

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CT-1359

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm (preferred)

other

2. Location

street and number Grays Road __ not for publication

city, town Prince Frederick __ vicinity

county Calvert

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Board of Commissioners Calvert County

street and number c/o Calvert Co Treasurer 175 Main Street telephone

city, town Prince Frederick state Maryland zip code 20678-3337

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Calvert County Courthouse liber KPS 1504 folio 8

city, town Prince Frederick tax map 30 tax parcel 336 tax ID number 240765

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

Contributing Resource in National Register District

Contributing Resource in Local Historic District

Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Recorded by HABS/HAER

Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT

Other: Williamsen-Berry, Tora L. MIHP Form CT-1028. "Plumer-Cranford Barn 'A'. 1990."

Archeological Investigations at Four Locations on The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm Calvert, County, Maryland

Prepared by The Ottery Group for Calvert County Park and Zoning. 2010

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<u>3</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<u>7</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education		<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary		<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			<u>1</u>	

7. Description

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Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is located off of Grays Road in Calvert County and totals approximately 196 acres. The property includes two tobacco barns, two dwellings, and associated outbuildings. In addition to these historic architectural resources, the Biscoe Gray Farm contains three archeological sites that were identified and inventoried in 2009. Information on these archeological sites can be found in the MHT archeological site files (18CV494, 18CV495, and 18CV496). The Biscoe Gray farm is an example of a tobacco farm that was operated by tenant farmers throughout the 20th century. The history of the farm prior to 1900 is uncertain due to a loss of primary historical records in Calvert County, with the earliest land records extending back only until the 1890s.

DESCRIPTION

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm encompasses rolling agricultural fields, undeveloped woods, and a road trace. The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is located just off of Grays Road west of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm entrance. The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is accessible through a plowed field at the entrance and up a trail into a wooded area. The Plumer-Cranford Barn "A" (CT-1028) was relocated to the Biscoe Gray Farm in 2003 and reassembled in its current location in the center of an agricultural field to the southwest of main entrance to the property. The George E. Rice House and associated outbuildings are located directly south of the Plumer-Cranford Barn "A" in a wooded area overlooking a road trace and agricultural fields to the east. The 19th century house is located on the top of a hill surrounded by woods at the southernmost tip of the Biscoe Gray Farm property. This house overlooks Battle Creek.

Three archaeological sites located within the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm were investigated and documented. Based on information relayed to Calvert County by a nephew of Biscoe Gray, the former landowner, the property contained a colonial period archeological site, and a possible cemetery of unknown temporal or cultural affiliations. Additionally, reconnaissance of the property by Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning identified the location of a probable prehistoric oyster shell midden. The four sites were investigated utilizing a combination of systematic surface collection, shovel test pit (STP) excavation, and mechanical trench excavation. As a result of this investigation, two sites have been recorded with MHT, an eighteenth century colonial site (18CV494) and a Late Woodland shell midden (18CV495). Testing failed to contribute data relevant to the temporal categorization of the 19th century house; no artifacts were recovered during the STP survey.

Two tobacco barns are located on the Biscoe Gray Farm. One, a frame barn, appears to date to the early 20th century and is historically associated with the Biscoe Gray property. Materials and construction date the barn to as early as 1900; however, the barn does not appear on historic maps of the property until about 1940. Dilapidated and partially overgrown with vines, it is located on a hill within a stand of trees, approximately 100 feet south of Grays Road. The other barn, a circa 1830s timber-frame building historically known as the Plumer-Cranford Barn "A," is individually listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties as CT-1028. It was moved from Broomes Island Road and reconstructed its present location in 2003 -2004.

Both barns are significant for their association with Southern Maryland tobacco production and architecturally important for reflecting agricultural practices and technologies popular at their respective time of construction. The relocated Plumer-Cranford Barn embodies in its form and construction methods typical of Southern Maryland tobacco barns built

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during the period 1800-1830. The barn historically associated with the Biscoe Gray Farm was built around 1900 and represents the type of barn popular in the region from 1830 to 1900. Together, these two barns represent a century of Southern Maryland traditions in tobacco barn architectural traditions.

The George E. Rice House is an L-shaped, two-story, two-by-two bays with two one-story, two-by-one bay wings to the south. The main, or earliest, part of the house is two-story, two-by-two bays, with a front-gable roof and a full-length porch; the porch is 16 feet, 6 ½ inches wide and 16 feet, 4 inches long. The standing seam front-gable roof has overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. There is an interior end brick stretcher chimney with a corbelled cap on the west elevation. The house is of wood-frame construction and is clad with circular-sawn weatherboard and cornerboards. The foundation of the main house is poured, concrete piers. Fenestration is asymmetrical with single six-over-six, double-hung sash, wood windows in the south bay of the first and second stories of the main façade. There are four windows, two on each story on the north elevation and no windows on the west elevation. The windows have thin wood sills and plain casings. The wood panel door is located in the center of the main house and accessible through a full-length, shed-roof porch. The porch's standing seam metal roof is supported by three chamfered wood posts and two turned pilaster posts on the façade. The house is in deteriorating condition with the front porch floor partially collapsed. The house is no longer weatherproofed with the main door open and glazing missing from many windows.

There are two one-story, two-by-one bay wings projecting from the south elevation. The wings are rectangular in plan, creating the overall L-shape of the George Rice House. The central wing is 16 feet, 2 ¾ inches wide and 12 feet, 2 ¾ inches long. Given the location of the stairwell and the uniformity of materials, it is likely that the central wing was contemporaneous with the main block of the house. The southern wing is 16 feet, 1 ¾ inches wide and 12 feet, 2 ¾ inches long. The location of the stove on the shared wall between the central and southern wing, the exterior seaming between the southern and central wings, the design of the interior door leading to the central wing, and the two exterior doors on the southern wing indicate that the southern wing was constructed at a later date. The standing seam, side-gable roofs are of shallow pitch and have exposed rafter tails. The wings are of wood-frame construction and have a stacked rock foundation. Due to the landscape's slope, the southernmost wing has a higher foundation than the central wing or main house. The wings have asymmetrical fenestration. The central wing has one six-over-six, double-hung wood sash window on the east and west elevations. The southern wing has two six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows on the east elevation and one on south elevation. The windows have thin wood sills and plain casings. There is no entry on the central wing; the southern wing has a door on the east and west elevations. The doors are vertical wood panel and are not secure. There is a brick stretcher chimney located on the ridge between both southern wings. The chimney appears to have been originally an interior end chimney for the central wing.

The George E. Rice House interior is no longer weatherproofed and therefore shows extensive signs of deterioration. The house has been vacant for numerous years and has no interior furnishings. The main house has one front room that is full-length. There is a short closet, a hearth and mantel where a stove was located, and a built-in closet on the far west wall beneath the stairs to the second story. The west wall is not a consistent surface; it changes in depth due to the built-in closets. The floor is exposed wood with a wide, wooden baseboard. The drywall ceiling is low and has narrow wood trim where each board is joined; the trim creates a detailed aesthetic feature on the interior. The walls are clad with a similar plywood and trim motif and were previously clad with wall paper which is faded and peeling. The front door opens into the main room; windows have a natural wood finished molding and sill.

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A low, small closet is located in the southern corner of the west wall. The closet is approximately 2 ½ feet high with a solid wood door with wood molding. The closet is beneath the stairs to the second story and is built into the main room. The central fireplace is slightly setback from the small closet. It has a plain wooden mantel with wide, wooden trim. The hearth is enclosed with plywood and has a circular opening in the top-center of the board. It is likely that the original fireplace was later converted to hold a wood or coal stove. Although the stove is no longer present, the pipe opening remains. A small coat closet is in the northern corner of the west wall, to the right of the fireplace. The closet has a full length door that is a few inches lower than the ceiling. The solid wood door has natural wood molding.

A horizontal paneled door on the south wall leads into the central, south wing of the house. Rectangular in form and modest in plan, the central wing has a higher drywall ceiling than the main house room. There are no exterior doors in the central wing; there are two six-over-six, double-hung windows that are symmetrically aligned. Narrow wood trim seals the seams where each board is joined. The walls are clad with similar plywood and trim motif. The trim could be both decorative and functional, sealing the plywood material so that it is weatherproof, or providing a modest, simple “faux wood panel” appearance to the interior. Although not covered with wallpaper, there is a wallpaper border at the top of the wall. The second story is reached by a set of stairs through a door in the northwest corner of the room; the door is solid wood panel. A chimney flue is exposed on the south wall; it is constructed of stretcher bricks that were previously painted. The flue has a circular opening, likely used to attach to a wood or coal stove that is no longer present. To the left of the chimney flue is a horizontal paneled door that provides access to the south wing room.

The southern wing was likely the wing that housed a kitchen. There is a built-in pantry in the southwest corner of the room. The pantry door is solid wood with wide wood trim and ledges for shelves. The southeast corner of the room has a built-in bookcase and remains of a built-in table. There is one existing shelf on the northwest wall. Slightly smaller than the other rooms, this room has two entry doors, one on the east façade and one on the west elevation. The doors are aligned in the interior and are horizontal panel on the interior and vertical wood on the exterior. The drywall ceiling matches the height of the central wing; the walls are clad in drywall boards. Narrow wood trim seals the seams where the boards join together. The walls were previously painted; however, the wood grain now shows through the paint. The floor is hard wood with a paper covering and a wide, baseboard.

George Rice Outbuildings

There are three outbuildings located to the south of the main house, a meathouse, chicken coop, and cow shed. They first appear in 1938 aerial maps of the Grays Road area, their construction dates to the George E. Rice House between 1915 and 1938.

Meathouse

The meathouse is the closest outbuilding to the main house just to the southeast. Meat was kept in the meathouse after the butchering of hogs and cows in the fall after the weather was cold enough to keep the meat from spoiling until it was cured. Meat was cured with salt and then placed on shelves or in boxes and barrels in a meat house. If meat was to be smoked it was hung in the meat house and subjected to a smoky fire for a week or longer. Smoke added flavor, but also

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produced chemical compounds that helped protect the meat from bacteria and insects. Square in plan it is 7 feet, 2 ½ inches by 8 feet, 4 inches. It is a one-by-one bay, one-story structure with a shallowly pitched shed roof. The corrugated metal roof has slightly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails on the facade. The meathouse is of wood-frame construction and post-hole foundation. There is a poured concrete floor with a cut, square hole in the interior; the square hole has been filled with sand. The hole was likely the location of the fire used to smoke the meat while it hung from the rafters above. The exterior is clad with rough hewn weatherboard on the east elevation and parts of the north and south elevations. The west façade and parts of the north and south elevations are clad in vertical, circular-sawn wood planks affixed with machine cut nails. The exterior siding change highlights the different spaces of the meathouse, from the entry to the bay where the meat was hung to be smoked. Some boards on the southwest end of the elevation are wide, rough hewn, and re-used from another building to patch the meathouse. The main door is vertical wood plank with strap hinges and a metal latch. The meathouse is in a deteriorated condition; it is no longer weatherproof and there are exterior boards missing.

Chicken Coop

South of the meathouse is the chicken coop; it is one-story, two-by-two bays and rectangular in form. The chicken coop is 15 feet, 1 inch by 10 feet, 1 ½ inches. It has a standing seam, front-gable roof of steep pitch with exposed rafter tails and overhanging eaves. The structure is of wood-frame construction with a concrete pier foundation. The wood framing on the southern end of the chicken coop has exposed diagonal beams on the interior. The concrete was shaped in a block form and includes gravel and sand. The exterior is clad in two types of wood. The northern end of the chicken coop is clad in circular-sawn, wide vertical planks. The planks vary slightly in width and are flush together; shorter wood planks cover the gable end. The southern end of the corn crib is clad in circular-sawn narrow vertical planks. They are uniform in width and are not flush. The enclosed southern section of the chicken coop provided shelter for the chickens during inclement weather while the open southern bay was used for sunning. Wire cut nails affix the planks to the exterior. A diagonal wooden piece provides framing support on the exterior west elevation. The corner of the south elevation has shorter narrow planks that may cover a prior opening. There is a door on the west façade in the wide vertical plank section of the structure. The door is located where the differing exterior material joins. The door is of circular-sawn wood planks that vary in width. The door is affixed with strap hinges and a looped, metal lock. It appears that wrought nails affix the door. The nails have been bent so the nail heads are not visible. The chicken coop is in good condition; it is weatherproofed and stable but not in use. The interior of the corn crib was not accessible as a tree has grown extremely close to the only door, making entry impossible.

