

ABSTRACT

Title of Final Project: Captain William Henry Burtis House,
National Register Nomination

Vincent Turner II, Master of Historic Preservation 2024

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The Burtis House, at 69 Prince George Street Annapolis, Maryland, is located within the Annapolis Historic District and is the last waterman's house directly on the city waterfront. Burtis House was constructed circa 1882 and its period of significance spans from ca. 1882 to 1910, the years William Burtis, the house's original owner, resided there. The property has a Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) number, AA-1152, although the nomination form, which was written in 1983, contains only cursory information about the house. The form has no information about who William Burtis was, why Burtis or the house is significant, or even context about its location. Recent research illuminates the history of the Burtis family, Burtis House, and the working-class Annapolis neighborhood it was once a part of, known as Hell Point. This study examines the historical context of Burtis House to create a new understanding of the property, which will emphasize the importance of William Burtis in Annapolis's history, tell the story of the Burtis family, reveal the largely forgotten history of Hell Point and nineteenth century Annapolis, and illustrate the significance of Burtis House's survival to the present day.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION FOR CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY BURTIS
HOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

By

Vincent P. Turner II

Master's Final Project submitted to the Faculty of the Historic Preservation Program of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Historic

Preservation

2024

Advisory Committee:

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Susan Kern and Dr. Michelle Magalong for serving as my advisors on this project. The Burtis House National Register nomination was a project nearly two years in the making and without the support of Dr. Magalong certainly would not have happened. Thank you also to Dr. Stefan Woehlke who co-taught the HISP 650 Studio in the fall of 2022 on the first Burtis House project, “At the Foot of Prince George Street: The Burtis House, Hell Point, and Climate Change.” I would be remiss not to mention the student members of the HISP 650 Studio: Brianna Candelaria, Ben Bernstein, Paul Albert, Winnie Cargill, Kelsey Farrish, Tabitha Gold, Emma Lucier-Keller, Francesca Maisano, Lucy Medley, William White, and Stewart Williams. Thank you especially to my friends, fellow students, mentors, and family who have supported me throughout my academic career.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Burtis House in Annapolis, Maryland is an oft overlooked, little understood, late nineteenth-century waterman's house at the foot of a dead-end street. The house is two-stories tall, five bays wide, and has an enclosed side porch facing Spa Creek. Its unassuming appearance belies its significance as one of the last tangible pieces of nineteenth century Annapolitan maritime history still on the water. Burtis House was possibly built around 1882 by John Hefner, a local carpenter with the help of William Burtis, a white waterman and entrepreneur. Burtis was the first owner of the house and ran a small flotilla of rowboats and sailboats from a boat shed and wharf once located to the rear of the building. Burtis was an Annapolitan fixture, once a member of the Maryland Oyster Navy, Burtis was famous for keeping an eye on the river with his spyglass and even performing acts of bravery like saving a drowning boy in June 1895.¹ He was known to yachtsmen up and down the Atlantic Coast as a hospitable host and even rented rooms in his own house to travelers.

Annapolis was a thriving seaport, dominated by maritime trades, at the time Burtis House was built in the early 1880s. Boatyards kept dozens of vessels in repair for crabbing, fishing, and oystering. Hell Point, a sprawling neighborhood in downtown Annapolis, hosted over a dozen oyster shucking factories and was home to hundreds of people.² Oyster shells from these operations provided fill for much of the "land" that we see today along the waterfront. Burtis House was ordinary, one among dozens of houses lining both sides of Prince George Street.

¹ "Captain W. H. Burtis and His Sailing and Fishing Resort—Some Interesting Incidents," *Evening Capital* (Annapolis, MD), June 21, 1895, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88065721/1895-06-21/ed-1/seq-1/>.

² This information was gleaned from the G. M. Hopkins 1878 map of Annapolis, 1880-1940 censuses, and files in the Records of the Superintendent, General Correspondence, Buildings, Grounds, & Athletic Facilities in the Special Collections & Archives at Nimitz Library, Annapolis, Maryland and Record Group 71, Records of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Behind the house a small boat shed kept Burtis's pleasure boat fleet in shape and provided a space for Burtis to process seafood.³ The neighborhood hummed to life every time a steamboat landed along the wharf at the foot of Prince George Street. These good times did not last however, and by the 1930s the oyster trade had drastically declined, steamboats stopped calling at the wharf, and some areas of Hell Point were regarded as little better than slums. In 1941 the U.S. Navy decided to annex the neighborhood to increase the size of the Naval Academy, located just to the north. In less than a year, dozens of houses and commercial buildings were cleared from the land and over a hundred families displaced. Burtis House bore silent witness to this change, safe on the south side of Prince George Street.

William Burtis was highly regarded among Annapolitans at the time of his passing in 1910. Burtis House remained in the family and was passed down through several generations until being sold in 1971 to the state of Maryland. It was used as office space by the Department of Chesapeake Bay Affairs, a precursor to the Department of Natural Resources. From 2005 to 2019, Burtis House was home to the National Sailing Hall of Fame Museum which was able to utilize the waterfront property in many of its programs. The building has sat vacant since 2019. Today, Burtis House faces an uncertain future. Neglect, sea level rise, flooding, and waterfront development threaten the integrity of the building. These factors make it important to document Burtis House and the stories of the Burtis family, their neighbors, and the long-gone Hell Point neighborhood. Preservation Maryland has worked with the state and the city of Annapolis since 2020 to document Burtis House and to formulate plans to save the building. Annapolis launched the City Dock Action Committee in 2019 to create a plan to address potential issues around

³ Newspaper articles frequently refer to Burtis's "pleasure boats" without defining what exactly that phrase means. My research indicates that it is a catch-all phrase for rowboats and sailboats primarily used for recreation as opposed to commercial fishing.

flooding and to redesign the City Dock area into a more pedestrian friendly zone. The final plan, Transforming City Dock, was unveiled in January 2020. It calls for a potential natural land barrier up to eight feet high and recommended that Burtis House be elevated approximately three-and-a-half feet above existing grade while mothballing it for future use. Multiple options were also presented for adaptive reuse.⁴ The plan outlined in Transforming City Dock was expected to be completed by spring 2024 but ended up being delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of May 2024, it is uncertain when work will begin on elevating and preserving Burtis House. Burtis House should be preserved so that future generations of Annapolitans and visitors may come to the waterfront to learn about this important era of Annapolis's and Maryland's history.

Problem Statement

Burtis House is a unique survivor among Annapolis's nineteenth century buildings as it is the last waterman's house still on the water in the City Dock neighborhood. Today, the house is largely overlooked but its story, sheltering several generations of the Burtis family, weathering the last major expansion of the Naval Academy grounds, surviving severe flooding events, and standing against neglect, is a story worth telling. The future of Burtis House is uncertain, as development and ever higher tides threaten to overwhelm the building. What is the story of Burtis House and what makes this particular building significant in a city full of significant buildings? This study will examine and answer those questions while also providing an argument for the inclusion of Burtis House on the National Register of Historic Places.

⁴ City Dock Action Committee, "Transforming City Dock," (Report, Annapolis, MD, 2020), 41, 94-99.

Research Questions

All research projects begin with questions. In the fall of 2022, the students of Historic Preservation 650 Studio were tasked with uncovering the history of Burtis House, the Burtis family, and Hell Point. Our combined efforts produced a 52-page report titled “At the Foot of Prince George Street: Burtis House, Hell Point, and Climate Change.” While the questions that follow were generally answered by the report, they were not explicitly used to argue for the nomination of Burtis House to the National Register. These questions guided my research and helped form a framework for the nomination that follows in Chapter 2.

1. Who is William Burtis and why is he significant?
2. What is the historical significance of Burtis House? Why does it matter that the house still stands?
3. What was Hell Point and how has the neighborhood around Burtis House changed from the late nineteenth century to the present day?
4. How does Burtis House’s architecture reflect the time and place in which it was built?
5. Does Burtis House retain architectural and historical integrity?
6. Is Burtis House worthy for consideration on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and the National Register of Historic Places?

