

Talbot County Court House
Washington Street between
Federal and Court Streets
Easton, Maryland 21601

T-65
1794

In 1710 land was purchased to build a court house to serve the Eastern Shore; this building was 20 by 34 feet in size and remained in use until the present building, a brick Georgian structure, was constructed in 1794.

The house has a projecting central pavillion and octagonal bell tower, covered with gold leaf, which was added in an 1898 remodeling. Permanent location of the Talbot County Court House near the old Pitt's Bridge assured the survival of the town of "Talbot", later Easton, and is one of the community's oldest structures.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

T-65

2100654201

Town of Easton

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Talbot County Court House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street between Federal and Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Easton

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

FIRST

STATE

Maryland 21601

COUNTY

Talbot

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Talbot County, Clerk of Courts

Telephone #: 301-822-2611

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street, Talbot County Court House

CITY, TOWN

Easton

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21601

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Town of Easton Survey by Paul Brinkman

DATE

August 29, 1967

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Maryland Historical Trust

CITY, TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

Maryland

7 DESCRIPTION

T-65

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Talbot County Court House, the symbolic center of Easton occupies a shady square in the North Washington Street commercial district.

Originally constructed in 1794 to serve as Maryland's "Little Capitol" of the Eastern Shore, the building was a rectangular brick building, five bays wide, covered by a hipped roof with a cupola. This early building, expanded in 1890 to seven bays, is recognizable as the central block of Talbot County's governmental and judicial complex. Although extensively remodeled through the years the old structure survives as an example of a Georgian public building, reputed at the time of construction to be surpassed in grandeur only by the State House in Annapolis.

Projecting from the center of the building is a three bay pavillion which contains the main entrance and two flanking windows. The pavillion has a shallow pediment, enriched with denticulated moldings. A belt course of four brick courses, encircles the building as does the water table with bricked-in basement windows. The Flemish bond brick work is finely done with narrow mortar joints and perfectly formed red-orange bricks. Corners of the building are finished with a queen and a king closer in alternating courses. Rubbed brick arches are found in major window openings: round at the first floor windows of the central pavillion and jack arches elsewhere. Molded brick is found at the water table with a cavetto above a quarter-round. Common brick with random glazed headers is used for side facades and the water table.

Twelve over twelve sashes are used in all windows except those in the first floor of the central pavillion. These define and emphasize the main entrance and have rounded upper sashes patterned by interlocking lancet arch muntins. Frames are enriched with back bonds of bold composite moldings.

The main entrance has undergone major changes, including the removal of a three bay entrance porch. The present door, enriched with an architrave with modified Doric details and fluted pilasters, was installed in the 1958 remodeling. The elliptical transom light resembles those in the pavillion windows.* Low granite steps and double four-panel doors complete the ensemble. Well scaled cast iron lanterns are mounted on either side of the entrance.

The hipped roof is finished with a cornice enriched by closely spaced modillions.

Crowning the structure is a closed octagonal cupola added 1898. In the east face is a clock. Its roof is covered with gold leaf and sports a weathervane.

Modern wings house the Talbot County Free Library and county offices. Nearly symmetrical, they are two stories in height, covered by gable roofs and connected by two-story hyphens with enclosed first floor arcades. The north wing is five bays wide with twelve over twelve windows and Flemish bond brick. The south wing includes the formerly freestanding library building and is seven bays wide with detailing similar to that of the north wing. The wings are connected to the main portion with two-story arcaded hyphens. Inside, the old structure is chiefly modern with detailing based on the Georgian style. The entrance hall is crossed by a wide central

(CONT.)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

Washington Street between Federal and Court Streets
Easton, Maryland 21601

Talbot County Court House

hall which runs the width of the building, connecting to the wings and containing the stair.

The siting and landscaping contributes greatly to the beauty and dignity of the building. Setting on a brick platform, the structure is approached by a wide walk with white wooden benches. Enclosed by a cast iron fence, the lawns bloom throughout each of the season with crepe myrtle and magnolia. In the south lawn, there stands a statue of a Confederate soldier.

* The earlier entrance, probably installed in the 1898 rebuilding, may be seen in the rear facade of the Victorian Store owned by the Talbot County Historical Society; see Inventory Form T-4.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

T-65

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES See Below

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significant both for its architecture and its history, the building is one of the most important in the town. Initially called "Talbot Court House", the location of the court here is largely the cause of the establishment of the town of Easton. Replacing an earlier structure of 1711, the building—despite alterations is one of the very earliest in the town.

