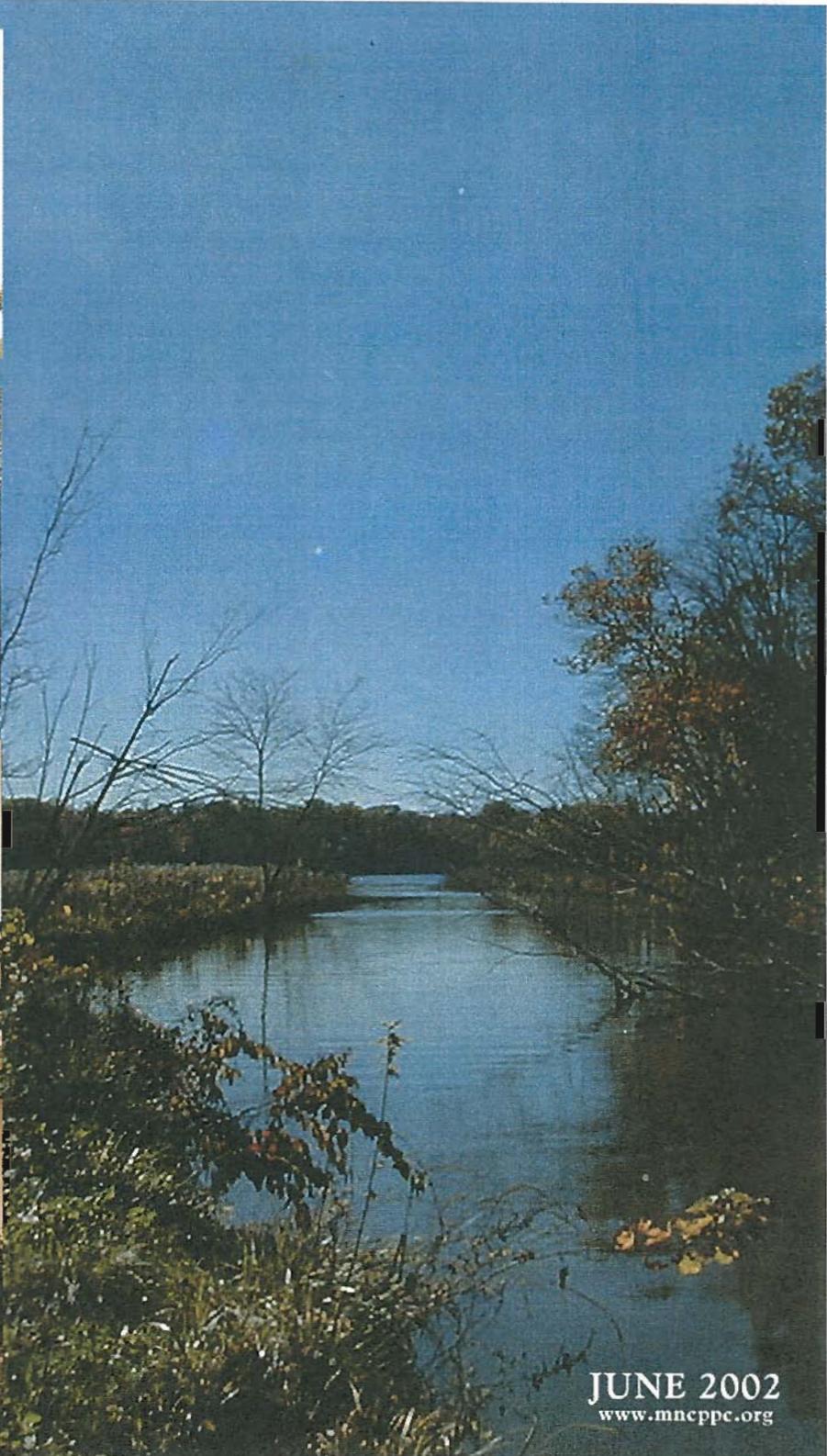
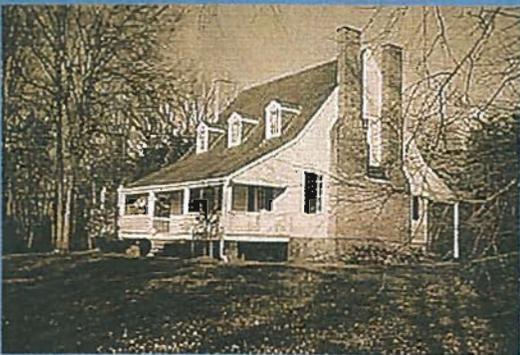


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Broad Creek Historic District Preservation Planning Study



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Abstract

TITLE Broad Creek Historic District Preservation Planning Study

AUTHOR The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

SUBJECT The history, architecture, planning context and goals of the Broad Creek Historic District

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ABSTRACT *The Broad Creek Historic District Preservation Planning Study* reflects the results of a series of design workshops conducted in 2001 by staff of the Planning and Preservation Section of the Community Planning Division, Planning Department, M-NCPPC, for property-owners, residents and others interested in the future of the Historic District. The study updates a previous planning study, provides a history and architectural survey, and clarifies county policies for protection of the historic district.

