

Piscataway (84-023)

Piscataway, located in southwestern Prince George's County, is one of the oldest villages in the county. Piscataway takes its name from a Native American tribe of the same name that lived in the area along Piscataway Creek. The Piscataway tribe was known to inhabit this area by the sixteenth century, with settlements stretching from Piscataway Creek to Anne Arundel County, and across the Chesapeake Bay. After John Smith's landing in 1608, white settlers eventually made their way along the Potomac River, pushing out the native tribes.¹

The Village of Piscataway was officially established after the General Assembly of the Province of Maryland passed the "Act for the Advancement of Trade and Erecting Ports and Towns" in 1706 and 1707 in order to establish commercial centers along the rivers in Maryland. The Act stated that a town was to be erected "on the South Side of Piscattaway [*sic*] Creek, at or near the Head thereof, to contain 40 or 50 Acres, at the Discretion of the Commissioners."² At the time, there was already some trading happening in the area. William Hutchison owned a storehouse located near what would become the village.³

In 1747, the Village of Piscataway was designated as an inspection site for tobacco. In order to protect the quality of tobacco being shipped to England, all tobacco grown in Maryland had to pass through inspections sites at Nottingham, Piscataway, Upper Marlboro, or Bladensburg before it was allowed to be publicly sold.⁴ These small landing communities grew as commercial activity was drawn to the tobacco warehouses located along the river and creek banks. Taking advantage of the location, several stores soon opened in the village. A few of these functioned as import/export shops, purchasing tobacco for export, while importing goods for the local farming community.⁵ Also contributing to the success of Piscataway was the development of roads that connected the village to other communities. In 1757, the postal route was established from Annapolis to St. Mary's County and it passed directly through the village. With the establishment of other new roads (now known as Floral Park Road, Piscataway Road, and Gallahan Road), Piscataway was well-connected to Port Tobacco, Nottingham, Upper Marlboro, Queen Anne, and Bladensburg.⁶

Piscataway was also the site of several early taverns, including Catherine Playfay's tavern which began operation in 1741. In the 1790s, the tavern was replaced with a new brick structure that also operated as a tavern. Run by the Isadore Hardy and known as Hardy's Tavern (PG: 84-023-05), the family continued to operate the tavern until the mid-nineteenth century. Thomas Clagett also ran a tavern in Piscataway, beginning in the late eighteenth century. A portion of the building still remains as part of a private residence. The building is still known as the Piscataway Tavern (PG: 84-023-03).⁷

¹ James H. Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 36, No. 4. (Oct., 1979), pp. 548-570.

² Archives of Maryland, *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, March 1707-November 1710*, volume 27, p. 160.

³ Unknown author, "History of the Village," located in the files at M-NCPPC, Prince George's County Historic Preservation Section, 1.

⁴ Marina King, "The Tobacco Industry in Prince George's County, 1680-1940," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County: Short Papers on Settlement Patterns, Transportation and Cultural History* (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1991), 69-71.

⁵ "History of the Village," 2.

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⁷ Susan G. Pearl, "Early Taverns in Prince George's County, 1703-1862," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County: Short Papers on Settlement Patterns, Transportation and Cultural History* (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1991), 61-64.

The 1798 Federal Direct Tax indicates that Piscataway remained a small community, despite its commercial success. Piscataway was comprised of approximately 28 acres of land, divided into 28 lots of varying sizes. Twenty-one dwellings, six warehouses, and 40 other buildings were listed. Some of these buildings included typical outbuildings, such as barns and dependencies, but also a ballroom, three granaries, a schoolhouse, and a bake house.⁸

