

Ardwick (69-023)

Ardwick was established in the late nineteenth century as a railroad suburb. The community is located in northwestern Prince George's County approximately six miles east of Washington, D.C.. The community is surrounded by modern residential development and is bounded by the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Metrorail line, and Routes 450 and 50. Although its establishment in 1889 and subsequent development was greatly influenced by the construction of the nearby Baltimore and Pennsylvania Railroad, Ardwick's significance as an African-American community was initiated by William Stanton Wormley, who first used the site as a retreat in the early twentieth century.¹

Until the late nineteenth century, the area comprising the present-day area of Ardwick was farmland. Both Martenet's map of 1861 and the Hopkins map of 1878 document limited development in the area that would become Ardwick. A few farms are located around the perimeter of the community, but none within the community boundaries.² Ardwick was initially platted in 1889 as a railroad suburb by Thomas Mitchell, a Washington, D.C., real estate broker.³ *The Washington Post* reported that:

Ardwick is a brand new town on the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, near Hyattsville. It is beautifully located...and the streets of the little city are laid out in the most convenient and symmetrical form....Already a number of cottages have been erected and occupied, and Ardwick will shortly become an important station on the road, and though just over the Maryland line, is practically a suburb of the National Capital.⁴

The original plat was abandoned soon after platting, and the area remained rural, despite the location near the Ardwick railroad station. The historically African-American portion of the larger Ardwick community developed along Ardwick-Ardmore Road, between Routes 450 and 410. In 1897, Hugh Browne constructed a modest wood-frame dwelling on five acres of land. William Stanton Wormley, a prominent African-American educator and artist from Washington, D.C., purchased the house and surrounding acreage in 1903. Wormley was the grandson of businessman James Wormley, who in 1871 established the Wormley Hotel, located at 15th and H Streets in Washington, D.C.⁵

The Wormley House in Ardwick was used as a country retreat and social center for Wormley and his family, friends, and colleagues who took advantage of the tennis court and trapshooting range constructed on the property by Wormley. The range served as a meeting place for the Trap Shooting Club known as WorTayCarBro, named after the families of the founding members Wormley, Taylor, Carson, and Brooks.⁶ Many prominent members of the African-American community in Washington, D.C. spent time at the Wormley property.⁷

¹ Susan G. Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey, 1996* (Upper Marlboro, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1996), 40.

² Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861); G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

³ Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, Plat Book BB 5: 96; "For Sale or Exchange," *The Washington Post*, 13 June 1884.

⁴ "Ardwick on a Boom," *The Washington Post*, 17 July 1889.

⁵ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 40-41.

⁶ Susan G. Pearl, "Wormley House (PG: 69-023-17)," Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form (March 1981), 7:1.

⁷ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 40-41.

Before his death in 1919, Wormley began selling parcels of his land to friends and family in 1911. They constructed modest dwellings of their own, creating a small community of professional African-Americans who commuted to Washington, D.C. Many of these homeowners were affiliated with the black public school system in Washington, D.C. and settled in the area between 1911 and 1945. Gradually the weekend retreat at Ardwick evolved into a community mostly made up of black professionals who permanently resided there.⁸

Later in the twentieth century, the community has been greatly affected by the expansion of nearby transportation routes, including local highways and the Metrorail line. This expansion, combined with new multifamily housing north of Ardwick-Ardmore Road, resulted in the demolition of several dwellings associated with the African-American community. New suburban development surrounding the historic community has also impacted the physical landscape of Ardwick.

There are no Historic Sites in Ardwick and only one Historic Resource:

- PG: 69-023-17, Wormley House, 7533 Ardwick-Ardmore Road

Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Ardwick was conducted in December 2007. The survey area consists of approximately 16 primary resources. The small historic community is clustered on both sides of Ardwick-Ardmore Road, between Buchanan Street on the west and Route 410 on the east. The community contains a variety of buildings constructed between the 1890s and 2000, the vast majority constructed in the 1950s. Buildings in Ardwick reflect a variety of vernacular and popular styles including the Colonial Revival and the Modern Movement. Building forms include rectangular-shaped plans, Cape Cods, Bungalow, and Ranch houses. The topography of the neighborhood is flat and houses have varying set backs from the road. The community is exclusively residential. Commercial, religious, and educational buildings are located outside of the survey area, primarily along Annapolis Road (MD Route 450).