Methodology

This nomination was completed using the standards set in “National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (1997) and “National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form” (1997). These guidelines provide in-depth explanations of all parts of the National Register nomination form. Research for this nomination was organized into three phases: examination of secondary sources, consultation of primary resources, and harmonizing all of the disparate information.

1. **Examination of Secondary Sources:** This nomination began as an extension of the research conducted for “At the Foot of Prince George Street.” This earlier project narrowed down dozens of potential secondary sources into only the most relevant sources. Two of the most important secondary sources for this nomination were *Annapolis, City on the Severn* by Jane McWilliams and “Historic Structure Report: 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Maryland” by Michael Dowling and Jane McWilliams. Even with this narrowed list, more research needed to be conducted. Other sources included research papers, oral histories, modern day maps, reports, and surveys.
2. **Consultation of Primary Sources:** Even after the conclusion of “At the Foot of Prince George Street” many questions remained about William Burtis, Burtis House, and Hell Point. My search led me to the Special Collections & Archives in the Nimitz Library at the U.S. Naval Academy and the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. At both archives I sifted through hundreds of pages of Naval Academy records to learn about the annexation of Hell Point and what the neighborhood was like in 1941-42. I also consulted newspaper articles, census records, Sanborn maps,

archival historic photograph collections, photographs provided by the Burtis family, and deeds.

3. **Harmonize:** The last and most crucial step was to synthesize all the information I had amassed. “At the Foot of Prince George Street” provided the framework for this nomination while the primary and secondary sources filled in the rest.

The National Register nomination provides two narrative sections where the merits of a building, district, site, structure, or object can be expounded: Section 7 and Section 8 Statement of Significance. Section 7 is where the physical characteristics of a property, in this case Burtis House, are described in detail. This is also where the argument for physical integrity of the property is made. Section 8 is where the Statement of Significance is described. Burtis House is significant under Criteria A, association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, for its connection with maritime commerce on Chesapeake Bay in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The period of significance for Burtis House begins around 1882, when William Henry Burtis purchased the property, and ends in 1910 when Burtis died.

Chapter 2: National Register Nomination

William Burtis House
Name of Property

Anne Arundel County, MD
County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Captain William Henry Burtis House

Other names/site number: 69 Prince George Street, William Burtis House, Burtis House
AA-1152

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 69 Prince George Street

City or town: Annapolis State: Maryland County: Anne Arundel

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

William Burtis House
Name of Property

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County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/vernacular

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: concrete and brick

Walls: wood

Wall covering: wood shingle, asbestos shingle

Roof: wood, composite

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Burtis House, built c. 1882, is a two-story, five-bay, double pile, balloon-framed, vernacular dwelling with a nearly flat side-gable roof, a one-story front porch, a one-story side porch, and a rear two-story addition. The dwelling rests on a continuous brick foundation. The walls are sheathed in a layer of wood shingle that has been covered with asbestos tile on the northwest, southwest and southeast elevations. The roof is clad in composite shingle. Burtis House is at the end of Prince George Street on the Severn River shoreline. The house faces northeast onto Prince George Street and is bordered by the Severn River to the southeast, a paved parking lot to the southwest, and an empty gravel lot to the northwest. The front porch extends over part of the brick sidewalk. Behind the house, a small pebble filled yard separates the dwelling from the parking lot. The property is in good condition and has been altered several times since its construction. Burtis House is significant as the last remaining nineteenth century waterman's house still located on the water in the City Dock neighborhood of Annapolis.

William Burtis House

Name of Property

Anne Arundel County, MD

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Narrative Description

The Burtis House was constructed around 1882 for Captain William Henry Burtis, a local white waterman and entrepreneur.

69 Prince George Street, known as Burtis House, is a two-story, five-bay, double pile, balloon-framed, vernacular dwelling with a nearly flat side gable roof, a one-story front porch, a one-story side porch, and a rear two-story addition. Sanborn maps from 1885 and 1891 indicate that the house was originally a duplex although all subsequent maps depict the house as a single-family residence.⁵ The main block of Burtis House is roughly 30'x32' and rests on a continuous brick foundation. The front façade (facing northeast towards Prince George Street) is five bays with a centered door on the first floor. There are four windows on the first floor and five windows on the second floor. All windows are 2/2 hung sash with wood trim and aligned vertically with the center window on the second floor aligned with the door below. A one-story, shed roof porch covers the middle three-fifths of the façade and is centered on the door. The porch is supported by three evenly spaced, turned posts. The door is a modern 6-panel metal replacement and is surmounted by a single pane transom. The tops of the windows and doors are of even height. Both the main roof and the porch roof are covered with asphalt shingles. The porch was likely added in the 1920s and most likely does not date to the period of significance.⁶ Due to considerable settlement of the main block and deflection of first-floor framing, new floor joists and piers were installed in 1998 to reinforce the building.⁷ Historic photographs show a small brick interior chimney at either end of the house. These chimneys were removed during renovations in 2003.⁸

The southeast elevation has a one-story, shed roof, enclosed porch covering most of the first-floor wall, which is recessed a few feet back from Prince George Street. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. There is a centrally placed six-panel door on the northeast side of the porch with a 1/1 fixed window on both sides under a small awning. The southeast side of the porch has eight 1/1 double-hung sash windows grouped in pairs of four. On the southwest side of the porch is a centrally placed six-panel door with a slim, vertical sidelight to its left and a 1/1 fixed window to its right. The second story of the southeast elevation features a 2/2 hung sash window offset from the center of the wall to the north and a 1/1 hung sash window offset from the center of the wall to the south. The porch was likely added in the 1930s and may have originally been open.⁹

⁵ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Jun., 1885. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_001/. and *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Nov., 1891. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_002/.

⁶ Michael Dowling and Jane McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report: 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Maryland," (Annapolis, MD: National Sailing Hall of Fame, Inc., 2017), 18.

⁷ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

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The southwest elevation's most dominant feature is a 13'x11'2" two story addition slightly offset from center. To the right of the addition, there is one 6/6 hung sash window on the first floor and two 6/6 hung sash windows on the second floor. The first-floor window is aligned vertically with the leftmost second-floor window. To the left of the addition on the first floor is one 2/2 hung sash window that is aligned vertically with one 6/6 hung sash window on the second floor. On the southeast side of the addition there are a pair of 1/1 hung sash windows on the first floor and a single pane window on the second floor centered to the windows below. The southwest side of the addition does not have any openings. On the northwest side of the addition is a six-panel door and a 6/6 hung sash window to its right on the first floor. A single six-pane window is centrally located on the second floor. A two-brick-wide chimney with terra cotta flue is located to the rear of the addition. The two-story addition could date to as early as 1959 but likely dates to the 1970s when the dwelling was converted into office space for the Department of Chesapeake Bay Affairs.¹⁰

The northwest elevation presents the gable end of the building and has a single 6/1 hung sash window on the first floor at its southern end.

I was unable to gain entrance to Burtis House for this nomination, but the Historic Structure Report completed by Michael Dowling and Jane McWilliams contains floor plans for both the first and second floors of Burtis House. The following observations are based on that report.

The interior of Burtis House has undergone several changes in the arrangement of rooms on the first and second floors. Structural analysis by Michael Dowling and Jane McWilliams did not determine if the house started as a center passage but did find an original c. 1885 wall running the full width of the house on the first floor. The current house has two rooms and a central hall running the width of the house formed by twenty-first century walls. It is unclear how this space was originally divided. The rear section of the house has always been divided into at least two rooms of unequal size with a center stair. The eastern room may have originally been open but has now been divided into three unequally sized smaller rooms by twenty-first century partitions. This first floor was extensively renovated following Hurricane Isabel in 2003.

The second floor contains more original finishes than the first floor and reveals that the stairs are likely in their original c. 1885 position. The current floor plan consists of four unequally sized rooms. The rooms towards the south are likely original as their walls all date back to the period of construction. The north half of the second floor has been divided into two drastically unequal rooms. A small, twenty-first century room has been created to the west.

The Burtis House site originally had outbuildings to the rear of the dwelling as indicated by several historic photographs and Sanborn maps. An 1885 Sanborn map, which is the first map to show Burtis House, shows that a one-story wood frame, shingle roofed boat house had been built

¹⁰ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 19.