The study, illustrated with photographs and maps, is divided into five major sections: Section I, the Introduction, explains a chronology of planning efforts in the community and the purpose of the present study. Section II contains a detailed history of Broad Creek from the period of Native American occupation to the end of the twentieth century. Section III contains the Architectural Character and Significance complete with photographs and individual site plans of all buildings in the district. Section IV, Planning Context, discusses environmental features, land use, zoning, transportation, parkland and trails in the district. Section V, Visioning Process and Goals for the Historic District, comprises a review of the process and results of the three design workshops. Four Appendices contain the 1987 Design Guidelines, the Historic District Advisory Committee Rules of Procedure, the Historic Area Work Permit process and other regulations, and the implementation strategies from the 1995 *Broad Creek Historic District Livingston Road Streetscape Guidelines*.

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire County public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the County government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect and manage the County's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department comprised of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision-makers, citizens and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change.

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The County Council has three main responsibilities in the planning process: (1) setting policy, (2) plan approval, and (3) plan implementation. Applicable policies are incorporated into area plans, functional plans, and the general plan. The Council, after holding a hearing on the plan adopted by the Planning Board, may approve the plan as adopted, approve the plan with amendments based on the public record, or disapprove the plan and return it to the Planning Board for revision. Implementation is primarily through adoption of the annual Capital Improvement Program, the annual Budget, the Ten-Year Water and Sewerage Plan, and adoption of zoning map amendments.

