

Maryland's National Register Properties



Photo credit: J. Richard Rivoire, 08/1987

Description: A 2 1/2-story brick structure, to which is joined a smaller two-story brick wing, Truman's Place was built on a north-south axis. The formal, five-bay principal elevation of the main block faces west and features a bracketed eave cornice and ornamental boxed cornices over the first floor windows. The four-bay rear elevation has a centered door but an asymmetrical arrangement of windows. The north end is unbroken except for a small window near the gable peak, and two flush gable chimneys stand at each end of the dormered roof. The lower, one-room deep service wing has an unbalanced composition of windows and doors, a bracketed eave cornice on the west front, and an exterior chimney with stepped weatherings. The masonry of both parts of the house incorporate the brick shell of a c. 1770, one-story, five-bay dwelling with a kitchen-service wing. The Flemish bond brickwork of the earlier structure contrasts sharply with the common bond masonry used in raising the two parts of the original house to their present height c. 1850. The interior of Truman's Place was in extremely poor physical condition by the late 1930s and has been largely rebuilt. Its 19th century center hall plan remains essentially unaltered, but the structural framing, as well as the woodwork and other finishes are contemporary with its 1938-1946 rehabilitation. Exterior features of the same vintage include slate roof shingles and a pedimented architrave framing the transomed entrance door. Ancillary structures, including a tenant house with an attached stable, a tobacco barn, a garden shed, and a three-bay garage, all date from the 20th century.

Truman's Place

Inventory No.: **CH-22**

Date Listed: **1/20/1988**

Location: **Gallant Green Road , Hughesville, Charles County**

Category: **Building**

Period/Date of Construction: **1770; 1850**

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Significance: Taking its name from a 1,000-acre proprietary manor grant to Nathaniel Truman in 1666, of which this property was a part, Truman's Place is the largest and most sophisticated mid-19th century brick house of its architecture in Charles County. Particularly noteworthy features include its overall scale and composition, the five-bay, central passage plan of the main block, and the bracketed eaves and window cornices of the principal facade. Most Charles County houses of this period, during which the three-bay/side-passage plan was the most favored, exhibit considerable restraint in their exterior decorations; the exuberant treatment of the front cornices and windows of Truman's Place are especially important when viewed in that context. Contributing to the local significance of the building is the remarkable similarity between its 19th century masonry and other construction details and design elements to three other substantial brick structures in this locality. These buildings, all of similar age and designed and constructed by Baltimore contractors, represent the first complete break from regional vernacular forms and construction methodology, and were the last "important" houses to be built here until several decades after the Civil War. Of these buildings, Truman's Place is by far the most architecturally refined. Also of interest is the fact that the house evolved to its present plan and appearance from a considerably older, one-story, two-part dwelling. The outer walls of the earlier building are clearly evident in the exterior masonry of all four elevations of the existing structure and constitute the only local example of its design to survive in

any physical form. The original dwelling was built by Richard Gardiner between 1759 and 1782, and enlarged by Richard's grandson, Thomas I. Gardiner, c. 1850. The Gardiner family, who figured prominently in the county's social and economic history throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, retained ownership of Truman's Place until 1938.



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