

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. **M: 12-21**

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

Historic **Dickerson Historic District**
other _____

2. Location

street and number _____ not for publication
city, town **Dickerson** _____ vicinity
county **Montgomery**

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name **Multiple Owners**
street and number _____ telephone _____
city, town _____ state _____ zip code _____

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. **Montgomery County Judicial Center** liber/folio **Multiple**
city, town **Rockville** tax map _____ tax parcel /tax ID number **Multiple**

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ Contributing Resource in National Register District
_____ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
_____ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
_____ Recorded by HABS/HAER
_____ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
X Other: **M-NCPPC-Montgomery County, Historic Preservation Section files**

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	69	11 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	1	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	1	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation		<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	71	11 Total
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
				1	

7. Description

Inventory No. **M: 12-21**

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The rural settlement of Dickerson is roughly bounded by the Little Monocacy River on the south and east, Mouth of Monocacy Road on the north, and the rear lines of properties on Dickerson Road to the west. This area is surrounded by farms, and there are a few farm fields and pastures within the town. Seven roads and the railroad tracks bisect Dickerson, and numerous unpaved lanes and roadways exist. Present everywhere in Dickerson are huge trees, farms and fields, rustic roads, buildings of varying styles, shapes, ages, and conditions, majestic Sugarloaf Mountain, and the whistle and roar of the railroad.

Dickerson possesses a significant concentration of buildings and structures that combine and relate historically and aesthetically. The survey area contains an eclectic collection of residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial structures erected between 1840 and 2010. With a medley of high and vernacular architectural styles, most are residential buildings executed in frame on individual lots of varying size. They feature hipped and gable rooflines, front porches and projecting bays, dormers, and decorative vergeboard. Newer structures blend with the scale, materials, and rhythm of the community. Adding to the quiet charm of this country town are mature shade trees on wide lawns and scatterings of frame outbuildings.

Dickerson's period of significance is 1871 to 1959. Most of the high-style architecture in the town occurred between 1891 and 1910, but coexistent vernacular Gothic Revivals and subsequent Craftsman bungalows, Cape Cods, and ranches contribute to the blend as well. Some Dickerson buildings are individually notable, such as the railroad station and the Hayes/Dilonardo house. Many are distinctive representatives of their period, such as the Colonial Revival Meem and Will Roberson homes, worker houses on Big Woods and Dickerson Roads, 20th century Craftsman cottages such as the bungalows on Mt. Ephraim Road, and the Matthews family houses executed in ranch style. While over time most buildings have been added to and altered, historic forms and styles are easily discerned and the community continues to read as a distinctive historic place.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Dickerson is located in northwestern Montgomery County, close to the Frederick County line, approximately 35 miles from Washington, D.C. The Maryland Piedmont settlement is punctuated with rolling hills, streams and rivers, flat fields, railroad tracks, and roads that connect with neighboring historic villages. As Dickerson has never been incorporated, its boundaries are visual (the line between clustered residential lots and farmland) and functional (such as postal service), rather than political. With its distinctive location on the railroad line and near the C&O Canal, Dickerson is one of a dozen rural villages in Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve.

The western edge of Parr's Ridge, which runs northeast to southwest across upper Montgomery County, is just west of town, making Dickerson generally higher than the surrounding countryside. Sugarloaf Mountain, a monadnock about three miles to the northeast, dominates the skyline. Throughout Dickerson, dozens of springs arise, collecting into small, unnamed streams that feed the Little Monocacy River, which meanders around the east and south of Dickerson. The Little Monocacy flows into the Monocacy River, which meets the Potomac River 2½ miles northwest of the town.

Dickerson's man-made environment is framed by its traditional road system and enlivened by its variety of architecture. Radiating from or near the railroad station-track hub, each of the town's seven roads presents a distinct character and streetscape. Around corners and beyond hills are architectural variegations and scenic vistas. Quiet residential areas are punctuated by the bustle of transportation. Dickerson sees considerable vehicular traffic, and a daily parade of trains (short commuters and lengthy freights) navigates through the town, where the whistle can be heard from every property.

The landscape is further defined by unpaved lanes, child/parent lots cut from farms, and unimproved stream valleys. Lot sizes in the survey area vary greatly, ranging from 3,815 square feet to 19.78 acres; most are generously sized and many are irregularly shaped. Public water is not available. Though the land does not percolate easily, property owners use wells and septic systems. The town has culverts, navigable road shoulders, and erratic curbs, but no sidewalks.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

The Dickerson historic district survey area contains a distinctive collection of residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial buildings and structures erected between 1840 and 2010. The overwhelming majority are residential buildings constructed between the 1872 arrival of the railroad and 1960. In that period, a variety of residential building styles, sizes, and plans is represented. Most notable are the modest vernacular homes of the late 19th century, the stately Colonial Revivals of the early 20th century, and the cottages and bungalows constructed between the World Wars. Frame construction predominates, but some early and recent masonry contributes to the mix. Small groupings of residential buildings suggest their initial special purpose, as with the worker housing of the late 19th and early 20th century. Over time, a small quantity of commercial, agricultural, and industrial buildings in the town has been maintained. The oldest store (dated 1871) and the railroad station (1891) still stand. Despite most buildings in Dickerson having been added to and altered, the architectural character of the community is cohesive, visible, and distinct from other settlements and the surrounding countryside.

Of the 82 properties¹ surveyed in Dickerson in 2010:

- 1 predates the arrival of the railroad
- 40 were constructed 1872-1919
- 30 date from 1920-1959
- 11 were built after 1960

Dickerson's environmental setting also retains its integrity. Today, as it was historically, Dickerson is surrounded by working farmsteads, planted fields, and spectacular vistas. Throughout the town, rural outbuildings, pastures and open space, farm animals, and even a windmill can be found. Vegetation is lush, and maple trees predominate. Pines are a 20th century supplement, with the forest largely comprised of tulip poplar and maple. Many properties also feature oak, spruce, hemlock, poplar, walnut, mulberry, and/or cottonwood trees. Flower and vegetable gardens are grown throughout the district.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Early Dickerson: 1840-1871

Extant from this early era are the road system, the character of Dickerson as a rural crossroads surrounded by farms, and a single residential building. What is now Dickerson functioned as a crossroads in an extensive road system in upper western Montgomery County. Major early 19th century thoroughfares still in use today are Mouth of Monocacy Road, Dickerson Road (Maryland Route 28), and West Old Baltimore Road. Local roads, such as Water Street (now Big Woods Road) and Mt. Ephraim Road, were added during this period and, by 1871, the railroad route had been determined and the tracks were under construction. Today, adjustments made to road alignments over the years are discernible from the orientation of buildings or the location of unexpected rights of way.

The William H. Dickerson House, 22315 Nicholson Farm Road, is the oldest building within the survey area. The original two-story log house, constructed c1840, sits on a rise facing west. It is a one bay by one bay structure, with side-gable roof and brick chimney. The single rooms on each floor are now used as the kitchen and master bedroom. It is probable that Mr. Dickerson, first postmaster and station agent, provided postal and railroad agent services from this house from 1871 until he built a store on this property closer to the railroad tracks. Later in the century subsequent Dickerson family generations attached a 2½ story frame addition on fieldstone foundation to the north of the log structure, also facing west. The front porch serves as the entrance to the house. In the 1970s-80s, the owners enlarged the rear porch for a family room, added a small mud room on the south side of the house, and to the north

¹ Total includes *site* of Dickerson School and *structure* of B&O Railroad bridge, track, and right of way.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 2

attached an open breezeway with garage beyond. Both the log and frame structures are now covered by asbestos shingles. From the original 215 acre property have been carved 19th century farms, the railroad right of way, Nicholson Farm Road, and lots for homes constructed from the late 19th through the early 21st centuries. Members of the Dickerson family owned the property until 1940. Since 1945, a parcel of about 2½ acres has remained with the house.

Heyday of the Railroad: 1872-1919

With the 1872 opening of the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad in Dickerson, the crossroads quickly transformed into a bustling settlement. The subsequent half century saw substantial commercial and residential construction within the young town.

One Baltimore architect and several local builders have been identified as working in Dickerson during this expansion period. E. Francis Baldwin, architect for the B&O Railroad, designed the station house, freight house, and interlocking tower for Dickerson's Station. A dozen buildings in town are attributed to Lawrence Baker Nicholson, and Charles B. Sellman designed several grand dwellings. William T. Hilton left his mark with nearby buildings, and it is likely that local black housewright Bene Hallman worked on structures in this period. Current Dickerson residents suggest that some houses were ordered from catalogs and that building materials were shipped by rail, but no documentation has been found to support these claims.

The first commercial enterprise in "Dickerson Station" was a c1873 frame store erected of log and frame by William H. Dickerson. The original four-bay 1½ story building was adjacent to the passenger platform. Mr. Dickerson transferred postal and railroad services from his house to this store, which he operated until his death in 1900. The small structure had to be moved a short distance twice, first in 1891 for the new B&O depot and then in 1910 to widen Mt. Ephraim Road. The address of the former Dickerson Store and Post Office is now 22230 Mt. Ephraim Road. The Dickerson family owned the property until 1940, after which it saw a number of uses, including a general store and post office, antique shop, animal feed store, and community center. During the 20th century, the structure was enlarged to the north, south, and west by small one-story cinderblock additions, exterior walls of the main block were sided, and the front porch was rebuilt. The post office function was removed in 1960. Despite these changes, the store retains its character.

The most elegant commercial building in Dickerson is the B&O Station, located between the railroad tracks and 22200 block of Mt. Ephraim Road. At first Dickerson and other stops had temporary facilities to serve passengers, yet in the early 1890s the B&O commissioned individualized frame stations. Dickerson station was designed by Baltimore architect E. Francis Baldwin for the B&O, with his partner Josias Pennington. Variations of this design were also erected at Germantown and Kensington in 1891 and at Garrett Park in 1895. The depot in Dickerson, which measures approximately 30 feet by 12 feet and cost \$1,419 to build, is distinctive for its V-shaped central bay that enabled the agent to see the waiting platform in both directions. Similar in plan with contemporary stations, Dickerson station had an agent's office separating the waiting rooms for men and women. An ornate construction date adorns the trackside central gable. The frame one-story freight house and tall interlocking tower once sited west of the station no longer stand.²

Associated with the railroad are a bridge structure and a former grade crossing. About 500 feet west of the depot is the bridge that carries the railroad over Dickerson Road (Route 28). The bridge is constructed of steel beams laid on a stone base. The abutments are comprised of huge ashlar stones laid in stretchers and headers with joints of lime or concrete; the walls and their four wings are strengthened with one or two courses below the street level. Drill or mounting holes and lift marks remain from the quarrying work. The first railroad bridge was erected between 1869 and 1872. It was likely replaced by the current structure in either 1904-06, when this section was double-tracked, or in the early 1920s, when Dickerson Road was paved and improved as a "State pike." Construction

² Avery, Carlos P., *E. Francis Baldwin, Architect* (Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2003), 34; E. Francis Baldwin's journal 1891, page 41, courtesy of the Baldwin family.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 3

materials point to the 1906 date, as a large number (perhaps 30) of steel east-west beams is required for strength and set right on the stones, and Portland cement is used to reinforce the beams below as well as on a parapet above that retains the track ballast.³ The former at-grade crossing is located just east of the station house and parking lot. Dickerson School Road, located south of the tracks, once continued north to meet Mt. Ephraim Road on the north side of the tracks. Owner CSX eliminated this crossing in the late 1990s.

Roberson garage and filling station, located at the intersection of Mt. Ephraim and Dickerson Roads at 22201 Dickerson Road and dated c.1910, is a third commercial representative. This two-story two-by-four bay rectangular front-gable frame building was constructed with lumber and windows taken from a defunct local mill. Will Roberson prepared the second floor for a community center and built a stage, but the upper story was never used for more than storage. In the 1980s, the Robersons covered the upper story with aluminum siding and the lower story with corrugated metal, leaving garage door openings on both levels. Two brick chimneys remain, as does the concrete oval that held Gulf gasoline pumps out front.⁴

The pace of residential construction increased considerably between 1891 and 1910. During these two decades, grand and small dwellings arose in every direction from the new depot. Predominant architectural expressions in this period are vernacular Gothic Revival cottages, stylish Colonial Revivals, and modest worker housing. The blight that decimated the American chestnut tree after 1900 proved a boon for local builders, providing chestnut for framing and interior wood features.

