

RIVERDALE HISTORIC SURVEY



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TITLE: Riverdale Historic Survey

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ABSTRACT

This report details the findings of a historical/architectural survey of the Town of Riverdale, requested by the Mayor and Town Council. The goal of the project was to document and analyze the age and architectural character of all residential buildings within the Town's two older subdivisions.

The report is divided into two primary sections: Background and Methodology, and Findings. Background and Methodology includes a brief historical statement about the development of the area that became Riverdale beginning with the establishment of the Riversdale Plantation in 1801, the arrival of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in the 1830s and the sale of the plantation and the platting of Riverdale Park in the 1880s. It also includes an explanation of the project's research methodology which involved a questionnaire to residents, the collection of archival tax assessment data, a comprehensive field survey, photography and the detailed analysis of a selected group of buildings. The section on Findings includes an expanded statement of the development and architectural character of the survey area in the twentieth century, a discussion of commonly found building forms and a comprehensive mapping of buildings by construction date and architectural form. The report is supplemented with maps, plats, tables and photographs.

RIVERDALE HISTORIC SURVEY

Prepared by

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June 1991**



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The Commission has three major functions:

- the preparation, adoption, and from time to time amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- the acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- in Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire County public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board, appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Performs technical analyses and offers advice and recommendations regarding most matters related to existing and future...
 - ...use of land including the enhancement of the physical environment, and
 - ...provision of public facilities and services.
- Works on a set of specific projects and tasks annually set forth in a work program and budget adopted by the Prince George's County Council and performs such other tasks in response to emerging issues as resources permit.
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- Maintains competent and professionally able staff to perform our duties and responsibilities.

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Introduction

This final report summarizes the findings of an architectural survey of the Town of Riverdale conducted by the Historic Preservation Section of the Prince George's County Planning Department/M-NCPPC from July 1990 to March 1991 (FY 91). The survey was requested by the Riverdale Town Council and the Honorable Ann Ferguson, Mayor. The goal of the project was to document the Town's historic buildings and classify them by form and age as the basis for an analysis of historic character.

Previous survey efforts include a number of individual "survey properties" within the Town which had been researched and documented by the Historic Preservation Section. A survey of twelve buildings in the 4700 Block of Oliver Street was conducted by the Historic Preservation Section in FY 86. Five additional houses were surveyed by Historic Preservation Section staff in FY 90. Also in FY 90, a group of graduate students in the George Washington University American Studies/Historic Preservation Program surveyed a number of residential and commercial buildings.

Within the Town of Riverdale, four properties are currently protected by the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Smith House (#68-4-1) and the Calvert Family Cemetery (#68-4-3) are Historic Resources, and the Warren House (#68-4-2) and Riversdale/Calvert Mansion and Slave Quarter (#68-4-5) are designated Historic Sites.

The FY91 Riverdale Historic Survey was designed to provide the Town of Riverdale and its residents with additional and more comprehensive information about the physical development and architectural character of that portion of the Town of Riverdale that developed as a late 19th and early 20th century railroad and streetcar suburb. As most commercial buildings in the survey area had already been documented by the George Washington University students, the focus of the FY 91 study was the residential building stock that had not been researched.

Background and Methodology

Historical Background

From its earliest settlement by Europeans in the 17th century, transportation across Prince George's County was accomplished on land by roads and paths and by water on the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers and their many tributaries. By the early 19th century, almost exactly 200 years after the first Europeans arrived on Maryland's shore, the face of Prince George's County was dramatically changed by the construction and implementation of a new form of transportation, the railroad. The "railroad age" initiated the evolution of the County's longstanding agricultural economy to one more focused on the commercial activity of the developing urban centers of Baltimore and Washington.¹

The first railroad constructed through Prince George's County was the Baltimore and Ohio (B & O) Railroad, chartered by the Maryland State Legislature in February 1827. A B & O line linking Baltimore and Washington, D C, and roughly parallel to the Washington-and-Baltimore Turnpike, was chartered in March 1833. The first passenger use of the line occurred in August 1835 after the 32 miles of track had been completed. More than 13 miles of track traversed Prince George's County and changed patterns of travel, commerce and daily life for local residents. Stations were established at several locations along the route. After the Civil War, a number of unplanned settlements and platted subdivisions had developed in the County adjacent to railroad lines and junctions. In addition, small towns like Beltsville, Hyattsville and later College Park and Branchville, after the establishment there of the Maryland Agricultural College, were brought into existence by the location of the railroad.