Research conducted for the National Historic Landmarks Commission in 1970 outlines the physical history of the building.

"The first brick Talbot County Court House, constructed in 1710-12, was replaced by the second and existing structure in 1794. A lithograph of Easton, made in 1835, indicates that the second court house was a two-story brick structure with a gable roof surmounted by an octagonal open cupola. The main facade was five-bays wide and three of these bays were located in a projecting central pavilion. The pavilion was pedimented and there was a circular opening with four keystones and a clock located in the center of the pediment. The windows were topped by flat arches of gauged brick. The court house was Victorianized in the nineteenth century and 'rebuilt' by the city fathers in 1898. If the 1835 lithograph is accurate, two bays were added at that time to the width, thus increasing the main facade from five to seven bays. The two first-floor windows flanking the entrance, in the center pavilion, had their flat arches replaced by round brick arches and an elaborate pedimented 'colonial' door with an elliptical fanlight was inserted. The roof was changed from gable to hipped and the octagonal open cupola was replaced by an octagonal closed cupola of different design. The clock was also removed from the face of the pavilion pediment and inserted in the new cupola.

The 1794 court house was further remodeled and restored in 1958 and at that time the two-story brick hyphens, with arched open first stories, and two large two-story rectangular brick wings were added. The simple court house of 1794 is now the central block of a large and elaborate five-part composition."

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

T-65

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Deeds and Land Records, Talbot County Court House.
National Historic Landmarks Commission Report, 1970.
Patchett and Garey, History of Easton.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY NA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

NA

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE None COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE	Marsha L. Fritz, Consultant	Cynthia B. Ludlow, Research Historian
ORGANIZATION	Historic Easton, Incorporated	DATE November 12, 1976
STREET & NUMBER	Box 1171	TELEPHONE Mr. Paul Parsons, 301-822-2706 President
CITY OR TOWN	Easton	STATE Maryland 21601

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

Washington Street between Federal and Court Streets
Easton, Maryland 21601

Talbot County Court House
T-65

History of
Easton
Garay
S. Elwood
Patchett
1691
412/P45

In 1710 an order was passed 'that the Court hath appointed to meet at or near Pitt's Bridge -- and to treat with Philemon Armstrong, owner of two acres of land near the said bridge, whereon to build a Court House in this county, according to Act of Assembly etc.'. One hundred and fifteen thousand pounds of tobacco were to be paid to Armstrong for his two acres, and Philemon Hensley was to be in charge of the construction. In 1711 Philemon Hensley bought two acres of land adjoining the lands lately laid out for the Court House. The twenty by thirty foot building was erected and served the needs of the county until independence had been achieved.

With the coming of the new "United States of America," it became apparent that a larger Court House was needed. There was considerable activity among various factions as to the site of the new building. A petition was submitted to the Legislature of 1775, and in 1786 an act was passed entitled "An act to erect a town in Talbot County, called Talbot". Commissioners were appointed which were authorized to survey the land and 'cause the streets, lanes and alleys to be named'. John Needles was appointed surveyor. In 1788 an amendment to this act was passed, that the name of the said town shall "hereafter be called Easton".

Cornelius West contracted to build the new Court House on the site of the old one, which was presumably demolished. The county paid £ 500, and the state paid £ 2,500., and it was to be used by both the general and the county court. The new building was completed in 1794 and, with late additions, is still in use today.