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County and State

by that time.¹¹ This boat house served as the heart of William Burtis's oystering and boat rental business. An undated photograph, likely dating from the 1886-1896 period, shows that the structure was whitewashed and that the side facing the river used for advertisement for Burtis's businesses. "BOATS FOR HIRE" and "OYSTERS ON HALF SHELL" were painted in bold, black letters.¹² As a commercial structure, this shed was modified several times throughout its working life including the major addition of a wood framed, composite roofed, single story landing shed in 1897. Several small additions are also shown on the west and north sides of the boat house. A wharf extending from the property into the Severn River is also shown. The property is labeled "Burtis," the only property on the block to have a name associated with it.¹³ By 1903 the westernmost addition to the boat house had been raised to two stories and both the boat house and dwelling were clad with a metal roof. The wharf was extended further into the river.¹⁴ By 1908 several more portions of the boat house had been raised to two stories and an addition was constructed on the south side.¹⁵ By 1921 the boat house had been raised to a full two stories while the boat shed remained one story and was clad in a composite roof. A small, one-story passage now connected the dwelling to the boat house.¹⁶ The boat house and wharf were demolished sometime prior to 1959.¹⁷

Property History

When Governor Francis Nicholson laid out his plans for the streets of Maryland's new colonial capital of Annapolis in 1695, the land that Burtis House would be built on did not exist. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Annapolis shoreline was dramatically altered through silting, dredging, and infilling which added substantially more land on which to build.¹⁸ In 1864, amidst the Civil War, some of the land Burtis House currently sits on was created through bulkheading and infill. That year the land was first recorded as a lot and had been improved with a wharf constructed for a steam mill. It was thereafter sometimes referred to as the "wharf lot." The wharf lot was further improved with the construction of a warehouse by 1869.¹⁹ Research by Michael Dowling reveals that the rest of the land Burtis House sits on was

¹¹ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Jun, 1885. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_001/.

¹² This photograph is included at the end of this nomination in the historic photograph section as Figure 1.

¹³ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Jul, 1897. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_003/.

¹⁴ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Apr, 1903. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_004/.

¹⁵ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Oct, 1908. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_005/.

¹⁶ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland*. Sanborn Map Company, Oct, 1921. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03572_007/.

¹⁷ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 16. For a more detailed description of the house and property, see this report.

¹⁸ Jane McWilliams, *Annapolis: City on the Severn*, (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2011), 144, 185.

¹⁹ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 3.

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created by infill sometime after 1878 but before 1885. The wharf lot was bought by John Hefner in 1881 and sold to William Burtis the next year.²⁰

It is uncertain when exactly Burtis House was constructed or who built it. In 1880, John Hefner, a carpenter, is shown on the census as a boarder at William Burtis's residence. Hefner bought a waterfront lot on Prince George Street in 1881 and it may be that Hefner and Burtis collaborated in the construction of 69 Prince George Street that same year or the following year. The house appeared as a duplex on the 1885 and 1891 Sanborn maps but was shown as a single-family dwelling on all subsequent Sanborn maps.²¹ A boat shed is depicted on the 1885 Sanborn map to the rear of the Burtis house and it was from this structure that Burtis conducted his oystering business and pleasure boat rental service until his death in 1910. A landing shed was attached to the eastern face of the boat shed some time prior to 1897 and likely served as place for Burtis to store equipment for his business. The combination boat/landing shed was removed from the property between 1930 and 1959.²²

Upon William Burtis's death, the house passed to his children Edward, Daniel, Roseanna, and Solomon with the latter becoming sole owner in 1920. Solomon was mainly employed as a plumber, but he continued to run the family boat rental business into the late 1920s.²³ Solomon and his wife Elsie Clemm Burtis resided at 69 Prince George Street until Solomon's death in 1951 and Elsie's sale of the property in 1952 to William Henry and Lillie T. Burtis.²⁴ It was during the years of Solomon and Elsie's ownership that spare rooms were rented out to families and many of the alterations to the property were undertaken such as the addition of the front and side porches.²⁵ William Henry and Lillie Burtis likely added the rear two-story tower addition to Burtis House during their tenure of ownership.²⁶ William died in November 1962 leaving Lillie a widow. Lillie lived at 69 Prince George Street for nine more years before selling the property in 1971 to the Maryland Department of Chesapeake Bay Affairs which later became the Department of Natural Resources.²⁷ The Department of Natural Resources converted Burtis House into office space for the state Natural Resources Police and later leased the building between 2005 to 2020 to the National Sailing Hall of Fame for use as a museum.²⁸ Title to the

²⁰ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 5.

²¹ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 6.; Sanborn Map, June, 1885.

²² Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 16, 56-57.

²³ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 8.; National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1920, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d.).

²⁴ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 11.

²⁵ National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1930, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d.); National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1940, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d.); National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1950, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d.); Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 59-61.

²⁶ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 59-61.

²⁷ Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Deed Book, Liber MSH 2428, page 571.

²⁸ Ray Rivera, "Hall of Fame to Set Sail for Annapolis; Md. Center to Honor Boating's Heroes," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), December 22, 2005. Jimmy Debutts, "Sailing hall of fame board votes to leave Annapolis, move to Newport, Rhode Island," *Capital Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), October 16, 2018.

William Burtis House

Name of Property

Anne Arundel County, MD

County and State

Burtis House property was transferred from the state to the city of Annapolis in 2021.²⁹ The house has remained vacant since.

Currently, rising sea levels caused by climate change threaten to inundate downtown Annapolis. Burtis House is especially vulnerable to flooding due to its location on the waterfront. In the past several years, nuisance flooding caused mold outbreaks within Burtis House that required remediation. The City Dock Action Committee was formed in 2019 to create a plan to address potential issues around flooding and to redesign the City Dock area into a more pedestrian friendly zone. The final plan, Transforming City Dock, was unveiled in January 2020. It calls for a potential natural land barrier up to eight feet high and recommended that Burtis House be elevated approximately three-and-a-half feet above existing grade. Multiple options were also presented for adaptive reuse.³⁰ As of May 2024, the future use of Burtis House is uncertain.

Integrity

Burtis House was constructed in downtown Annapolis, Maryland around 1882, during the height of the oyster harvesting boom on Chesapeake Bay. Today, the house sits in its original location along the waterfront although much has changed within the neighborhood since William Burtis lived there. In 1942 nearly all of Hell Point was razed by the U.S. Navy to expand the Naval Academy and many of the neighboring commercial and residential buildings have since been demolished. The boat shed and landing shed were removed from the property sometime prior to 1959, significantly impacting Burtis House's setting. The house itself has been altered several times since 1910 but, according to a 2017 historic structure report, the exterior walls of the main block and even some of the internal walls have original material dating to 1885.³¹ The additions to Burtis House are largely within scale and the building itself is still able to convey the sense of what an average waterman's house in the late nineteenth century may have looked like in Annapolis. Burtis House possesses a strong integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association.

²⁹ Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Deed Book, Liber SAP 38521, page 327.

³⁰ City Dock Action Committee, "Transforming City Dock," (Report, Annapolis, MD, 2020), 41, 94-99.

³¹ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 61.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Maritime History

Period of Significance

c. 1882-1910

Significant Dates

c. 1882

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Burtis House, located at 69 Prince George Street in Annapolis, Maryland, is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Maritime History at the local and state level. The former dwelling was once the home of William Henry Burtis and served as the base of operations for his oystering and recreational boat rental business. William Burtis, a white man, was an important figure in Annapolis's maritime trade following the Civil War and was known up and down the Atlantic Coast for his hospitality. Burtis House stands as the last nineteenth century waterman's house still on the water in the City Dock neighborhood of Annapolis, an important piece of history from a significant time in Annapolis's development. The period of significance for Burtis House is defined by the years William Burtis lived there, from c. 1882 to 1910. It is uncertain when the house was constructed but strong evidence indicates that it was built as early as 1882 when Burtis purchased the property and certainly by 1885.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Annapolis History

Native peoples have lived in the Chesapeake Bay region for over 10,000 years. The earliest inhabitants were likely migratory, moving to camps nearer the shore during the summer months and to camps further inland during the winter. The area that would eventually become Anne Arundel County was a sort of middle ground between the Susquehannock and Piscataway peoples at the time of European contact. The Susquehannocks, an Iroquoian speaking tribe, dominated the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay by the 1640s and had pushed the Piscataway, an Algonquin speaking tribe, towards the Patuxent River and Potomac River valleys.³² When the first Puritan settlers arrived from Virginia later that decade and established Providence, the precursor to Annapolis, there were no native villages at the mouth of the Severn River. Native settlement preferences, building villages on well-drained and fertile soils located on the first and second terraces of broad necks near major rivers, may have influenced where the Puritans established Providence.³³ By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the Susquehannocks were considerably weakened by disease, warfare with European colonists, and pressure from other Native American groups which forced them to abandon the region.³⁴ Some

³² Ron Garrett, "History," Anne Arundel County, MD, last modified December 11, 2015, <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/severn-river-commission/history/>.

