUSTIFICATION

The 96 acres that accompany the house and outbuildings are just one-tenth of the original tract of land laid out in the 17th century. The farm continues to operate in the 20th century, though on a much smaller basis. The grounds are rented out to local farmers. The rest of the property is wooded and borders the Octorara Creek. Octorara Creek has been an integral part in the development of this property including Elihu Hall's mill begun in the mid-18th century, and should not be divorced from the farm. The house also has an important vista of the Susquehanna River, and the acreage between the house and Rowlandsville Road is important to this vista.

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Cecil County Rent Rolls, Cecil County Historical Society, Elkton, Maryland.

Cecil County Tax Assessments (1841-), Tax Assessment Office, Cecil County Courthouse, Elkton, Maryland.

Chancery Court Records (newspaper clippings from 1806-B 66/27, 28, 29), Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

1783 Tax Assessment, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.

Malone, Dumas, ed. <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u>, Vol. VII. "Mills to Platner", p. 554. New York: Chas. Scribners, Sons, 1934.

Forman, H. Chandlee, <u>Early Manor and Plantations House of Maryland</u>. Easton, Maryland: by the author, 1934.

FHR-8-300A (11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED. MAY 7 SALE

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

BEGINNING for the same at a locust post heretofore set on the easterly side of Kilby's Corner Road, and south 16 degrees 00 minutes East 660.00 feet; thence, still with the outlines of the whole tract, south 75 degrees 00 minutes West 24.35 feet to a stone; thence, running south 36 degrees 00 minutes East 511.5 feet; thence, running north 67 degrees 15 minutes East 660.00 feet; thence, north 68 degrees 45 minutes East 396.00 feet to a Birch tree; thence, running north 62 degrees 30 minutes east 432.30 feet to a heap of stones by a run; thence, south 82 degrees 45 minutes east 155.10 feet; thence, running south 39 degrees 00 minutes east 316.80 feet to a point at the mouth of a run on the northerly side of the Octorara Creek; thence, running and binding on or near the northerly and westerly side of Octorara Creek, four courses, viz: south 54 degrees 15 minutes west 165.00 feet; south 37 degrees 00 minutes west 198.00 feet; south 04 degrees 00 minutes east 165.00 feet; and south 10 degrees 15 minutes east 198.00 feet; thence, crossing the Octorara Creek, north 76 degrees 00 minutes east 148.50 feet; thence, running on or near the easterly side and southerly side of the said Octorara Creek, six courses, vix. north 10 degrees 30 minutes west 198.00 feet: north 38 degrees 00 minutes east 198.00 feet; north 55 degrees 15 minutes east 66.00 feet; north 60 degrees 15 minutes east 462.00 feet; north 67 degrees 00 minutes east 363.00 feet; and north 85 degrees 30 minutes east 255.75 feet; thence crossing Octorara Creek, north 12 degrees 15 minutes west 462.00 feet to a stone; thence, running south 75 degrees 15 minutes west 462.00 feet to a stone; thence running north 36 degrees 15 minutes west 380.62 feet to a pipe now set; thence, leaving the outlines of the whole tract and running through and across the lands of the Grantors for new lines of division, south 84 degrees 55 minutes 00 seconds west 269.94 feet to a pipe now set; thence, running north 25 degrees 21 minutes 30 seconds west 569.81 feet to a pipe now set; thence, north 48 degrees 17 minutes 10 seconds west 195.34 feet to a pipe now set; thence north 26 degrees 10 minutes 50 seconds west 148.50 feet to a pipe now set; thence, north 63 degrees 55 minutes 00 seconds west 704.94 feet to a pipe now set; thence, running south 57 degrees 34 minutes 40 seconds west 255.55 feet to a pipe now set; thence, south 77 degrees 55 minutes 30 seconds west 1204.64 feet to a pipe now set on the easterly side of the aforementioned Kilby's Corner Road, thence continuing this same direction, south 77 degrees 55 minutes 30 seconds west 10.00 feet to a point on the bank of the said road, south 25 degrees 45 minutes east 150.00 feet to the beginning hereof, containing 96 acres. (Cecil County Deed WAS 289/66.)