For a variety of reasons, Piscataway began to decline in the early nineteenth century. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Baltimore developed as a large port, with more farmers using Baltimore for the inspection, sale, and shipping of their tobacco. As Baltimore grew, the smaller river communities began to diminish as centers of commercial activity.⁹ Due to large-scale deforestation to build warehouses and other buildings, the silting of Piscataway Creek made its waters more shallow and not available for larger boats to dock and trade their goods. In 1858, the tobacco inspection warehouse was sold into private hands, officially ending Piscataway's significance as a trading post.¹⁰ In 1860, the village's population numbered 125 residents whose professions included farmers, blacksmiths, physicians, carpenters, merchants, hotel manager, and wheelwrights. As development and new rail lines were established to the east, effectively bypassing the village, Piscataway lost residents to other communities. By 1900, the population had dropped to 100 residents.¹¹

Martenet's map of 1861 shows approximately 25 buildings in the linear village along what is now Floral Park Road. The detailed map shows the number of commercial buildings in the small village. They included three doctor's offices, Griffin's Store and Post Office, Stanton's Store, H.C. Finch store, a blacksmith and wheelwright shop, St. Mary's Catholic Church (PG: 84-023-10), as well as a hotel (Hardy's Tavern). A schoolhouse is shown south of the village. The 1878 Hopkins map documents the beginning of a decline in the population of the village. The map shows the continual existence of several residences, such as St. Mary's Church, the houses of Dr. Hurtt (PG: 84-023-08) and Dr. Edelen (PG: 84-023-06), and the schoolhouse. A Methodist Episcopalian Church is a new building shown south of the schoolhouse.¹²

There are five Historic Sites in Piscataway:

- PG: 84-023-03, Piscataway Tavern, 2204 Floral Park Road
- PG: 84-023-05, Hardy's Tavern, 2305 Floral Park Road
- PG: 84-023-06, Edelen House, 2401 Floral Park Road
- PG: 84-023-08, Dr. Edgar Hurtt House, 2308 Floral Park Road
- PG: 84-023-10, St. Mary's Catholic Church & Cemetery, 13407 Piscataway Road

There are three Historic Resources:

- PG: 84-023-02, Underwood Farmhouse, 2004 Floral Park Road
- PG: 84-023-04, Stanton-Blandford House, 2207 Floral Park Road
- PG: 82-023-09, Miller House, 2312 Floral Park Road

⁸ "History of the Village," 2.

⁹ King, "The Tobacco Industry in Prince George's County," 69-71.

¹⁰ "History of the Village," 3.

¹¹ "History of the Village," 4.

¹² Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861); G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Piscataway was conducted in July 2007. Piscataway remains a small linear village, located along Floral Park Road. Piscataway Road marks the eastern boundary, while Livingston Road forms the western boundary. The study area is remarkably intact, with very little modern infill. There has been some loss of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century- buildings, but the examples that remain are outstanding illustrations of the time period in which they were constructed. Houses along Floral Park Road are set very close to the road on lots of varying sizes. The surrounding flat rural landscape is dotted with wooded areas. A tract to the east of the survey area has been cleared as the site of a future subdivision.

Buildings in the survey area date from the mid-eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. Only one building dates from the second half of the twentieth century. The majority of buildings date from the nineteenth century. Styles represented in Piscataway include Georgian, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. The buildings reflect both high-style designs and vernacular interpretations of these popular styles. Common building types include side-hall-and-double-parlor plan, the I-house, bungalow, and Cape Cod. There is one commercial building, constructed in the late nineteenth century. It appears to be currently used as a private residence.

Suburban development is beginning to encroach on the small community. The “Villages of Piscataway” (also known as “The Preserve at Piscataway”) is a 879-acre mixed-use development currently being constructed south of Floral Park Road at the intersection with Piscataway Road and Danville Road. The “Villages of Piscataway” will contain commercial/retail buildings, single-family dwellings, and townhouses. For now, the historic Village of Piscataway is visually buffered from the new development by surrounding trees on the south side of the Village, however, the majority of the forested land is owned by the “Villages of Piscataway” and may be developed in the future.