Typical of vernacular Dickerson residential buildings with Gothic Revival features are the Zachariah Cooley House, Sears House, and Will Hoyle House. The c1895 Cooley house, 22161 Dickerson School Road, is sited high along an abandoned unpaved road parallel to the railroad tracks, about 400 feet southwest of the depot. The 2½ story L-shaped frame house is three by four bays with a cross gable roof. It has a vergeboard-embellished center gable, turned porch posts, and three brick interior end chimneys. The original novelty siding and fishscale gable shingles have been covered by artificial siding, and the metal roof replaced by a patterned fiberglass asphalt shingle. A meat house with cantilevered gable roof stands behind the dwelling. Farther south at 22135 Dickerson Road is the 1901 home of the Sears family, in pristine condition. This three by three bay frame L-shaped house with Queen Anne characteristics features German wood siding, a pressed tin patterned roof, Seneca sandstone foundation, cross gables with decorative vergeboard, turned porch posts, an ocular center gable window, and a similar cantilevered shed among its multiple outbuildings. A simpler example of the Gothic Revival style is the Will Hoyle House, 22405 Mouth of Monocacy Road. The L-shaped c1900 dwelling has been vacant for years, yet it features gently pedimented heads above 2/2 windows, a triangular arched center gable window, three brick chimneys, and a standing seam metal roof. Hence the Hoyle House maintains a dignified presence in the farm field at the north end of Nicholson Farm Road. Within the Dickerson survey area, there are 11 center gable Gothic Revival vernacular dwellings, ranging in construction date from 1879 to 1903. *See Dickerson Historic District Table attached.*

The last years of the 19th century and first decade of the 20th mark a period of high style architecture in Dickerson. Notable are the Colonial Revival style houses, which comprise almost 15 percent of the total properties surveyed. Mostly Four Square in form and frame in construction, they perch on high ground throughout Dickerson with addresses on all but two of the town's roadways. Some are still owned by the original family, and one retains a windmill, once a common feature of the landscape. The large Meem House (22175 Dickerson School Road, built 1904) and Lloyd Jones House (22301 Mt. Ephraim Road, 1906) are sited across the railroad tracks from one another. They are similar but not identical. Both are 2½ stories, square in plan, with a steep hipped roof topped by a

³ Robert Kapsch, site visit with Eileen McGuckian, July 2010.

⁴ Ellis Roberson, interview by Eileen McGuckian, May 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 4

balustraded widow's walk and punctuated by three dormers. Both dwellings have an assortment of polygonal bay windows, porches, and interior details such as paneled doors and chestnut trim. The Meem House sits on 3½ acres of mature trees, plantings, gardens, and lawn. Adjacent to the two-acre Jones property was the family granary and farm machinery business, Mercer Jones & Son, which was replaced in 1967 by the masonry buildings of Neutron Products.

A pair of handsome Colonial Revival houses is nestled south of the railroad bridge on Dickerson Road. The Bussard/Brown House (1905), at 22134, and adjacent Howard Roberson/Mulgrew House (1907), at 22138, are also similar, but not identical buildings. On smaller parcels than the Meem and Jones Houses, the 2½ story frame dwellings are three by three bays, with wrap-around porches and round tapered columns, central brick chimneys, polygonal two-story bay windows, and steep hipped roofs that flare at the wide eaves. 22134 is now sheathed in aluminum siding, and 22138 sports a finial at its roof peak. Both dwellings are framed in chestnut and attributed to builder Charles B. Sellman. Other stately Colonial Revivals include the Lawrence Jones House at 22300 Dickerson Road (c1895), a center gabled L-shaped home with Lincrusta interior wallcovering; the early 20th century Peddicord/Breckenridge House (22321 Mt. Ephraim Road), a c1910 cross-gabled house with two-story canted bays and round tapered porch columns; and the Will Roberson House, 22210 Mt. Ephraim Road (1906), a hipped roof Four Square with a polygonal two-story bay and round tapered porch columns.

Four dwellings on Big Woods Road exemplify the vernacular cottages built for railroad and quarry workers around the turn of the 20th century. The unpaved road (then known as Water Street) extended southeast from the intersection of Dickerson Road and the railroad tracks to the ice factory on Little Monocacy River. No connection to the Big Woods black community or the Barnesville-Beallsville Road existed at this time. Lawrence Baker Nicholson, a Dickerson merchant who had previously purchased lots and arranged to build homes on Water Street, erected a group of four rental houses for workers at the railroad and the newly-opened Dickerson quarries. Of the three 2½ story single-pile dwellings still standing at 22010, 22022, and 22030 Big Woods Road, the Stottlemeyer House at 22022 is in most pristine condition. It is three bays by one bay, with side gable and novelty wood siding, 2/2 sash windows, fieldstone foundation, interior brick end chimney, and standing seam metal roof. The full-width shallow decorative front porch features turned posts and pilasters and leads to an entrance door with two-light transom. There is a small rear addition. On the 13,068 square foot property are two frame outbuildings and an unnamed stream that runs southward to the river. Another picturesque building nearby on Big Woods Road is the Hallman/Trundle/Hamilton House. Unpainted and uninhabited for years, without plumbing or electricity, it perches on a tiny parcel on the side of a driveway to another house. The 1½ story one bay by two bay front gable house has German siding and sits on brick piers.

A unique Dickerson dwelling from this period is the Hays/Dilonardo House at 20311 Dickerson Church Road. Constructed in 1883, this five bay by four bay two-story Colonial Revival house is architecturally significant for its Federal-influenced detailing and as the only 19th century brick building in Dickerson. The Hays family kept the house without central heat, electricity, or plumbing until 1943; the Dilonardos purchased it a decade later. The double pile house has walls two bricks thick on the first floor and one brick thick on the second. It features a gently hipped metal roof and a front entrance set in an arched doorway with a transom and flanking sidelights surmounted by a brick keystone. The Dilonardos maintain five acres of trees, shrubs, formal and informal gardens, and lawn.

Mature Community: 1920-1959

As the pace of Dickerson's growth slowed following the first World War, architectural traditions were recast, and new plans and styles emerged. The popularity of Colonial Revival continued through a scaled-down second phase type that became known as Cape Cod. Craftsman bungalows and vernacular cottages were erected on infill lots and along extensions of older roads. By the 1940s and through the 1950s, one-story ranch style homes of brick, wood, or cinderblock could be seen throughout the town. Farm families created lots from fields for new homes, some for retiring parents or grown children and others for newcomers. However, no platted

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 5

subdivision of more than three new building lots has ever occurred in Dickerson. Detached and later attached garages were erected for cars at new and existing homes.

Examples of second phase Colonial Revival style residences include Creighton Place, the Runkles/Johnson House, and the White/Daza House. Creighton Place, 22014 Dickerson Road, was modeled after a house in Virginia and built for Samuel Creighton and Beulah Nicholson Jones about 1921. The 2½ story, three by two bay frame house has a side gable roof with wide returns, an entrance door with large transom and side lights, 1/1 double-hung sash windows, and a full-width front porch with six tapered square wood columns. Reputedly the first house in Dickerson with electric lights (powered by a Delco generator), Creighton Place was sufficiently large for Mrs. Jones to rent rooms to tourists. Still in the family, it sits on a two-acre lot.⁵ The Runkles House, 22401 Mt. Ephraim Road, is a substantial brick house built in 1936. The 2½ story house, on the corner lot of a working dairy farm, is three by three bays square, with a side gable roof, a large exterior chimney, and 1/1 windows, and the full-width front porch has a hipped roof supported by four tapered round columns. The frame White/Daza House, 22165 Dickerson School Road, is also three bays square, with side gables, a front stoop, and a brick exterior chimney. At 1½ stories, it portrays the Colonial Revival style in a modest Cape Cod cottage of the 1940s.

The Craftsman style is represented with a number of cottages and bungalows on Dickerson Road. The White/Espinoza bungalow at 22022 Dickerson Road dates from c1919. Its steep, wide hipped roof tops a three by three bay square frame building with 2/2 windows. The full-width front porch features four tapered round Doric columns. Just north is the Paul Roberson House, 22120 Dickerson Road, built of slightly smaller dimensions, also about 1919. It has a broad front gable roof, two brick chimneys, 1/1 windows and wood siding, and a full-width hipped roof front porch with four tapered square columns atop rusticated block piers. Designs and materials for two 1½ story bungalows side by side on Mt. Ephraim Road may have been ordered from a catalog in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The Runkles/Gentry House at 22331 is five bays by two bays with a side gable roof. The full-width front porch is supported by heavy square columns on thick brick piers, and the front entrance has a transom and sidelights. The Dayhoff/Sutphin House at 22341 is slightly smaller at three bays square. The house sits on rock-faced concrete blocks, and the full-width front porch has four tapered columns on battered square piers. Both homes have a side gable roof with a broad central dormer.

Ranch style dwellings constructed in the 1950s are found on most roads in town, sited on rectangular one- to three-acre lots. Fine examples of 1950s custom ranch houses for a younger generation are the Matthews family homes on Dickerson Road. Local farmer Walter K. Matthews provided each of his five children with a new house, of which three are in the survey area. The first house, at 22005 Dickerson Road, was constructed for Walter K. Matthews, Jr. of red stone from Linden, the family farm on Martinsburg Road. Vivian Matthews Orme's was next, a brick house across the street at 22010. Hubert Matthews erected his brick and stone house at 22001. Edwin Matthews and Doris Matthews Lewis, the two other siblings, built nearby in stone on Martinsburg Road and in brick on West Hunter Road, respectively. All of the Matthews homes are cross-gabled I-plan 1½ story masonry dwellings around 1,800 square feet in size, on one to 1½ acre lots. Each front facade features a huge brick chimney and a notable entrance focus; all have side porches. Simpler examples are the cinderblock houses erected on lots carved from the Robert T. and Virginia E. Dayhoff Farm between 1948 and 1957. These modest 1½ story dwellings sit on deep, narrow lots at 22325, 22329, 22333, and 22401 Nicholson Farm Road. To the basic side gable, single pile house has been added a variety of facing materials, as well as porches, garages and/or carports, chimneys, and additions that personalize each house. Other individually planned ranches, small and large, executed in brick and frame, can be seen on the south end of Big Woods Road.

⁵ Ida Lu Brown and Jack Price, daughter and grandson of Creighton and Beulah Jones, interviews by Eileen McGuckian, June and August 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 6

Commercial and industrial structures date from this period as well. The caretaker's house still stands at 21810 Big Woods Road as a reminder of Runkles & Matthews Ice Factory on nearby Little Monocacy River. In 1946, a decade after the Nicholson/Chiswell/Jones store burned, the current Dickerson Market, a T-shaped 1½ story cinderblock commercial structure near the railroad bridge, opened at 22145 Dickerson Road. An addition was made at the north end in 1959 to house the new Dickerson post office. Today the market represents the succession of general merchandise stores in town, all of which hosted the post office at one time.

In addition to the post office, other community buildings erected in Dickerson during this period were Dickerson Methodist Church and Dickerson School. Mt. Pleasant M. E. Church South, designed by William T. Hilton, opened on Mt. Ephraim Road in 1888; the frame building and adjacent burying ground served the congregation for decades, then was abandoned for a new structure in the middle of the town. The new Dickerson Methodist Church, 20341 Dickerson Church Road, opened for worship in 1930. Its front-facing gable entrance faces east and is surmounted by a large square steeple with round-headed louvered windows on each face, then topped with a hipped steeple that is pointed at the top and flared at the bottom. The frame church (now covered in aluminum siding) sits on a concrete block foundation and features four pointed-arch stained glass windows on each side. In 1963, the congregation erected a ranch-style brick parsonage next door. Behind the church building, today known as Dickerson United Methodist Church, are a two-seat frame outhouse and an open pavilion.

Dickerson Elementary School, 22121 Dickerson School Road, was a two-story brick building that served local white students from 1921 until it burned in 1959. On the property now is a park operated by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, with ball fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, and benches. The site of the old school is demarcated with a retaining wall and four cement steps that lead to a sidewalk.

Outbuildings

Almost every property in Dickerson has at least one outbuilding, and some have several. Most are of frame construction. There are barns, large and small, that remain from farming uses of earlier times. There are garages, chicken houses, small and large storage sheds, open wood sheds, animal sheds, stables, and a few outhouses. Meat houses, with gable roofs that are cantilevered out over the entrance, are located on properties at 22161 Dickerson School Road, 22025 Dickerson Road, and 22404 Nicholson Farm Road. One windmill is still extant behind the house at 21921 Dickerson Road, and photographs indicate former locations of two others in town.

8. Significance

Inventory No. **M: 12/21**

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	

Specific dates	1871-1959	Architect/Builder	Multiple
----------------	-----------	-------------------	----------

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

_____ National Register

_____ Maryland Register

_____ not evaluated

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dickerson is significant as an early crossroads of rural Montgomery County that evolved through 200 years as a residential, market, and transportation center. A small western county settlement located between Sugarloaf Mountain and the Potomac River, Dickerson's historical and architectural continuity and its proximity to usable waterways, local building materials of wood and stone, fertile soil, Piedmont ridges, and convenient transportation has made the area attractive through the present day.

An unincorporated rural settlement surrounded by productive farmland, the town presents an architectural medley of styles, sizes, and building types set along country roads and in open space. Through the mix of vernacular and Gothic Revival cottages, grand Colonial Revivals, Craftsman bungalows, and ranch houses, residential structures portray 19th and 20th century construction activity in Dickerson. The tight group of mostly frame dwellings and commercial buildings radiates from the railroad station on a long-standing system of roads and rails.

