

A walking tour of
HISTORIC
Vienna



On The Nanticoke

Viating back to the 17th century, Vienna is one of Maryland's older settlements. Predating the colonial era, the area lies in the heartland of Nanticoke Indian territory. Capt. John Smith described this region and his encounters with its native inhabitants in the 1624 journal detailing his 1608 expedition of the Chesapeake Bay. When Dorchester County was formed in 1669, an established Indian settlement already existed just north of here and was home to the Nanticoke chiefs. Local Indian history places the village's traditional feast grounds at Vienna. The community of Vienna was formally founded by decree of the Colonial Assembly in 1706 in an area already known as "Emperor's Landing" for its association with the Nanticoke Indians. A ferry operated here for many years -- before the 1828 construction of a wooden bridge, and again after 1860, until a newer bridge was constructed in 1931.

During the American Revolution (1775-1783), Vienna served as an important source of goods and supplies for the Continental Army. British vessels raided the town at least five times, taking or destroying ships and provisions. The only Revolutionary military casualty on Dorchester soil, Levin Dorsey, died on these shores, hit by a shot fired from a British vessel.

The British again sailed up the Nanticoke during the War of 1812, firing several volleys at the town, but the village was spared any significant damage. The Vienna Company of the local militia was organized during this time to defend against the threat of invasion. Remnants of a low stone wall made from ships' ballast can still be seen near the Customs House, a reminder of the days when the Port of Vienna was important enough to draw British attention during this war.

During the War Between the States, Maryland's governor was Thomas Holiday Hicks, who is credited with preventing the state from seceding from the Union. He

resided in Vienna from 1829 to 1840 in a house still standing along Water Street.

Much of Vienna's early architecture survives. Although many homes are featured in this brochure, there are numerous buildings throughout the village that visitors will enjoy as they stroll along the quiet streets. Thanks to a determined effort by a town proud of its heritage, the historic quality of Vienna's homes is being restored and preserved. The community looks ahead to the opportunity to share its heritage as they welcome the future.

Take a stroll along Vienna's riverwalk where, on June 2, 2007, Vienna on the Nanticoke welcomed the Captain John Smith replica shallop at our waterfront park. This voyage was in commemoration of his epic 1500 - mile Chesapeake adventure in 1608. The celebration was part of the inauguration of the Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail – America's first all-water National Historic Trail. This water route will allow modern-day explorers to experience the Chesapeake while learning about Native American history, early English and colonial settlements, and the Chesapeake's abundant natural resources.



1. Vienna Heritage Museum, 303 Race Street, c. 1923; Town of Vienna

Regular Hours. Also open by appointment.
Originally opened in 1923 by the Hurst family as a service station with soda fountain. This building has also served as a mail order bookstore, a hide tanning operation and, currently, as a museum owned by the Town of Vienna and operated by the Vienna Heritage Foundation. Granville Hurst closed his service station for four years in 1941 and donated all his tires to the war effort; he reopened it again after V-J Day. The museum was opened in 2001 when the Martinek family closed their operation – the last remaining mother-of-pearl button factory in the United States – and donated their machinery to the Vienna Heritage Foundation. In addition to the button-making machinery, the museum's collection contains many items from the area including a cannonball, Victorian clothing, an extensive collection of Native American artifacts, as well as documents and memorabilia relating to Vienna.



1.

2a, 2b, 2c., 103; 101; 100 Middle Street c. 1900; Private

These three saltbox structures were built around 1900 as a business venture by James Higgins, a prominent Vienna businessman who owned several town properties. Their design remains relatively unchanged today. The homes have been dubbed "The Three Sisters" by a present-day Vienna resident.



2.

3. Ferry Toll House, Race Street (between Middle and Water streets), c. 1860; Town of Vienna

This one-room building was originally located near the present-day boat ramp at the foot of Race Street. It served as the base of operation and collection of fares for ferry service that was established by decree of the Colonial Assembly in 1756. A bridge built in 1828 replaced the ferry and was used for a period of 32 years, at which time ferry service was reinstated. It is believed that this building was used until 1931, when the first Route 50 bridge replaced the ferry service.

4. Dr. S. S. Ewell House, 3 Water Street c. late 1700s; c. early to mid 1800s; Private

According to early residents, the middle 1-1/2 story section containing an enclosed staircase and casement windows dates to the late 1700s. The front, two-story portion was built by Dr. S. S. Ewell in the early to mid 1800s. One of several physicians in Vienna, Dr. Ewell had his practice in this house for approximately

50 years. The chestnut beams and floor joists in the house are mortise and tenon; four of the original five fireplaces remain. During restoration work in 2002, a small cannonball (grape shot) was unearthed beneath the floor in the front portion of the house; another indication the center section may be older than the front.



5.



3.



4.

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6.

5. 105 Water Street c. 1859; Private

This house is of similar interior design as The Wright House next door (107 Water). It is shown to have existed when the 1877 *Illustrated Almanac of Dorchester County* was published. Over a five-year period, 1997–2002, a complete renovation was undertaken including the clapboard exterior, plaster walls, wood floors, front porch and the two-story column w/bay windows.