Historic District Evaluation

Ardwick represents several Prince George's County Heritage Themes including African-American history, social history, and residential architectural styles. However, Ardwick is not eligible for listing as either a local historic district, or as a National Register Historic District. Further, the community is not eligible under the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for African-American Historic Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland. Although a portion of Ardwick is an early-twentieth-century African-American community and documents the achievements of specific individuals in Ardwick, the extant dwellings do not meet the requirements for listing as an African-American settlement. These requirements include the community having a surviving communal or institutional building (a church, social hall, school, or municipal building), at least 30% of the houses present during the period of significance of the district must survive, and the pattern of streets and size of original lots must be present.

⁸ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 40-41. The majority of houses constructed by Wormley's friends are no longer extant. The house of Percy Rayford, head of the Science Department of Division II School, was located to the east of Wormley. A portion of his land was taken for the construction of Route 50. The houses of the Shaw, Thomas and Underdown families on the north side of Ardwick-Ardmore Road were all demolished and replaced by mid-twentieth-century residential development. Susan Pearl, "Ardwick," paper located in the files at M-NCPPC, Planning Department, Historic Preservation & Public Facilities.

Of these three requirements, Ardwick retains approximately 50% of the houses present from 1903-1945. Ardwick does not have a communal or institutional building and the size of the original lots have decreased. The pattern of streets has also changed as the result of the construction of Route 50. The period of significance is defined from Wormley's purchase of his house and property in 1903 to the construction of the neighboring house at 7541 Ardwick-Ardmore Road in 1945. This house, constructed for Fred Jones, is the last house constructed in Ardwick that is associated with this African-American community. The community fails to retain the architectural integrity necessary to convey its historic significance as an early-twentieth-century rural retreat for prominent African-Americans from Washington, D.C. Only four historic structures remain that were once associated with the community, the Wormley House, the Thomas Hunster House, the Walter and Elsie Smith House, and the Fred Jones House. Of the four, only the Thomas Hunster House and the Fred Jones House were designed and constructed by or for an African-American who lived in the community. The other two houses were constructed by white families and later purchased by an African-American family. After William Stanton Wormley's death, the Wormley House was significantly altered by numerous additions that obscure the form and style of the original structure. Increasing suburban growth in Ardwick surrounds the neighborhood and has impacted the historic setting of the community. As a whole, the community does not retain its integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association.

Individual Designation

The Thomas Hunster House (PG: 69-023-27), located at 7523 Ardwick-Ardmore Road, should be evaluated for individual designation as a Prince George's County Historic Site and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The one-and-a-half-story Bungalow was constructed circa 1911 by Thomas W. Hunster (1851-1929), a prominent African-American artist originally from Cincinnati, who spent the majority of his career in Washington, D.C. The dwelling is architecturally unique in Prince George's County and features a wrap-around porch, projecting portico, an artist's studio in the loft, and a band of narrow windows across the full façade of the loft level. Hunster, working with his carpenter, designed and built the house.

Hunster was a teacher and head of the Art Department for the D.C. public school system for 48 years.⁹ He was noted as making "more of an inspirational and constructive contribution to public education in the District of Columbia than any one person before or after. To him must be accredited not only the initiation of the fine arts department but the departments of manual and industrial arts as well."¹⁰ Hunster was well known for his "Exposition des Negres d'Amerique," a series of paintings on the progress of African-Americans that was exhibited at the Paris World's Fair in 1900 and for an exhibition at the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition.¹¹

The Thomas Hunster House retains its integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Because of modern suburban development surrounding the property, the dwelling has lost integrity of setting.

The Walter and Elsie Smith House (PG: 69-023-28) at 4105 Elsie Court (formerly 7515 Ardwick-Ardmore Road), should be evaluated for individual designation as a Prince George's County Historic Site and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The house is historically associated with Walter Smith, a prominent D.C. citizen, and member of the African-American community of Ardwick. Additionally, the house is architecturally significant as an early-twentieth-century vernacular dwelling.