³³ Robert S. Grumet, "National Historic Landmark Theme Study: Historic Contact: Early Relations Between Indian People and Colonists in Northeastern North America, 1524-1783," (Philadelphia, PA: Mid-Atlantic Region, National Park Service, 1992), 114.

³⁴ Ibid., 157.

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of the Piscataway, facing the same pressures as the Susquehannocks, left Maryland in the first decade of the eighteenth century, while another portion of the tribe remained in southern Maryland.³⁵

English Puritans founded the settlement of Providence along the northern shore of the Severn River in 1649 after being forced out of the colony of Virginia. The settlement never grew into a proper town and attracted little development throughout the rest of the seventeenth century. Beginning in the 1660s the colonial government of Maryland attempted to create a town on the south shore of the Severn on the land of Richard Acton. This settlement was given the name Arundelton by the 1670s but was not officially laid out until the 1680s.³⁶ Governor Francis Nicholson shifted the colonial capital of Maryland from St. Mary's City to the newly renamed Ann Arundell in 1694 and laid the streets into an arrangement that has largely survived to this day. The original notes and map do not survive but other fragmentary records indicate Prince George Street was created in 1695 in the same orientation as can be seen today. The then-foot of the street was known as Hill's Point, after Richard Hill.³⁷ The town quickly became an important international trading port and served as a hub for commerce on Chesapeake Bay. Shipyards sprang up along the north shore, today's City Dock, of an inlet known as Nicholson's Cove, today's Ego Alley, and ferries landed on wharves along the waterfront, linking Annapolis to other ports along the bay. Annapolis gradually lost its status as the most important international port of trade in Maryland by the late eighteenth century thanks in large part to the establishment of Baltimore in 1729.³⁸

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, watermen from outside of Maryland started harvesting oysters from the state's portion of Chesapeake Bay. The threat of overharvesting was so great that the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 1830 that outlawed dredging and made it illegal for nonresidents to harvest oysters in the state's territorial waters. In 1865, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law requiring a person to have a license before harvesting oysters.³⁹ Many watermen continued to harvest oysters illegally due to poor enforcement. This led to fierce competition between legally and illegally operating watermen which exploded into violence following the close of the Civil War. Watermen from Virginia frequently trespassed into Maryland's territorial waters to harvest oysters and vice versa. Maryland founded the Maryland Oyster Police Force in 1868, known colloquially as the Oyster Navy, to put a stop to the bloodshed.⁴⁰ The Oyster Navy patrolled Maryland's waters apprehending, and occasionally battling, illegal oyster harvesting vessels and their crews. During this time, Annapolis's economy flourished as seafood packing houses sprouted up along its waterfront. The leftover oyster shells were used as fill and by the late 1880s Prince George Street had largely been extended to its

³⁵ Grumet, "Historic Contact," 248.

³⁶ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 5-16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁸ Rosemary F. Williams, *Maritime Annapolis: A History of Watermen, Sails & Midshipmen*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

³⁹ David Morgan et al., "Oyster Restoration in Maryland," Maryland Department of Legislative Services, December 2019, <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NatRes/Oyster-Restoration-in-Maryland.pdf>.

⁴⁰ John R. Wennersten, *The Oyster Wars of Chesapeake Bay*, (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 37.

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existing footprint. Houses for watermen and workers at the seafood packing houses were constructed on this fill near the waterfront. This area became known as Hell Point; the name is possibly a corruption of Hill's Point but is popularly believed to have been a nickname earned from the numerous drunken fights of its denizens.⁴¹

Hell Point

Hell Point was the economic heart of Annapolis for the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where blacksmith and carpenter shops, boat repair yards, lumber mills, bars, and seafood packing houses, among other enterprises, could be found. The neighborhood's boundary was undefined, with even its own former residents unable to agree on a fixed set of lines. Combining historical accounts reveals that the neighborhood was roughly confined to the area between Randall Street to the west, Hanover Street to the north, the Severn River to the east, and City Dock to the south.⁴² The United States Naval Academy, established in 1845, was located along the northern edge of the community on the grounds of old Fort Severn.

According to Jane McWilliams, "Many of the tenements in this area housed employees of the academy; laborers, food service workers, laundresses, domestics, as well as skilled craftsmen, musicians, a school teacher, and several shop owners. There were also a large oyster packing house and adjacent shucking shanties. The academy's building and grounds officer complained mightily about the area's 'rum shops, and other houses of questionable character,' but he saved his greatest scorn for the oyster workers, whose 'loud, boisterous, and very unsavory' language was audible inside the yard. Worse, 'there are always oyster shells piled up and spread about on this property, containing more or less meat attached, in a state of decomposition, creating a very unpleasant odor, which is wafted by the prevailing wind into the Cadet and Officer's Quarters.'"⁴³ This intense dislike of Hell Point by outsiders contrasted heavily with the views of residents who later fondly recalled their time living in the neighborhood.⁴⁴ The Naval Academy annexed a few blocks at the northern end of Hell Point in 1902 to expand its campus following an increase in funding and enrollment.⁴⁵

The Hell Point neighborhood was also one of the most diverse areas of the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1880, the First Ward, which encompassed Hell Point, was the home of over half of Annapolis's foreign-born population. It also contained most of the city's workers in the seafood industry, the military, and general maritime pursuits. The Third Ward, nearby and just to the northwest of the First Ward, was home to most of the city's

⁴¹ Thomas W. Bodor et al., "Cultural Resource Survey of the United States Naval Academy Annapolis, Maryland," (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 1993), <http://hdl.handle.net/1903/26931>;

⁴² Bodor et al., "Cultural Resource Survey."; HISP 650 Studio, "At the Foot of Prince George Street: The Burtis House, Hell Point, and Climate Change," (College Park, Maryland: Historic Preservation Graduate Program, University of Maryland, 2022), 9-10. <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/29732>.

⁴³ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 235.

⁴⁴ Bodor et al., "Cultural Resource Survey."

⁴⁵ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 235.

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African American population.⁴⁶ Following the Spanish-American War in 1898 and end of the Philippine Insurrection in 1902, Filipinos arrived in Annapolis to work at the Naval Academy. Most were single men who lived on the grounds of the academy, but some married local women and moved into Hell Point.⁴⁷ Italian and Greek immigrants arrived in the first quarter of the twentieth century, drawn by jobs at the Naval Academy. They established their own stores and restaurants throughout the city including Hell Point.⁴⁸

Two of the most important transportation hubs in Annapolis were in Hell Point, the Annapolis-Claiborne Ferry, and the steamboat wharf. The Annapolis-Claiborne Ferry began operations in June 1919 at the foot of King George Street, continuing a long tradition of cross bay traffic dating back to the 17th century. The ferry route was approximately 23 miles and took at least an hour and a half to complete by steamboat in one direction. The ferry made two daily round trips.⁴⁹ Service was provided to both Black and white passengers, although accommodations were segregated.⁵⁰ “By 1939, the ferries made twenty round trips a day in the summer and fourteen in the winter, carrying well over half a million passengers and almost two hundred thousand cars and trucks that year.”⁵¹ The state of Maryland took over ferry operations in 1940 as the Naval Academy contemplated annexing all of Hell Point, including the ferry terminal. The western shore terminal was moved to Sandy Point in 1943, thus ending a centuries long tradition of cross bay ferry traffic in Annapolis.⁵² At the foot of Prince George Street lay the steamboat wharf, first established sometime in the 1830s and last managed by the Tolchester Beach Improvement Company. Steamboats from Baltimore frequented the wharf and brought both passengers and trade goods to Annapolis. Stevedores worked tirelessly to empty and fill the cargo holds while passengers walked or rode wagons up Prince George Street towards the rest of the city. Prince George Street became one of the main arteries of travel and commerce for Annapolis because of the steamboat wharf. This prosperity gradually declined going into the second quarter of the twentieth century as trucks and cars became more popular. Steamboat service ceased in 1932.⁵³

Roughly 100 families lived in Hell Point by 1941, a mix of African American, Filipino, and white residents. “Roughly a third of their homes were owner occupied; most of the others, titled to absentee landlords, were two-story frame dwellings without running water, electricity, or central heat. Also within the two-block area were commercial establishments: lunchrooms, a

⁴⁶ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 212.