Cow Shed

The cow shed is located south of the George E. Rice House and west of the chicken coop. Rectangular in plan, the cow shed is 18 feet, 7 ½ inches by 18 feet. Built during two building periods, the structure has a slightly asymmetrically pitched, standing seam shed-roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The northern section of the cow shed was used for livestock while the southern bay was used as a shelter for agricultural equipment. The entire structure is of wood-frame construction with the northern bay having a stone foundation on the south elevation. The foundation has been repaired using modern concrete and brick. Built into the hill's slope, the shelter has a deteriorating wooden sill foundation. The foundation on the southwest corner the shelter is supported by a pile of stones. The exterior is clad in

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circular-sawn, vertical wood planks affixed with a mix of both cut and wire nails. The boards on the northern section are just slightly wider than those on the south shelter's exterior. The southern shelter has a large rectangular opening with clipped corners where farm equipment could be driven into the structure and stored. There is one, square window opening on the southern elevation of the southern shelter. It has a vertical plank hatch that seals the opening. The northern livestock section of the structure has a door opening on the east elevation and north elevation. They are both vertical plank doors with metal strap hinges. The door on the north elevation is centrally located, with a small opening at the roofline in the northwest bay. The opening is secure by a hatch of vertical planks with strap hinges. The hatch could have been for keeping fowl or for hay storage.

19th Century Side-Passage House

The 19th century house is located on a ridge above Battle Creek at the southern tip of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm. The dwelling is located on flat land that slopes steeply to the west, south, and east. Set deep in the woods, there are no agricultural fields or outbuildings near the dwelling. The 19th century road trace continued from Grays Road, past the George E. Rice House out to the 19th century house at Battle Creek. A deep cistern, lined with brick at the top foot, is located ten feet from the northeast corner of the house and is fifteen feet deep.

The 19th century house is a two-story, three-by-one bays dwelling of side-passage plan. The house is 18 feet, 2 inches by 14 feet, ½-inch. The standing seam, side-gable roof is of steep pitch and has exposed rafter tails. There is an exterior end chimney on the west elevation; the chimney has a stone foundation. Halfway up the flue there is a square opening in the center of the chimney. This void was possibly used to remove exhaust from a coal or wood stove from the main room. The chimney has been repaired over time with cement mortar. The house is of wood-frame construction with a foundation that rests on the ground. The exterior is clad with rough hewn weatherboard affixed with cut nails. Many weatherboards on the northwest corner of the house have deteriorated, leaving only the interior lath. The dwelling has symmetrical fenestration; windows no longer have glass panes; however, remnants of the double-hung wood sashes are visible. The windows have wood sills and wood framing. The side-passage house has four points of entry; the door openings in the hall are aligned. No doors remain; however, the openings are in poor condition. The door openings are no longer square. They are less than 5 feet high. The 19th century house is in a poor-to-ruinous condition, rapidly deteriorating. Without major stabilization, weatherproofing, and renovation the dwelling maybe lost.

The 19th century house's interior is no longer weatherproofed and therefore shows extensive signs of deterioration. The house has been vacant for many years and has no interior furnishings. The first floor has a hall and parlor, the second floor was not accessible due to the instability of the stairs. The hall is 6 feet, 11 inches by 10 feet, 1 inch. The interior has plaster walls with cut lath. The plaster is in poor condition and disintegrated in some areas leaving only exposed lath and exterior cladding. The ceilings are low and covered in plaster; the floor is currently covered in debris. The stairway to the second story is accessible through the hall by doors on the north or south elevations. The ten wood stairs have a simple wood railing that is damaged. The newel post at the bottom of the stair is missing. Due to structural concerns the architectural historians did not access the second story; however, as of XXXX when David Krankowski visited this site, the newel post at the top of the stairs was still present. An interior door leads into the main room (parlor) on the first story that is 13 feet, ½-inch by 9 feet, 11 inches. The main room has two entry doors, one on each of the north and south elevations; they do not align. A shelf is located in the northeast corner of the room beside a closet that is located beneath

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the stairs. The closet has some wood shelves for storage. The remains of a wood mantel are located on the west wall with an opening in the wall to the chimney flue. This was likely the location of a wood or coal stove; a metal stove cover was found in the debris in the house.

Plumer-Cranford Barn "A"

The circa 1830 Plumer-Cranford Barn was originally located on a small farm in nearby Port Republic, Maryland. It was thoroughly documented in 1992 and individually listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) as the Plumer-Cranford Barn "A," survey number CT-1028.¹

In 2003 the barn was in a state of neglect and threatened with imminent demolition. Recognizing the barn's historic significance as one of the Calvert County's oldest surviving tobacco barns, the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners moved the barn, including two original sheds, from a farm along Broomes Island Road to the County-owned Biscoe Gray Farm where it was reassembled and restored to its mid-19th century appearance.

Disassembled by a team of Amish craftsmen, the historic barn's heavy timber framing was found to be largely intact. Necessary repairs were made to plates and sills using traditional methods and matching materials. (It should be noted that prior to relocation some sections of plate and sill were repaired. These areas are distinguished from original material by circular saw marks.) In order to maximize the retention of historic fabric, most damaged joists and rafters were "sistered" rather than replaced. In the sheds some studs and rafters were so badly deteriorated, however, that they required replacement.

The barn was then reassembled on the new site. In order to return the barn to its circa 1830 appearance deteriorated exterior vertical siding was rejected in favor of historically accurate horizontal weatherboards. Openings were fitted with period style vertical-board-and-brace doors. The roof was covered with a new standing seam metal roof.

The barn is roughly oriented on a north-south axis and rotated 180 degrees from its original alignment. The principal façade now faces west with original lean-to sheds extending the length of the north and east walls. (A decrepit 20th-century shed, located on what was originally the barn's north end, was not reconstructed.) The sheds utilize earth-fast construction. While most, if not all, of these posts are replacements, they accurately replicate the sheds' original construction method. The barn's main section measures 40 x 20 feet which is standard for a barn of this period. Its sills are supported by local fieldstone piers relocated from the barn's original foundation.

With respect to form, the barn has a cross-axial plan typical of early-19th century tobacco barns. "Cross-axial plan" means that the roof line is oriented along one axis- in this case a north-south alignment- while the interior is divided in half by a sill that runs perpendicular or "cross-axis" to the roof line. The presence of an internal sill would preclude the use of machinery inside of the barn and indicates that the barn was constructed in the period before mechanization.

¹ Williamsen-Berry, Tora L. 1990. *Plumer-Cranford Barn 'A' (CT-1028)*, Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form. Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

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Here the cross-axial plan is created by the presence of a 7 x 10 inch lap-jointed cross sill reinforced by 4 x 6 inch transverse tension braces, that divides the barn's central 40 foot core into two 20 foot sections that are in turn internally subdivided into four-foot "rooms." As stated in 1990 MIHP form, most of the barn's original framing members are entirely hewn and pit sawn. The exceptions are raw logs employed in the sheds as principal and intermediate posts, and replaced elements.

While the internal order of the main barn adheres to a typical 4-foot room division for hanging tobacco, the walls' framing does not always adhere to the typical 4- or 8-foot structural bay system typical of barns divided into four-foot rooms. The 1990 surveyor aptly observed that this barn's structural system combines "both the routine and the eccentric."²

Originally wooden shingles covered the pit-sawn, common-rafter roof. In keeping with common practice, these were later replaced by a standing seam metal roof. The bridled and pegged rafter pairs are placed at 4-foot intervals and reflect the internal room division. The pairs rest on a false plate which in turn rests directly on the joists. Joists are lapped over the plate and their projection creates a slightly overhanging eave. Each rafter pair is joined by three sets of collars also spaced at four-foot intervals. Collars provide structural rigidity and serve as tiers for hanging tobacco. Three additional rows of tiers are located between the plate and collars.

The principal entrance is an 8-foot-wide double door centered on the west façade. The east wall features a similarly sized double opening. The barn has two single pedestrian-sized openings located in the west end of both the north and south walls. According to the 1990 MIHP form, the double openings in the east and west walls were originally 4-foot-wide doorways. The openings were later doubled in size and sills that originally spanned the doorway cut in order to accommodate the ingress/egress of wagons or machinery. An fifth door is situated at the north end of the east wall. Situated between two cedar support posts that also serve as the door frame, this opening was built to provide direct access to what is now the north shed.

Evidence indicates the north shed was originally used to stable horses or cattle, and because of designated usage, there was no internal connection to either the main body of the barn or the east shed that was designed for the hanging of tobacco. This unusual segregation no longer exists. Framing has been removed to allow uninterrupted access between the two sheds and missing sections of the original c. 1830 riven siding on the main barn's north wall allows some visual communication between the main barn and the north shed.

The east shed houses a 19th century tobacco prize. A tobacco prize is a large screw press used to compress tobacco into the hoghead barrels used for shipment. These now obsolete and increasingly rare devices were necessary for packing tobacco until the creation of the loose leaf market in 1939. This example utilizes recycled barn timbers and features a series of repairs and replacements that makes dating difficult, but the principal elements and use of cut nails indicate this example dates to the 19th century.

The circa 1830 Plumer-Cranford Barn is significant as one of Calvert County's oldest known surviving tobacco barns. Features typical of tobacco barns of this period, either currently or originally exhibited by the Plumer-Cranford Barn,

² Williamson-Berry, 1990: 3.

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include its cross-axial plan, dimensions, use of hand-hewn and pit-sawn framing members, narrow pedestrian-scale doorways, and an interior divided into 4-foot sections or “rooms” for hanging tobacco. Other common characteristics include main barn’s use of continuous sills supported on a pier foundation, the use of mortise, tenons and wooden pegs to secure the heaviest framing members, and cut nails fixing secondary framing members.³

The presence of two original sheds is remarkable for a barn of this age and helps to further our understanding of early-19th century barn construction and use. Their survival is especially rare given the sheds were built with earth-fast methods. This technology, which features structural posts inserted directly into the ground, dates back to the earliest colonial period and continued to be employed in agricultural buildings until about the Civil War. This inexpensive and relatively uncomplicated building method was very common in this area, but its design inherently lacked durability. As a result few earth-fast buildings survive.

Biscoe Gray Frame Barn

This deteriorating barn is situated at the top of a hill surrounded by tall but immature trees. Oriented along an east-west axis, this gable-roofed frame building consists of an original 40 x 20 foot transverse-aisle plan core and a later, badly deteriorated 15-foot-wide north shed. A badly rusted corrugated metal roof mostly covers both sections. Vertical board siding sheathes the main barn’s exterior walls. The shed’s siding is also fixed vertical boards. Siding on both sections averages between 6 and 8 inches in width, display circular saw marks and is affixed with wire nails. The main barn’s siding is in deteriorating condition, but mostly intact, however, significant sections of the shed’s siding are missing, leaving the framing exposed.

The foundation and framing members are typical for a barn constructed in the mid-twentieth century. The circular sawn 6 x 6 inch sills of the main barn rest directly fieldstone piers placed under the corners and intermediate posts. The shed’s sills are of the same character but are supported by 2 ½ x 1 inch concrete piers. Concrete piers also supplement the original ironstone piers of the main barn’s north wall. The piers are coarse, roughly molded, of a light color, and were likely made on site.

The main barn was constructed with a symmetrical fenestration pattern consisting of a single 4-foot-wide door in both the east and west gable end and a one-foot-wide double door in both the long north and south walls. The north-side opening, along with wall siding, was removed to accommodate the shed addition. Sills are interrupted at the double doors in order to accommodate machinery, but extend across the pedestrian, gable-end doors in both the main section and the shed.

The barn’s interior framing displays an irregular structural bay system. Along the north and south walls the 5 x 5 inch circular sawn corner posts and similarly dimensioned and finished intermediate posts occur at 7-foot intervals and are reinforced at the sill by 3 x 4 inch circular sawn upbraces. This 7-inch bay structural system expands to 10 feet at the center to accommodate the double doors. Posts appear to sit flush on the sill, but the sequence of wire nails near the posts’ base suggests an internal tenon. Above the posts attach to the plate with a half-lap joint secured with wire nails.

³ Thursby, Lori, and Carrie Schomig. 2009. *Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George’s, and St. Mary’s Counties*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Draft. Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland: E39.

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Transverse-aisle plan barns by definition feature a center aisle. In earlier examples the aisle was a physical space defined by a cross sill extending from either side of doorways located in the barn's long walls. Later, in an effort to better accommodate mechanical equipment, cross sills were often removed and new barns were constructed without this once defining feature. As a result, the aisle became a conceptual rather than bounded physical space. As a late example of the transverse-aisle plan, the Biscoe Gray Frame Barn was constructed without cross sills.

With respect to roofing, the circular-sawn, mitered-and-nailed rafter pairs have two sets of collars that do double duty providing both structural reinforcement and serving as additional tiers for hanging tobacco. The roofing system is unusual in the absence of a false plate. In this barn rafter ends rest directly on the joists and the joists in turn lap directly onto the plate.

The lack of a false plate between the structural plate and the roofing system is curious as this is a nearly ubiquitous feature in common rafter roofs. Relatively inexpensive and easy to construct, a false plate allows the roofing system to stay structurally independent of wall framing. False plate construction is especially useful in tobacco barns because if the roof is damaged by wind there is less chance of damage to the main structure. Structural independence also makes repairs to either roof or wall easier.