⁹ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 42.

¹⁰ G. Smith Wormley, "Educators of the First Half Century of Public Schools of the District of Columbia," *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 17, No. 2 (April 1932): 124-140, 133.

¹¹ Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 42.

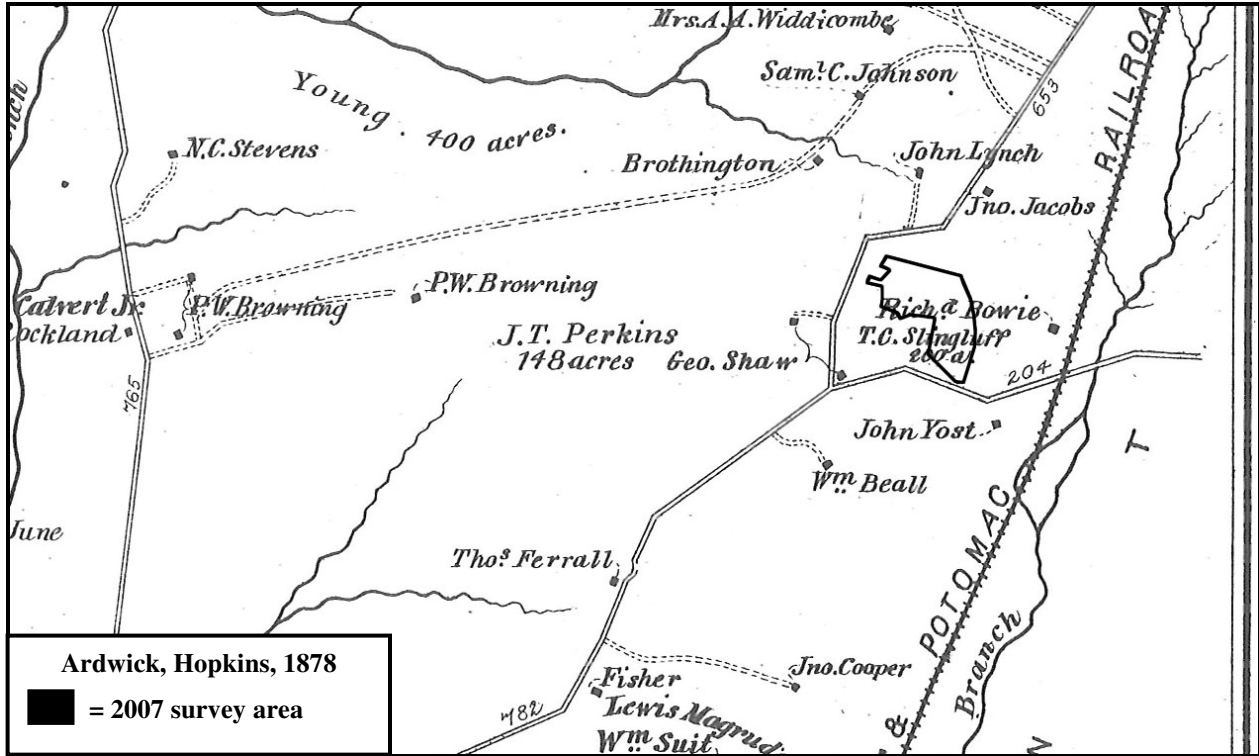
The two-and-a-half-story wood-frame dwelling was constructed circa 1910 and has a rectangular-shaped plan and a side-gabled roof. The dwelling features a wrap-around porch supported by Tuscan columns, jib-windows, two large front-gabled dormers, and an interior chimney with a corbelled cap. Constructed for the Jenks family, the dwelling was purchased in 1928 by Walter and Elsie Smith. Walter Smith was principal of Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. for 21 years. His wife, Elsie was an English teacher at Dunbar High School. The house retains its integrity of location, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. The house has been reclad in asbestos siding and some original windows have been replaced with vinyl, resulting in a minimal loss of materials.