⁴⁷ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 272-273.; Charles M. Potter and Charles M. Carlson, “Appraisal Report, Extension U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland,” 25 June 1941. Maryland State Archives, Thomas C. Worthington, Jr. Collection, <https://speccol.msa.maryland.gov/pages/speccol/collection.aspx?speccol=2375>.

⁴⁸ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 259.; HISP 650, “At the Foot of Prince George Street,” 14-16.

⁴⁹ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 263.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁵² Clara A. Simmons, *Chesapeake Ferries: A Waterborne Tradition, 1636–2000*, (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 2009), 83-84.

⁵³ David C. Holly, *Steamboat on the Chesapeake Emma Giles and the Tolchester Line*, (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1987), 150-154, 284.

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saloon, Senator Louis Phipps's gas station, oil tanks, the old steamboat landing and ferry wharf, and the yard and warehouses of the Johnson Lumber Company."⁵⁴ The most common occupation listed for residents of Hell Point on the censuses taken between 1880 and 1940 was waterman. German, Greek, Irish, Scottish, and English descended residents lived along Prince George Street, King George Street, and the Market Space. African American and Filipino residents of Hell Point mainly lived in alleyways like Terry Court, Holland Street, Block Street, and Johnson Place in the blocks to the north of Burtis House.⁵⁵

With the outbreak of World War Two, the Naval Academy again looked to Hell Point to expand its campus footprint. The academy intended to annex and clear all of Hell Point to City Dock, but a lack of funds meant that the Navy could only purchase properties to the north of Prince George Street and east of Randall Street save a small cluster of 10 properties at the intersection of Randall Street and Prince George Street.⁵⁶ The entire annexed area was cleared by September 1942 erasing all evidence of Annapolis's commercial maritime heritage from the landscape.⁵⁷ In the decades that followed, modern commercial development chipped away at the houses along lower Prince George Street until only 69 Prince George Street and 97 Prince George Street remained.

William Henry Burtis and Family

William Henry Burtis was born between 1832 and 1836 in New York City, New York. Not much is known about his early life. Burtis settled permanently in Annapolis, Maryland sometime before the outbreak of the Civil War and married Emily Hollidayoke, an Annapolis native, in 1860.⁵⁸ He began working as a constable for the city in 1861 alongside his father-in-law Edward

⁵⁴ McWilliams, *Annapolis*, 294.

⁵⁵ HISP 650, "At the Foot of Prince George Street," 11-13, 16.

⁵⁶ Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks to Secretary of the Navy, "Acquisition of land adjacent to the Naval Academy grounds, Annapolis, Maryland," 27 August 1941.; Superintendent, Russell Willson to Chief of Naval Operations, "Acquisition of land for U.S. Naval Academy," Undated.; James Forrestal, Acting Secretary of the Navy to Reverend James L. Smiley, "Response to complaint about compensation for properties to be taken by the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland," 8 November 1941. These three documents can be found in Box 549, Folder Annapolis: C21-68-AN, #1 of 2 Anne Arundel Co. Exp. Farragut Field, Naval Academy, Annapolis., File #1, Maryland: 21, RG 71 Records of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, Maryland: 21, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁷ J.R. Beardall, Rear Admiral, U.S.N., Commandant, Severn River Naval Command to Wm. U. McCready, Mayor of Annapolis, "New Acquired Addition to the Naval Academy, Holland Street Area," September 23, 1942, Box 5, Folder 9 in Record Group 405, Records of the U.S. Naval Academy, Records of the Superintendent, General Correspondence, Buildings, Grounds, & Athletic Facilities, Special Collections & Archives at Nimitz Library, Annapolis, Maryland.

⁵⁸ Nicole Fuller, "Burtis House Battle," *Sun*, (Baltimore, MD), May 11, 2008, <https://www.proquest.com/pdnbaltimoresun/docview/2062152191/45AEC80B96884BD1PQ/3?accountid=14696>. Emily's surname is most frequently spelled "Hollidayoke" in the historical record but the recorder for the 1850 census spelled it "Hollydeyoke."

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Hollidayoke.⁵⁹ Burtis was drafted into the Union Army in July 1863 and was discharged in April 1865.⁶⁰ Following his return from service, Burtis joined the Maryland Oyster Navy and became captain of a patrol boat around 1870.⁶¹ It was also about this time that Burtis began renting out pleasure boats and working as a waterman.⁶²

The 1880 census recorded William Burtis, his wife Emily, children Edward, Daniel W., Roseanna, and Solomon, and a boarder, John Hefner, as living on Prince George Street. Burtis's occupation on the census is listed as "renting boats + oysters" while his eldest son, Edward's occupation is specified as "oysters + crabber."⁶³ In 1882, Burtis purchased a lot that had already been improved with a wharf and warehouse at the end of Prince George Street along the waterfront from John Hefner. Burtis expanded his pleasure boat rental business into a considerable enterprise in only a few short years. His boats were considered some of the safest in the city with an article in the *Annapolis Evening Capital* in 1895 reporting that in 31 years of business Burtis had "never had a boat to capsize or meet with any mishap." In the same article it is mentioned that Burtis rescued the son of W. H. Kerr from drowning the previous Sunday.⁶⁴ The *Evening Capital* wrote a glowing article about William Burtis's deeds on his 60th birthday in 1896. The paper stated that "He is a whole soul, genial good fellow, kind-hearted and generous to a fault, and has done more to relieve and assist the distress of unfortunates than any man in the community." The article goes on to say that Burtis House "is quite the resort for pleasure seekers" during the summer months and that during the winter he serves customers "delightful oyster roasts." On several occasions Burtis took to the water to rescue drowning persons.⁶⁵ By 1897 the Burtis lot contained a two-story frame house, a boat shed, a landing shed, and wharf. Burtis managed a fleet of one sloop and fourteen boats. Burtis also provided moorings for visiting boats and yachts at a time when marinas did not exist.⁶⁶

The 1900 census recorded William Burtis as a "Pleasure Boat Businessman," his eldest son Daniel W. as a waterman, and youngest son Solomon as a plumber. William, his wife Emily,

⁵⁹ "History of the Police Department," Annapolis, MD | Official Website, accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.annapolis.gov/436/History-of-the-Police-Department>.

⁶⁰ "Soldier Details – William H. Burtis," NPS.gov (U.S. National Park Service), accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers-detail.htm?soldierId=A05D8B89-DC7A-DF11-BF36-B8AC6F5D926A>.

⁶¹ Fuller, "Burtis House Battle," *Sun.*; Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 6.

⁶² Fuller, "Burtis House Battle," *Sun.* Newspaper articles frequently refer to Burtis's "pleasure boats" without defining what exactly that phrase means. My research indicates that it is a catch-all phrase for rowboats and sailboats primarily used for recreation as opposed to commercial fishing.

⁶³ National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1880, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d).

⁶⁴ "Captain W. H. Burtis and His Sailing and Fishing Resort—Some Interesting Incidents," *Evening Capital* (Annapolis, MD), June 21, 1895, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88065721/1895-06-21/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁶⁵ "Capt. W. H. Burtis Celebrates His Sixtieth Anniversary and is Hale and Hearty," *Evening Capital*, (Annapolis, MD), February 7, 1896, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88065721/1896-02-07/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁶⁶ Dowling and McWilliams, "Historic Structure Report," 6-7.