Historic District Evaluation

Piscataway represents several Prince George’s County Heritage Themes including Native Americans, early towns, later churches, commerce, agricultural heritage, landings and river crossings, taverns, transportation, and residential architectural styles. The Piscataway survey district meets the following Prince George’s County criteria for designation as a historic district:

- (1)(A)(i) – Piscataway reflects the evolution of an eighteenth-century port town to a nineteenth-century rural crossroads village in Prince George’s County. The variety of residential, commercial, agricultural, and religious buildings that are extant document the growth of rural villages in Prince George’s County. The community has the potential to yield significant information about Native American inhabitants in Prince George’s County. The Piscataway tribe is known to have lived in the area by the sixteenth century. The tribe occupied land stretching from Piscataway Creek to Anne Arundel County and across the Chesapeake Bay.
- (1)(A)(iv) – Piscataway reflects the economic, commercial, and agricultural heritage of Prince George’s County. Its history as an early village, an eighteenth-century port town, an important trade center, commercial area, and its tobacco-related history are all significant.
- (2)(A)(i) – Piscataway is significant as one of the few communities in Prince George’s County that still represents a linear rural village, and whose architecture has remained largely intact. The variety of styles date from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth century and reflect the evolution of taste and style in Prince George’s County.

(2)(A)(iv) – Piscataway merits recognition as a historic district whose buildings reflect the growth and development of an early rural village. Piscataway evolved from an important eighteenth-century port town to a nineteenth-century rural crossroads village. Extant buildings in the village convey this evolution and are excellent examples of the time period in which they were constructed.

In 1996, the Maryland Historical Trust determined that Piscataway was eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association as an early-eighteenth-century town and as a rural crossroads village in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was also determined eligible under Criterion C for its distinctive architecture from the late eighteenth century through early twentieth century and as a rural linear village.

In a letter dated September 25, 1996, from J. Rodney Little, the State Historic Preservation Officer, to Linda Morrison of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little notes that 11 archaeological sites in Piscataway need to be evaluated for eligibility in the National Register.¹³ Because of the number of identified archaeological sites in Piscataway, the community is also recommended eligible under Criterion D:

Criterion D - The community has the potential to yield significant information about Native American inhabitants in Prince George's County. The Piscataway tribe is known to have lived in the area by the sixteenth century. The tribe occupied land stretching from Piscataway Creek to Anne Arundel County and across the Chesapeake Bay.

Historic district boundaries have been drawn to exclude encroaching development including the parcels of land owned by the "Villages of Piscataway" on the south side of Floral Park Road. The boundaries were also drawn to exclude the Edelen House, a vernacular dwelling located east of Piscataway Road. The Edelen House has lost its association with the historic village because of the surrounding development, and as a result has been excluded from a potential historic district. On the north side of Floral Park Road, a non-historic house constructed circa 1980 was excluded from the recommended historic district.

In addition to its historic significance and the potential to yield important information, Piscataway has retained its integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. Some buildings have been altered, which has resulted in a minimal loss of workmanship and materials. Future development may affect the setting of Piscataway, but the vital aspects of integrity (location, design, feeling, and association) remain present to express the significance of the historic Village of Piscataway.