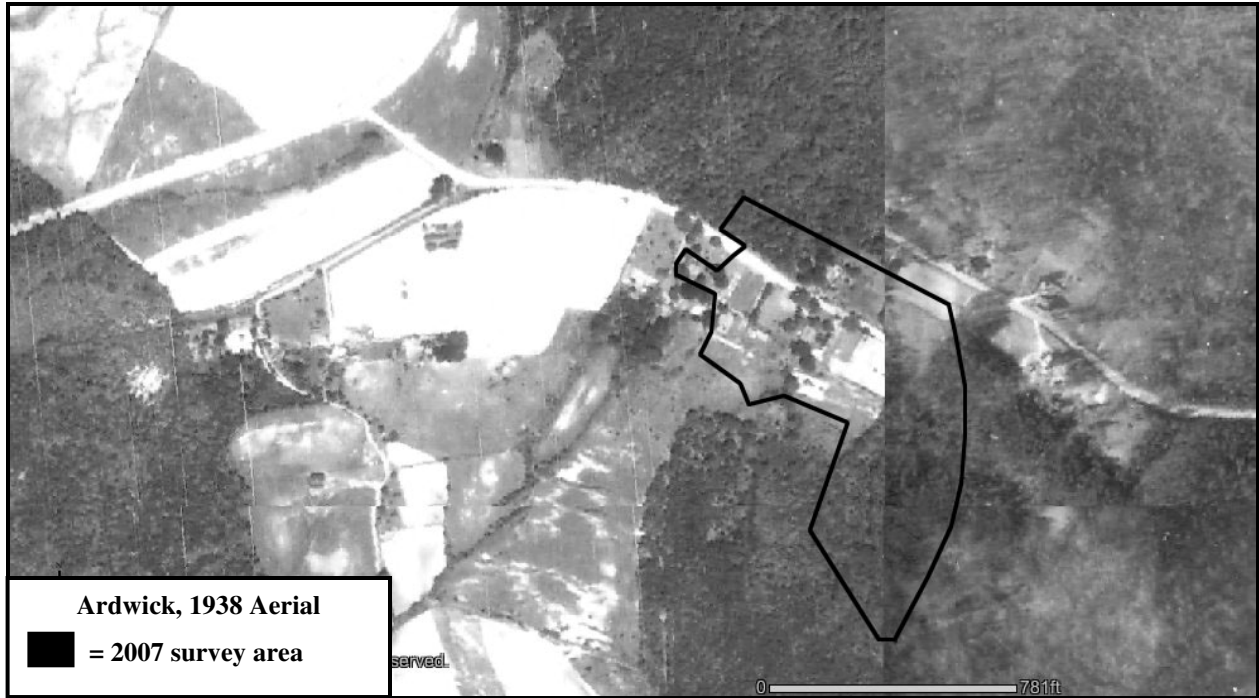
The Wormley House (PG: 69-023-17), located at 7533 Ardwick-Ardmore Road, is currently designated as a Prince George's County Historic Resource and should not be designated as a Historic Site. The dwelling retains little architectural integrity to convey its original plan or form as an I-house. After William Stanton Wormley's death in 1919, his sisters inherited the property and enlarged the dwelling by constructing wings on the south and west elevations, as well as a kitchen addition on the south end of the house. At this time, the house was also reoriented to face north, and a small vestibule was added on the north elevation to serve as the main entry.¹² Because of these significant alterations, the house in its current form does not retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. Additionally, as a result of modern suburban development around the property, the house no longer retains integrity of setting. Despite losing its architectural and design significance, the Wormley House is historically and culturally significant in Prince George's County. Wormley was instrumental in the development of the African-American community in Ardwick. Wormley was the first African-American to settle in Ardwick and his house served as the social center of this African-American community.

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¹² Pearl, *Prince George's County African-American Heritage Survey*, 40-41.











Looking southwest, Wormley House (PG: 69-023-17), 7533 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, Wormley House (PG: 69-023-17), 7533 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, 7547 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, 7541 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northwest, 7600-7538 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, Walter and Elsie Smith House (PG: 69-023-28), 4105 Elsie Court (formerly 7515 Ardwick-Ardmore Road) (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, Thomas W. Hunster House (PG: 69-023-27), 7523 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking west, Thomas W. Hunster House (PG: 69-023-27), 7523 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, 7513 Ardwick-Ardmore Road (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)