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children Daniel W., Rose A., Solomon, and Sarah J., as well as granddaughter Rose all lived at the house.⁶⁷ Emily Burtis passed away in 1903.⁶⁸

The 1910 census showed William Burtis, daughter Roseanna, son Solomon, son Daniel and daughter-in-law Sadie as well as grandchildren Rose, William, and Emily residing at the house. Burtis was around 73 and his occupation was listed as “owning a boathouse” and Daniel’s occupation as a boathouse helper. Solomon was a plumber.⁶⁹ William Henry Burtis died on New Year’s Eve 1910 and was buried at Saint Anne’s Cedar Bluff Cemetery in Annapolis. Research by Michael Dowling and Jane McWilliams found that Burtis may have been 78 at the time of his passing.⁷⁰ Burtis was described at the end of his life as “one of the best-known watermen of Maryland and highly respected citizen of Annapolis.” He was eulogized in the *Evening Capital* and the Baltimore *Sun* “as a man whose wide acquaintance ‘extended among yachtsmen all along the Atlantic Coast, who made Burtis’s place their headquarters on occasions of their visits to Annapolis during the summer.’” One of his pallbearers was Annapolis’s mayor James F. Strange.⁷¹ After William Burtis’s death the house was passed down in the family until finally being sold by Lillie T. Burtis to the Department of Chesapeake Bay Affairs in 1971.⁷² Title to the Burtis House property was transferred from the state to the City of Annapolis in 2021.⁷³

Maritime History

Burtis House is significant under Criteria A, association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, for its connection with maritime commerce on Chesapeake Bay in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Burtis House was constructed around 1882 by William Burtis, during the height of oyster harvesting on Chesapeake Bay. There were nine seasons between 1875 and 1900 in which Maryland waterman pulled an average of over 9 million bushels of oysters from the Chesapeake with the all-time peak harvest in the winter of 1884-1885 when over 15 million bushels were taken from the bay.⁷⁴ Over 700 boats manned by over 5,600 men plied the waters of Chesapeake Bay in the early

⁶⁷ National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1900, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d).

⁶⁸ Frederick Morse, “Emily Hollydeyoke Burtis (1839-1903),” Find a Grave, December 29, 2013, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122399757/emily-burtis>. Morse uses the spelling of her surname from the 1850 census. The name more frequently appears as “Hollidayoke.”

⁶⁹ National Archives and Records Administration, US Federal Census 1910, (Washington, DC: United States of America, Bureau of the Census, n.d).

⁷⁰ Frederick Morse, “William Henry Burtis (1836-1910),” Find a Grave, December 29, 2013, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122399551/william-henry-burtis>. Dowling and McWilliams, “Historic Structure Report,” 7.

⁷¹ Dowling and McWilliams, “Historic Structure Report,” 6-7.

⁷² Dowling and McWilliams, “Historic Structure Report,” 9.; Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Deed Book, Liber MSH 2428, page 571.

⁷³ Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Deed Book, Liber SAP 38521, page 327.

⁷⁴ McWilliams, *City on the Severn*, 207. Wennersten, *Oyster Wars*, 55. A bushel is about 100 oysters.

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1880s to harvest oysters.⁷⁵ William Burtis made his livelihood from first enforcing regulations surrounding the harvesting of oysters and later from harvesting oysters himself in the midst of this tremendous economic boom. Daniel, his eldest son, would take after his father and become a waterman. Burtis House was once like many of the houses in Annapolis built by and for watermen in the city. By virtue of its location, and perhaps more than a bit of luck, Burtis House survived the Naval Academy annexation of Hell Point in 1942 which saw the demolition of nearly every other waterman's house in the neighborhood. In the ensuing decades more of the houses along Prince George Street were lost and the last oyster packing plant in Annapolis, McNasby Seafood and Oyster Company, closed in 1986. With McNasby's closing so too ended the city's centuries long history with seafood processing and packing.⁷⁶ Today, Burtis House stands as one of the few tangible pieces left of nineteenth century Annapolitan maritime history and certainly stands alone as the representative example of domestic space created by a waterman along the waterfront in Annapolis.

⁷⁵ Wennersten, *Oyster Wars*, 55.

⁷⁶ Laura V. Trieschmann and Kimberly P. Williams, "McNasby Seafood and Oyster Company National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," (Washington, D.C.: EHT Tracerics, Inc., 2002).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.977106 | Longitude: -76.484587 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐

NAD 1927

or

☐

NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Bounded by Prince George Street to the northeast, Spa Creek to the southeast, Dock Street to the southwest, and the building at 73 Prince George Street to the northwest.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is based on the property description in the title transfer for the Burtis House property from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to the City of Annapolis; Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Deed Book, Liber SAP 38521, Page 327.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Vincent Turner II

organization: University of Maryland, School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

street & number: 3835 Campus Drive

city or town: College Park state: Maryland zip code: 20742

e-mail vincentt495@gmail.com

telephone:

date: 05/14/2024

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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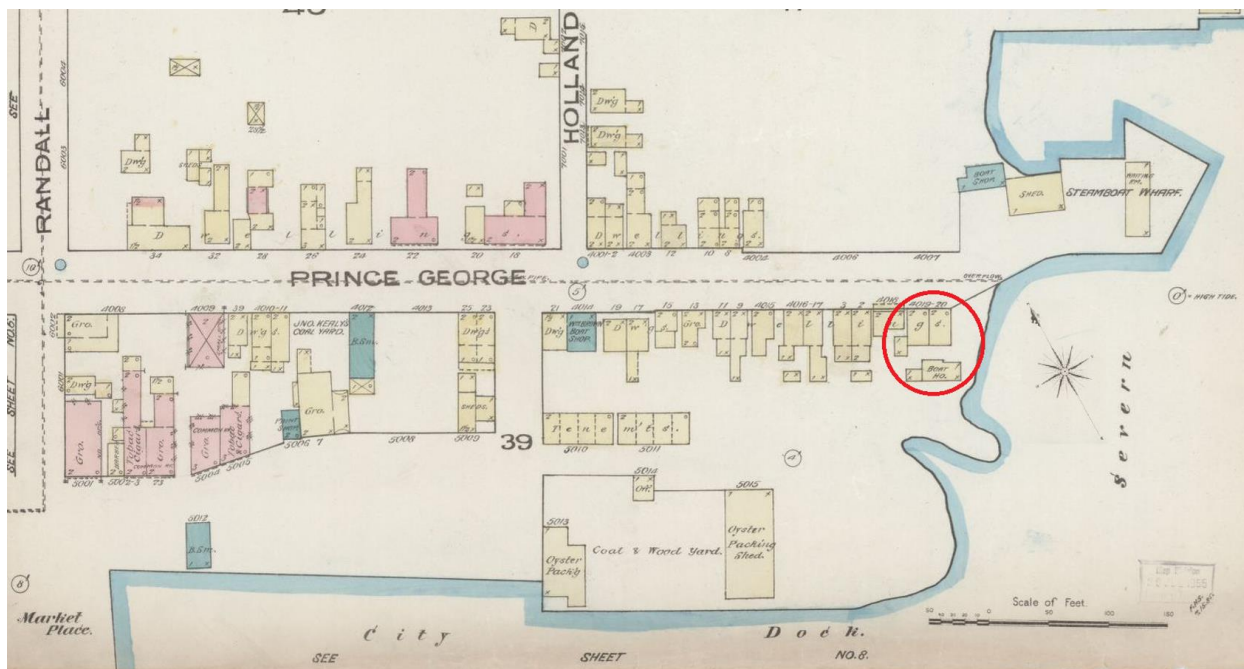
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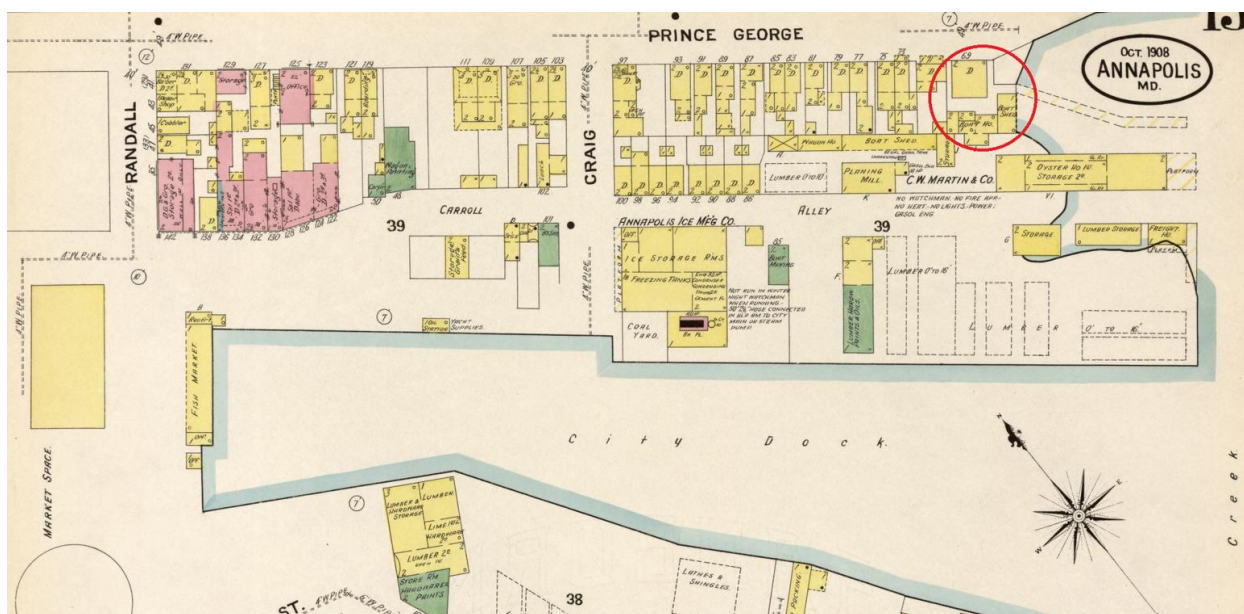
Map 2. Satellite image of Annapolis, Maryland with Burtis House circled in yellow. The circle is at the top left-hand corner of the text box. Source: Google Earth.