Dickerson has a long and multi-faceted history, but its significance has been overshadowed by the nearby C&O Canal, Sugarloaf Mountain, and larger communities such as Poolesville and Barnesville. Dickerson is often depicted as a railroad community, which it certainly is, but not exclusively. Families had settled, local industries opened, the road system was in place, and community institutions were operating before the railroad arrived. In the decades since the automobile eclipsed the railroad in the 20th century, the community of Dickerson has continued to evolve in keeping with its rural crossroads past.

Development in Dickerson is divided into Early History (1740-1871), Heyday of the Railroad (1872-1919), Mature Community (1920-1959), and Recent History (1960-2010). While building upon previous periods, each era presents particular historical themes as well as architectural evidence of its generation's tastes and technology. Historical and architectural continuity are in evidence everywhere in Dickerson today. There are several exceptional buildings, some replacement buildings, and numerous contributing structures that represent the historical periods of Dickerson's development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

EARLY HISTORY: 1740-1871

Upper western Montgomery County and the Dickerson area were settled a century before the arrival of the railroad. Proximity to the confluence of the Potomac and Monocacy Rivers, Piedmont ridges, and an established north-south route attracted Indians, European settlers, and industrious individuals striking out in the frontier.

Native Americans in the Woodland period (1,000 BC – AD 1,600) established trails and trade routes through the area long before European settlers claimed the land, but were pushed out by the 1690s. In 1711, Baron Christoph von Graffenreid, a Swiss promoter,

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

and frontier guide Martin Charetier ascended Sugarloaf Mountain and prepared the first known map of this area, which spurred additional industrial activity.⁶

The first land patents around Dickerson were issued by the Lords Baltimore to Arthur Nelson and Luke Ray. Nelson's Adventure, patented in 1740 with 97 acres (and later part of Mount Carmel, 1788), straddled a crude north-south colonial road and the Little Monocacy River south of the present center of town. Ray's Venture, 150 acres patented in 1743 farther east and north, included the Dickerson portion of Big Woods Road and up to Mouth of Monocacy Road. Patentees claimed most of the remaining area prior to the American Revolution. Other patent names were Largo (1750), Beall's Good Will (1753), Oversight (1760), Doe Neck (1764), Veaches Loss (1770), and Good Cheer (1772).⁷

For colonial governing purposes, the area that would become Dickerson was included in Monocacy Hundred, a civil district created in 1728 as that part of Prince George's County west of Seneca Creek. After Frederick County formed (1748), the area was part of Sugar Loaf Hundred, and with the creation of Montgomery County in 1776 became Medley's District.⁸ The closest postal facility for early residents in the Dickerson area was Mouth of Monocacy, which opened in 1831 to serve the community along the canal.

Farming

Starting in the 18th century, English settlers from the Maryland Tidewater and Germans from Pennsylvania began turning Dickerson's woodland into tillable fields. As planters prospered and accumulated acreage, they added to or replaced their log homes and outbuildings with those of frame. They expanded acreage and shifted plantings from tobacco and corn to wheat and other grains and dairy products, shipping crops to market on crude roads. In 1832 the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal opened to provide a new corridor for farmers and boost the local economy. Traffic increased through Dickerson, 2½ miles from the canal at the point where the Monocacy River flows into the Potomac, and about three miles from Spinks Ferry to Virginia. In 1840, area farmers helped create the Medley's District Agricultural Society, which encouraged scientific use of the soil, crop diversity, and increased application of technology to farming.⁹

Early residents employed slaves for farming operations. Among local slaveowners were Nathan C. Dickerson, Mary E. Gott, Mary M. Hempstone, Henry Scholl, and Lloyd S. Jones. In the Civil War several local slaves "left with the military" or enlisted in the Maryland Colored Troops. After emancipation, former slaves joined free blacks in the antebellum communities of Big Woods, south of Dickerson, and Mt. Ephraim to the northeast. Big Woods, one of the oldest black communities in Montgomery County (M: 12/17), was founded by the Spencer and Awkard families well before the Civil War. Mt. Ephraim (also known as Bell's Chapel) at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain in Frederick County, was home to the free Moody family. Martinsburg, closer to the Potomac River, was

⁶ Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Rockville: Montgomery County Government and Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976), 13-14.

⁷ Land Patents in Dickerson area map, copied from part of map by Sheila Cochran, Florence Howard, and Mary Charlotte Crook, Montgomery County Historical Society, 1995.

⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁹ Ibid., 124-128.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

established about 1866 by free blacks such as Nathan Naylor and by former slaves. Residents of these nearby black communities helped industrial and construction enterprises to form and thrive as the town of Dickerson evolved.¹⁰

Two 18th century farmsteads remain in the Dickerson area, along the old public road (now Route 28). Locust Grove, home of the Veatch and Gott families and now known as Mount Carmel (M: 12/22), dates to about 1759. The property, including the sandstone house and slave quarter, commands a hill above Little Monocacy River on which Gott's Mill operated. For 120 years, the White family owned Inverness (M: 12/35), which is south of the junction of Route 28 and Martinsburg Road; the rolling terrain is punctuated by a Federal style brick manor house, a stone bank barn, two slave quarters, and another mill. And, while he did not build upon the land, George Washington from 1794 to 1799 owned 519 acres just 1¾ miles southwest of Dickerson.¹¹

Roads

The earliest roads were built along old Indian trails, on ridges, and to connect places of production with markets. Land patents of the 18th century seem to have had little relationship to the road delineations. The colonial roads served quarries, mills, and tiny villages, branching out as the population increased. In time an extensive road system developed in western Montgomery County, but roads were rough, frequently impassable, and difficult to maintain. A crossroads for early north-south and east-west routes, what is today the center of Dickerson has since the 18th century been the confluence of at least three roads.

Road alignments in the Dickerson area did not remain constant through time. Over more than two centuries of use, adjustments were made to connect with new settlements or transportation routes, to use new technology, to lessen curves or steep grades, or to accommodate farms and businesses along the way. These shifts are evident today from building orientations to the road, a comparison of maps of different eras, and from phrases in legal documents or memories of long-time residents.

In the 18th century, the major destination in this upper corner of Montgomery County was Mouth of Monocacy, where the Monocacy flows into the Potomac River. Settlers and through-travelers needed roads to George Town (by 1751 a port from which to ship tobacco), Baltimore (opened 1730), Frederick Town (founded 1745 and administrative seat of government for area residents until the formation of Montgomery County in 1776), Virginia towns and other points west (across the Potomac River), and Montgomery Court House (by 1805 known as Rockville).

The northwest-southeast main road through western Montgomery County is today part of MD Route 28, known locally as Dickerson Road. Authorized through an act of the Maryland Assembly in 1790, the general configuration shows on a 1791 survey and on Dennis Griffith's map of Maryland dated 1794. Following former Indian trails, branching off toward the Potomac River, and extending from the frontier beyond Frederick Town to the mouth of the Monocacy River through the seat of government at Montgomery Court House and south to the port of George Town, the road served travelers, planters, commercial enterprises, and numerous small settlements along the way. On Martenet & Bond's 1865 map, the roadway in Dickerson is fairly straight. It was described in deeds as the "public road leading from Gott's Mill" (just south of town on Little Monocacy River) and traversed lands belonging to Hempstone, White, and

¹⁰ Maryland Slave Census, 1867-1868, Montgomery County; George W. McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County* (Sugarloaf Regional Trails, Inc, 1979).

¹¹ National Register of Historic Places nomination forms; "Washington's Farm" road plaque, Maryland Bicentennial Commission and Maryland Historical Society.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

Dickerson. From these deeds and maps, it appears to have followed the approximate paths of current Dickerson Church and Nicholson Farm Roads before heading north toward the Monocacy River and Frederick.

In the years before the Civil War, other roadways opened to intersect with the main road and to emanate in all directions from what is now the center of Dickerson. Mouth of Monocacy Road connected Dickerson farmers with the early settlement of Mouth of Monocacy, and after 1832 with the aqueduct and canal, to interior towns such as Barnesville. William H. Dickerson's house was noted in 1848 as situated south of the "main road leading from the mouth of Monocacy to Barnesville."¹²

Other antebellum routes were convenient to Dickerson. West Old Baltimore Road opened in the 1790s to bring products of Baltimore to the West and the products of the West to Baltimore. Martinsburg Road opened in 1838 to provide access to local mills and other public roads for residents of the area; for Dickerson farmers, it was another route to the Potomac River and the canal. By the late 1830s, a mail route between Mouth of Monocacy and Rockville was in operation and the earliest part of today's MD Route 109 had been laid out from Beallsville to Barnesville.

What is today Mt. Ephraim Road also appears on the 1865 map, to serve the Mt. Ephraim community located near the Frederick County line. The southwest end of the road connects with the Baltimore Road/Mouth of Monocacy Road. From the Mt. Ephraim crossroads, the road continues north for miles, around Sugarloaf Mountain and across Bear Branch and the Monocacy River. It may have been an early route to Frederick before a bridge was built across the Monocacy. This early road remains unpaved today.

Industry

Early industrial activities made use of abundance and variety of local rock, providing employment and economic bursts for the Dickerson area. Amelung's New Bremen Glass Works, one of the earliest in the country, operated in nearby Frederick County before 1800. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Joseph B. Johnson, brother to Maryland Governor Thomas Johnson, developed an iron furnace and forge about two miles north and west of Dickerson. From the family home Rock Hall, the Johnson family operated several sandstone and granite quarries between Sugarloaf Mountain and the rivers, as well as mills, iron furnaces, quarries, and a distillery.

Quarries in the area provided stone for construction projects and work for local men over nearly two centuries. Columns for the U.S. Capitol in 1817 came from the "Potomac Marble Quarries," located near the Potomac River opposite Masons Island about 2 miles above Conrad's (White's) Ferry and about six miles from today's town of Dickerson.¹³

To construct the large, elaborate Monocacy Aqueduct on the C&O Canal in 1832, the canal company selected a grey stone from Eliza Nelson's farm at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain. It proved too soft for the aqueduct but may have been used as rubble inside the structure. Superior stone closer to the construction site was found at Johnson's quarry near Rock Hall. Known as the White Quarry, this deposit of durable mountain sandstone was used for the ring stones or voussoirs in aqueduct arches. Stone from the adjacent Red Quarry was probably used for the aqueduct abutments. The white stone is reported to have been also used to line the walls of

¹² Montgomery County Judgment Records, JGH6/103; today the William H. Dickerson House address is 22315 Nicholson Farm Road.

¹³ Actually a limestone conglomerate called Breccia, the material was referred to as "Potomac Marble." Michael Dwyer, Park Historian, notes and files, M-NCPPC.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 4

limestone kilns and iron furnaces (including Cacoclin Furnace in Frederick County). Local quarry workers, cutters, boatmen, drivers, and carpenters found jobs alongside laborers and masons from Great Britain, and the project was completed in 1833.¹⁴

Making use of Little Monocacy River flowing through Dickerson, 19th century milling became an important local industry. Oakland Mills, established in 1772 as a grist mill, later added saw and plaster milling to its services; the B&O purchased the abandoned mill property for the railroad right-of-way in the early 1870s. By the mid-19th century, Mary Gott and George Webster each operated saw and grist mills on the river close to the main road from Darnestown. Downstream from Oakland Mills on the Little Monocacy River, a factory operated by Daniel Price appears on Martenet's 1865 map, about where Big Woods Road now crosses the river. Perhaps Price's manufacturing laid the foundation for a later industry in this vicinity. Other nearby water-powered enterprises by the 1820s were Monocacy Mills at Mouth of Monocacy and Greenfield Mills, near Furnace Ford in Frederick County.¹⁵

The Civil War

With their farms located in the path of troop actions and between signal stations at Poolesville and Sugarloaf Mountain, men from the area fought in the Civil War. In this part of the county, allegiances were generally with the South. Twenty-one-year-old William H. Dickerson enlisted in the 35th Battalion, Virginia Cavalry led by Elijah Veirs White of Poolesville. The Confederate unit constantly harassed Union forces along the Potomac. Richard Poole Hays moved from Barnesville to Dickerson 20 years after serving with White. Daniel Trundle Shreve, son of Benjamin and Mary (Trundle) Shreve, organized the "Leesburg Rangers," a Virginia militia group. By the end of the war, all slaves in Maryland were emancipated.¹⁶

By 1871, local residents were weary of war and ready to build a local community. At this time, the Dickerson vicinity contained large and small farms, a road system radiating in four directions to markets and nearby settlements, the C&O Canal, neighboring towns (Mouth of Monocacy, Mt. Ephraim, Beallsville, Barnesville, Frederick, and Poolesville), three nearby black communities (Big Woods, Mt. Ephraim, and Martinsburg), three mills on Little Monocacy River, a primary school for white students, and accessible churches of every major Christian denomination. William H. Dickerson, who had lived near the rural crossroads since at least 1860, operated a post office when he was appointed postmaster in 1871. The community took his name. Dickerson was poised to take advantage of the technology that was about to arrive.