is Laws
Chap. XVI



**EASTON
HISTORIC
DISTRICT
T-410.**

T-65
Court House

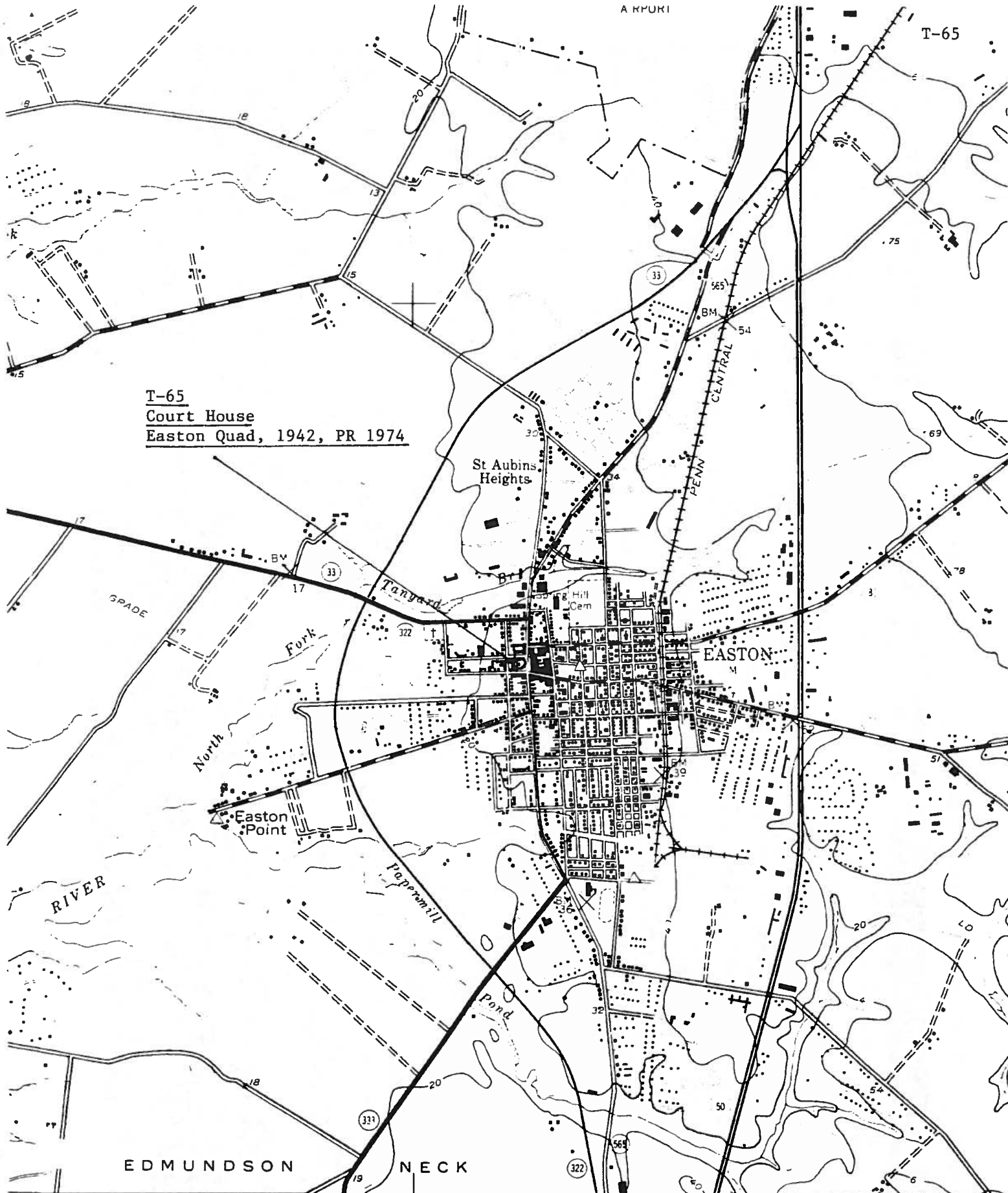
(RD. T-410) EASTON - Talbot Co.
Scale - 15 Rods to an inch