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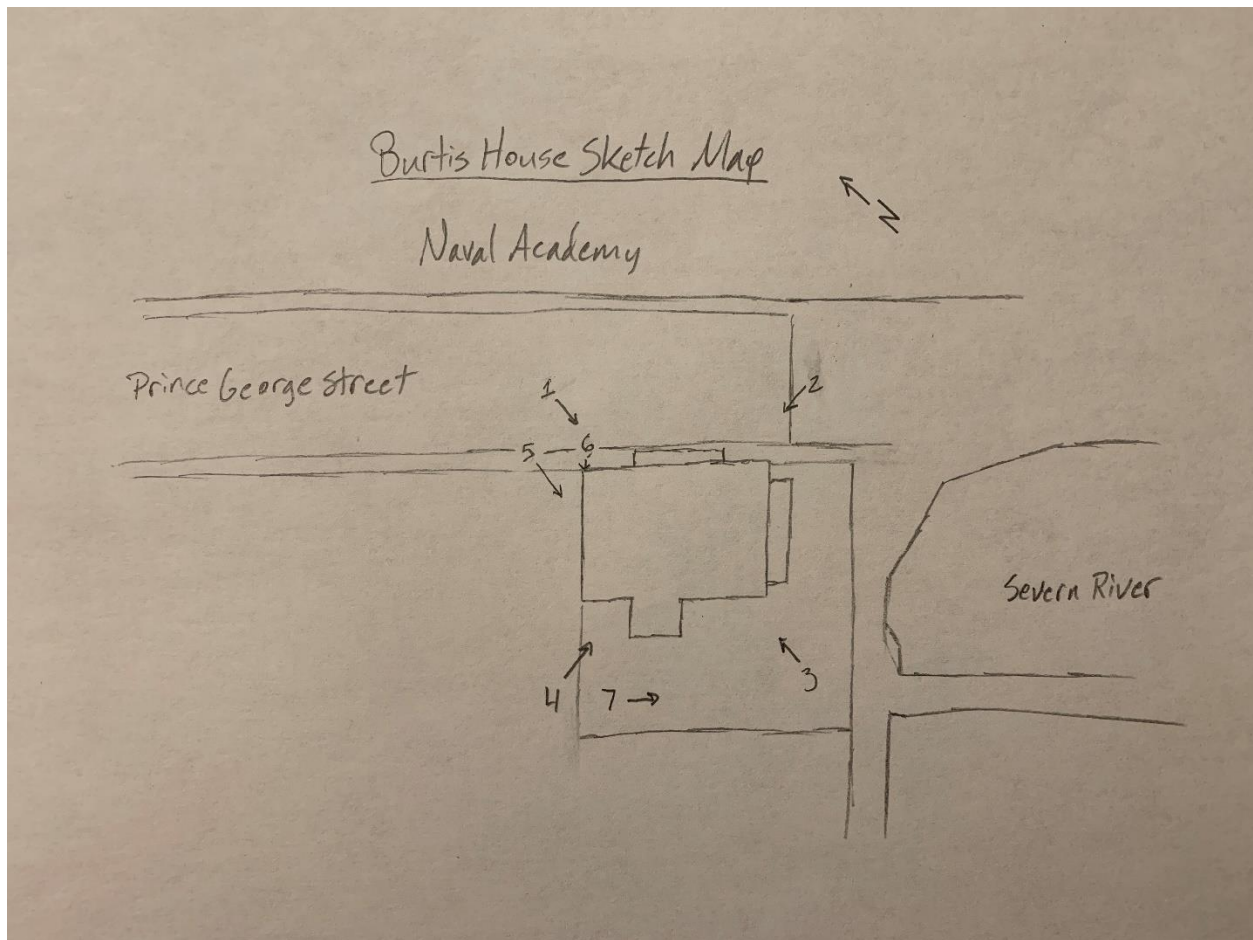
Map 3. 1885 Sanborn Map with Burtis House circled in red. Note the boat house to the rear of the property is already extant and there is no indication of a wharf on the shoreline to the immediate east of the property.



Map 4. 1908 Sanborn Map with Burtis House circled in red. Note the extensive additions to the boat house at the rear of the property and the wharf to the east, indicated by dashed lines.

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Map 5. Sketch map of the Burtis House site, not to scale. Each number corresponds with a photograph taken in 2022 of Burtis House and the direction in which the photograph was taken.

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Figure 1. Possibly the oldest photograph of Burtis House, on the right. c. 1886 - 1896. Note the two end chimneys. On the first floor of the elevation facing the Severn River there is a door at the far left and a window adjacent. The Burtis boat shed is the small white structure in the center of the image with the words "Oysters" and "Boats for Hire" painted on the side facing the river. Source: Maryland State Archives, Accession No.: MSA SC 985-1-238; Location: 33/01/02/47.