Individual Designation

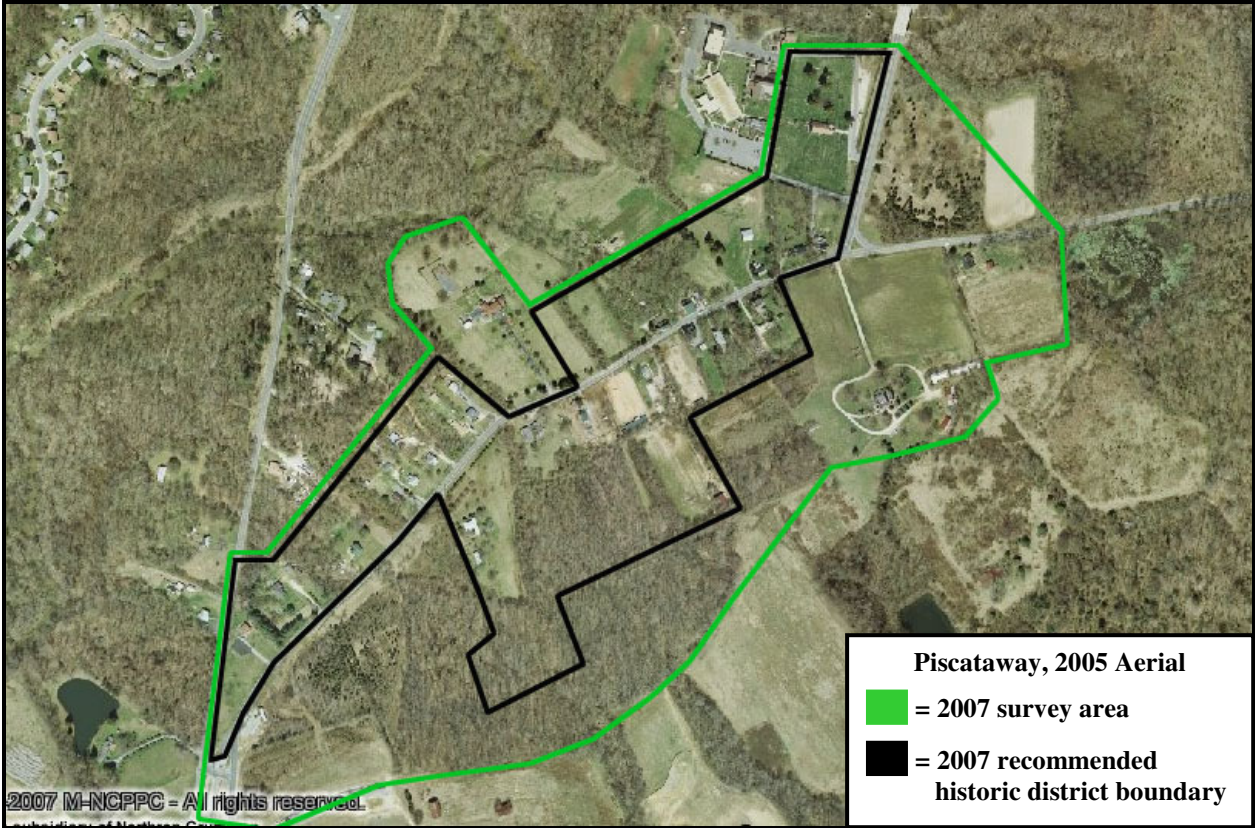
The Stanton-Blandford House at 2207 Floral Park Road is currently listed as a Prince George's County Historic Resource. The Stanton-Blandford House is an excellent example of an early-nineteenth-century salt-box structure. The ornate Greek Revival-style portico and its dual function as a dwelling and general store make the Stanton-Blandford House an important historical and architectural landmark in Piscataway. The building, which predates many of the surrounding buildings, represents an established and familiar visual feature in the community. The building retains sufficient integrity to convey the characteristics for which it is significant. Because of its historic significance in the community and its