Extant representatives of this early period of Dickerson history are the road system (today known as Dickerson Road, Mouth of Monocacy Road, Mt. Ephraim Road, Dickerson Church Road, Nicholson Farm Road, and Big Woods Road), the log section of the William H. Dickerson house at 22315 Nicholson Farm Road, and the character of Dickerson as a rural crossroads settlement surrounded by farmland.

¹⁴ Robert Kapsch and Elizabeth Perry Kapsch, *Monocacy Aqueduct on the C&O Canal* (Poolesville: Medley Press, 2005). Michael Dwyer, Park Historian, memo to Bob Young, M-NCPPC, March 3, 1975.

¹⁵ Simon J. Martenet, *Martenet & Bond's Map of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Baltimore, 1865).

¹⁶ Charles T. Jacobs, *Civil War Guide to Montgomery County, Maryland* (Rockville: Montgomery County Historical Society, 1996), 6-7.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 5

HEYDAY OF THE RAILROAD: 1872-1919

Arrival of rail transportation quickly transformed the area from a small crossroads to a bustling settlement around the tracks. The railroad literally placed Dickerson on the map,¹⁷ and area residents immediately began to take advantage of its opportunities. The Metropolitan Railroad Company organized in 1853 to build a railroad from Georgetown to Frederick and Hagerstown, yet the venture was unstable from the start. Insufficient financial backing exacerbated by squabbling political jurisdictions, national economic downturns, mixed public sentiment, legislative inaction, competition among major American rail companies, and the Civil War all worked against the venture. The Met's charter, including multiple extensions, finally lapsed.

In early 1865, the Maryland General Assembly granted a new charter to the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad Company, which quickly moved to lay out a final route that connected with the west. The company worked to obtain rights-of-way, and to start laying the track. Retaining the Met's name as well as its route, in 1868-9 the B&O began construction at the most difficult section of the 42 3/4 miles from Washington to Point of Rocks: the cut through Parr's Ridge between Dickerson and Barnesville.¹⁸

The railroad climb eastward from Point of Rocks across the Monocacy River to Dickerson is a 1.04 percent grade. Just east of Dickerson the track twisted around hillsides as it worked its way up, crossing the Little Monocacy River on a 76 foot high, 500 foot long timber trestle viaduct. Then the grade increased to 1.1 percent to arrive at its highest point, the Barnesville summit at 527.4 feet above sea level. Railroaders call it the "ruling grade," the steepest section of track on the line from which they determine tonnage that a train can carry. This sustained six-mile, 297 foot upgrade has challenged engineers for 130 years.¹⁹

The B&O planned four first-class station houses in Montgomery County – at Silver Spring, Rockville, Germantown, and Dickerson. Designed by B&O architect E. Francis Baldwin, the stations were to be two stories in height, 53 feet x 41 feet in size, and built of press brick with slate roofs. Of these, only the Rockville station was in place when train service opened in 1873. In 1878, Silver Spring and Gaithersburg received brick depots and Germantown a small frame station. For other stops, in the first years of Met line operation the B&O made do with platforms, waiting sheds, or smaller, simpler station houses.²⁰

With the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O under construction in the early 1870s, adjustments were needed to public roads. Changes in grade levels as well as the paths for the rail bed and tracks required road accommodation. Presumably because of the terrain, a railroad bridge with vehicle underpass was needed from the start. The bridge was erected between 1869 and 1872 over Dickerson Road. About 500 feet east of the bridge/underpass, vehicles could cross the tracks at grade level.

¹⁷ G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington Including the County of Montgomery, Maryland* (Philadelphia: The Compiler, 1879), Medley District, 30-1.

¹⁸ William E. Hutchinson, in *Gaithersburg: The Heart of Montgomery County* (Gaithersburg: City of Gaithersburg, 1978), 15.

¹⁹ Herbert H. Harwood, Jr., *Impossible Challenge: The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Maryland* (Baltimore: Barnard, Roberts and Company, 1979), 271.

²⁰ *Montgomery County Sentinel*, May 9, 1873; Carlos P. Avery, *E. Francis Baldwin, Architect* (Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2003), 26-7.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 6

Timing provided a brief advantage for Dickerson over other Montgomery County stations on the line. The crossroads community was ready when the Monocacy River bridge and the track between Dickerson and Point of Rocks opened in 1872, months before the southern section (constructed from Washington, D.C. westward). Thirty-three-year-old Confederate veteran William H. Dickerson took advantage of the location where his parents, Christy (Hempstone) and Nathan Dickerson, owned property. The younger man had farmed the land with the aid of other laborers. By 1873 William Dickerson had established a general merchandising store, served as a railroad agent for the B&O, and had been appointed postmaster. As was the custom of the time, the new town was named for Dickerson, its first postmaster, whose store was located in a log structure on the north side of the tracks. For almost 20 years, station agent Dickerson served rail patrons from his store, today's 22230 Mt. Ephraim Road. He also received commissions for tasks such as telegraphy and railroad express. However, because economic slumps required the B&O to scale down its original plans and down-county suburbanites rode the train in greater numbers, the young town waited until 1891 for a station house to be erected by the railroad.²¹

New stops and towns sprang up along the rail line – Derwood, Halpine, Takoma, Knowles, and Boyds – and older communities such as Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Germantown shifted attention closer to the tracks. At the upper County line, the old settlement at Mouth of Monocacy, which had boomed during the heyday of the C&O Canal, gave way to Dickerson's Station on the railroad. Mouth of Monocacy folded its post office into Dickerson's between 1889 and 1909 and maintained a daily stage from the old to the new town.²²

B&O Service and Improvements

Formal service on the Met began May 25, 1873, with Dickerson's Station located 35.8 miles from the Washington, D.C. start of the line at New Jersey Avenue and C Street, N.E. Not every passenger train stopped at Dickerson, however, which was considered a local stop. A typical local train took one hour to travel from Dickerson to Washington. Express trains blew the whistle and continued through. Service in the 19th century aimed to attract commuters, who lived in closer-in towns, mainly Rockville and south. The 1873 schedule had four passenger trains a day in each direction on a single track. Two years later there were five passenger runs each way, two of them being all-stops trains. By the mid-1880s the Met had grown to fourteen passenger trains and five scheduled freights; a decade later the number of trains reached an all-time high of 36 daily passenger trains. 1887 rates between Washington and Dickerson were: single trip \$1.10; monthly tickets \$13.45 (good for 60 trips), monthly school tickets \$8.95 (46 trips in a month), family tickets \$35.75 (50 trips in a year).²³

By 1890, Dickerson had grown sufficiently to warrant a station house. As development occurred along the rail line, the B&O prepared wood frame depot designs for communities large enough to merit use. Like the earlier brick stations, these modest buildings were designed by E. Francis Baldwin. Basic waiting structures worked well for small stops such as Randolph (constructed 1892), but

²¹ Maryland Historical Trust inventory forms, research on Dickerson buildings by Mark Walston, Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1978-79.

²² *Polk Directory, 1909-1910.*

²³ Harwood, *Impossible*, 273-9; B&O Railroad Company, *Metropolitan Branch Schedule of Suburban Trains to and from Washington. In effect May 29, 1887*; employee schedules in collection of Bob Cohen (employee schedules list every regularly scheduled train – passenger, freight, mixed, mail, etc., express and local trains); interviews by Eileen McGuckian with Sidney Earle, Jr., John King, Harry Meem, and Bob Cohen, summer 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 7

booming Takoma (1886) required a larger variation. Midway in size and complexity were stations with a central office and waiting rooms on either side, such as those erected in Kensington, Germantown, and Dickerson in 1891. The depot in Dickerson, which measures approximately 30 feet x 12 feet and cost \$1,419 to build, was distinctive for its V-shaped central bay that enabled the agent to see the waiting platform in both directions. By 1891 Harry Meem, Sr., was the station agent. Serving from 1891-1906 and 1933-39, he was responsible for operating the station and the one-story frame freight house just to the west of it.²⁴

The B&O Railroad, under the presidency of Leonor F. Loree, embarked on a modernization campaign in 1901, with the goal of allowing trains to move faster and more safely. Projects accomplished incrementally over three decades included straightening the route, double-tracking, and replacing temporary structures with sturdier ones. Tackling the steepest part of the line in 1904-06, workers lessened the sweeping S curves up the western slope of Parr's Ridge between Little Monocacy River and Barnesville station. The wooden trestle bridge at Little Monocacy was replaced with a triple-arch stone viaduct over the stream bed. Double-tracking the section from Dickerson to Barnesville was complete by 1908, with an interlocking tower built immediately west of the Dickerson freight house. The tower contained the controls (switches and signals) that merged the two tracks into one at that point. By World War I, the line was double-tracked from Washington to just short of Germantown, then from Barnesville to Dickerson and some sections between there and Point of Rocks, resulting in increased public confidence and usage of the railroad.²⁵

The B&O decreased scheduled passenger train service around the turn of the century. In 1904, thirty daily passenger trains included more expresses and fewer locals, only stopping at Dickerson when they were flagged down. However, because the Met remained a main artery for food, fuel, and building materials in and through Montgomery County, freight traffic expanded during this time.²⁶

County residents from the District of Columbia to the Frederick line, including landowners, farmers, merchants, and speculators all found opportunities presented by the new line. Within thirty years, the railroad brought growth and prosperity to residents of the countryside it crossed and helped to transform upper County farmland into some of the most productive in Maryland. From Gaithersburg to the Monocacy River, where the Metropolitan Branch cut across land characterized in the 1870s as "largely covered with pine forest," and "many cleared fields producing nothing more valuable than sedge grass," the rails altered both economics and appearances. By 1903, the *Sentinel* noted that wheat and corn production levels and values had risen five- to ten-fold because of the increased accessibility and reasonable pricing of fertilizers such as lime and bone-phosphates.²⁷

In Dickerson, dairy, vegetable, and grain farming prospered as the railroad made it possible to reach markets rapidly without risk of spoilage. Rail connections with Baltimore and the west enabled local farmers to bring supplies in and ship products out. By 1890, the "milk train" was a mainstay of farmers along the line who shipped dairy products to Washington. Early each morning conductors picked up containers at the siding track that had been collected from local farms. A Dickerson story is told about Pete, who daily stopped his wagon at farm lanes to load ten-gallon cans full of milk and five-gallon cans of cream. One day Pete awakened at the

²⁴ Avery, *Baldwin*, 34; E. Francis Baldwin's journal 1891, p. 41, courtesy of the Baldwin family.

²⁵ Harwood, *Impossible*, 279-89; Little Monocacy Viaduct MIHP form M: 12/19; Erik Ledbetter, interview by Eileen McGuckian, July 2010.

²⁶ Harwood, *Impossible*, 283.

²⁷ MacMaster, *Remembrance*, 211.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 8

Dickerson siding track to learn that his trusty horse Mike had dutifully stopped at each farm regardless of his sleeping master's failure to pick up the containers.

A 1912 study of Montgomery County noted that, within three miles of the railroad, probably fifty percent of the farmers were engaged in dairying to some extent. "The dairymen all ship to Washington by rail, boarding it at Dickerson, Barnesville Station, Bucklodge or Boyds." Farmers by this time also shipped more grain by rail and less on the C&O Canal. Discussing the value of farmland, the authors stated that "Location, rather than intrinsic value, has been in all cases the determining factor. Much of the land adjacent to the Railroad, even in the upper end of the county where the development has been slower, has increased in value 50 to 80 percent [since 1900]." By 1912, there were fourteen or more dairy and grain farms, with eighteen specializing in grain. Dickerson farm families, who participated in the Montgomery County Agricultural Society since its inception in 1846, also joined the Medley's District Agricultural Society and the Barnesville Grange, organized in 1874.²⁸

Commercial and Industrial Growth

Other commercial enterprises soon joined William H. Dickerson's store near the rail stop. Lawrence Baker Nicholson moved his general store from Comus, building on the south side of the tracks about 1882. Lawrence A. Chiswell became his partner and succeeded him, and Maurice Chiswell and S. Creighton Jones were later merchants here. A competitor to Dickerson's store, the Nicholson store sold groceries, meat, beans, salted fish, sugar, candy, dry goods, local eggs, milk, and Talbott lima beans grown in Dickerson. It was destroyed by fire in December 1932.²⁹

Mercer Jones & Son was a multi-generational enterprise that benefited from the railroad. Local farmer Lloyd S. "Mercer" Jones (1847-1929) established a granary east of the Dickerson depot, shipping tens of thousands of bushels of grain annually from a siding track. His son Lloyd James Jones, Sr. (1878-1954) added a flour and crushing mill at the site in 1903. The mill, which cost about \$10,000 to build, was the first to be powered by coal-fed steam engines rather than water.³⁰

Another multi-generation business arose closer to the railroad bridge. Benjamin Roberson moved his blacksmithing business from Barnesville to Dickerson in 1906. Within a few years, his sons Will and Howard opened a garage and filling station at the corner of Dickerson and Mt. Ephraim Roads (22210 Mt. Ephraim Road), as well as a plumbing and heating business. The enterprise is now operated by Will's son Ellis Roberson, assisted by his sons. Four generations of Robersons have worked on this property and lived in Dickerson.³¹

Unlike other closer-in towns, Dickerson seems to have been too distant a destination for city dwellers seeking to escape Washington summers. Some local residents, however, accepted boarders, temporary workers, and travelers passing through on the railroad. An

²⁸The Department of Church and Country Life of the Board of Home Missions of The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *A Rural Survey in Maryland* (New York City, 1912), 10, 15, 26-7; MacMaster, *Remembrance*, 12; Dona L. Cuttler, *The History of Dickerson, Mouth of Monacacy, Oakland Mills, and Sugarloaf Mountain* (Bowie: Heritage Books, Inc., 1999), 3.