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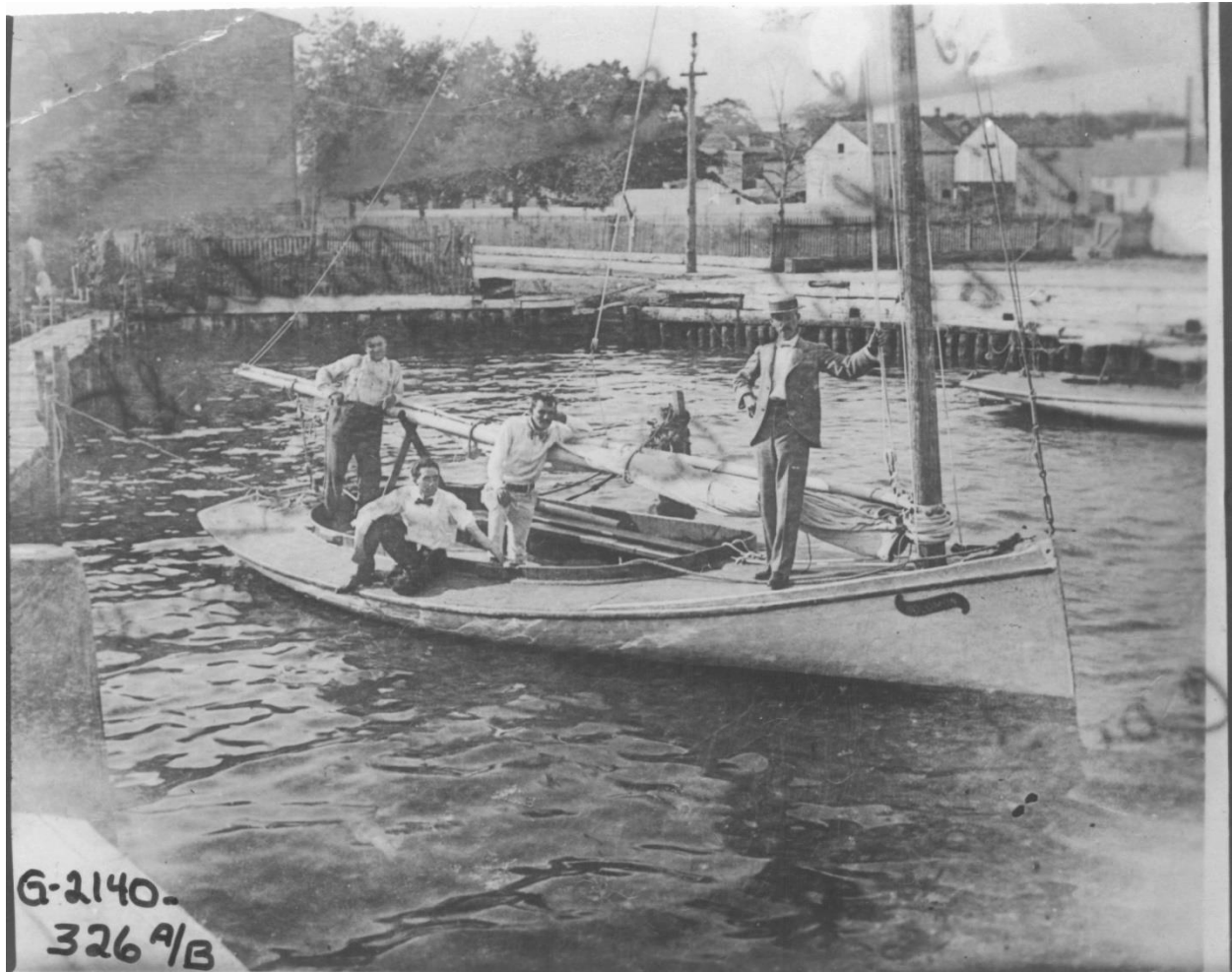


Figure 2. Possibly the second oldest image of Burtis House; c. 1891 - 1903. This photo might show one of the boats rented out by William Burtis. The Burtis House is in the upper left with the Burtis wharf on the far left.

Source: Maryland State Archives, Accession No.: MSA SC 2140-1-326 Location: 33/02/02/25.

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Figure 3. Burtis House is centered in this image from c. 1897-1903. Burtis's wharf and the boat shed can be seen just to the left of the house.

Source: Maryland State Archives, Accession No.: MSA SC 985-1-237 Location: 33/01/02/47.

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Figure 4. Image taken c. 1905. Burtis House is on the left side of the street. Behind the house are the boat house and landing shed. The sailboats in the foreground are possibly part of Burtis's rental boat fleet.

Source: Maryland State Archives: Accession No.: MSA SC 1477-1-6735 Location: 33/02/01/67.

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Figure 5. Rear of the boat shed and landing shed showing manual operation of a marine railway. Image likely from 1920s – 1930s.
Source: Burtis Family

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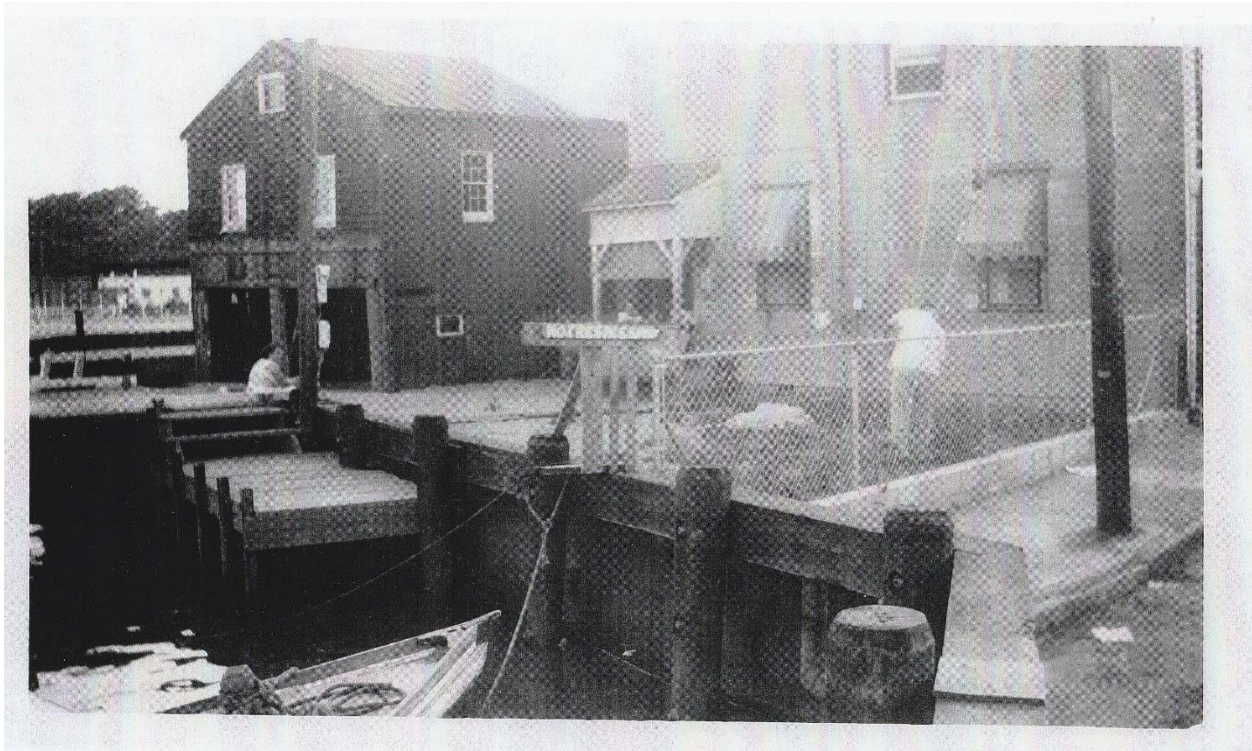


Figure 6. Burtis House on the right. Note there is now a second window on the first floor to the right of the previously existing fenestrations. The Burtis boat shed is the two-story structure in the background. The landing shed was removed at an unknown date before this picture was taken. The 1930 Sanborn map shows the landing shed in place, but the 1959 Sanborn map shows all auxiliary structures had been removed by that time. c. 1930s – 1950s.

Source: Burtis Family

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Photo 1

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, northeastern (front) façade, view to the southwest. Photo taken September 13, 2022.

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Photo 2

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, northeastern (front) façade to the right and southeastern (side) elevation to the left, view to the northwest. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

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Photo 3

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, southwestern (rear) elevation, view to the northeast. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

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Photo 4

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, northwestern (side) elevation to the left and southwestern (rear) elevation to the right, view to the northeast. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

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Photo 5

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, northeastern (side) elevation, view to the southwest. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

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Photo 6

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, detail of the northeastern corner of Burtis House showing the layers of siding. The outermost (right) layer is asbestos shingle, the middle layer is wooden shingle, and the left layer is German siding. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

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Photo 7

Source: Vincent Turner II

Burtis House, 69 Prince George Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, MD 21401, approximate location of the boat shed and landing shed, view to the southeast. Photo taken September 6, 2022.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.