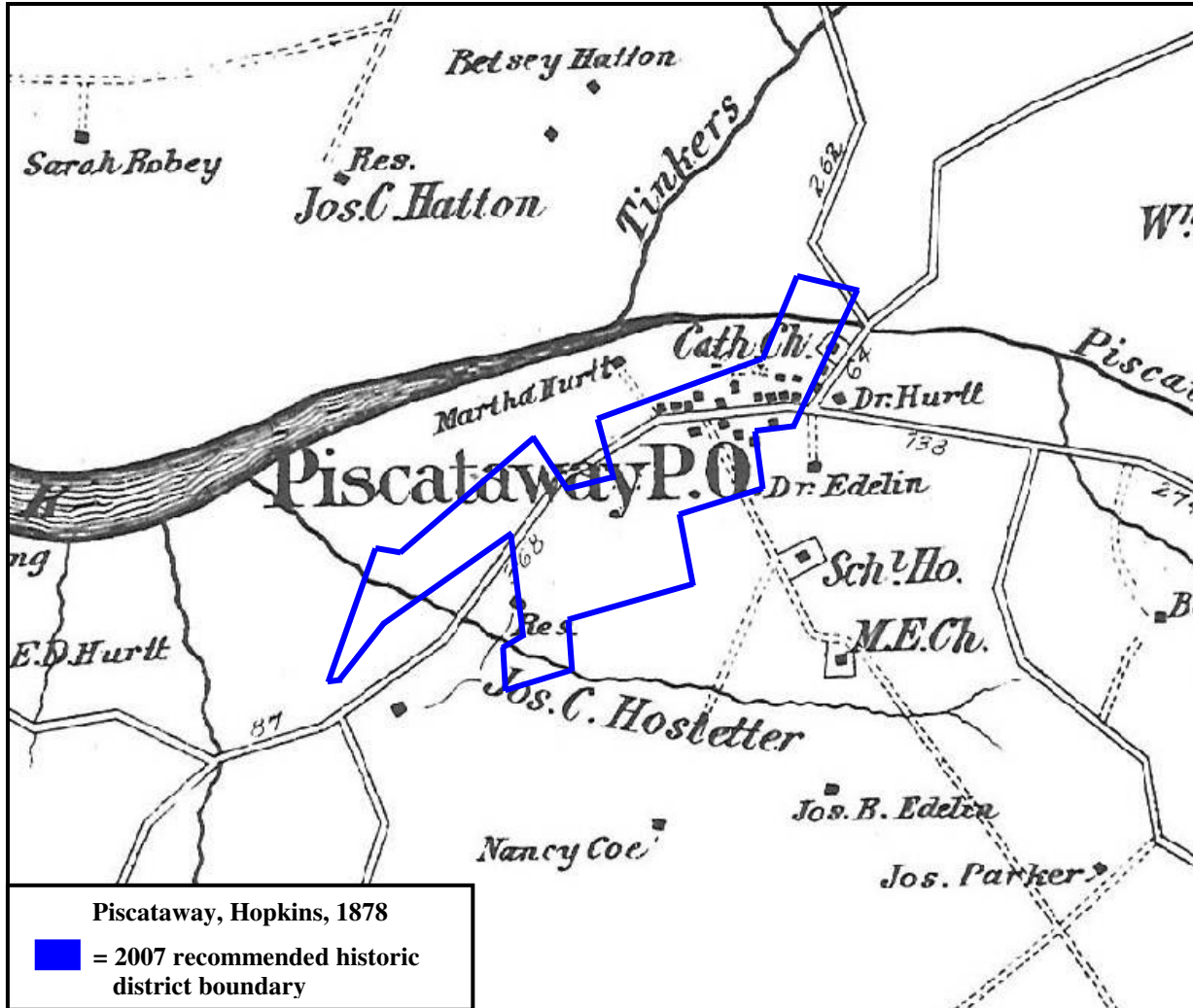
¹³ J. Rodney Little to Linda Morrison, 25 September 1996, located in the Piscataway file at M-NCPPC, Prince George's County Historic Preservation Section. These sites are: 18PR470, 18PR476, 18PR478, 18PR482, 18PR483, 18PR485, 18PR487, 18PR489, 18PR490, 18PR496, and 18PR498.