²⁹Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 82; U.S. Census Records, 1900.

³⁰Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 84; *Montgomery County Sentinel*, February 3, 1903; U.S. Census Records, 1880, 1900.

³¹Ellis Roberson, interview with Eileen McGuckian, May 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 9

example was Sellman's boarding house, which opened at the tracks on the northwest side of the railroad bridge intersection, but no longer stands on Dickerson Road. In the 1890s Frederick Sellman retired from farming and moved from Mouth of Monocacy to Dickerson, where he kept shop and his wife Damaris ran the boarding house. Four rooms of the long, two-story building were rented to salesmen and tradesmen who arrived on the train, to personages associated with the quarry, and to telegraph operators and station masters who hadn't yet established their own homes. Also on the property was a livery stable, where salesmen could rent a rig to conduct local business. Sellman's operation even included a race track on which his and other horses competed. Harry C. Meem, Sr., boarded here when he first arrived as station agent and telegraph operator in 1891. In 1904, Meem married the Sellmans' daughter Nora and they built a home nearby (now 22175 Dickerson School Road). Frederick Sellman died the same year, after which his wife sold off parcels of their considerable land holdings until her death in 1912.³²

Since trains brought mail in and out of the community, postal service in Dickerson was located near the railroad stop. The Dickerson post office was established in 1871, with William H. Dickerson as postmaster. At first mail was sorted in and delivered from a box car on a siding, but soon a more substantial base was needed. The post office moved into Dickerson's store by 1891, then to Nicholson and Jones' general store in the late 1910s and 1920s, then back in 1932 to Dickerson's store, where it remained until 1960. Outgoing mail was prepared in sacks and placed on a hook, to be grabbed by passing trains or wheeled to the station in carts; a designated messenger delivered larger mail sacks from the post office to the train. All patrons picked up incoming mail at the post office until rural mail delivery began here in 1906; Luther F. Loy of Dickerson was the first RFD carrier in Montgomery County. In 1909, operations at canal-oriented Mouth of Monocacy closed permanently in favor of railroad-based Dickerson.³³

In an 1879 directory of Montgomery County, T.H.S. Boyd listed two merchants, two dairies, a physician, three millers, a postmaster, and 43 farmers, describing Dickerson as:

Thirty-six miles on the Metropolitan Branch, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Land well cleared and clay soil; valued at from thirty to fifty dollars per acre. Under good cultivation, and yielding 35 bushels of Wheat, 40 of Corn, 1000 pounds of Tobacco, and two tons of Hay to the acre. Churches and Schools in the immediate vicinity. Population, 100.³⁴

Two quarry operations (M: 12/24) in Dickerson, on opposite banks of the Little Monocacy River, opened around the turn of the 20th century. Damaris and Frederick Sellman sold land and rights to the smaller, northernmost quarry to the District of Columbia government in 1898-9. This quarry yielded stone for water purification and curbs or road ballast before closing in 1905.

³² Sugarloaf Regional Trails, *Inventory of Historical Sites in Western Montgomery and Frederick Counties, MD*, 1977, 145; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 31.

³³ Sugarloaf Trails, *Inventory*, 62; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 6, 13, 20, 60.

³⁴ T. H. S. Boyd, *The History of Montgomery County, Maryland, from its Earliest Settlement in 1650 to 1879* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1972), 127-8; other County settlements of similar size in 1879 were Boyds, Damascus, Germantown, Laytonsville, Montrose, Sandy Spring, and Spencerville.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 10

Standard Lime and Stone Co. of West Virginia and Baltimore purchased the larger, southernmost quarry and operated it from 1900 to 1927. Known as the "D.C. Stone Quarry," it yielded diabase stone popularly called "trap rock." Rocks were quarried, crushed or sorted for size, shipped to specific sites, and used by the District Government for water purification, curb stones, and railroad ballast. When 10 to 20 railroad cars were full, quarry workers contacted Brunswick station for a locomotive to pick up the cars.

Local men found jobs at the Dickerson quarries, often supplying one-third of the work force. At its peak, the large quarry employed 30 men six days a week, with separate day and night crews. Standard Lime and Stone built worker houses (since razed) on the hill behind where the Methodist Church is now located. Mercer Jones, the neighboring farmer who ran the granary and farm supply, supplemented his income by working as a night superintendent. Bene Hallman, from the black community on Mt. Ephraim Road, worked in the quarry. A local resident recalled that blasting from the quarry occasionally cracked windows and threw out rocks. County farm agent Otto W. Anderson purchased the larger quarry in the late 1930s. It became an attractive nuisance as a popular swimming hole for young adults from the 1950s through the 1980s.³⁵

Residential Construction

Merchants, land speculators, builders, and small manufacturers built up the town. The number of residential structures grew dramatically, resulting in a distinctive mixture of architectural styles, scales, and uses on varying lot sizes. Most of the homes fronting and near the railroad tracks (on Dickerson Road, Mt. Ephraim Road, and what are now Dickerson Church and Dickerson School Roads) and along Big Woods Road were constructed during this period.

Dickerson and the countryside experienced some of the real estate boom along the rail line. *The Washington Star* noted that the new line traversed "country admirably adapted for fine building sites.... We...have no doubt that the road will, ere many years, be lined with first class country residents for many miles out."³⁶

While most of the new suburbs were created down-county within closer commuting distance to the nation's capital, Dickerson and other rural towns experienced some growth as newcomers built homes near the depots. Few residents commuted from Dickerson to Washington, D.C., however, before World War II. Suburban commuters were more likely to locate in Takoma Park, Kensington, Garrett Park, Rockville, or Gaithersburg.

The arrival of the railroad opened a half century of substantial construction in Dickerson. Particularly between 1891 and 1910, handsome small and large residences arose in every direction from the center point where crossing roads met the tracks. Residential architectural expression in this period ranged from Victorian cottages to Colonial Revival Four Squares. The blight that decimated the American chestnut tree after 1900 proved a boon to contemporary building. Sawmill workers cut chestnut from dead or dying trees for new construction, and builders used the wood for framing and interior trim.³⁷

³⁵ Sugarloaf Trails, *Inventory*, 60-61; McDaniel, *Black Resources*, 143, Figure 30 shows black workers, including Hallman, at Dickerson quarry; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 42.

³⁶ Reported in *Sentinel*, March 23, 1866.

³⁷ The fungus accidentally introduced to the United States around 1900 eliminated the American chestnut as a commercial species; www.Wikipedia.org/AmericanChestnut.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 11

Infrastructure technology available in the new down-county suburban communities was slower to arrive in the upper county. Although the aquifer under Dickerson provided ample fresh well water, many homes constructed before (and after) 1920 used outhouses for another decade or more. A number of homeowners erected windmills to pump water from wells into the house. Telephone service to the area could be obtained soon after the turn of the 20th century, but electricity was not widely available until after World War I.

A review of census records during this period indicates that nearly all Dickerson residents were white. However, as was the practice of the time, some individuals from local black communities worked for middle-class white families full or part time and others lived in rooms in the homes of those families. For example, in 1900 Oliver Robertson, a laborer, lived on the property of William and Elizabeth Dickerson. Maria Fairfax lived with Frederick and Damaris Sellman to help with their varied business and household operations, and Sarah Dorsey assisted Lawrence Chiswell's family as cook and servant.³⁸

Several builders and architects were active during this expansion period; details are at the end of this section. One particularly active family was that of Lawrence Baker Nicholson. A successful Dickerson merchant, Nicholson purchased farmland and individual lots and either contracted with local builders or constructed houses on them for lease or sale. After Nicholson's death in 1904, his wife Elizabeth A. Nicholson and son Linwood Burton Nicholson continued to buy and sell properties on which to construct homes well into the 1920s. Identified with the Nicholsons are 17 Dickerson dwellings, most located on Big Woods and Dickerson Roads. *See the listing of Nicholson properties that follows this section.*³⁹

The Met line became a major route for transporting building materials. The B&O offered discounts for purchasing and shipping such materials, although to date no specific instances have been substantiated in Dickerson. Several residential buildings are believed to have been ordered from catalogs such as Sears, Roebuck & Co. Wood to construct the c1921 Creighton and Beulah Jones House, 22014 Dickerson Road, could have arrived by rail or by road, as front porch balustrades are stamped "Mt. Airy MD."⁴⁰

With all of this activity, Dickerson's road system expanded during this period. What is now Big Woods Road was surveyed in 1879 to provide access to mills on the Little Monocacy and to nearby routes. Local landowners built new homes along this road to accommodate railroad and quarry workers. In 1910 Mt. Ephraim Road, an antebellum route that intersected with Mouth of Monocacy, Baltimore Road, and Dickerson Road near the railroad tracks, was widened "to enable teams to turn without coming in contact with the railroad or other private property." William H. Dickerson's store had to be moved back to accommodate the widening.⁴¹

³⁸ U.S. Census, 1900.

³⁹ Montgomery County Land Records; Montgomery County Judgment Records, exhibit for Equity 2449, plat of Nicholson properties, 1910; Cuttler, *Dickerson*; Ida Lu Brown interview with Eileen McGuckian, August 2010.

⁴⁰ Harwood, *Impossible*, 283; Eileen McGuckian interview with Jack Price, owner of his grandparents' home at 22014 Dickerson Road, June 2010.

⁴¹ Road Commission Records of Montgomery County, JLB2/197.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 12

Extant illustrations of this expansion period of Dickerson history include five dwellings oriented to the railroad tracks: Christy Dickerson House (22170 Dickerson School Road, Gothic Revival cottage, 1879), Zachariah Cooley House (22161 Dickerson School Road, Gothic Revival, c1895), Meem House (22175 Dickerson School Road, Colonial Revival, 1904), Lloyd Jones House (22301 Mt. Ephraim Road, Colonial Revival, 1906), and Cooley/Nicholson House (22165 Big Woods Road, vernacular cottage, 1890s). A grouping of three dwellings on a side lane on high ground above Big Woods Road (with addresses of 22121, 22125, and 22129 Dickerson Road) characterize the modest cottages constructed c1900 as rentals for railroad and quarry workers. Dickerson's early commercial enterprises are represented by the William H. Dickerson Store and Post Office at 22230 Mt. Ephraim Road (1873), the B&O Railroad Station (1891), and Roberson's garage and filling station at 22201 Dickerson Road (c1910).

MATURE COMMUNITY: 1920-1959

Dickerson increased in size and population during the mid-20th century. The center of town, clustered around the railroad depot, expanded with the addition of dwellings in a variety of residential styles. There was an influx of people from southwestern Virginia in the 1920s, and local families were known to take in "welfare children" and orphans. Dairy and crop farming in the area was conducted by families that included Matthews, Dayhoff, Jones, White, and Stull. Some farmers divided off individual building lots for family members or new neighbors, but the largest recorded subdivision in Dickerson -- Robert T. Dayhoff's on Nicholson Farm Road, 1955 -- created just three lots.⁴² In the 1940s and '50s Cape Cod and ranch-style homes of brick, frame, and cinderblock appeared on new lots facing Big Woods, Dickerson, Nicholson Farm, Mt. Ephraim, and Dickerson School Roads. Dickerson's commercial center, however, grew little in this era. Chiswell and Nicholson's store burned down in 1932. Harry and Dorothy Dronenburg constructed Dickerson Market in 1946, but for shopping and commerce, residents drove to larger cities such as Frederick, Gaithersburg, or Rockville.

Although residents of the small town participated in regional activities, they also developed community institutions of their own. So far as is known, Dickerson did not consider self-government, although the neighboring towns of Poolesville and Barnesville did choose to incorporate.⁴³ Nonetheless, Dickerson residents set about improving their surroundings, providing educational opportunities, maintaining social interaction and common interests, and strengthening regional cooperation.

Changes in Transportation

By the 1920s, the railroad had become a less important transit service in Montgomery County. Early in the century, trolley lines extended from Washington along major roadways such as the Rockville Pike and Connecticut Avenue to compete with rail travel in the suburbs. In the upper county, the number of passenger trains from Point of Rocks into Washington declined as automobiles and trucks became more common. Everywhere, automobiles emerged as reliable transportation alternatives. Harry C. Meem is acknowledged to be the first Dickerson resident to own an automobile, having purchased a Ford Model T touring car in 1912. Nonetheless, accessibility to the railroad remained vital to rural areas. A symbol of Dickerson's connection to the outside world, the train continued to transport farm products, local residents and visitors, general freight, and building materials to and from the town through the middle of the 20th century.⁴⁴

⁴² Montgomery County Land Records, Plat No. 4536, Dayhoff's Subdivision, August 1955.