6. Capt. C. E. Wright House 107 Water Street

c. 1835-1850; Private
This residence is thought to have been built by ship's carpenters for Clarence E. Wright, a seagoing captain. The home features many ship's fittings and hardware incorporated into its design.



7.

7. 109 Water Street c. 1860-1870; Private

The interior design remains much the same as when it was built, with its original woodwork, floors and plaster. Before the 1920s, a widow's walk was part of the roof structure but was claimed by a fire that destroyed the roofs of many homes along Water Street.

8. Tavern House, 111 Water Street c. mid-late 1700s; Private

This building has been both a tavern and a home. Since the 1700s, it has offered lodging for those traveling by foot, horse, carriage, and auto. Innkeepers have included Alexander Douglas and his wife, Hanna, who operated a tavern and the ferry around 1793. Douglas was the first postmaster of Dorchester County's earliest post office. He and his partner, John Smoot, built the first bridge across the Nanticoke. The bridge was eventually removed because sailing ships had trouble negotiating the draw. The carefully restored house is of post and beam construction with six fireplaces, original woodwork and colors. As a Bed & Breakfast, the Tavern House continues to serve travelers and vacationers.



8.



9.

9. 113 Water Street, c. 1810-1850; Private

This house has been sensitively restored by its current owners, who carefully blended modern conveniences with historic features such as pegged rafters and cornice braces, mortised studs and sills, dove-tailed floor joists, and original fireplaces. The house was originally a main section with a separate kitchen containing a large cooking fireplace. Where possible, many of the old materials have been reused in other places throughout the home.

10. 115 Water Street, c. early 1800s; Private

This tastefully modernized house was built in the early 1800s and was sold in 1802 for "7 slaves, 6 horses, 1 yoke of oxen, 17 cattle, 1 head of sheep, 70 bales of cleaned wheat and 1 crop of corn". The present kitchen contains beaded, hand-hewn beams and a large cooking fireplace. Another feature, discovered during restoration, Roman numerals were carved by the builder into the trusses where they join together with wooden pegs.

11. 117 Water Street, 1855; Private

This house, thought to be of the late federal period, retains many of its original features, including random width pine flooring, old mantled fireplaces, and plain block interior wood trim.

12. 119 Water Street, c. 1800; Private

The original structure was a single story bungalow measuring about 30' across and 20' deep with a fireplace at each end. The wall timbers, sills and ceiling joists are all hand hewn with mortise and tenon joinery. Evidence uncovered during a 2004 renovation suggests building methods and construction techniques used by shipbuilders of that era. The front two upstairs rooms were added sometime around 1920; floorboards in those rooms appear to have been part of the original roof – some being 24" wide. The timing of this work coincides with a fire that damaged many homes along Water Street. In approximately 1940, the house was again expanded by a two-story addition toward the back. This addition left the front roofline intact, but changed the back roofline to give the house a classic saltbox appearance.

13. Thomas Holiday Hicks House

121 Water Street, c. 1828; 1840; Private

The house features original locks and latches, high fireplace mantles, and retains some of its original, beaded siding. Prior to being elected Maryland's Civil War Governor, Thomas Holiday Hicks moved here upon his marriage to the widow who owned it. She had inherited it from her first husband, who had built it with his inheritance from his first wife. Governor Hicks is credited with keeping Maryland from seceding from the Union although there was much local sympathy for the South.

14a, 14b, 14c.

Customs House / Warehouse / Stone Ballast Wall Church & Water streets, c. 1768; Town of Vienna

14a. The original three-level structure was erected after Vienna became the lower shore custom district about 1768. It stands at the edge of a slope leading down to the shore of the Nanticoke River upon which wharves and warehouses were built to accommodate international shipping and commerce. The Customs House was closed in about 1865 when the Customs Collector was moved to Crisfield.

14b. At the river's edge, behind and to the left of the Customs House, remains one such warehouse used for docking of schooners, and in late 1800s, for steamships.

14c. To the right of the Customs House can be seen remnants of a retaining wall made of stone from ships' ballast.

**15. The Brick House
100 Church Street, c. late 1700s; 1861; Private**

The original section of this house, believed to date from the late 1700s, is now in the rear. In 1861, a wealthy merchant and sea captain, James K. Lewis, built the brick portion in Victorian style, making it the first brick home in Vienna. The spacious rooms feature 12-foot ceilings; the basement shows mortised and tenon joists as well as brick floors.

22.

**16. Methodist Episcopal Cemetery and Church (site)
Church Street (between Water and Middle sts.); Private**

Three Methodist Episcopal churches have been built on this site dating back to the early 1880s. These were often referred to as The Meeting House and each structure sat facing the river. Grave markers in the adjacent cemetery date from the 1850s and display many old, local names. Some descendants of these old families still reside in Vienna.

17. 112 Church Street, c. 1800; Private

One of Vienna's older homes, its recent restoration retained much of the original architecture. Random width pine floors, closed stairway, and exposed hand hewn beams attest to the structure's age.