Internally, the barn is divided into 4-foot "rooms." This room division is achieved against the backdrop of a 7- to 10-foot structural bay system by nailing 1 x 5 inch studs at 5 inch intervals. These studs are face nailed to horizontal framing members and extend from the sill to approximately 5 inches above the plate, terminating immediately adjacent the west side of the rafters.

The tier poles, consisting of small unbarked logs, rest unsecured on top of horizontal framing members between the structural posts and the studs. Vertically tiers are placed at 3 ½ -foot intervals in contrast to the more common 4-foot intervals. Three rows of tiers are located below the plate. Two sets of collar ties above the plate also provide hanging area.

As previously stated, this barn is in deteriorating condition. Fortunately, the main section's foundation remains sound and structural members are in relatively good condition with rot mostly limited to small sections of sill. The roof and siding need immediate attention to prevent further decline. The shed addition, however, is in an advanced state of disrepair with issues that go beyond sheathing. The absence of large sections of siding and roofing have resulted in extensive damage to framing members, especially east and west wall sills.

The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is architecturally interesting for applying construction techniques and materials not commonly employed on Southern Maryland barns until the early 20th century to a tobacco barn form generally associated with an 1830-1900 context.⁴ Given the nature of rural agricultural building construction, no written documentation is available to indicate when the Biscoe Gray Frame Barn was constructed, but physical evidence points to a building date in the very last part of the 19th century or, more likely, in the early part of the 20th century.

⁴ Thursby and Schomig, 2008: E53.

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Evidence includes the fact that the barn's construction relies exclusively on wire nails which did not come into common use until after 1890. The rejection of hand fashioned structural elements in favor of balloon framing, circular-sawn members fastened by wire nails, and regularly dimensioned machine-sawn lumber both for primary and secondary framing elements further support a post 1890 construction date.⁵

At the time of construction the barn utilized the most up-to-date construction methods, but curiously they were applied to a barn type that was rapidly falling out of favor. The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn's size, rectangular form, and particularly its transverse-aisle plan with wide double doors on the long elevation and the inclusion of a shed along the long elevation are hallmarks of Southern Maryland tobacco barns built between 1830 and 1900.⁶

As the name suggests, the transverse-aisle plan barn is characterized by the presence of a center aisle oriented perpendicular to the roof's ridgeline. The aisle is accessed via double doors located along one or both of the building's long walls. The transverse-aisle plan design is considered to be more efficient and labor-saving than the cross-axial plan barn because its wide doors allowed tobacco to be brought directly into the barn on wagons or later tractors. The transverse-aisle plan design, however, was less machine-friendly than the type of barn then coming into wide-spread use.

Although the transverse aisle plan persisted into the 20th century, most barns built after 1900 have a center-aisle plan and double doors on both ends. These are known as "drive-through" barns. This plan developed in response to the wide spread availability of gasoline-powered tractors and trucks.⁷ The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is significant as very late example of a transverse-aisle plan tobacco barn, and its form embraces both tradition and change. While the builder accepted modern building methods he rejected the increasingly popular drive-through plan form, and applied new building methods to the construction of a traditional and familiar form.

Tobacco barns represent Southern Maryland's most visible and iconic surviving symbol of the region's 350-year relationship with tobacco production. The importance of tobacco to Southern Maryland's economy, culture and landscape cannot be overstated and is well documented.⁸ These distinctive barns are the most enduring tangible artifact of tobacco culture. Southern Maryland tobacco barn design evolved over time in response to changing farming and building methods. Through their various designs tobacco barns illustrate how area tobacco farmers negotiated and adapted to changing economic cycles, technologies and farming practices.⁹

⁵ Martin, Christopher. 1991. *Calvert County Tobacco Culture Survey Phase II: Oral History and Folklife*. Washington, D.C.: Engineering-Science. Submitted to Calvert County Historic District Commission, Prince Frederick, Maryland: 14.

⁶ Thursby and Schomig, 2008: E53.

⁷ Thursby and Schomig, 2008: E54.

⁸ Kulikoff, Allan. 1986. *Tobacco and Slaves: the Development of Southern Culture in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, and Middleton, Arthur Pierce. 1984. *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Original edition, Newport News, Virginia: Mariners' Museum, 1953.

⁹ Ranzetta, Kirk E. 2005. The Myth of Agricultural Complacency: Tobacco Barns of St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1790-1890. In *Building and Environments: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, vol.10*, edited by Kenneth A. Breisch and Alison K. Hoagland. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press: 82.

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The circa 1830 Plumer-Cranford Barn is a heavy timber-frame, cross-axial plan barn and is important as a rare and highly intact example of the type of tobacco barn popular during the 1800-1830 period.¹⁰ In contrast, the circa 1900 frame, transverse-aisle plan barn displays the hallmark features of tobacco barns built between 1830 and 1900. Together, these two barns embody a century of Southern Maryland tobacco barn architectural traditions. Both were built at the end of their designs' respective period of popularity and are late examples of their type.

¹⁰ Thursby and Schomig, 2008: E39.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	Architect/Builder
Construction dates 1830, 1930-1940s	

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SUMMARY

Calvert County encompasses a narrow piece of land between the Chesapeake Bay to the east, and the Patuxent River to the west and south. Calvert County is surrounded by water on all sides except to the north where it adjoins Anne Arundel County. It is fourth oldest county in Maryland, established in 1654.¹¹ Although the County once stretched to the headwaters of the Patuxent River in modern-day Frederick County, it now measures only 218 square miles, making it the smallest of all Maryland counties. High cliffs characterize Calvert County’s bayside shoreline. The numerous creeks along the Patuxent River facilitated maritime traffic, servicing the County’s richest agricultural lands.

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is located off of Grays Road, south of Sixes Road, near the head of Battle Creek on the west bank of Calvert County. The 196-acre property is bound by agricultural fields, Battle Creek tributaries, and dense forest.

Prince Frederick is the largest town in proximity to the property. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is made up of parcels formerly owned by the Gray and Laveille families, prominent landholders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The property retains two dwellings - a 19th century side-passage house and a 1930s tenant house - as well as agricultural outbuildings including a meat house, chicken coop, and cow shed, and two tobacco barns. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is a prime example of a twentieth century tobacco farm and is significant to the County’s agricultural heritage.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Calvert County was established in 1654 by the second Lord Baltimore, Cecelius Calvert, who requested his friend, Robert Brooke, to serve as the County’s first “Commander.”¹² Brooke, an Englishman from a distinguished family, took the post and sailed to Maryland with his family.¹³ Brooke settled on the south side of Battle Creek on a twenty-one hundred acre tract called Brooke Place Manor (CT-46). Calvert County already had a lengthy history of human settlement by native Algonquian-speaking tribes. Beginning in the mid-17th century, settlement in Calvert County was marked by large land holdings operated by English colonists in pursuit of wealth begotten by the growing and exporting of the “money crop.”

¹¹ Stein, Charles Francis. “A History of Calvert County.” Schneidereith & Sons: Baltimore, 1977: 1.

¹² Stein, 1977: 18-19.

¹³ Stein, 1977: 18-19.

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Battle Creek was named by Robert Brooke after the birthplace of his wife in Battle, Sussex, England.¹⁴ The land at Battle Creek Cypress Swamp (just north of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm) was owned for generations by the John Gray family and was once thought to have been a part of Brooke's twenty-one hundred acre tract.¹⁵ The Gray family is an important family in Calvert County which has had a presence at the intersection of Sixes and Gray Roads since the eighteenth century. One member of the Gray family, George Gray, received a land grant and settled in Calvert County, at the head of Battle Creek, in 1705.¹⁶

The majority of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is comprised of land that was formerly part of the Laveille Farm, which borders the Gray farm to the south. An unnamed stream marks the boundary between the two historic parcels. A portion of the Laveille Farm (CT-43) remains, although it is no longer owned by the Laveille family. The Laveille family has a long history in Calvert County. John Laveille, a French Huguenot, arrived in Calvert County in the late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century. One branch of this family established a homestead along Battle Creek.¹⁷ Early land records of Calvert County indicate that this land, described as being "on the east side of Battle Creek... part of 'Harwood' and part of 'Brooke Place Manor'... approximately 250 acres..." was transferred from of John Thomas Laveille, Sr. to his son John Thomas Laveille, Jr. in 1796.¹⁸ The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm has two lots, comprised of 144 acres, which were a part of the Harwood tract.

The eighteenth century in Calvert County was an era of growth and prosperity as well as change and revolution. The County's first seat was in Calverton (originally known as Battletown, also Calvertown), located at the mouth of Battle Creek and easily accessible by water from both sides of the Patuxent River. As local roads improved over the course of the seventeenth century, the population dispersed across the county.¹⁹ By 1722 Calverton was no longer a major population center. That year the Assembly acted to establish a new county seat, named Prince Frederick, between the headwaters of Battle and Parker's creeks.²⁰ The population of Calvert County also grew substantially through the eighteenth century from 2,800 in 1700 to 8,000 in 1775, at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. In 1790 the population was 8,632, half of which was white and half was African-American.²¹

During the eighteenth century, large landholders dominated the "social, economic, and political system of Calvert County."²² The eighteenth century saw the wealthy landowners of the county embark on a period of building "large, well-designed, and substantial" family estates that would pass down through the prominent families of Calvert County for generations.²³ During the first half of the eighteenth century the Tasker family owned the Harwood tract, as well as

¹⁴ Stein, 1977: 29.

¹⁵ Goldstein, Debbie. "Swamp Gets a New Naturalist." Calvert Journal-Gazette 24 February 1977: 5.

¹⁶ Stein, 1977: 266.

¹⁷ Stein, 1977: 286.

¹⁸ Hutchins, Ailene W.. Calvert County, Maryland, Early Land Records. Prince Frederick, MD: A.W. Hutchins, 1982: 15.

¹⁹ Stein, 1977: 96.

²⁰ Stein, 1977: 96.

²¹ Dames & Moore, "Historic Sites Context Study and National Register Evaluation." The Calvert County Historic District Commission, 1995: 3-6.

²² Dames & Moore, 1995: 3-8.

²³ Dames & Moore, 1995: 3-8.

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additional lands in Calvert and other Southern Maryland counties. By mid-century, Harwood had been combined with another tract which in turn had been divided among the Dukes and the Brooms, two significant local families.²⁴

There was virtually no manufacturing or commercial activity in Calvert County except for the sale of tobacco or tobacco related services. To supplement their income from tobacco sales, the landed gentry had to find other opportunities for income, including holding a public office, or practicing medicine or law.²⁵ Calvert County was essentially an agrarian society based on tobacco.²⁶ Following the shift away from indentured servitude during the early Colonial period, wealthy landowners relied on enslaved African-Americans as the main labor force on the tobacco farms.²⁷

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries, tobacco was the main crop in Calvert County and along Grays Road. The relative success of each farm's tobacco yield was reflected in the architecture and layout of each farm. Barns designed specifically for drying and stripping tobacco dotted the landscape of Calvert County and along Grays Road and their size and proliferation is a reflection of the intensive focus on this single crop. The end of the Civil War marked a transition in Calvert County, and most agricultural areas, from large-scale tobacco farming to smaller farms and the shift to tenant farming and sharecropping as formerly enslaved African-Americans settled across the county and sought means to support themselves and their families with little socioeconomic standing. Farm owners worked alongside tenant farmers and sharecroppers to grow the labor-intensive crop.

Two prominent families, the Laveilles and the Grays, owned portions of what is now the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm. In the nineteenth century, Uriah Laveille (1800-1855), a descendant of John Laveille, owned the Laveille homestead and likely operated a mill on site.²⁸ Uriah had eight children between three wives. His third wife, Mary Harris Laveille (1806-1877) gave birth to Alexander Laveille (1839-1882). Alexander Laveille married Mary Ann Lomax Sedwick (1842-1922), the daughter of neighbor John Sedwick; his farm holdings would total more than 415.6 acres.²⁹ In 1899, Mary Ann Lomax Sedwick Laveille willed her landholdings (including the current tract) to her seven children, Mary Rebecca Laveille (b. 1867), Margaret Emma Laveille Cranford (b. 1870), Nannie Dawkins Laveille (b. 1872), Uriah Alexander Laveille (b. 1874), Lillie Lomax Laveille Hance (b. 1876), Benjamin Hance Laveille (b. 1878), and Mary Jane Sedwick Laveille (b. 1881). In the early twentieth century, her son Uriah H. Laveille sold his parcel, Lot 6 consisting of 56.2 acres, to George E. Rice in 1902.³⁰

George E. Rice (b. circa 1882) was an African-American farmer who owned and lived on the property in the early-twentieth century. He married Mary F. Rice (b. circa 1863) and lived on the farm with Mary and his step-son John H. Grahm. George Rice's occupation is listed as a farmer on each census dating from 1910 to 1930. There is no mention in the deeds of any specific buildings nor do any buildings exist on historical maps at the time Uriah Laveille sold the

²⁴ Rivoire, J. Richard. MIHP Form CT-43, "La Veille House." 1973.