⁴³ Poolesville and Barnesville incorporated in 1867 and 1888 respectively.

⁴⁴ Harry C. Meem, Jr. (1978) and Ross Meem (2010) interviews with Eileen McGuckian.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 13

During this period, the B&O continued to upgrade the line. In efforts to accommodate heavier trains, higher speeds, and safety concerns, steel rails replaced iron, bridges were strengthened and rebuilt, and curves were straightened. The B&O finished double-tracking the remainder of the line (including sections east and west of Dickerson) in 1926-28. The railroad also provided special services, for which County residents and the B&O developed nicknames: the express train, mail train, milk train, and fish train.

Starting in the late 1920s, express trains provided service from Chicago, St. Louis, or Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. in the mornings and back in the evenings. Express trains such as the Shenandoah, the Diplomat, and the Capitol Limited sped by without stopping at Dickerson, but one that did stop was the daily Queen City express from Cincinnati. Diesel began to replace steam engines in the mid-1930s, and after World War II diesel power was supreme. Soon the B&O felt compelled to remind engineers that "Passenger trains will not exceed a speed of 70 mph between Washington and Point of Rocks."⁴⁵

For years, the B&O was willing to establish a flag stop virtually anywhere to accommodate passengers or cargo. For example, G. Leicester Thomas, Sr., arranged for a train to stop in Dickerson to serve the 250 acre property he'd purchased in 1925. Goldfish contained in repurposed milk cans were loaded onto a truck at Three Springs Fisheries hatchery (later renamed Lilypons Water Gardens) and brought to Dickerson. The engineer maneuvered his train, the truck backed up to the door of one of the lead baggage cars, and a worker handed the cans across. On other occasions, Gordon Strong, owner of Sugarloaf Mountain, drove over to meet guests at the depot, and it is suggested that he was singularly able to flag down a train in Dickerson.⁴⁶

The B&O added extra trains when it determined that a shipment would be too heavy for the scheduled engines to pull. One such long-distance train that stopped in Dickerson regularly was called Second 8, a collection of largely closed-sack mail and express packages assembled in Cumberland most weekday mornings to run as a supplement to No. 8, the eastbound Shenandoah. Whether mail, express, quarry stone, or shipments from Lilypons, Second 8 was frequently assigned larger engines to start over the Parrs Ridge/Barnesville hill with a heavier load.⁴⁷

The Depression decade brought further adjustments from the railroad and its clientele. By the 1930s, competition from trucks on good roads led the B&O to increase the number and speed of its freight trains. At the same time, the railroad decreased lower-paying daytime local passenger service. According to local lore, during the Depression when hobos rode the trains, they could jump off a front car, grab a sandwich at the store or a local house, and make it back to the last car of the same train. Although more educational opportunities were available up-county, in this era a number of local white teenagers still rode the rails to Rockville or Gaithersburg high schools. Meanwhile, black students could catch a school bus to the Colored High School in Rockville.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Cohen, B&O schedules in his collection; quoted from April 30, 1944 schedule.

⁴⁶ www.Lilypons.com; Ellis Roberson interview.

⁴⁷ emails, Harry Meem to Eileen McGuckian, June 2010.

⁴⁸ Harwood, *Impossible*, 291; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 3; interviews, Meem and Roberson.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 14

During World War II, local passenger service was consolidated. Three eastbound trains stopped each weekday morning; in the afternoon, two scheduled westbound trains stopped in Dickerson. The mail still arrived and departed by rail. Otherwise, Dickerson was a flag stop, and Sellman (M:12/14), serving Barnesville, became the closest major stop. In 1942, Dickerson residents were shocked by a disastrous accident west of the depot; a three-train pile-up of passenger and freight trains killed 14 people and injured 76. After the frenzy of the war years, the Met found itself slowly changing its nature from a high-speed passenger railroad to a fast freight line. Mercer Jones Co. shipped several carloads of wheat to the flour mill in Georgetown every day. By 1955, the number of passenger trains had declined to eleven each way daily.⁴⁹

Road Improvements

The path of the old public north-south route through Dickerson shifted in the early 1920s. Once the State Roads Commission (established in 1908) obtained solid funding, automobiles became more common, and bicyclists pushed for paved roads, this became Maryland Route 28. The road through Dickerson was paved, slightly re-routed to the east near the railroad underpass, and dubbed the “new State Pike.” According to family history, Beulah (Mrs. Samuel Creighton) Jones planned to open a tourist home so she talked the state into keeping the road in front of Creighton Place (22014 Dickerson Road). Some buildings south of the underpass found themselves closer to the west side of the new roadway. The Sears house on the east side at 22135 Dickerson Road gained frontage, and the old right-of-way became a local lane. With the road improvements, automobile tourists became a more familiar sight, as they traveled to local attractions such as Sugarloaf Mountain.⁵⁰

The new State Pike led to other changes on both sides of the railroad tracks. After the main road was realigned, the former Mt. Pleasant M. E. Church relocated in 1930 to a site on the abandoned roadway, with an address of 20341 Dickerson Church Road. Although the road between Dickerson and Frederick was paved in 1924, the local street that paralleled the tracks from the brick Hays House (20311 Dickerson Church Road) past the large homes facing the tracks (with addresses on Dickerson and Dickerson School Road) remained gravel through the 1950s. North of the underpass, the path of Dickerson Road past the Lawrence Jones House, Nicholson House, and Sellman Boarding House (22300, 22310, and 22210 Dickerson Road) was shifted to the west. Part of the old roadway was then renamed Nicholson Farm Road.⁵¹

About this time, the route now known as Big Woods Road became a more traveled thoroughfare. The road led south from Dickerson toward the community of Big Woods. By the 1920s, more dwellings had been constructed on both sides of the road by farmers and by local builders to serve as rental properties for quarry and railroad workers. Then known as Water Street, the road opened as far as the ice manufacturing operation at the edge of Little Monocacy River. Today the roadway connects Dickerson through the black

⁴⁹ Cohen, B&O employee schedule, 1944; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 14; Harwood, *Impossible*, 293-4; Pete Dilonardo, interview with Eileen McGuckian, May 2010.

⁵⁰ Ida Lu Brown, interview, July 2010; Land Records, deed 382/226 (1925).

⁵¹ 1908 USGS map, 1914 Soil Map, Maryland, Montgomery County sheet, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Maryland Geological Survey; 1952 USGS map; Kathy Dilonardo, interview with Eileen McGuckian, June 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 15

community of Big Woods and south to the oldest section of Route 109 (between Beallsville and Barnesville).⁵² Local residents recall the Big Woods Road name first used in the 1970s when County street signs were installed.

Dickerson Employment

In the first third of the 20th century, Dickerson residents continued traditional work at the grain mills, the quarries, the post office, at stores in town, and on family farms. Some residents held more than one job. Mercer Jones, for example, worked as a night superintendent at the quarry, operated a farm, and owned a granary and farm supply company. Nearby, Gordon and Louise Strong hired local workers to construct houses and a school, and to work on their two thousand acres on Sugarloaf Mountain. Becoming a local recreational destination, the number of annual visitors to Sugarloaf increased from 788 in 1926 to 31,000 in 1941.⁵³

Two Dickerson men active during this period were Zachariah Cooley and James Runkles. Cooley was a farmer who moved to Dickerson from Comus in 1896. He and his family lived in an imposing house (22161 Dickerson School Road) at the railroad tracks. In addition to operating a blacksmith shop in town, Cooley bought and sold land for residential development. He died in 1928. James Runkles came from Carroll or Frederick County ready to work hard and make his mark on Dickerson. He owned half a dozen farms in the area, held mortgages on other properties, operated a saw mill, a spoke factory, and an ice factory, and served on the Methodist Church building committee. He built a bungalow and a brick Colonial on Mt. Ephraim Road in the 1930s and died in the 1950s.⁵⁴

In the 1920s, Runkles invested in an ice factory on Little Monocacy River. Activity on this industrial site on Big Woods Road dates back to the 19th century. By the 1930s, Walter K. Matthews and his three sons had joined the business and the operation was known as Runkles & Matthews, "Manufacturers of Ice." The owners kept the ice cold in the ice house and, until refrigeration became more common, delivered the blocks by horse and wagon and later by truck to Dickerson, Comus, Poolesville, and Barnesville customers. The ruins of the factory and ice house can still be seen in the dense underbrush near the river banks. The caretaker's house, a 19th century log building that has been enlarged several times, still stands at 21810 Big Woods Road.⁵⁵

In the center of Dickerson, today 22301 Mt. Ephraim Road, Mercer Jones and his son Lloyd James Jones continued to operate their granary and milling business. The site was located next to the tracks, where Mt. Ephraim Road leaves its parallel path with the railroad and takes a sharp turn north toward Sugarloaf Mountain. A nearby rail siding allowed loading of corn and wheat, purchased from local farmers, through funnels onto special railroad cars and then to market. Later, Lloyd James Jones, Jr., added farm machinery sales and an International Harvester dealership. By mid-century, the business was less profitable and in 1966 closed its

⁵² This section of Maryland Route 109 opened in 1838; Land Records, BS9/117.

⁵³ H. Anne Lipp notes on interviews with Lloyd Jones and Leo Roberson, 1977; Melanie Choukas-Bradley, *Sugarloaf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 30-44.

⁵⁴ MHT inventory form, Zachariah Cooley House, 1978; Margaret Dayhoff Johnson and Doris Matthews Lewis, interviews with Eileen McGuckian, summer 2010; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 66, 78, 87, 90-1.

⁵⁵ Cutler, *Dickerson*, 65-6; Doris Matthews Lewis and Cory VanWerkhoven, interviews with Eileen McGuckian, 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 16

doors. The following year, Neutron Products purchased the property, razing the older buildings and enlarging a cinderblock warehouse for manufacturing, but retaining the Jones House for office use.⁵⁶

Community Institutions

During this maturation period, Dickerson residents created organizations for civic and social causes, in the process strengthening or creating a variety of community institutions. They continued to support town baseball teams, church and cultural activities, and other local interests. Dickerson residents and businesses committed to improving educational opportunities, social interaction, and regional cooperation. Automobiles, electricity, radios and later television enabled Dickerson to maintain a broader outlook. Local residents also organized regional service clubs such as Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary.

The establishment of state public schools for whites in 1860 and for blacks in 1872 expanded opportunities for local students. Dickerson area white students attended primary grades at Poole's Tract School on Mt. Ephraim Road (the ruins of which can be seen at its northwest intersection with Barnesville Road) from 1879 to 1913 or Monocacy School on the Dickerson Road (just south of Little Monocacy River) from 1864 until 1920, when the School Board abandoned both schools and consolidated classes into a new building in Dickerson. In addition, from 1918-21, Gordon Strong's private Halsted School at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain provided primary, junior high, and high school grades, plus training in skills such as blacksmithing.⁵⁷

Dickerson Elementary School opened for white students in 1921 on land purchased from Zachariah and Martha Cooley, prompting the naming of a road in its honor. The two-story brick building served pupils in grades one through seven. The volunteer Dickerson Community League supported the local public school and assisted local needy families. After the school burned in 1959, students took buses to Germantown until the new Monocacy Elementary School on Barnesville Road opened in 1960.⁵⁸

After eighth grade, Dickerson students in this era had to travel farther to obtain a high school education. From 1923 to 1932, however, secondary study was offered at the elementary school. The School Board discontinued "Dickerson High School" for lack of students, with only three graduates in 1926 and seven in 1929. Although Poolesville's small high school opened for white students in the 19th century and drew Dickerson teens, from the 1890s through the 1950s some local families opted for larger down-county schools that could be accessed by rail. Born in 1906, Harry Meem, Jr., son of the station agent, took the train to St. Mary's School in Rockville and then to Rockville High School.⁵⁹

Black students in the Dickerson area attended Sellman School. This primary school in Big Woods opened c1883 and consolidated with other black schools in Sugarland and Martinsburg in 1937. Rebuilt in 1939, the school was closed just before the start of desegregation. From 1927 to 1960, students going beyond eighth grade could take a school bus to Rockville Colored High School and

⁵⁶ Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 84; Jack Ransohoff, interviews with Eileen McGuckian, May and June, 2010.

⁵⁷ Sugarloaf Trails, *Inventory*, 63.

⁵⁸ Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 69-72.

