

## ABNER CLOUD HOUSE

Located between Canal Road and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in Hixson, D.C., NW. Near "Fletcher's Mill." This is near the intersection of Reservoir Road and Canal Road.

One of the most outstanding of the historic structures along the right-of-way of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, title to which was vested in the National Park Service in December 1957. The site is of historical significance because it stands near the former Little Falls Skirting Mill (forerunner of the C & O Canal), which was one of the improvements to facilitate travel made by the Potomack Company of which George Washington was president. The site is also of significance because the Abner Cloud House is the oldest existing structure along the C & O Canal.

The site of the Abner Cloud House was included in an original patent of land dating back to 1689 and recorded in the Hall of Records at Annapolis, Maryland. On 10 December 1794, title to the land was vested in John Thelkeld, a prominent landholder of Georgetown, who deeded it to Jesse Bayly (also known as "Bailey"). Bayly had married a daughter of Amos Cloud, who is reported to have owned property on what is now Foxhall (formerly Ridge) Road. Amos Cloud is believed to have also come here from Chester County, Pennsylvania, with his father Abner Cloud, Sr., who, in addition to owning land in the then Montgomery County, Maryland, also owned property nearby Virginia, where he is listed on the 1790 census. The whereabouts of Abner Cloud, Sr., and of Amos Cloud is rather obscure thereafter. The land records indicate, however, that Jesse Bayly deeded the land to his other-in-law Abner Cloud, Jr, on 19 October 1795. This was the site of the latter's home and mill. In 1798 Abner Cloud, Jr., married Suzanne Emmett Smallwood of Virginia. The Clouds had two daughters, Artemesia and Amsa. From 1801, when he built the house and mill that bears his name, until his death in 1812, Abner Cloud resided in the structure with his family. His widow, Suzanne, continued to live in the house until 1852. During the period 1801 to 1812, Abner Cloud used the basement of the house which now fronts on the C & O Canal at the south elevation for storage of the flour he milled and for grain.

When the property was sold to John F. Brizwell in 1852, he continued to live at the site and to operate the mill. Sometime in the 1860's, the property was reported to be owned by William A. Star, a Georgetown miller, who continued to operate the mill as the Cloud-Star Mill. In 1869, it is reported that D L Shoemaker, member of a prominent Georgetown family, owned the property and milled the locally popular Weaver brand of flour. Ownership is sketchy thereafter for almost 75 years and there is disagreement among local residents concerning ownership of the house and mill. A James C Copperthite probably resided here and was owner in 1909. In 1957, when the property was condemned by the U S Government, Mrs Helen Keimon occupied the house, which by then was badly run down.

There have been some structural changes in the original building; about 90 percent of the original structure still exists. Existing architectural evidence shows an original door off the first floor of the south elevation near the east end of the wall. It is possible that the door may have led to an outer stairway to the rear to provide easy access to the mill. Later, a porch of undetermined date was added to the structure. By 1962 vandalism and the deleterious effects of the weather caused the collapse of the porch on the west, north and east elevations and was removed.