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I. Introduction

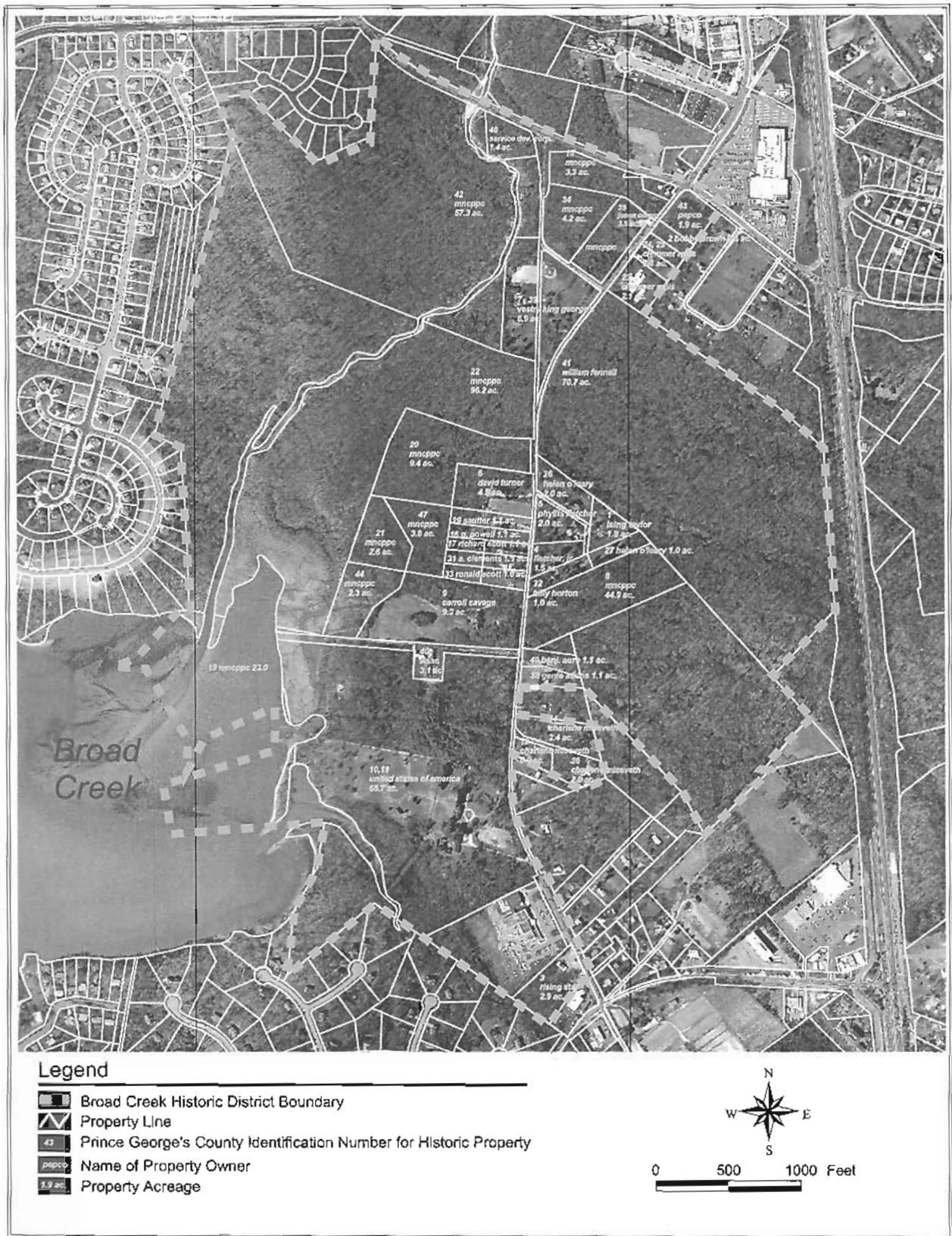
Background

Broad Creek is a 460-acre rural historic district, established in 1985 by the Prince George's County Council by Council Resolution 152-1985. It is a rural area along the Potomac River that contains historic buildings, prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, and woodlands surrounding the Broad Creek estuary; it also includes a range of twentieth-century houses and a former school, now a regional arts center. The district encompasses the site of Aire, one of six towns established in 1706 by the Maryland General Assembly as tobacco shipping ports. There are several important eighteenth-century Historic Sites located within the district's boundaries: St. John's Episcopal Church (ca. 1766), Harmony Hall (1760s), and Piscataway House (mid-eighteenth century), as well as the ruins of Want Water (early eighteenth century). Map 1 illustrates the rural character of the historic district.

The district is protected by the county's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The county's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviews applications for alterations, new construction, or demolition within the historic district. In doing so, the HPC seeks the recommendation of the Broad Creek Historic District Advisory Committee (BCHDAC). Regulations, policies, guidelines and concepts that have helped protect the historic district include the Prince George's County *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*, Subtitle 29 of the County Code (the County Historic Preservation Ordinance), the *Broad Creek Historic District Study* (1983), the *Broad Creek Historic District Design Guidelines* (1987), and the *Broad Creek Historic District-Livingston Road Streetscape Guidelines and Alternatives* (1995).

History of Planning Efforts

The Broad Creek Historic District was designated in 1985 by action of the Prince George's County Council. It was the first historic district created under the county's historic preservation ordinance. The 1981 *Historic Sites and Districts Plan* recognized Broad Creek as a "potential historic district" because of citizen testimony in support of the concept. The plan stated that, "Upon proper documentation, demonstration of local support, and Historic Preservation Commission review and recommendation, [it] could receive favorable action by the Planning Board and County Council." Citizens supporting the concept then turned to the Planning Department for support; in 1982 the Tanta-Cove Garden Club made a request to the Department's Planning Assistance to Municipalities and Communities program, and a study of the area was conducted. The resulting publication, the *Broad Creek Historic District Study*, October 1983, contained a history of the area and its historic properties, a description of the area's features, land use patterns and zoning, a summary of private efforts to preserve the area, and a discussion of boundary criteria along with an analysis of several boundary alternatives. The study concluded that historic district designation would provide the greatest protection for the area, and



Map 1--1998 Aerial Photograph

proposed boundaries for the district that substantially conform to those ultimately adopted by the County Council. The study also contained a number of planning recommendations related to implementing the historic district.

After public hearings by the Historic Preservation Commission in 1984, the District Council held a hearing and designated the Broad Creek Historic District in July 1985. Pursuant to Subtitle 29, the Historic Preservation Commission appointed a nine-member historic district advisory committee. The advisory committee initially was made up of district residents, a business owner, and one representative each from St. John's Church, the Tanta-Cove Garden Club and the Tantallon Citizens' Association. (Recently, the number was expanded to 11 members, with representatives of the Potomac Valley Citizens' Association, National Park Service and the Broad Creek Conservancy joining the committee) The advisory committee's role is to assist and advise the Historic Preservation Commission in the performance of its duties and to serve as the liaison between the historic district residents and the Historic Preservation Commission.