⁵⁹ E. Guy Jewell, *From One Room to Open Space: A History of Montgomery County Schools from 1732 to 1965* (Rockville: Montgomery County Public Schools, 1976), 329; *Sentinel*, June 1926 and April 26, 1929; Ross Meem interview, June 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 17

later to Carver High School and Junior College. Desegregation of Poolesville High School proved one of the greatest challenges for County schools in the late 1950s, but is now the public school for all Dickerson area students.⁶⁰

While residents supported a variety of Christian denomination churches in the Medley District, the only church building erected within the bounds of Dickerson was Methodist. As early as 1783, Methodists heard Francis Asbury preach at Sugar Loaf Mountain Chapel (M: 10/70). A century later, they organized Mt. Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church South (M: 12/20), built a church on Mt. Ephraim Road, and opened a burying ground. This property is located 3/4 mile east of Dickerson. In 1930, the congregation opted to move into town, to a new edifice on land donated by Standard Lime and Stone Company with the understanding that no cemetery would be located there. Townspeople supported the church through strawberry festivals, cake sales, and oyster suppers. Dickerson families such as Roberson, Matthews, and Meem are long-time members. Over the years the church, known today as Dickerson Methodist Church, served numerous community and social functions. Some families still use the Mt. Pleasant burying ground, but now most Dickerson families bury loved ones in cemeteries in Beallsville or Barnesville.⁶¹

Nearby Monocacy Chapel, at present-day Beallsville (M: 17/1) was established as an Anglican chapel of ease for All Saints Parish in 1748, evolving into St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Poolesville a century later. Baptist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches were constructed in Barnesville. Area black residents attended Mount Zion in Big Woods (Methodist), Bell's Chapel in Mt. Ephraim (Methodist), Jerusalem Baptist Church in Poolesville, or Warren Methodist Church in Martinsburg.⁶²

Formerly in various locations throughout the town, the Dickerson Post Office finally found a permanent home after Dorothy and Harry Dronenburg constructed a small addition to their Dickerson Market specifically for the facility in 1959. Postal operations opened the following year. In a town with few commercial establishments, the post office has always served as an informal meeting place. Before street addresses were assigned, everyone came to the post office. Dickerson survived U.S. Postal Service closings of local facilities that affected most small communities in the late 20th century. Today, about one-fourth of in-town residents elect to pick up mail at their post office box (Dickerson 20842) rather than delivered at their home.⁶³

By this era, other services were needed for a growing population. The Dickerson Fire Prevention and Swimming Association organized in 1936 had limited success, yet a decade later towns in the upper western county responded to the need for greater safety. Returning World War II veterans in the Monocacy Lions Club organized the Upper Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department. Chartered in 1946 by the communities of Barnesville, Beallsville, Dawsonville, Dickerson, and Poolesville, the volunteers soon

⁶⁰ Nina Honemond Clarke, *History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland 1872-1961* (NY: Vantage Press, 1978), 48, 65, 73-4, 128-9, 190.

⁶¹ J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland*, Vol. 1, 1882 (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, reprinted 1968), 726; MIHP form Mt. Pleasant M.E. Church South (site) and Cemetery (2008); Dickerson United Methodist Church, 50th anniversary booklet, 1980. MacMaster, *Remembrance*, 69.

⁶² Nina Honemond Clarke, *History of the Nineteenth Century Black Churches in Maryland and Washington, D.C.* (NY: Vantage Press, 1983), 187-8, 229, 111-3, 225.

⁶³ Sugarloaf Trails, *Inventory*, 59; Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 6, 60.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 18

purchased a pumper truck and answered the first call. This local fire department immediately became a regional institution, even beyond the public safety arena. A Ladies Auxiliary raised money through bazaars, white elephant sales, lunches and dinners, and a fireman's carnival was the high point of the summer. The Junior Auxiliary Marching Unit organized in 1955 to represent the fire department at parades in Poolesville and elsewhere. Today volunteers and career personnel at Station 14 on Beallsville Road serve the largest response area in Montgomery County.⁶⁴

In the early 20th century, Dr. Alfred McGill Belt purchased a lot near the railroad tracks on which to build the Dickerson Library and Emergency Hospital to serve the up-county population. Before he could carry out his plans, he died in the 1918 influenza epidemic. Decades later, Montgomery County provided a bookmobile to bring library books to Dickerson residents on Saturdays. Activists such as Sally Dilonardo convinced the County to build the Western County Library, which opened in 1978 at Poolesville Jr/Sr High School. In 1991, the library moved to a large storefront in Poolesville Towne Center. This facility, since expanded in size and services, remains the closest library to Dickerson.⁶⁵

Like many rural communities in Montgomery County, Dickerson is known to have assembled a cornet band around 1900. Musicians from the Big Woods and Jerusalem black communities incorporated the Dickerson Concert Band in 1909. Its purpose was "to educate and train the members thereof in the proper use of musical instruments and to enable them to perform and play on the same in concert and harmony; and to play or discourse and make music on public occasions and at private entertainments, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever their services, performances and music may be desired or their inclinations may lead them...." Some decades later, Dickerson resident Walter K. Matthews organized the Poolesville Community Band, enlisting local musicians and his children to play Sousa marches and other popular music wherever they could. After Matthews bought Linden farm (M: 12/31) on Martinsburg Road in Dickerson in 1932, he built a large dairy barn and went into the milking business. He constructed a bandstand illuminated with electric lights and opened Linden Park to the public. Matthews hosted church picnics and concerts at Linden through the early 1950s.⁶⁶

Extant representatives of this maturation era in Dickerson history are community institutions such as Dickerson Methodist Church (20341 Dickerson Church Road, 1930) and Dickerson Elementary School site (22121 Dickerson School Road, 1921-59), and commercial and industrial properties such as Runkles and Matthews ice factory (site) and caretaker's house (21810 Big Woods Road, 19th century) and Dickerson Market and Post Office (22145 Dickerson Road, 1946/1959).

Characterizing the residential construction are Craftsman cottages and bungalows such as the Espinoza bungalow (22022 Dickerson Road, c1920), Gregg/Winslow cottage (22111 Dickerson Road, 1930s); Hays cottage (Dickerson Road, 1930s), bungalows at 22331 and 22341 Mt. Ephraim Road, and the Elizabeth Nicholson cottage (22404 Nicholson Farm Road, 1924). Continuing the Colonial Revival tradition in Dickerson are the pre-World War II Creighton Place (22014 Dickerson Road, c1921) and Runkles/Johnson House

⁶⁴ "History of Upper Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Department" from VFD archives; Montgomery County Historical Society exhibit file, 2003.

⁶⁵ Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 28; Kathy Dilonardo and Ida Lu Brown interviews, summer 2010.

⁶⁶ MacMaster, *Remembrance*, 245; Montgomery County Corporation Records EBP1/442; Doris Matthews Lewis interview, June 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 19

(22401 Mt. Ephraim Road, 1936) and post-war Cape Cods White/Daza House (22165 Dickerson School Road, c1943), and the Fisk House (22300 Mt. Ephraim Road, c1947). Representing the ranch style of the 1950s are cinderblock houses cut from the Dayhoff farm in a small subdivision (at 22329, 22333, and 22401 Nicholson Farm Road, 1950s) and the Matthews family brick and stone houses at 22001, 22005, and 22010 Dickerson Road, 1950s).

RECENT HISTORY: 1960-2010

The past half century brought change to Dickerson while reaffirming the town's historic character as a rural crossroads settlement located on the rail line. Area residents dealt with population growth and the decline of traditional farming by calling upon private and public resources to maintain the environment that attracted them to the Montgomery countryside. Dickerson's population continued to increase as new generations built upon lots divided from farms and as more city dwellers and suburbanites relocated to the rural up-county. Agricultural uses widened beyond dairy and grain farming to include creative means of making a living in the countryside. And, as they had in the earliest years of Dickerson's recorded history, local residents looked to regional approaches in addressing local issues and concerns.

The Railroad

Commuter usage on the Met never reached levels that the B&O hoped, but through the 1960s, commuters and local businesses regularly used the trains, siding tracks, and depot. Passenger use kept declining, however (only seven daily passenger trains each way in 1970), and the public sector stepped in. AMTRAK took over long-distance train service in 1971, and MARC (Maryland Area Regional Commuter) began commuter rail operations in 1974. CSX assumed ownership of the tracks and began to increase freight operations. Five years later, Montgomery County leased the Dickerson station from the B&O at \$1 per year and assumed maintenance. After the last on-site station agent left in March 1981, the County installed a time clock that automatically opened the station doors on weekday mornings. The building was boarded up in July 1982 after vandals set a fire that caused substantial damage. Designated on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation in 1983, Dickerson station was restored by the County with site beautification by local residents. The station was rededicated in a 1986 ceremony. At the request of an adjacent property owner, CSX closed the at-grade track crossing of Dickerson School and Mt. Ephraim Roads in the late 1990s. Currently the station is open infrequently for community events and meetings.⁶⁷

Commuter travel from Dickerson station expanded in the late 20th century, along with increased development and the population of Montgomery County's northwest corridor and beyond. Traffic problems on the highways and back roads initiated a resurgence of rail commuter travel, made more attractive after Metro subway service began in 1976. Nevertheless, every so often MARC has suggested closing the stops at Dickerson and Boyds. In 2010, Dickerson claimed more commuters than ever before. Stopping at Dickerson each weekday is a total of nine MARC trains; three going each way, with an extra train westward on Friday afternoons. Northern origination points for this line are Martinsburg, Brunswick, and Frederick.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Harwood, *Impossible*, 294-9; Edward Daniel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation fact sheet and correspondence, 1986; McGuckian conversations with Dickerson residents, summer 2010.

⁶⁸ Posted MARC schedules, June 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 20

Commercial and Industrial Uses

PEPCO's coal-fired generating plant opened on Route 28 adjacent to the town of Dickerson in 1958. Connected to the Met line by a spur track, the plant was the first major industrial intrusion into the rural environment since construction of the B&O railroad in the 19th century. PEPCO's activities, with its three smoke stacks, was the harbinger of unwanted change in the upper western county. Neutron Products' purchase of the former Mercer Jones granary property on Mt. Ephraim Road in 1967 signaled the arrival of a new type of industry in Dickerson. Founded by Jack Ransohoff, an enterprising chemical engineer steeped in the technology and economics of nuclear power plant fuel cycles, Neutron was one of many small companies seeking to find peaceful applications of nuclear energy in the 1950s after the Atomic Energy Act ended government monopoly. A decade later, Neutron was prepared to manufacture Cobalt 60, a radiation source, for medical and other purposes. Ransohoff bought half of the Jones land and moved into the former Jones warehouse. By the early 1980s, Neutron had tripled its plant size and purchased the rest of the property, including the large Colonial Revival Jones house at 22301 Mt. Ephraim Road. Neutron has experienced rocky relationships with its Dickerson neighbors. In the early 1980s, the Dickerson Community Association assisted the Maryland Department of the Environment to assess radiation on the property. Later the State prohibited Neutron from manufacturing radioactive materials and ordered the sale of assets to pay for clean-up operations. Today Neutron continues a slower rate of production and distribution operations at the Dickerson site.⁶⁹

Local Government

For most of its history, Montgomery County was dominated by rural interests and governed by public officials with agricultural and small town backgrounds. Growth around Washington, D.C., tilted Montgomery County's population southward in the first third of the 20th century, with more public officials elected and appointed from down-county.

The State established M-NCPPC in 1927 as a bi-county planning agency for the lower county. Planning in Montgomery County grew incrementally in the second third of the 20th century to include up-county regions. Dickerson resident Frederick Gutheim – internationally known writer, urban planner, historian, educator, preservationist, civic activist, and small farmer – served as a commissioner of the Upper Montgomery County Planning Council from 1950 to 1957.

As County government broadened its services, it also raised the levels of planning, control, and restriction. A comprehensive General Plan, which consolidated existing highway, parks, schools, and specific master plans, was adopted in 1957 for the 294-square-mile Regional District, covering the down-county. Five years later, a new General Plan, based on a concept of channeling future development known as “wedges and corridors,” extended M-NCPPC jurisdiction to the entire county with the exception of incorporated municipalities. Thus was the countryside, including Dickerson, brought into the full reaches of Montgomery County government.⁷⁰

Community

Besides the traditional civic organizations that have been in place for decades, citizen activism emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to continuous real and perceived threats to the upper western county's historic resources and rural way of life. When land belonging to historic Inverness and Linden farms was selected as a site for WSSC's Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, Dickerson banded with neighboring communities to convince the U.S. Environmental Protection Administration to withdraw its

⁶⁹ Cuttler, *Dickerson*, 84-5; *The Frederick Post*, August 9, 1978, and December 4, 1980; www.epa.gov (Neutron Products, Current Site Information); Ransohoff interviews, May and June 2010.

⁷⁰ MacMaster, *Remembrance*, 371-2.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 21

support. Local residents rallied to fight subsequent threats and created regional nonprofit organizations that would protect the rural community and encourage involvement in community and conservation issues. The major organizations are Sugarloaf Citizens Association (founded in 1973), Historic Medley District (1974), Sugarloaf Regional Trails (1974), Dickerson Community Association (1999), and Montgomery Countryside Alliance (2001).

