

Belair  
(Near Collington) **BOWIE**  
Prince Georges County  
Maryland

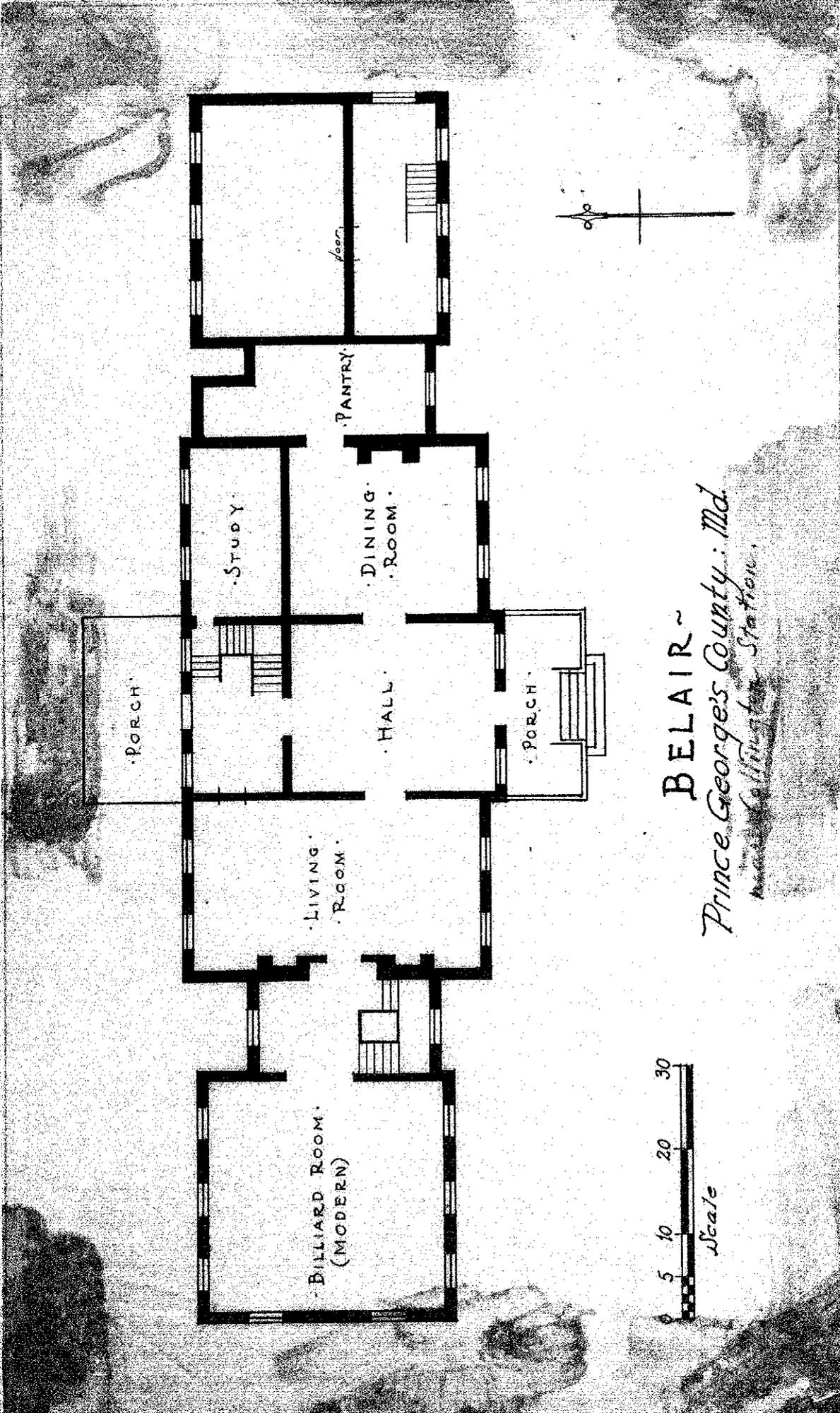
HABS MD-87

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MD.  
17-COLTO.V

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Maryland

Historic American Buildings Survey  
John H. Scarff, District Officer  
1012 Keyser Building, Baltimore, Maryland



BELAIR~  
 Prince Georges County: Md.  
 near Colington Station.

Central Portion erected c. 1735 by Gen. Samuel Oake and his Sons. Wings  
 added and alterations by Woodward family, present owners.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BELAIR

(Bowie City Hall) (Samuel Ogle Mansion)

HABS NO. MD-87

Location: Southside of Tulip Grove Drive, west side of Belair Drive, Bowie, Prince George's County, Maryland. <sup>Pg. 2</sup>

Significance: Initially completed ca. 1746, Belair is an outstanding example of Georgian architecture. It was also home to two Maryland governors and symbolizes more than 250 years of thoroughbred horse racing.