²⁵ Stein, 1977: 106.

²⁶ Dames & Moore, 1995: 3-7.

²⁷ Dames & Moore, 1995: 3-8.

²⁸ Hutchins, 1982: 118.

²⁹ Hutchins, 1982: 139.

³⁰ Calvert County Land Records. Deed GWD 3: 275 and Deed GWD 1:1.

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property to George Rice.³¹ However, a side-passage vernacular dwelling is located on the point above Battle Creek on Lot 6. Despite its absence in the Laveille family deeds and according to style, construction, and materials, this house was constructed in the 19th century and dates to the Laveille ownership.

USGS Topographic maps show a road trace that connected to Grays Road, continued southwest to Battle Creek, and then turned south, crossing an unnamed drainage, and connecting to the Laveille property and its homestead buildings. Although not included on historical maps, a 19th century side-passage house is located at the edge of Battle Creek before the road trace turns south to La Vielle Place (CT-43), the Laveille family homestead. The same road trace appears on the 1865 Martenet Map of Calvert County. The trace's inclusion on the Martenet and other historical maps imply that the point where the 19th century house was located was regularly accessed. This trace was an important access road for the Laveilles to reach Grays Road; it is visible as early as the 1857 Abert and Kearney Map of the Patuxent and St. Mary's Rivers.³² The road remained in use; however, by 1901 it was denoted as "undeveloped" on topographic maps.³³ The change in the road's status could be explained as the Laveille family subdivided their land and sold it to people outside the family. The road therefore was no longer necessary to connect the Laveilles to Grays Road as they no longer owned the property the trace ran through.

The Laveilles owned a prominent house and large farmstead along Battle Creek. La Vielle Place is a one-and-one half story gambrel roof dwelling clad in Flemish bond and constructed in the mid-to-late-18th century with a 19th century addition. Given the grandeur of their family home, it is unlikely that they would have relocated to the 19th century vernacular dwelling located to the northwest. It is more likely- due to its form and function- that the modest 19th century dwelling was constructed for use by people working the land, rather than the land owners. The location, style, use, and construction of this modest dwelling indicate that it dates to the second half of the 19th century.

A number of families with the Rice surname lived along Gray's Road in the area of Mutual. A John Rice owned a house and blacksmith shop (CT-183) along Gray's Road, east of the Biscoe Gray property.³⁴ The Alexander and Sarah Jane Rice House (CT-111) was purchased by Sarah Jane Rice and George W. Rice in 1882. This property, which later passed to Alex Rice, is located southeast of the Biscoe Gray property, on Laveille Road.³⁵ Thomas Rice, the son of Alex Rice, built a house (CT-184) just over 200 yards from his father's house around 1930.³⁶ While it is unclear if all the Rices in the Mutual area are directly related, there is a clear pattern of occupancy in the late 19th century, where small, existing homes on rural farmsteads were purchased and later modified by their owners. The same holds true for the George E. Rice House.

³¹ Abert and Kearney, Map of the Patuxent and St. Mary's Rivers, 1857., 1865 Martenet Atlas of Maryland., and Topographic Map of Leonardtown, Maryland Quadrangle, United States Geological Survey, 1892.

³² 1865 Martenet Atlas of Maryland..

³³ Topographic Map of Leonardtown, Maryland Quadrangle, United States Geological Survey, 1901.

³⁴ McDaniel, George W. MIHP Form CT-183, "John Rice Forge and House." 1977.

³⁵ McDaniel, George W. MIHP Form CT-111, "Alexander and Sarah Jane Rice House." 1976.

³⁶ McDaniel, George W. MIHP Form CT-183, "Thomas Rice House." 1977.

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It is possible that after his 1902 purchase, George E. Rice lived in the 19th century vernacular house while working the land. During his occupation of the 19th century house, he may have improved it with interior plastering and a more formal stairway and newel post. In 1915 George E. Rice further added to his landholdings along Grays Road by purchasing another parcel of the former Laveille farm. Mary A. L. Laveille's daughter, Margaret-Emma Cranford and her husband W. Hutchins Cranford sold the adjacent Lot 7, consisting of 88 acres, to Thomas Parran/Parren and his wife Annie Parran in December of 1915.³⁷ The Parrans immediately sold the 88 acre lot to George E. Rice.

It is on this parcel that George E. Rice constructed a second dwelling sometime between 1915 and 1938.³⁸ This dwelling, the George E. Rice House, is located just off of Grays Road to the south along the old road trace. The new house was much more accessible from the main roadway and was closer to many of the farm's main agricultural fields. With water transportation being replaced by better roadways in the twentieth century there was little reason to remain in a smaller dwelling far from the roadway. George E. Rice owned the property, now consisting of approximately 144 acres for twenty three years, until 1938 when he forfeited the property due to failure to pay his mortgage.

William B. Gray purchased Rice's 144-acre property that was adjacent to his extensive landholdings along Grays Road.³⁹ In 1875 William B. Gray (1863-1947) inherited a tract of land from that Gray Estate.⁴⁰ William was the son of Lafayette Biscoe Gray (1832-1908) and Christiana Elizabeth Bowen (1839-1883). Lafayette Biscoe Gray was the son of Dorcas Darcas M. Bowen (b. 1800) and William Gray (b. 1796), a likely descendant of Gray patriarch, George Gray. William B. Gray (1863-1947) married Sallie R. Hammett (1866-1936) and had four children, John Hammett Gray (1887-1969), Biscoe Lafayette Gray (for whom the property is named, 1893-1989), Lewis S. Gray (1903-1983), and Ernest B. Gray (1904-1977). William B. Gray and his family lived in a two-story frame house (CT-601) north of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm. He built the farmhouse circa 1900.⁴¹ United States Geological Survey Topographic Maps and 1938 Soil Survey for Calvert County show two additional outbuildings, constructed during William B. Gray or Biscoe L. Gray's ownership of the property (1938-2008).⁴² Although no longer standing, the outbuilding in the central north field and the second near the 19th century dwelling were likely for agricultural equipment storage.

Upon William's death in 1947, the land he owned was split between his children. His son Biscoe L. Gray and his wife Margaret Gray inherited the 144 acres formerly of the Laveille farm.⁴³ Biscoe increased his holdings throughout the late-twentieth century, purchasing and subdividing the land he and his siblings had inherited from William Gray.

³⁷ Calvert County Land Records. Deed GWD 16-234 and Deed GWD 16-229. The deeds seem to have both been entered into the record on December 14th, 1915. This may explain the discrepancy in dates on the actual deeds. Also, the Parrans are spelled and referenced both as the Parrans and the Parrens.

³⁸ Calvert County Land Records. Deed GWD 16-234 and Deed GWD 16-229. and 1938 Aerials.

³⁹ Calvert County Land Records. Deed AAH 40: 117. William B. Gray purchased the former George E. Rice land at auction and added to his larger land holdings in that area.

⁴⁰ Calvert County Land Records. Deed GWD 1:70.

⁴¹ Stinson, Merry. MIHP Form CT-601, "Ernest L. Gray Farmhouse." 1980. The house was named for Ernest L. Gray, one of William's sons and later owner of the property.

⁴² 1938 Soil Surveys of Calvert County, and Topographic Map of Leonardtown, Maryland Quadrangle, United States Geological Survey, 1963, 1986, and the modern topographic map.

⁴³ Calvert County Land Records. Deed AWR 18: 149. The 144 acre former portion of the Laveille farm was inherited.

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Biscoe and his wife Margaret (d. 1971) had four children, James T. Gray, Margaret Gray Conklin, William N. Gray (d. 1991), and Biscoe Lafayette Gray, Jr. At the time of his death in 1989, Biscoe L. Gray owned three adjoining parcels along Grays Road. Parcel One was the former Laveille land holdings totaling 144 acres; Parcel Two was formerly owned by Ernest B. Gray as part of the land left by William B. Gray; the original inheritance was subdivided again and Biscoe Gray inherited 42 acres.⁴⁴ Parcel Three was also formerly owned by Ernest B. Gray; it was subdivided and inherited by his brother Louis Gray; it was then left to Biscoe Gray when Louis died.⁴⁵ Upon his death, Biscoe Gray Sr's surviving children and the children of the deceased William N. Gray (G. Stewart Gray, William N. Gray, Jr. and I. Randall Cutler) inherited the Gray land holdings.⁴⁶ In 2004 they sold 206 acres to Calvert County as part of the Rural Legacy program.⁴⁷

AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is significant for its contributions to and association with the agricultural heritage of Calvert County. Tobacco became the principal agricultural crop in Calvert County due, in part, to fertile soil conditions and the accessibility to water transportation. Tobacco grew naturally in Calvert County and was used by Native Americans; however, early Colonists cultivated a tobacco plant used by the Spanish in South America, known as Orinoco.⁴⁸ Maryland Broadleaf, a hybrid of the local wild tobacco and Orinoco tobacco is "cultivated and cured by methods which the early Colonists developed and became a distinctive type of tobacco in the world market."⁴⁹

In Southern Maryland, Maryland Broadleaf tobacco was the crop of choice mainly because of the prime soil conditions in the region. After being cut in the field, tobacco was dried and then pressed into hogsheads, large wooden barrel containers. The constant demand for this type of tobacco was satiated by the relative ease by which it could be moved from farm to market by the network of water transportation, first, and later by roads that linked communities in the county.⁵⁰

The intensive nature of tobacco farming required many farmers in Calvert County to take on extra workers to produce a successful crop. As the cycle of tobacco is over a year from planting to prizing and selling, cheap labor was essential to make the work profitable. Prior to the Civil War, farmers relied on slave labor to plant, tend, pick, strip, and dry the tobacco; however, following the ratification of the Maryland Constitution of 1864, tenant farming and other forms of sharecropping replaced the system of slavery as the primary means by which the tobacco economy could continue.

Tenant farming and sharecropping were similar forms of economy wherein a landless farmer was provided land on which to produce a crop, primarily tobacco.⁵¹ Because of the relative value of tobacco per acre compared to other crops, it was favored by small farmers who owned less than one hundred acres. Also, the relatively small size of the farms provided

⁴⁴ Calvert County Land Records. Deed AWR 18: 149 and Deed ABE 256-770.

⁴⁵ Calvert County Land Records. Deed AWR 18: 149 and Deed ABE 256: 773, and Deed ABE 331: 330.

⁴⁶ Calvert County Land Records. Deed ABE 579: 874. His property consisted of 208 acres on three separate parcels.

⁴⁷ Calvert County Land Records. Deed KPS 1504: 8.

⁴⁸ Stein, 1977: 46.

⁴⁹ Stein, 1977: 46.

⁵⁰ Stein, 1977: 46.

⁵¹ Prola, Rosemary. *Ponds Wood Road Historic Context*, 2007: 2-3.

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plenty of work for tenant farmers who could move from one farm to the other.⁵² To earn extra income tenants helped farm owners hang and strip tobacco in the winter and often raised their own crops as well.⁵³ Since some aspects of tobacco cultivation were labor intensive yet relatively low skill, tenant farmers with larger families could get help from their children to increase profitability.⁵⁴ The system, much like sharecropping, provided little upward economic or social mobility; as a result, very few tenant farmers earned enough money to buy a farm of their own and improve their situation.⁵⁵

Tenant farming and sharecropping were essential to tobacco cultivation in the area; however, the impact these forms of labor had on farmers was often negative. Tenant farming and sharecropping were hard ways of life, with long hours, little income, and little promise of advancement. Many farmers also lacked a complete education as they often dropped out or missed a lot of school to work in the fields and earn extra income for their families. Some farmers believed that tenant “farming was akin to slavery” because it allowed landlords to maintain a low cost workforce when slavery was no longer legal.⁵⁶

Although the tenant houses were small and often did not have running water or even electricity, they allowed the tenant farmers to have their own home at no additional cost.⁵⁷ Tenant houses were often located on the margins of property boundaries. They were typically one or two stories with a chimney and an outhouse. Tenant houses were “plain in appearance” and usually had “no structural or decorative features outside such as a porch, window shutters or door or window trim.”⁵⁸ The 19th century house on the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is an example of this type of simple dwelling.

The history of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is interesting in that it was owned at separate times by both white and African-American families whose common tie was farming. Once George E. Rice defaulted on his mortgage the William B. Gray family purchased the property. The Grays then had the neighboring Sewell family, also African-Americans, working their land, which was likely the Biscoe Gray Farm.⁵⁹

Tobacco farming also had a profound effect on regional architecture. Maryland Broadleaf tobacco is best air-cured; this practice led to the development of a regional barn type. Tobacco barns specific to this region are “a type of structure in which the board siding of the barn is left with cracks or air spaces to permit the air to circulate, thereby drying and curing the tobacco.”⁶⁰ Barns were located in the middle of patches of tobacco, conveniently situated to take advantage of passing winds.⁶¹ “Tobacco barns differed from other barns and granaries because they were built to satisfy two basic requirements: to provide a dry and protected building for storing tobacco leaves, and to allow for the circulation of air

⁵² Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-10.