County ordinances governing the Dickerson area responded to and complemented citizen advocacy. In 1980, the same year that Montgomery County purchased Linden Farm on Martinsburg Road from the Matthews family to open a sludge composting facility, the County Council established the Agricultural Reserve. This arc across the northern third of Montgomery County includes the town of Dickerson within its 93,000 acres. Also in 1980, the Council created the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation and preservation ordinance. The town of Dickerson is included as a historic district resource on the Locational Atlas, and Dickerson railroad station is designated a Historic Site on the Master Plan. The Master Plan protects historic resources found to be significant to Montgomery County.

The County Council approved and adopted the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan program in 1996. Meeting the criteria of being in an area where natural, agricultural, or historic features are predominant, with low traffic volume, outstanding natural features, rural vistas, and/or historic resources, and being narrow roads intended for predominantly local use, 66 County roads were designated by the plan. The list includes three roads that feed into the center of Dickerson. Big Woods, Mt. Ephraim, and Mouth of Monocacy from Route 28 to Mt. Ephraim were designated “rustic,” and Mouth of Monocacy Road west of Route 28 and east of Mt. Ephraim was listed as “exceptional.”⁷¹

Farming

In the past half century, farm acreage continued to decrease dramatically, as did the number of families making their living in dairy and grains. By 1974, there were only five dairy/grain farms near Dickerson and two grain farms. Soybeans were first grown around Dickerson at this time. Establishment of the Agricultural Reserve was a major accomplishment met with great expectations. Some farmers have opted to transfer development rights elsewhere in the County, but this was not always possible or sufficient to sustain a farming operation. Higher production costs and lower yields combine with long hours of hard work and a dearth of willing labor to make farming less sustainable than in times past.⁷²

Later decades of the 20th century witnessed long-time and new farm families creatively expanding the definition of agriculture. In the Dickerson area, agricultural uses include a therapeutic riding center, “pick-your-own” fruits and vegetables, Community Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) cooperatives, landscape gardening businesses, horse boarding and riding, alpaca and goat farms, and a winery, as well as traditional dairy and grain farms.

Within the town, most homeowners raise vegetables on home lots, and there are flower gardens throughout Dickerson. Landowners utilize organic farming practices. A few landowners protect their properties from development through conservation easements, which provide a significant tax break over and above desires to thwart development. The Montgomery County Agricultural Society,

⁷¹ The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, *Rustic Roads Approved and Adopted Functional Master Plan*, 1996.

⁷² Margaret Dayhoff Johnson, interview by Eileen McGuckian, June 2010.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 22

which sponsors year-round activities, 4-H Clubs, and the annual fairs in August, remains educational as well as social for the farming community.

Dickerson Today

The town of Dickerson is quietly thriving. It continues rural traditions in a settlement that is mostly surrounded by farms. Residents and their activities form part of a regional network of country lifestyles and community institutions that extend into the full northwestern quadrant of Montgomery County.

Dickerson residents span a variety of backgrounds, occupations, age groups, income levels, and interests. Many belong to families with long-time connections to Dickerson, operating family businesses and living in homes passed down from previous generations. Most own their properties, but a number of local and absentee landowners lease properties for residential or commercial use. Some newcomers are former city dwellers or suburbanites who moved to the country. Many commute to jobs in the cities or suburbs. A few property owners reside elsewhere and come to Dickerson on weekends.

Dickerson residents are concerned about current and continuing challenges to the countryside. They work to keep the local elementary school open, maintain the integrity and practical use of the Agricultural Reserve, battle encroachments such as “mega churches” or schemes to dump unwanted public services in the upper county, keep traffic under control, monitor activities at industrial sites, fret about “tear-downs” and “mansionization” that could change the character of the area, and bemoan the loss of historic buildings and green space.

Roads and rails still meet at the center of town, where residents and travelers gather at the market and the post office. The rolling countryside, capped by Sugarloaf Mountain, and productive farmland are never far away. Outlying farms are interconnected agricultural resources which add to the relevance of rustic roads, unimproved stream valleys, and undeveloped farm fields and forests in the area. Dickerson in 2010 presents a continuity of history, architecture, land use, people, and community.

DICKERSON AREA BUILDERS AND ARCHITECTS

Lawrence Baker Nicholson (1846-1904) and **Elizabeth Ann Cooley Nicholson** (1851-1926) moved from Comus to Dickerson in the decade after the railroad came through. Listed as a painter in the 1880 census, Mr. Nicholson opened a store c1882 on the south side of the tracks. Later the family lived in a large brick home on Mouth of Monocacy Road just west of its intersection with Dickerson Road; both buildings were destroyed by fire in the 1930s. Described in the newspaper as a “wealthy merchant,” he purchased properties to divide into building lots, erecting structures or contracting with builders to put up at least 15 houses on roads around the center of Dickerson. After he died intestate in 1904, Nicholson’s real estate holdings were divided among his widow and eight children. During the seven-year Equity proceeding, the court assembled a variety of information: deeds to and from Nicholson, payments on mortgage notes he held, receipts from tenants, private and public sales of real estate, trustees’ reports, and a 1910 survey showing ten building lots on Big Woods and Dickerson Roads.

After Lawrence’s death, Elizabeth Nicholson continued to purchase, build, and sell or rent properties, as did their son **Linwood Burton Nicholson** (1874-1954). Attributed to the Nicholsons are modest homes for railroad and quarry workers, comfortable Victorians, and large Colonial Revivals. Some were built for family members, some built on speculation, and others for rentals.⁷³

⁷³ Cuttler, *Dickerson*; U.S. Census Records, 1880, 1900, 1920; Ida Lu Brown interview, July 2010; Montgomery County Judgment Records, Plat from Equity 2449, 1910.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 23

Nicholson houses (before 1904 Lawrence Baker; 1904-26 Elizabeth A.; 1927- Linwood Burton)

Nicholson-Chiswell-Jones Store, c1882 (destroyed by fire 1932)
Lawrence Jones House, 22300 Dickerson Road, c1895 (Colonial Revival with Lincrusta)
Zachariah Cooley House, 22161 Dickerson Church Road, c1895 (Gothic Revival)
Padgett-Morningstar House, 21930 Big Woods Road, c1897 (Gothic Revival)
Carlisle-Roberson House, 22001 Big Woods Road, c1899 (Gothic Revival)
Rhodes House, 21915 Big Woods Road, before 1900 (Gothic Revival)
Worker Houses, 22121-25-29 Dickerson Road, before 1900 (21 vernacular cottage, 25 and 29 Gothic Revival)
Poole house, 22010 Big Woods Road, c1900 (vernacular cottage)
Stottlemeyer House, 22022 Big Woods Road, c1900 (vernacular cottage)
Oberdorfer House, 22030 Big Woods Rd, c1900 (vernacular cottage)
Sears House, 22135 Dickerson Road, 1901 (Queen Anne with Gothic Revival features)
Hughes House, 22025 Dickerson Rd, c1903 (Gothic Revival)
Wolfe-Jones House, 22101 Dickerson Road, 1904 (Colonial Revival, cross gable)
Jones/Gott House, 22400 Nicholson Farm Rd, c1919 (Colonial Revival)
Elizabeth Nicholson House, 22404 Nicholson Farm Rd, 1924 (Craftsman cottage)
Out of survey area: Lawrence Beall Jones House, 21811 Dickerson Road, c1925 (Colonial Revival)

Charles Byron Sellman (1881-1947) was a carpenter and housewright based in Poolesville. He built a number of Colonial Revival homes in Dickerson in the first decade of the 20th century. Large in scale and four square in plan, some have stylistic touches such as a flared roof or a widow's walk. The following homes are framed and trimmed in chestnut wood, available after the blight.⁷⁴

Meem House, 22175 Dickerson School Road, 1904 (Colonial Revival with widow's walk)
Bussard/Brown House, 22134 Dickerson Road, 1905 (Colonial Revival)
Howard Roberson/Mulgrew House, 22138 Dickerson Road, 1907 (Colonial Revival)
(Presumed) Lloyd James Jones, Sr. House, 22301 Mt. Ephraim Road, 1906
(Colonial Revival with widow's walk)

E. Francis Baldwin (1837–1916), architect of the B&O Railroad from 1872 through the 1890s, designed structures on the Metropolitan Branch line, including the depot in Dickerson. Dickerson's station house was constructed in 1891, sporting a trackside central bay with a unique and practical V-shaped projection. It is likely that Baldwin also designed Dickerson's freight house and interlocking tower as well. Of Baldwin's more than 500 known projects, one-fifth were railroad stations. A prolific Baltimore architect, he also designed churches, public and college buildings, banks, stores, industrial buildings, clubs, and private residences.⁷⁵

Bene Hallman (b. before 1870), of the black community of Mt. Ephraim, is likely to have worked in Dickerson with any of the white builders listed above. A skilled jack of all trades, he was a traditional housewright as well as a stonecutter at Dickerson quarry, farm laborer, broommaker, and probably also a worker at the sawmill near Sugarloaf Mountain. A log house on Sugarloaf which he built for Gordon Strong in the early 1900s still stands.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ FN: Cuttler, *Dickerson*; U.S. Census 1900.

⁷⁵ Avery, *Baldwin*.

⁷⁶ McDaniel, *Black Resources*, 141-144.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12-21

Name

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 24

William T. Hilton (1829-1909) a carpenter, master builder, and undertaker, did all of his work within a few miles radius of his Barnesville home. The brick house known as Mt. Ephraim (1868), Sugar Loaf Mountain Chapel (1861), and the original Mt. Pleasant M.E. Church, South (1888) near Dickerson are examples of his skills.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ M-NCPPC, *Circling Historic Landscapes* (Silver Spring: M-NCPPC and Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1980), The Builder Designer Trail.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. **M: 12/21**

See Continuation Sheet 9.1

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 200.5 acres

Acreage of historical setting

Quadrangle name Poolesvln Quad

Quadrangle scale: 1: 24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Dickerson Historic District survey area is roughly bounded by the Little Monocacy River on the east and south, Mouth of Monocacy Road on the north, and the rear lines of properties on Dickerson Road and Dickerson Church Road to the west. An unincorporated town, Dickerson is surrounded by farmland.

See map attached.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title **Eileen S. McGuckian, Historian**

organization **M-MNPPC-MC, Historic Preservation Section**

date **September 2010**

street & number **8787 Georgia Avenue**

telephone **301-563-3400**

city or town **Silver Spring**

state **MD 20910**

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M: 12/21

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Avery, Carlos P., *E. Francis Baldwin, Architect*. Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2003.

Cavicchi, Clare Lise [Kelly], *Places From the Past*. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2001, 178.

Cuttler, Dona L., *The History of Dickerson, Mouth of Monacacy [sic], Oakland Mills, and Sugarloaf Mountain [MD]*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1999.

Cuttler, Dona L., Compiler, *Paperclips: Selected Clippings from the Montgomery Sentinel (MD) 1900-1950, Vols. I and II*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2002.

Harwood, Herbert H., Jr. *Impossible Challenge: The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Maryland*. Baltimore: Barnard, Roberts and Company, 1979, Chapter 12 "Washington Finally Gets West: The Metropolitan Branch," 265-299.

Hutchinson, William E., in *Gaithersburg: The Heart of Montgomery County*. Gaithersburg: City of Gaithersburg, 1978, Chapter 1 "Gaithersburg and the Railroad," 11-36.

Land, Corporation, Judgment, and Roads Commission Records of Montgomery County, Maryland.

MacMaster, Richard K. and Hiebert, Ray Eldon, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland*. Rockville: Montgomery County Government and Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976.

Maps: Land Patents, Montgomery County Historical Society, 1995; Survey of roads June 1791 (MCHS plat F-195); Dennis Griffith, *Maryland 1794*; Julius Ducatel, *A New Map of Maryland and Delaware (in Annual Report of the Geologist of Maryland, 1837)*; *Metropolitan Railroad 1855*; Martenet & Bond, *Map of Montgomery County 1865*; G.Hopkins, *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington Including the County of Montgomery, Maryland, 1879*; USGS maps 1908 and 1952; US Dept. of Agriculture and MD Geological Survey, *Soil Map, Maryland, 1914*; State Roads Commission 1937 and 1950.

Maryland Historical Trust, MHT inventory forms for Dickerson buildings. Research by Mark Walston, architectural descriptions by Candy Reed with ACHS summary forms for Sugarloaf Regional Trails, Inc., 1978-9.

McDaniel, George W., *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County, Maryland*. Sugarloaf Regional Trails, Inc., 1979.

McGuckian, Eileen, interviews May-August 2010 with Pete and Kathy Dilonardo, Margaret Dayhoff Johnson, Jack Ransohoff, Ellis Roberson, Ida Lu Brown, Joey Caywood, Bob Cohen, Sidney Earle, Jr., Robert Kapsch, John King, Erik Ledbetter, Doris Matthews Lewis, Harry Meem, Ross Meem, and Jack Price.

The Department of Church and Country Life of the Board of Home Missions of The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *A Rural Survey in Maryland*. New York City, 1912.

Sugarloaf Regional Trails, *Inventory of Historical Sites in Western Montgomery and Frederick Counties, MD, Volumes I and II*, Sugarloaf Regional Trails, Inc., 1977.

U.S. Census Records, 1860-1930.