Design Guidelines were then developed and approved by the District Council in 1988 to assist property owners in the historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Historic District Advisory Committee in evaluating plans for alterations to existing buildings and for new construction. The Guidelines incorporated the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and included guidelines for rehabilitation of nonhistoric properties, new construction, site details, the streetscape, and for publicly owned land.

Between 1985 and 2000, over 30 historic area work permits were approved in the district; many of these were for signage, but three were for construction of new houses and one was for the complete rehabilitation of a derelict house into a liveable residence.

A constant threat to the quality of life in the historic district has been the amount of traffic on Livingston Road. The Historic District Advisory Committee has worked with the county's Department of Public Works and Transportation on "speed awareness days," during which a speed-measuring device clocked speeds and police issued warnings. The difficulty of controlling speed on the two-lane road was one of the reasons why, in 1994, the Broad Creek Historic District Advisory Committee made a request to the Planning Department's Planning Assistance to Municipalities and Communities program for a study of the Livingston Road corridor. The study, entitled *Broad Creek Historic District, Livingston Road Streetscape Guidelines and Alternatives*, was published in October 1995. It summarized the results of a community visioning process, identified issues related to the streetscape, and addressed design alternatives. Streetscape guidelines were suggested with various alternatives for each design concept. The guidelines address gateway entrances, fences, traffic circles, brick walls, and guardrails. The study also covered implementation strategies and future actions for the Broad Creek Advisory Committee to address.

One of the outcomes of the streetscape study was that the Department of Public Works and Transportation was asked to consider installing traffic circles to reduce speed; after analysis and further dialogue with the community, the Department installed four speed humps in the district as a more economical solution than traffic circles. Consensus generally has been that the humps have helped somewhat in slowing down the traffic

through the district. Residents believe that these and other speed reduction measures are extremely important in order to maintain slower driving through the district and discourage through traffic, thereby reducing the need for widening, straightening, and other changes that would diminish the road's rural character.

In 1998 the Broad Creek Conservancy, Inc., was established to focus on the protection of the historic district. The Conservancy's purposes are:

- (a) To preserve or to aid in the preservation of areas and objects of scenic, natural, geological, biological, historical, artistic, or recreational importance in Broad Creek located in the Potomac River Valley;
- (b) To assist in the preservation, including owning, leasing, operating or maintaining the National Historic Register property known as Harmony Hall...located on Broad Creek, and to assist in the general, historic, and environmental protection and preservation of the entire Broad Creek Historic District...;
- (c) To establish or aid in the establishment of nature reserves or other protected areas for scientific, educational, or aesthetic purposes;
- (d) To conduct land use planning studies;
- (e) To further natural history, conservation, artistic, and cultural education...of Broad Creek and the Potomac River Valley;
- (f) To buy, exchange, contract for, lease...own...and...manage [real property];
- (g) To borrow or raise money for any of the purposes of the corporation...

The Conservancy has taken an active role in the issues related to the maintenance and protection of Harmony Hall and the historic district, and a member serves on the Historic District Advisory Committee. It also holds an easement jointly with the Maryland Environmental Trust on the Piscataway House and grounds.

Purpose

The purpose of the present planning study is to produce a preservation plan for the district that accomplishes several objectives: (1) to update a planning study completed before the district was officially designated; (2) to provide a thorough history of the district as well as an inventory (with photographs, maps and architectural descriptions) of all buildings, both contributing and noncontributing, in the district; (3) to determine whether there is a need for revision of the Broad Creek Historic District Design Guidelines; and (4) to clarify county policies in protecting the historic district. The planning study incorporates the results of visioning workshops with the community to address how to build upon and convey a sense of the significance of the district and the importance of preserving its character. A consultant was engaged to conduct the visioning workshops and to provide an examination of the *Broad Creek Historic District Design Guidelines*.

The study contains six sections. Chapter II encompasses a history of the development of the historic district area. It is based on primary research

into land, tax and court records to determine who owned the land tracts, who constructed the early dwellings and other buildings, and when smaller farms and twentieth-century houses were constructed. Chapter III contains an analysis of the architectural character of the historic district and descriptions of each of the buildings, along with site maps and photographs. This chapter is intended as a reference for the Historic District Advisory Committee in commenting on any applications for change in the district. Chapter IV contains an environmental analysis, a discussion of existing land use and zoning, transportation conditions and issues, parkland, and trail proposals. Chapter V contains the consultant's report on the spring 2001 visioning workshops carried out to determine goals for the future of the district and to provide recommendations for follow-up to this study. The appendices reprint the Design Guidelines and Rules of Procedure for Historic District operations, the Historic Area Work Permit application process, and the implementation strategies charted as a result of the 1995 *Broad Creek Historic District–Livingston Road Streetscape Study*.