⁵³ Sundermann, Anne. *The Money Crop: Calvert County After the Buyout*. Crownsville, Maryland: The Maryland Historical Trust, 2005: 43.

⁵⁴ Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-12.

⁵⁵ Sundermann, Anne M. *The Money Crop* 2005: 41.

⁵⁶ Sundermann, Anne M. *The Money Crop* 2005: 43.

⁵⁷ Sundermann, Anne M. *The Money Crop* 2005: 41-42.

⁵⁸ McDaniel, George W. *Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982: 7-8.

⁵⁹ 1930 Census.

⁶⁰ Stein, 1977: 46.

⁶¹ Ranzetta, Kirk E. “The Myth of Agricultural Complacency: Tobacco Barns of St. Mary's County, Maryland 1790-1890.” Building Environments Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture. Knoxville : The University of Tennessee Press:, 2005: 81-96.

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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
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needed to cure the tobacco. Thus, the strength and durability of construction usually required for barns was modified to provide an open and well-ventilated interior in which to dry the leaves. Long poles spanning the width of the building were hung with tobacco and then set in several tiers.”⁶²

Barns in Calvert County were constructed during three distinct periods, illustrating an evolution in the tobacco barn style. The earliest extant tobacco barns in Calvert County (1800-1830) were square in the barn’s main section and were built of heavy timbers. “Drying poles separated the interior into ‘rooms’ and formed the basis of the structural system. The standard barn consisted of four-foot rooms and eight-foot bays, although a system of five-foot rooms and ten-foot bays was common in the eighteenth century.”⁶³ Doorways were narrow, limited to foot traffic, and spanned with large, hand-hewn sills. Sheds for tobacco stripping and storage were commonly added to two, three or four sides.⁶⁴

Between 1830 and 1900, farmers in Calvert County began to construct fairly standardized barns for curing tobacco. These barns are more rectangular than the square barns of the early-nineteenth century and often have only one original shed located on the south side.⁶⁵ The roof is usually an asymmetrical gable; there is a door for foot traffic on each long elevation. “On the interior, these barns had four tiers of poles below the plate and three above, with the small top known as the ‘cat tier.’”⁶⁶ The Plumer-Cranford Barn “A” on the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm was relocated and reconstructed from the Plumer-Cranford Farm in 2003. The barn has hewn and pit sawn wood frame construction and machine-made cut nails.⁶⁷ These attributes help date the barn’s original construction to between the 1830s and the 1880s.

The shift to mechanization on the tobacco farms of Calvert County in the twentieth century is evident in tobacco barn construction of this period. Low barns with doors in the gable ends began to appear; barns became longer structures with single or double aisle plans to provide access for modern farm vehicles. The large door opening now allowed a tractor to be driven through it, which improved efficiency. A specialized room for stripping tobacco is also found within the modern barn’s footprint. The room might be heated or made more airtight (than the rest of the barn) for the comfort of the laborers.⁶⁸ The large number of vertical ventilation planks, propped open by hinges suggests a change in the method of ventilation. This new type of barn was often built “60, 80, or 100 feet in length.”⁶⁹ With intact nineteenth century tobacco barns becoming increasingly rare and many tobacco barns now unused or in a state of disrepair, the tobacco barns in Maryland are an endangered resource in Calvert County.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm maintains a high integrity of feeling, association, location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. The property retains many of its original buildings, including a 19th century side-passage dwelling, a 1930s dwelling with associated agricultural outbuildings, and the Biscoe Gray Frame Barn. Although in varying condition, the

⁶² Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-5.

⁶³ Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-5.

⁶⁴ “Tobacco Barns: Calvert County Maryland.” Pamphlet. Calvert County Historic District Commission, 1991.

⁶⁵ “Tobacco Barns: Calvert County Maryland.” 1991.

⁶⁶ Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-7.

⁶⁷ Williamsen-Berry, Tora L. MIHP Form CT-1028. “Plumer-Cranford Barn ‘A’. 1990.”

⁶⁸ Dames & Moore, 1995: 4-7.

⁶⁹ Martin, Christopher. Calvert County Tobacco Culture Survey, Phase III-Oral History and Folklife. Engineering Science, Chartered, 1992.

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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
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houses retain their design, materials, and workmanship. The landscape remains largely unaltered as it continues to be rural, undeveloped woods and agricultural fields. The surrounding environmental setting is unchanged from its appearance during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with farmhouses and agricultural land surrounding the property. One of the few changes is the conversion of former open fields into forest, as agricultural production declined in the mid and late 20th century.

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A for its contributions to agricultural heritage and C, for retaining buildings that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of agricultural architecture. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is eligible as a significant example of a site representing Calvert County's nineteenth and twentieth century rural-agricultural heritage, specifically tobacco farming. The landscape remains largely unchanged since the eighteenth century with the addition of a few modest dwellings and associated structures. The George E. Rice House is significant architecturally as a fine example of a tenant house. Its outbuildings are representative of small farm buildings; there are also two tobacco barns on the property that are part of the vanishing heritage of Southern Maryland.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CT-1359

Calvert County Land Records.

- Dames & Moore, "Historic Sites Context Study and National Register Evaluation." The Calvert County Historic District Commission, 1995.
- Hutchins, Ailene W. *Calvert County, Maryland, Early Land Records*. Prince Frederick, MD: A.W. Hutchins, 1982.
- McDaniel, George W. *Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.
- Stein, Charles Francis. "A History of Calvert County." Schneidereith & Sons: Baltimore, 1977.
- Sundermann, Anne. *The Money Crop: Calvert County After the Buyout*. Crownsville, Maryland: The Maryland Historical Trust, 2005.
- Thursby, Lori, and Carrie Schomig. 2009. *Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland: Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Draft. Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of surveyed property 196
Acreeage of historical setting 208
Quadrangle name Broomes Island Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is located off of Grays Road, south of Sixes Road, near the head of Battle Creek on the west bank of Calvert County. The 196-acre property is bound by agricultural fields, Battle Creek tributaries, and undeveloped forest. The property is located on tax map 30, parcel 336.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Amy Bolasky Skinner, Architectural Historian		
organization	The Ottery Group, Inc.	date	November 1 st , 2009
street & number	3420 Morningwood Drive, Suite 100	telephone	301.562.1975
city or town	Olney	state	Maryland

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

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Inventory No. CT-1359

Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Chain of Title for Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Lot 7 of Laveille Farm

KPS 1504: 8 February 4 th , 2002	Margaret B. Conklin, G. Steuart Gray, I. Randall Gray Cutler, W. Nowick Gray, Jr., Sally B. Pettit, James T. Gray, and Biscoe L. Gray, Jr. to Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County	206 acres
ABE 579: 874 November 12 th , 1991	Estate of Biscoe L. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray, Jr., Margaret B. Conklin, James T. Gray and Gail Cooper, Personal Representative of the Estate of William N. Gray (Heirs Sally G. Pettit, G. Steuart Gray, William N. Gray Jr., I. Randall Cutler)	206 acres
AWR 18: 149 March 2 nd , 1949	William B. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray (wife Margaret Gray)	144 acres
AAH 40: 117 November 28 th , 1938	Attorney Benjamin Hance, Representative for default mortgage sale (George E. Rice) to William B. Gray	144 acres
GWD 16: 229 December 14 th , 1915	Thomas Parran (Parren) and Annie Parran (Parren) to George E. Rice	88 acres
GWD 16: 234 December 14 th , 1915	Margaret-Emma Cranford and W. Hutchins Cranford to Thomas Parran (Parren) and Annie Parran (Parren)	88 acres
GWD 1:1 July 24 th , 1899	Mary A. L. Laveille (widow) to Margaret-Emma Cranford and her husband, W. Hutchins Cranford	88 acres

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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Chain of Title for Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Lot 6 of Laveille Farm

KPS 1504: 8 February 4 th , 2002	Margaret B. Conklin, G. Steuart Gray, I. Randall Gray Cutler, W. Nowick Gray, Jr., Sally B. Pettit, James T. Gray, and Biscoe L. Gray, Jr. to Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County	206 acres
ABE 579: 874 November 12 th , 1991	Estate of Biscoe L. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray, Jr., Margaret B. Conklin, James T. Gray and Gail Cooper, Personal Representative of the Estate of William N. Gray (Heirs Sally G. Pettit, G. Steuart Gray, William N. Gray Jr., I. Randall Cutler)	206 acres
AWR 18: 149 March 2 nd , 1949	William B. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray (wife Margaret Gray)	144 acres
AAH 40: 117 November 28 th , 1938	Attorney Benjamin Hance, Representative for default mortgage sale (George E. Rice) to William B. Gray	144 acres
GWD 3: 275 October 4 th , 1902	Uriah H. Laveille to George E. Rice	60 acres
GWD 1:1 July 24 th , 1899	Mary A. L. Laveille (widow) to Uriah H. Laveille	60 acres

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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Chain of Title for Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Parcel 2 and 3 of William Gray Property

Parcel 2

KPS 1504: 8 February 4 th , 2002	Margaret B. Conklin, G. Steuart Gray, I. Randall Gray Cutler, W. Nowick Gray, Jr., Sally B. Pettit, James T. Gray, and Biscoe L. Gray, Jr. to Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County	206 acres
ABE 579: 874 November 12 th , 1991	Estate of Biscoe L. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray, Jr., Margaret B. Conklin, James T. Gray and Gail Cooper, Personal Representative of the Estate of William N. Gray (Heirs Sally G. Pettit, G. Steuart Gray, William N. Gray Jr., I. Randall Cutler)	206 acres
ABE 256: 770 December 20 th , 1979	Louis S. Gray and Biscoe L. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray	42 acres
ABE 253: 933 September, 1979	Louis S. Gray, Personal Representative of the Estate of Ernest B. Gray to Louis S. Gray and Biscoe L. Gray	42 acres

Parcel 3

KPS 1504: 8 February 4 th , 2002	Margaret B. Conklin, G. Steuart Gray, I. Randall Gray Cutler, W. Nowick Gray, Jr., Sally B. Pettit, James T. Gray, and Biscoe L. Gray, Jr. to Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County	206 acres
ABE 579: 874 November 12 th , 1991	Estate of Biscoe L. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray, Jr., Margaret B. Conklin, James T. Gray and Gail Cooper, Personal Representative of the Estate of William N. Gray (Heirs Sally G. Pettit, G. Steuart Gray, William N. Gray Jr., I. Randall Cutler)	206 acres
ABE 331: 330 November 14 th , 1984	Personal Representatives of the Estate of Louis S. Gray to Biscoe L. Gray	22 acres
ABE 256: 773 December 20 th , 1979	Louis S. Gray and Biscoe L. Gray to Louis S. Gray	22 acres
ABE 253: 933 September 14 th , 1979	Louis S. Gray, Personal Representative of the Estate of Ernest B. Gray to Louis S. Gray and Biscoe L. Gray	22 acres
AWR 18: 149 March 2 nd , 1949	William B. Gray to Ernest B. Gray	90 acres