Description: Belair is a large brick mansion built in five parts; beginning with the central block dating ca. 1740. The main or garden facade is seven bays in length. The central three bays are set in a 2 1/2-story pedimented pavilion with a bull's eye window set within the pediment. All first and second floor windows have segmental arches of alternating header and stretcher brick and contain six-over-six-light sash. A brick belt course separates the two floors.

The north, west, and east elevations are laid in English bond while the south front facade is of a more elaborate flemish bond with glazed headers. The watertable is laid in English bond on all elevations. There is a heavy modillion cornice on all elevations; roof pediments at both the front and rear facades display the same treatment. The roof plan is a low-pitched, hip-on-hip; there is a hip-roofed dormer window on both side elevations and one on each side of the pediment on the south facade.

The entire interior of the main block was renovated in the early 19th century; all detail (including architraves, stairs, doors, cornices, mantels, jambs and sash) is of the Federal period. Though, recent restoration shows that interior structural details of the Georgian period are still intact behind the newer renovations. The floor plan has remained largely unaltered as the partition walls are of brick. The wings were added early in the 20th century; each are three bays long and two stories high with a hip-on-hip roof. Architectural detail of the main block is repeated on these additions. One-story hyphens connect the wings to the main block and are one bay in width and have gable or pitched roofs. The interior details of

the wings copy that of the main block.

History:

Belair was built between 1742-1746 by Benjamin Tasker Sr. for Samuel Ogle, fourth proprietary Governor of Maryland. Ogle married Tasker's daughter Anne in 1741, and on their return from England in 1747 the central section of Belair had been built. At this time they added a detached two-story brick building near the eastend of the mansion to use as a office and kitchen. The Ogles also began the tradition of horse racing at Belair, a popular past time of the period.

Ogle died in 1752 and Benjamin Tasker, senior and junior, were named as executors of the will. A couple of years after Ogle's death, his widow and three sons moved to Annapolis. At this time, Tasker Jr. assumed full possession of the mansion. He, like Ogle, was active in politics. He was one of Maryland's delegates to the Albany Congress of 1754 where he served on a committee along with Benjamin Franklin, which was charged with the task of drawing up a plan for a central government of all the colonies. Thirty-three years later echoes of its provisions surfaced again at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Through their association on the committee, Benjamin Tasker, Jr. and Benjamin Franklin became friends and, when the latter came to Annapolis in the spring of 1755, he made a visit to Belair. Governor Horatio Sharpe was also a guest in the mansion on a number of occasions. During his tenure at Belair, Tasker Jr. made many improvements to the property, such as adding gutters and downspouts, built a new barn, cider mill and milk house and made extensive plantings including the avenue of tulip poplars which still stands.

In 1774, Belair was in the possession of the Benjamin Ogle, Samuel's son, whom was Governor of Maryland from 1789-1801. The house stayed in the family until 1871. Hard financial times caused Belair to be put on the market. It changed hands many times after that until it was purchased in 1898; the beginning of the now famous Woodward era (James T. Woodward). The Woodwards continued the Ogles' thoroughbred tradition in the modern era, and began a reign of Maryland horse racing history

that lasted for over half a century. Standing as testimony are the elaborate Belair stables built around the turn of the 20th century. Belair is recognized as the only great colonial estate where breeding for the course has been carried on through three centuries.

James T. Woodward was responsible for the additions of the hyphen and wing added to the west end of the original house and his nephew, William Woodward Sr., to the identical additions on the east end of the house, which concluded the fifth part of the mansion. Woodward Sr. died in 1952 and Belair passed to his son, William Woodward Jr. He tragically died a few years later at which time the estate was placed on the market with the money going to the trust funds for his two minor sons. Eventually the historic 2,280 acre estate was sold to Levitt & Sons, who built a huge community on the Belair estate, Belair at Bowie. The house was donated to the City of Bowie in 1964 for use as city government offices. Today the city administers Belair as a museum.

Sources: Shirley Baltz and Leonard E. Fiehler. "National Register Nomination: Belair, 1977." The nomination is located in the History Division, National Park Service.

Virta, Alan. Prince George's County: a pictorial history. Norfolk: Donning Company/Publishers, 1984.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Landmarks of Prince George's County. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Historian: Terra Klugh, HABS Historian, 1994.

ADDENDUM TO:  
BELAIR  
(Bowie City Hall)  
(Samuel Ogle House)  
Tulip Grove Drive, Belair-at-Bowie  
Bowie  
Prince George's County  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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