18. 114 Church Street, c. 1885; Private

This structure was built by a family named Conway. It was later owned by the sister of Dr. George Bunting, founder of the Noxema Company; the residence remained in this family from 1920-1996.

19. The Meadow, 204 Middle Street, c. 1861; Private

Built in 1861, this house stayed in the same family until 1964. Its name, "The Meadow" was chosen by the current owner from three names found in the old deed (The Icehouse, Calmus Patch, The Meadow). The 3-story structure has oak stairways and woodwork, which remain in original, natural-finished condition. There are two original stained glass windows. The barn at the rear of the house is original and was first used to stable horses.

20. Hughes Cemetery, Middle Street, Private

Headstones in this African American cemetery date from 1859 to 1918. In the 1877 *Illustrated Almanac of Dorchester County*, the cemetery's owner was listed as "the Hughes family heirs". James Alfred Hughes (b. 1849; d. 1913) is buried here. He was a Vienna blacksmith and property owner prior to 1882, as noted in a poem written by a Vienna resident around 1900.

21. 201 Market Street, c. late 1700s; Private (not pictured)

Among the oldest buildings in Vienna, this house is thought to have been built in the late 18th century. It features chestnut ceiling beams in the kitchen, wide pine flooring, hand-hewn sills, and mantled fireplaces. Most of the carpentry is mortise and tenon.

22. 127 Market Street, c. 1870; Private (not pictured)

This Italianate dwelling was built about 1870 by Thomas Higgins, a prominent Vienna merchant. The house is three bays long and boasts a two-story central bay that protrudes to suggest a tower. Above the central window of the second floor is a hood, also suggestive of the Italianate style. The elaborate cornice has carved brackets with turned drop-finials.

23. Vienna Methodist Church (Methodist Protestant Church), 206 Church Street, 1849; 1882; 1901; Private

This structure is the third Methodist Protestant Church building to stand at this site. The first was built in 1849, a second in 1882, the third (and present church) in 1901. In 1941 the Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Protestant churches combined and officially became known as the United Methodist Church in 1968.

24. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 203 Church Street 1709 (site); 1892; Private

Originally known as the Chapel of Ease and built in 1709, the present St. Paul's was one of the earliest congregations in Dorchester County. The original building's foundation is located in the Protestant Episcopal Cemetery on Chapel of Ease Road. A church was rebuilt at its present location in 1892.

25. Percy's Purchase, 125 Middle Street c. 1790; Private

One of Vienna's oldest structures. Although the building has seen many changes, much of the early carpentry is still evident, including exposed ceiling beams and working fireplaces with beautiful mantles.

26. 120 Middle Street, Private

J.T. Webb, a member of a prominent Dorchester County family, owned the house in 1877, when the *Illustrated Atlas of Dorchester County* was published. It sits on the largest single lot in Vienna. This house has a hyphen and kitchen on line with the street and main part of the house. This home, like the house across at 125 Middle, has two exterior brick chimneys on its gable ends and another on the outside of the kitchen.



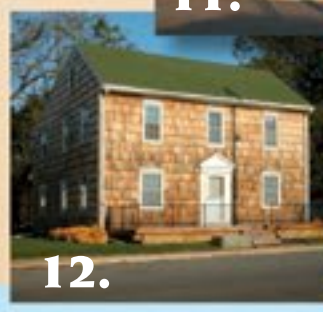
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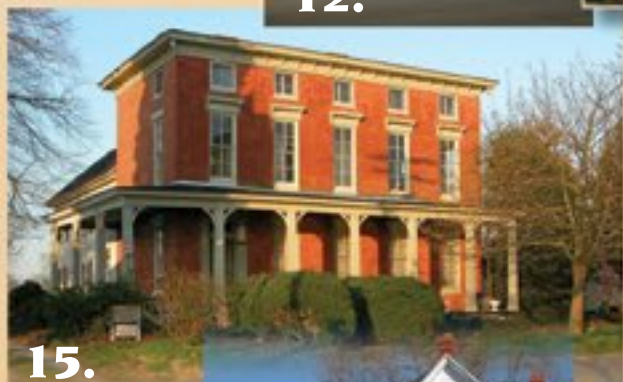
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For more information about Vienna history, log onto Vienna's website at viennamd.org, Heritage Area website at tourchesapeakecountry.com or phone 410-228-1000.

VIENNA'S ANNUAL EVENTS

- SHAD FESTIVAL – last Saturday in April
- HOLIDAY HOME TOUR AND LUMINARIA EVENING – Saturday before Christmas Eve (Admission for Home Tours)
- AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE DAY – first Saturday in November

VIENNA BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

- Vienna Heritage Museum
- Millie's Roadhouse (restaurant)
- Clean Spot Coin Laundry
- Tavern House – B&B
- Vienna Food Mart – gas station and convenience store (ATM)
- Bunky's Garage
- Megan's Hair Design
- Hebron Bank
- Public boat ramp (Race Street at river)
- Public playground and tennis courts (Middle St. near Market St.)
- Antique shopping available

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