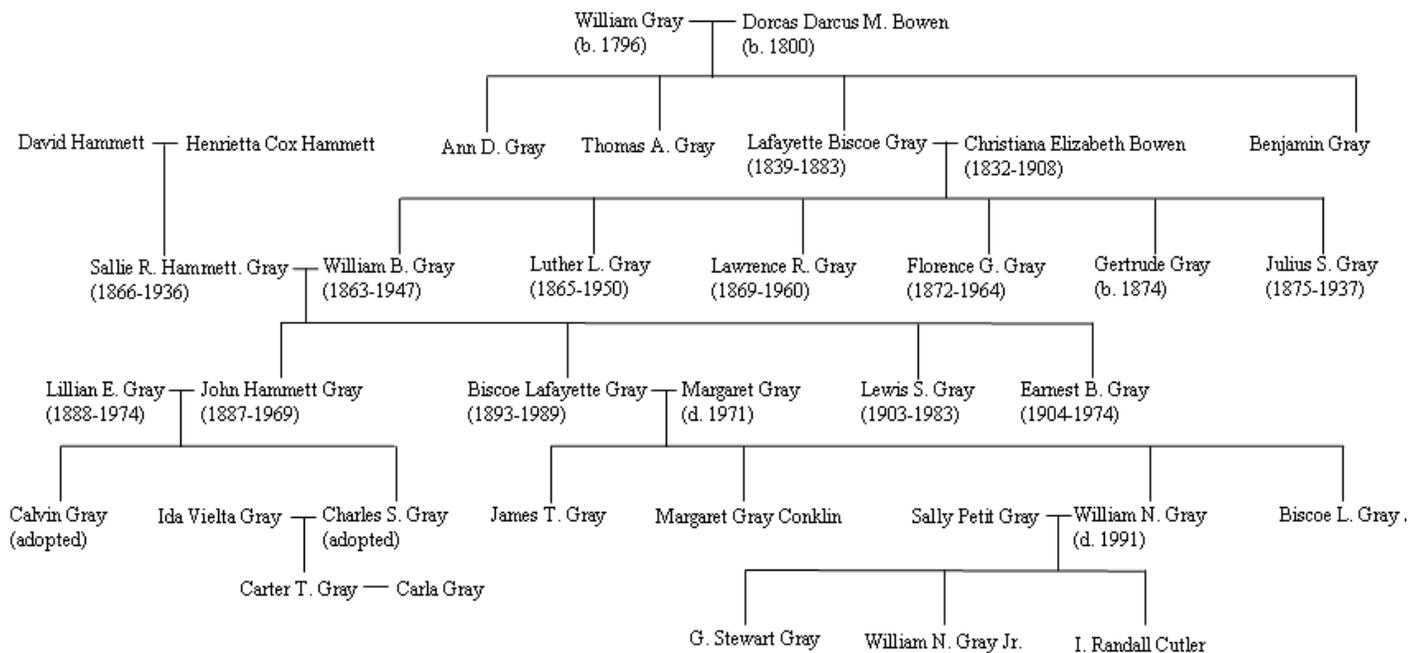
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Inventory No. CT-1359

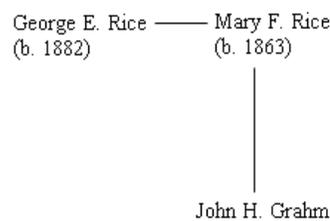
Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Gray Family Tree



Rice Family Tree



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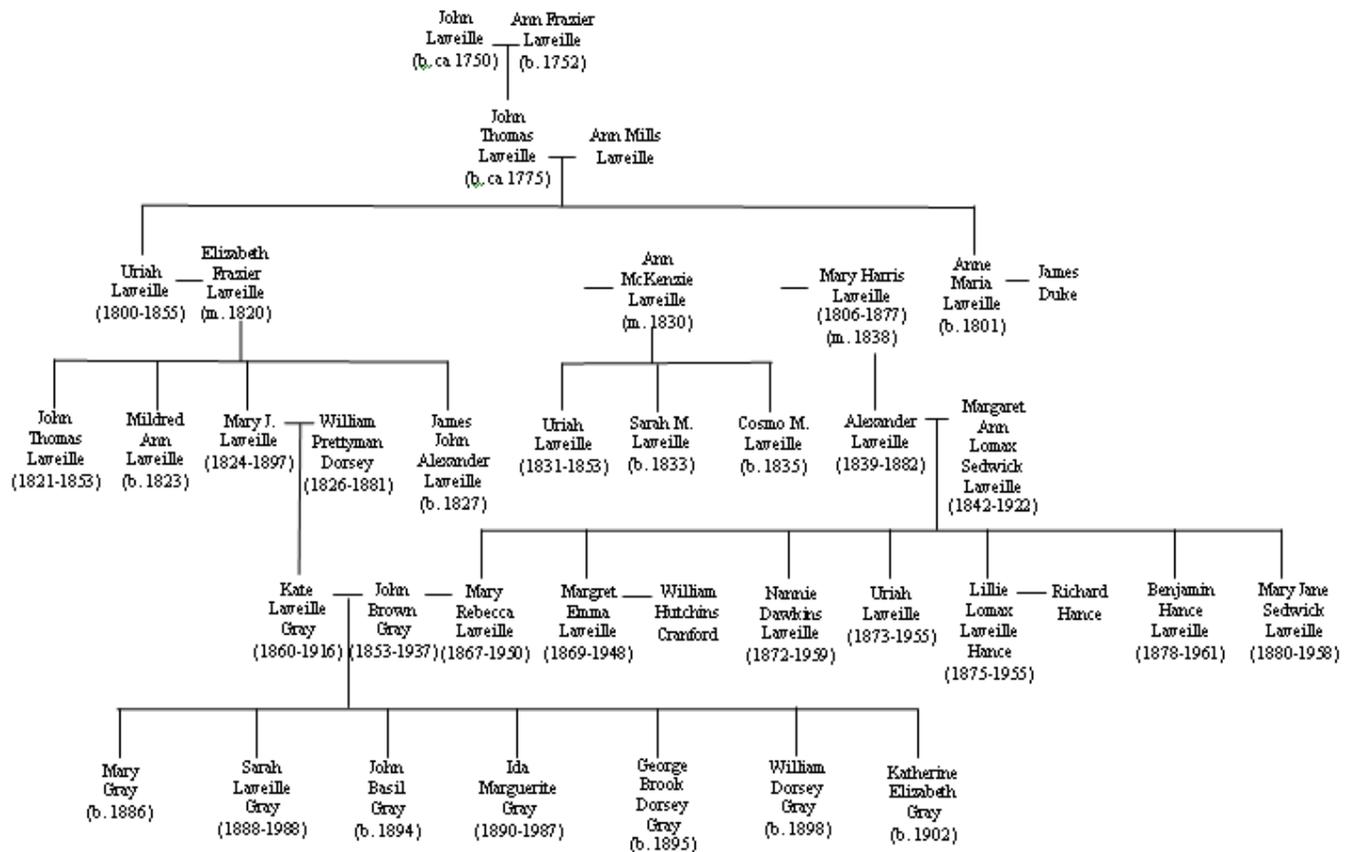
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Inventory No. CT-1359

Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 5

Laveille Family Tree

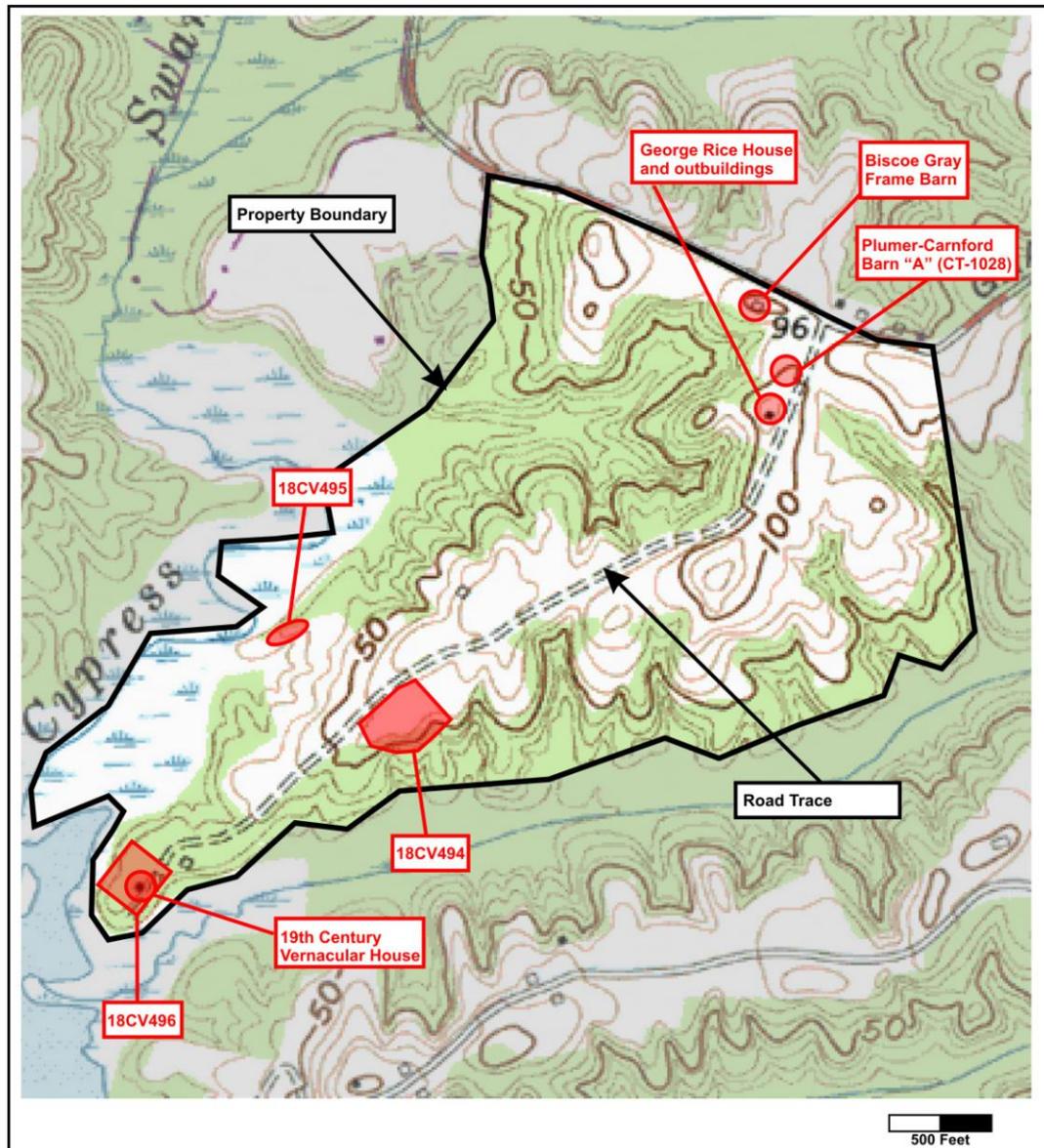


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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 6



THE
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Olney, MD 20832
phone (301) 562-1975
fax (301) 562-1976

Biscoe Gray Site Map:
Detail of USGS Broomes Island, MD Quadrangle (1986)
Showing Cultural Resources on the property

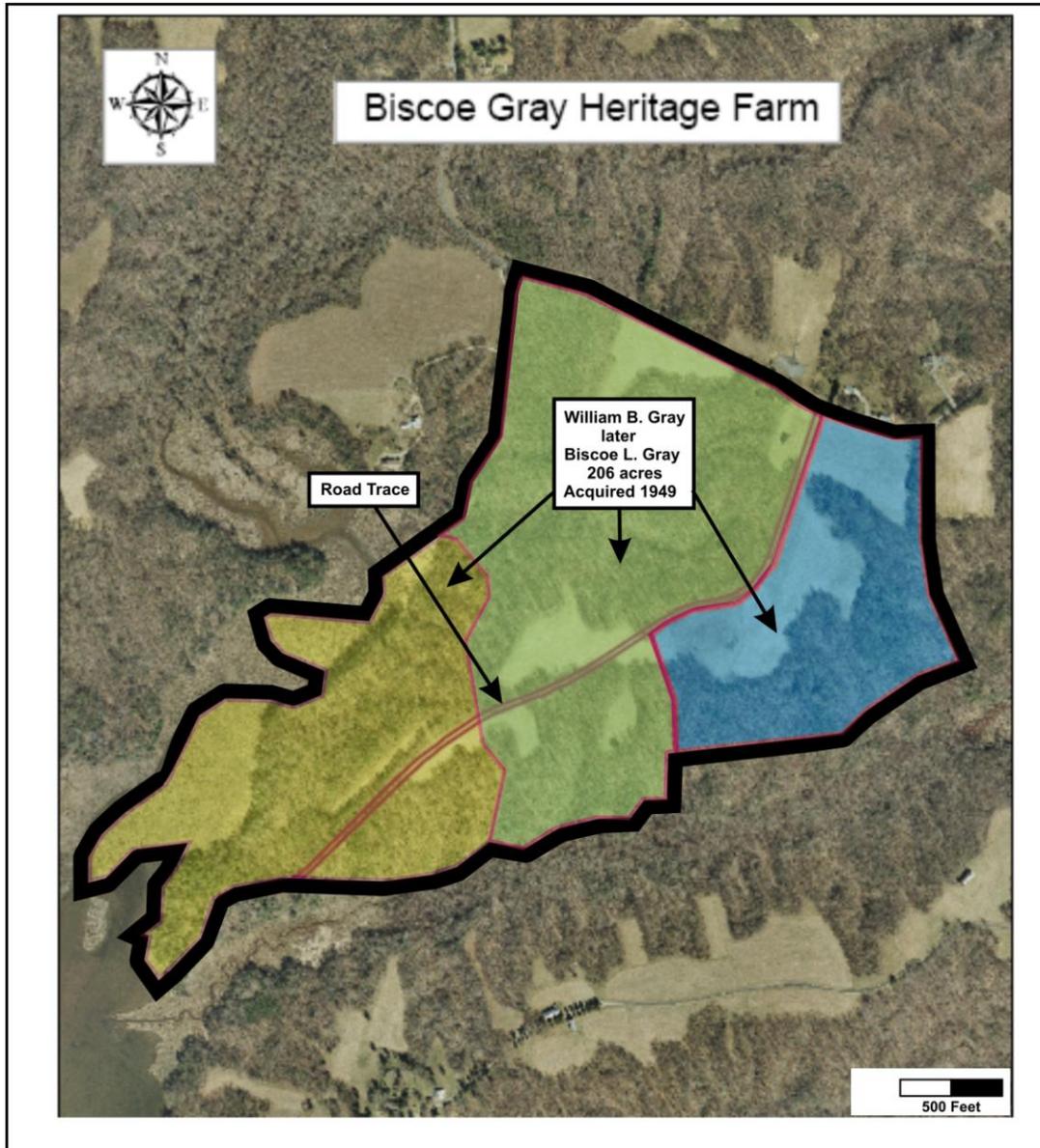


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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 7