247
445

A RPURI

T-65

T-65
Court House
Easton Quad, 1942, PR 1974



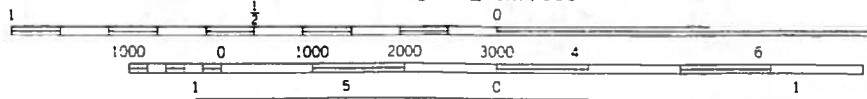
EDMUNDSON

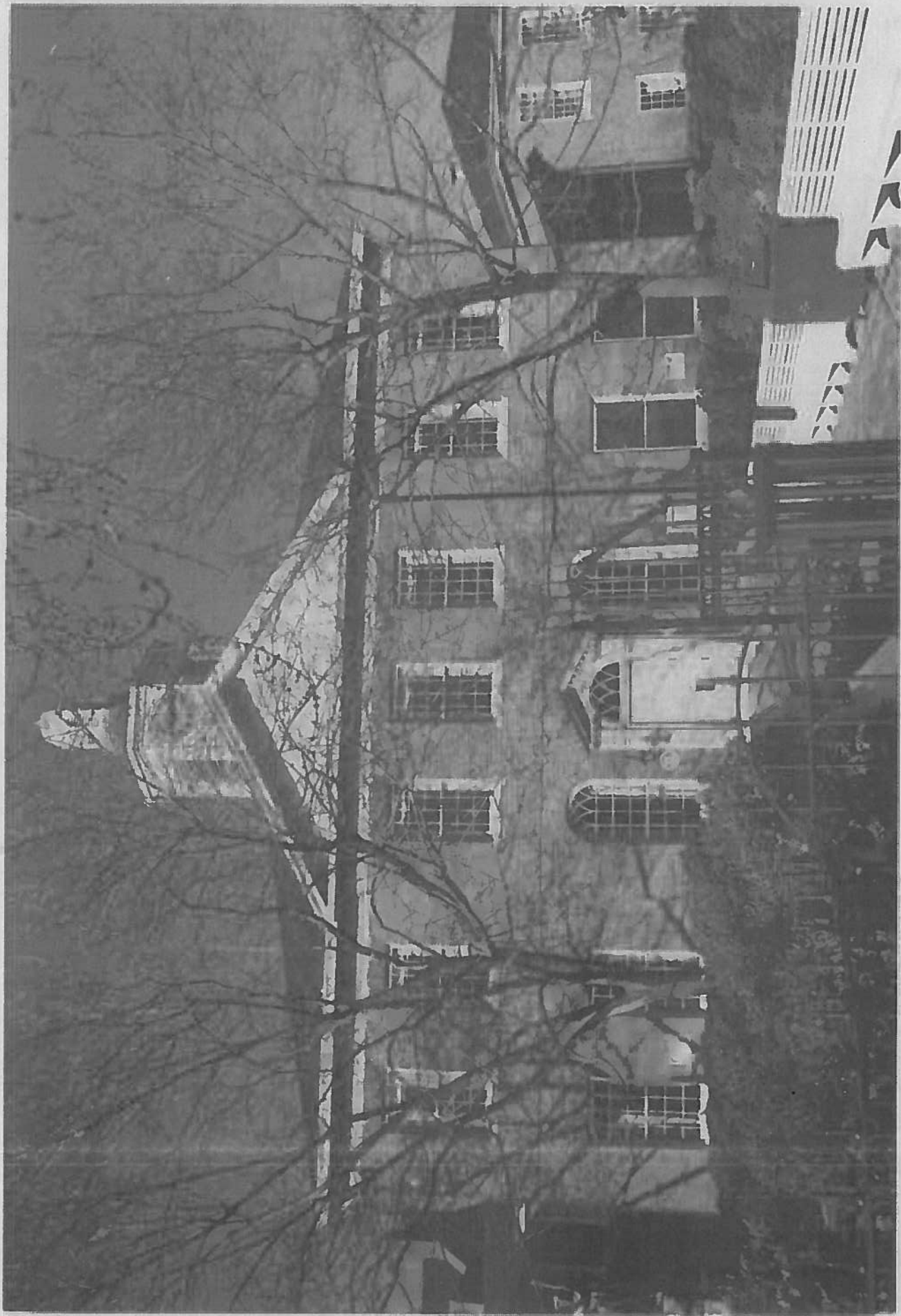
NECK

(TRAPPE)
5761 II NE
SCALE 1:24,000

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metric methods





13 x 1.80



75%

65

TALBOT COUNTY COURT HOUSE
COURT HOUSE SQUARE

EASTON, MD

FEB 1977

VIEW TO WEST, FRONT ELEVATION

T-65

BERNARD WILLIAMS, JR.
510 DIAMOND STRE
EASTON, MD AND 601



150 Line
Screen

P-1863

102%
DUOTONE

William Elston Shannahan's horse
and carriage in front of Court House

original photo by Wm Barnwell Shannahan
c. ~~1892~~ 1895

loaned to Bob Hollyday

T-65
12

64%
6.11

PHOTO FROM:

H. Robins Hollyday Collection
Historical Society of Talbot County
Easton, Maryland 21601

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