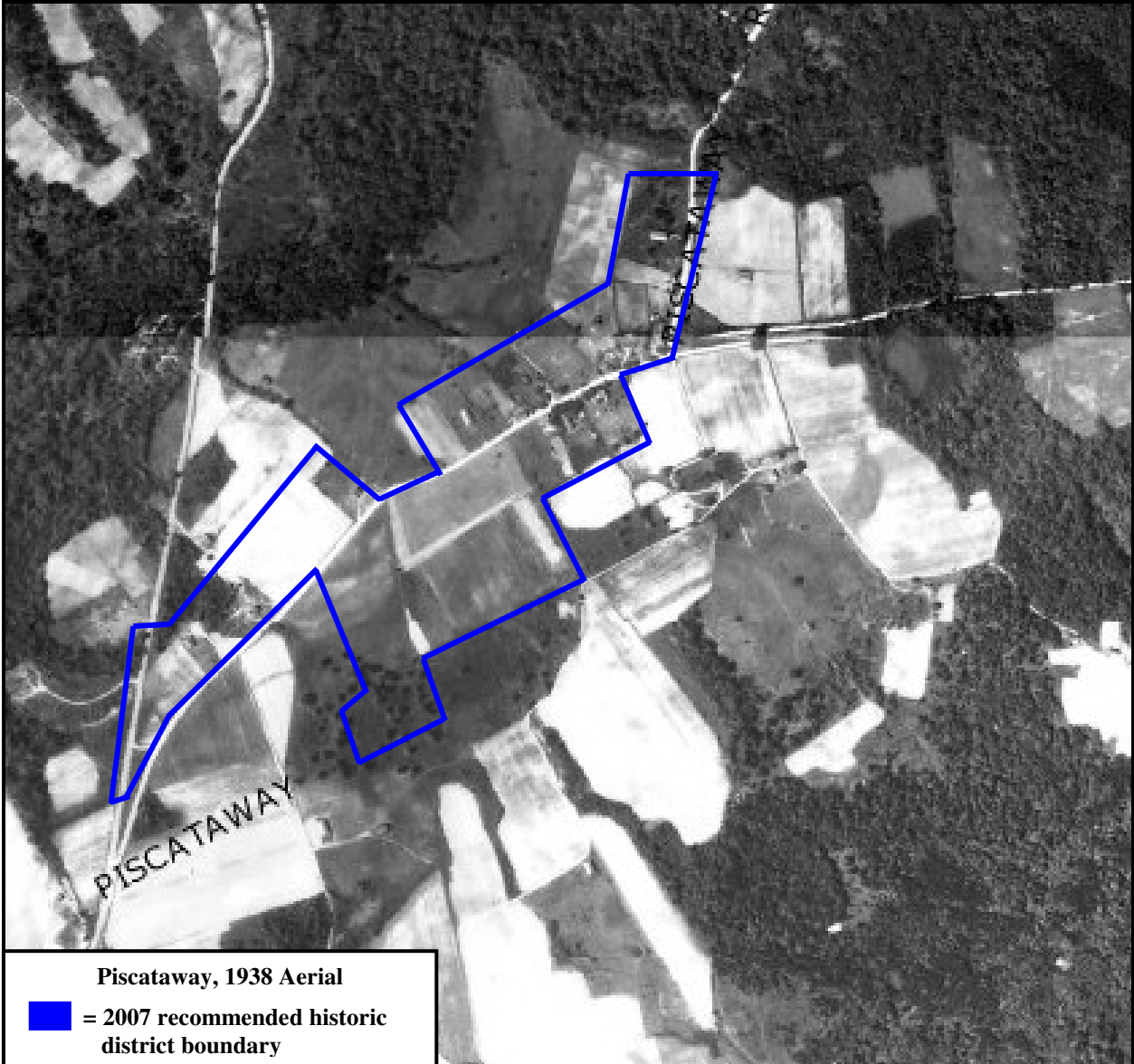
architectural integrity, the Stanton-Blandford House should be considered for review and designation as a Prince George's County Historic Site.

Piscataway is the site of two early taverns, the Hardy Tavern (1750s/1790s) and the Piscataway Tavern (1790s). A few other early taverns still exist in the county, and may benefit from a multiple property thematic study.

Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.
November 2007









Looking north, St. Mary's Catholic Church and cemetery (PG: 84-023-10), 13401 Piscataway Road (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking west, Miller House (PG: 82-023-09), 2312 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking east up Floral Park Road towards 2501 St. Mary's View Road (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking southwest, Hardy's Tavern (PG: 84-023-05), 2305 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, 2208 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, Stanton-Blandford House (PG: 84-023-04), 2207 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, 2201 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, Sarah Underwood House (PG: 84-023-02), 2004 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking north, Piscataway Tavern (PG: 84-023-03), 2204 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, Edelen House (PG: 84-023-06), 2401 Floral Park Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)