**THE
OTTERY GROUP**
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Olney, MD 20832
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fax (301) 562-1976

Property Boundary 1938-2002:
Aerial Showing History of Parcel Ownership by color,
Owners, and Property Boundaries
on the Biscoe Gray Property

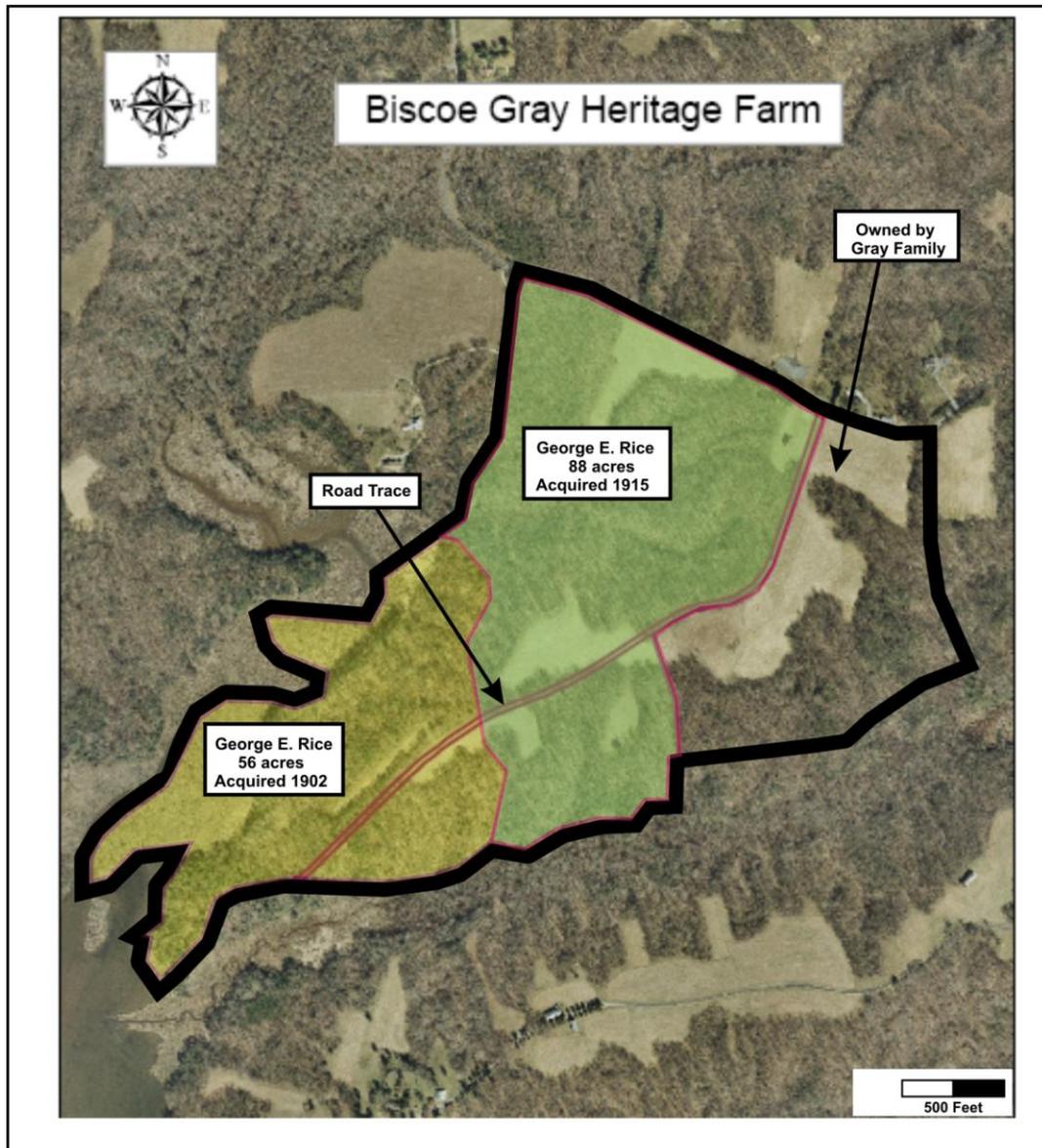


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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 8



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fax (301) 562-1976

Property Boundary 1902-1938:
Aerial Showing History of Parcel Ownership by color,
Owners, and Property Boundaries
on the Biscoe Gray Property

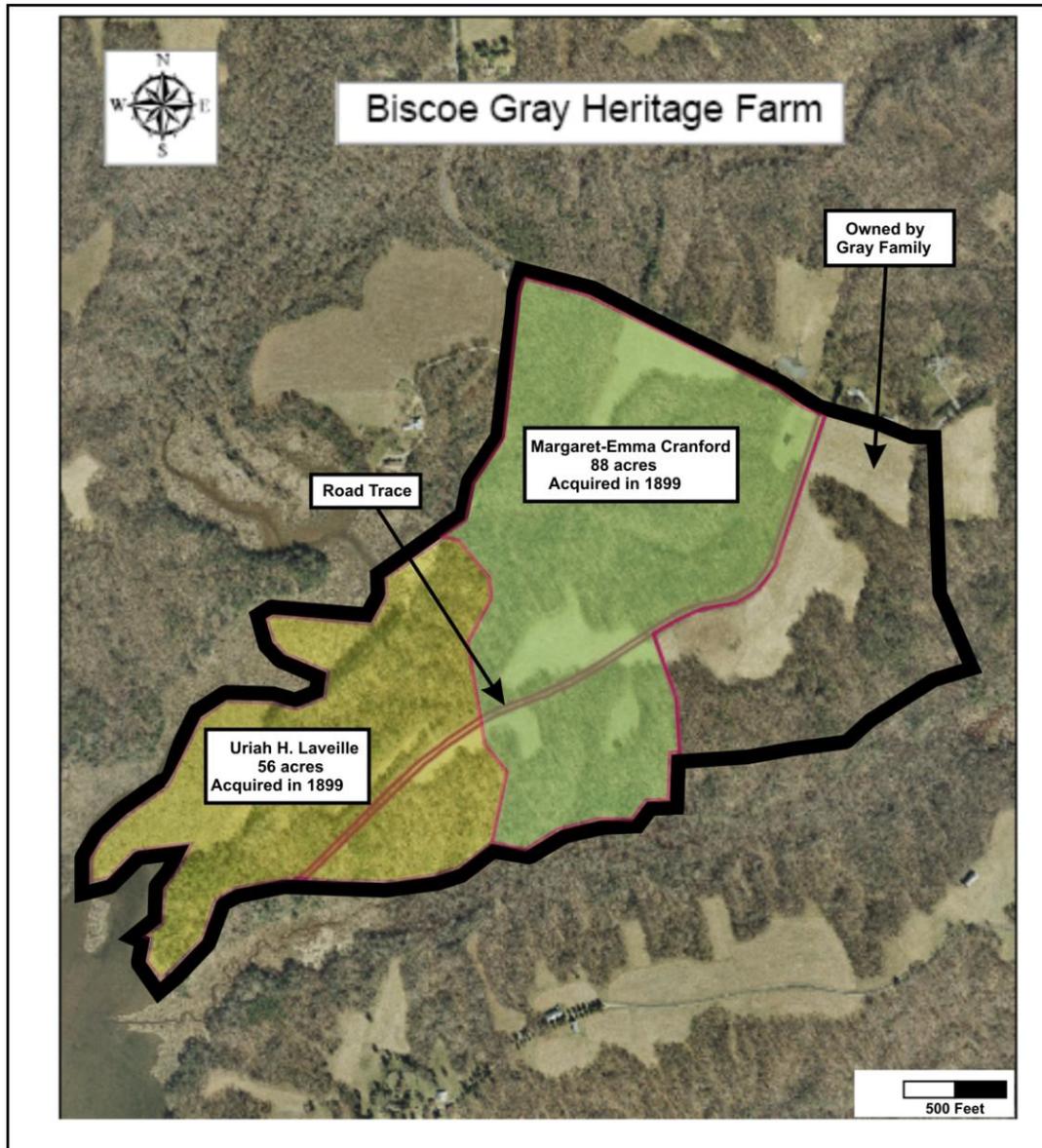


Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 9



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Property Boundary 1899-1902:
Aerial Showing History of Parcel Ownership by color,
Owners, and Property Boundaries
on the Biscoe Gray Property

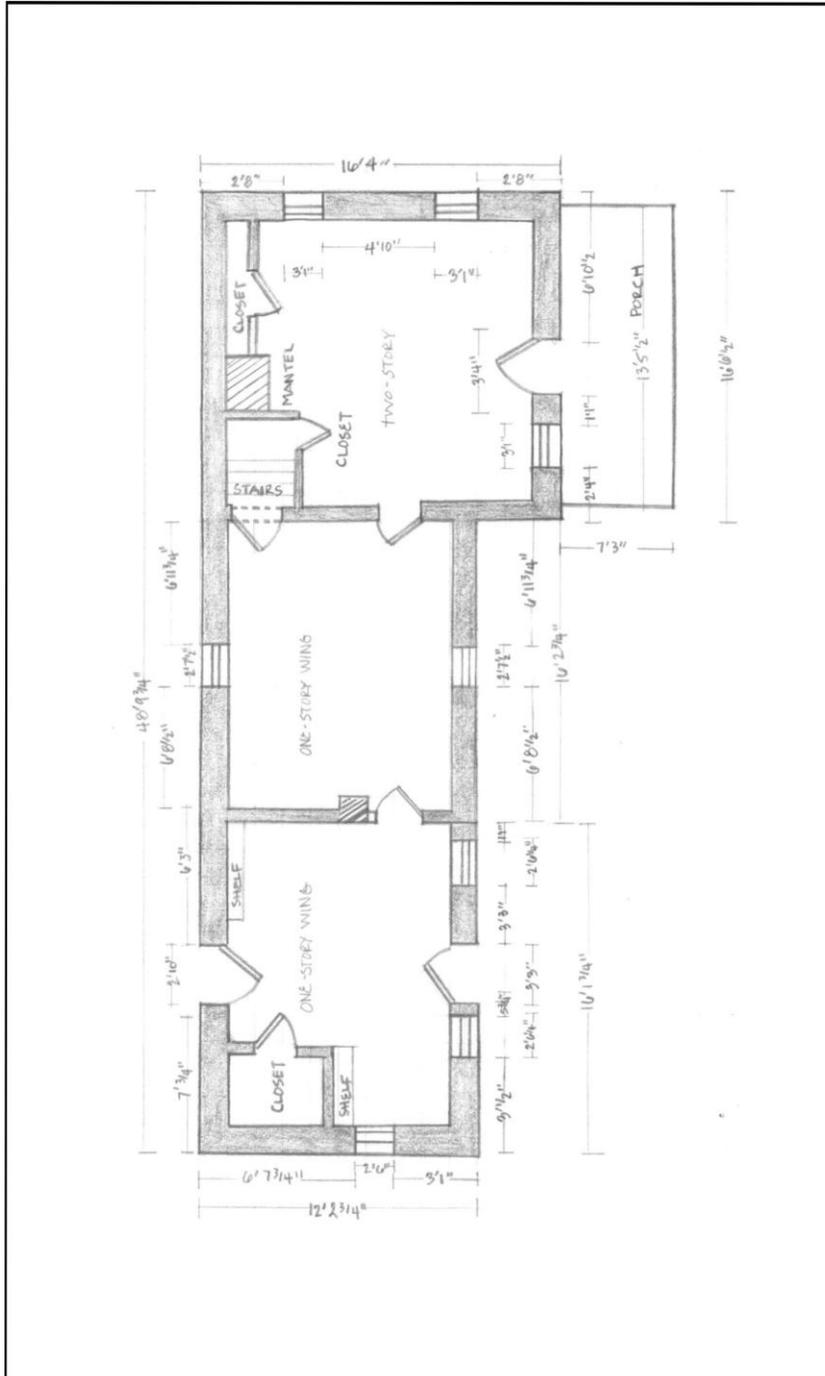


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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Maryland Historical Trust Inventory No. CT-1359
Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm: George Rice House
Prince Frederick, Calvert County, Maryland
Measured Drawing
Not to Scale

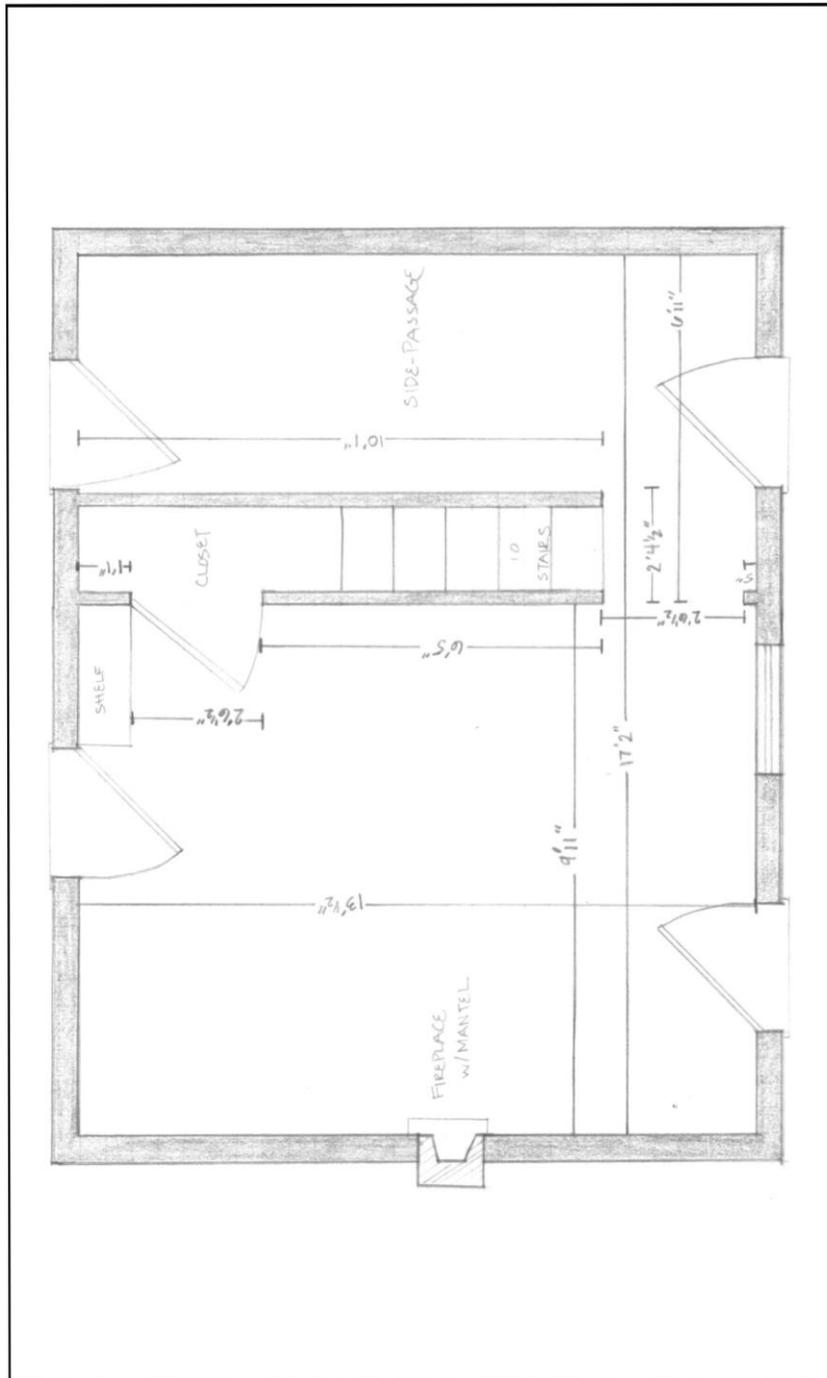
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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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Maryland Historical Trust Inventory No. CT-1359
Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm: 19th Century House
Prince Frederick, Calvert County, Maryland
Interior Measured Drawing
Not to Scale

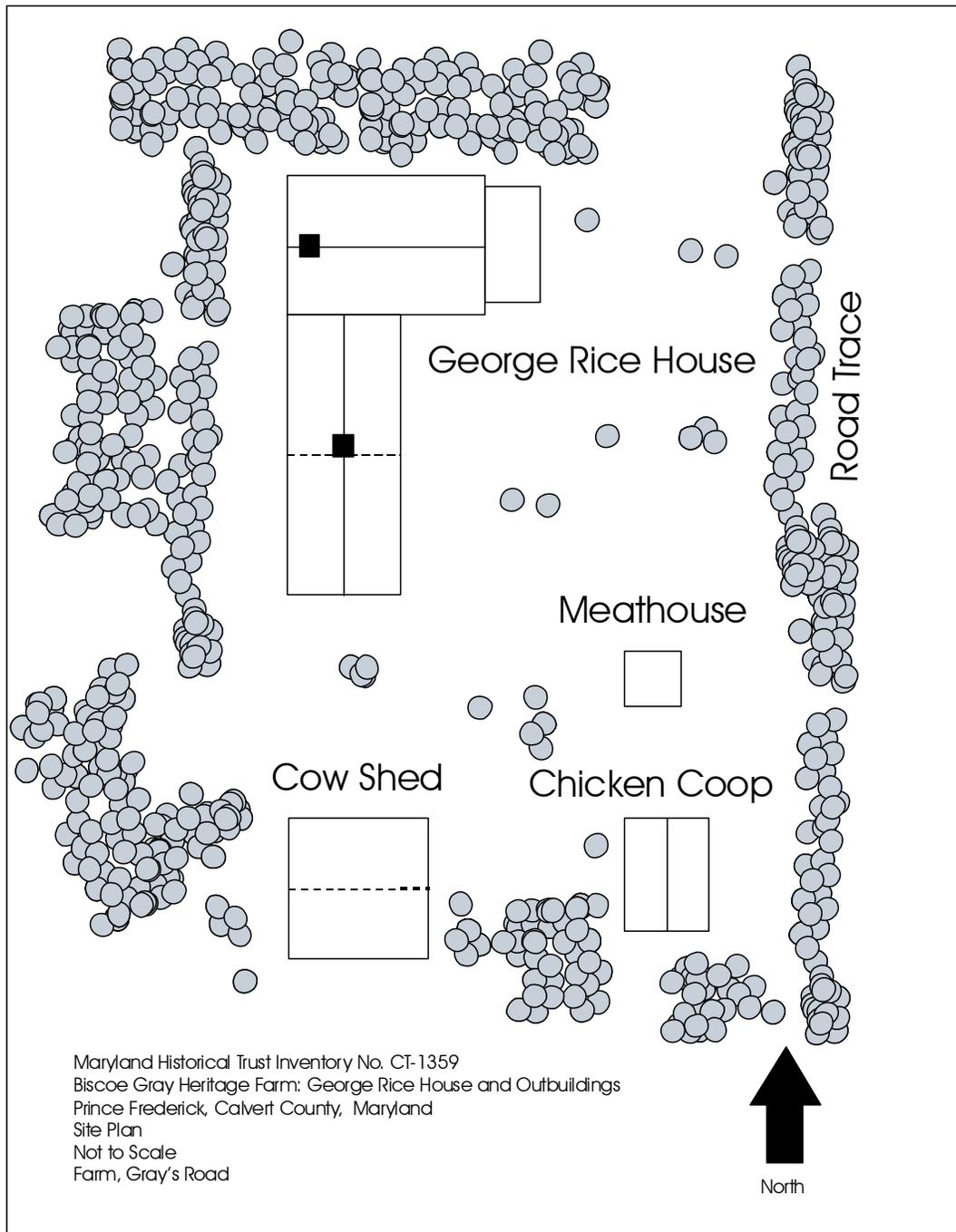
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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
Continuation Sheet

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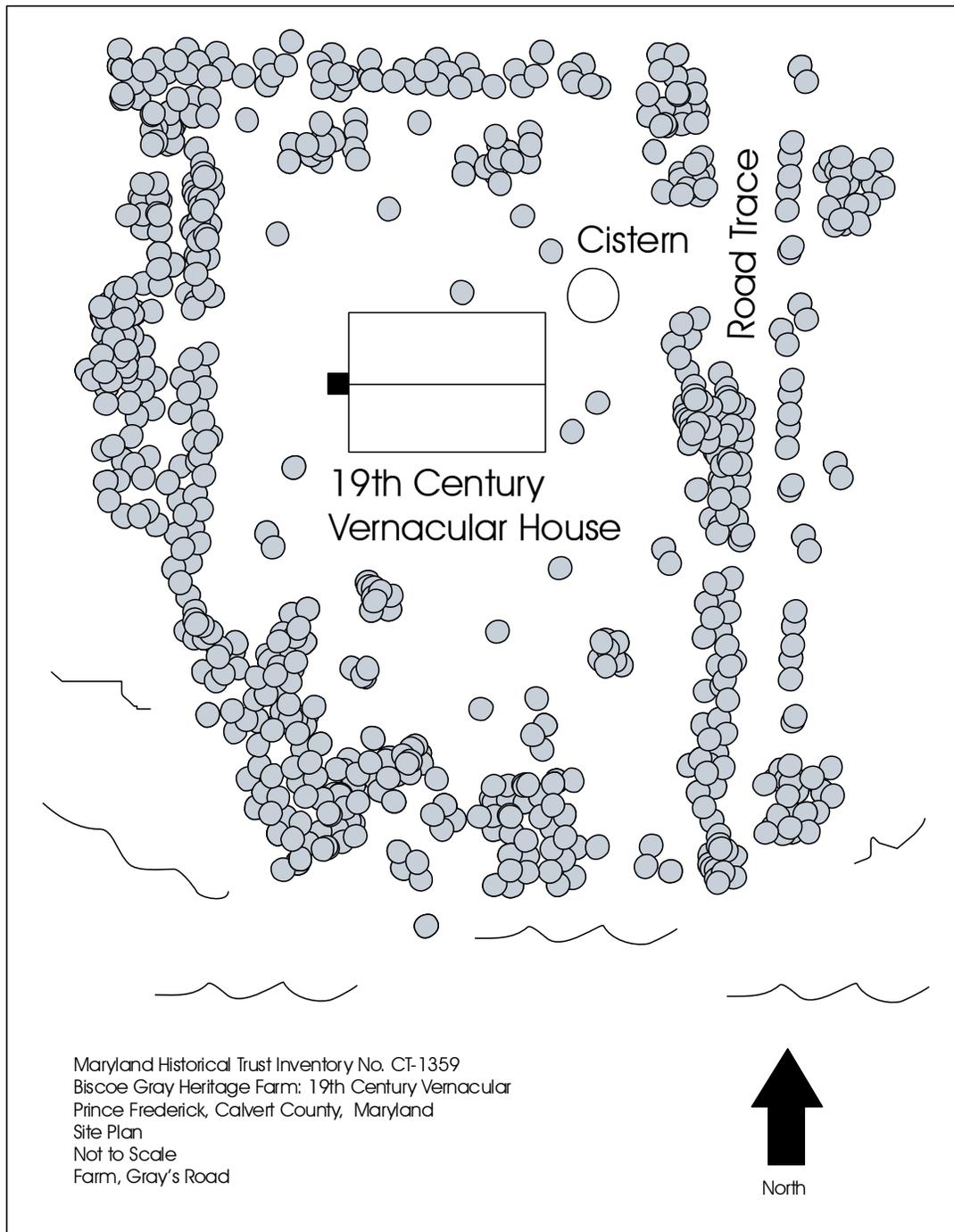


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Name Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm
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CAPSULE SUMMARY

CT-1359

Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm

Grays Road

Prince Frederick, Calvert County, Maryland

c. 1830s-1940s

Public

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is located off of Grays Road, south of Sixes Road, near the head of Battle Creek on the west bank of Calvert County. The 196-acre property is bound by agricultural fields, Battle Creek tributaries, and dense forest. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is made up of parcels owned by the Gray and Laveille families, prominent landholders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The property retains two dwellings, agricultural outbuildings, a meat house, chicken coop, and cow shed, and two tobacco barns. The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm is a prime example of a twentieth century tobacco farm and is significant to the County's social heritage.

The Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm encompasses rolling agricultural fields, undeveloped woods, and a road trace. The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is located just off of Grays Road west of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm entrance. The Biscoe Gray Frame Barn is accessible through a plowed field at the entrance and up a trail into a wooded area. The Plumer-Cranford Barn "A" is located in the center of a plowed agricultural field to the southwest of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm entrance and agricultural access road. The George E. Rice House and associated outbuildings are located directly south of the Plumer-Cranford Barn "A" in a wooded area overlooking a road trace and agricultural fields to the east. Following the trace to the southernmost tip of the Biscoe Gray Heritage Farm to Battle Creek, the 19th century house is located on the top of a hill surrounded by undeveloped woods.