With the advent of the passenger rail lines, business could now be conducted at ever greater distances from home, and well before the Civil War many County residents regularly commuted to Baltimore and Washington. After the war, the rail lines and the region's expanded population facilitated the development of suburbs throughout the western portion of Prince George's County. By the end of the nineteenth century, with the advent of streetcar lines connecting the County with downtown Washington, the older towns and subdivisions flourished and new ones like Mount Rainier, Brentwood and Riverdale Park were established.

The land that would become Riverdale Park at the end of the nineteenth century had been traversed by the B & O railroad since the 1830s, when the property was part of the Calvert family's Riversdale Plantation. The land on

¹ This discussion of the development of the railroads is taken from "Railroads in Prince George's County, 1835-1935" by Susan G. Pearl, "Railroad Communities in Prince George's County, 1870-1940" by Howard S. Berger. Both short papers are available as part of the Historic Contexts in Prince George's County, Prince George's County Planning Department, M-NCPPC, June 1990.

which Riverdale Park was built had been part of the plantation established in 1801 by Henri Joseph Stier, a Belgian aristocrat who purchased 800 acres north of Bladensburg. After Stier's return to Belgium in 1803, the completion of the Riversdale mansion and management of the plantation was left to his daughter Rosalie and her husband George Calvert. The Riversdale Plantation became a model of its type, and remained within the Calvert family for three generations.² After the death in 1864 of Charles Benedict Calvert (son of Rosalie and George Calvert), a commission was appointed to divide the plantation among his heirs.³ The 300-acre dower lot containing the mansion and the 175-acre lot adjoining it to the north were sold by Calvert heirs in 1887 to John Fox, president of the Riverdale Park Company, a New York real estate syndicate which then began to develop the suburb of Riverdale Park.⁴

The land was platted in 1889 by surveyor D J Howell. Streets were laid out in a grid pattern, straddling the Washington line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which ran north and south through the new community and offered residents easy commuting into the Federal City to the southwest. Baroque elements including park spaces and circles of green were provided in the plan and parkland was reserved around the Calvert mansion which was to be preserved "as a sacred relic of an era replete with historic memories."⁵ Streets were named for Presidents of the United States, Washington through McKinley, as well as for other distinguished statesmen such as Clay, Lafayette and Beale.⁶

Construction of dwellings began in the early 1890s. All were of frame construction, and reflected the popular tastes of the period, as illustrated in house catalogs of those years. Some were pyramidal-roof foursquares, others front-gabled or cross-gabled, many were highlighted by projecting bays or corner towers, and almost all had prominent wraparound porches with jigsaw decorative details. By the turn of the century, the new suburb had approximately 60 dwellings, a Presbyterian church, a handsome Victorian schoolhouse and a railroad station, the latter two public buildings were built by the Riverdale Park Company. There were two general stores, and telephone and telegraph communications were available. Concrete sidewalks were constructed, and sewers were provided for the principal streets.⁷ Because of its convenient location and its picturesque tree-lined streets, Riverdale Park

²Riversdale, Historic Structures Report, 1979, Part II, History, (S G Pearl)

³Prince George's County Equity Records, #475

⁴Prince George's County Land Records, JWB8 426, 520, JWB12 484, JWB13 614

⁵"Riverdale Park" real estate brochure (undated) circa 1904

⁶Prince George's County Land Records, Plat Recorded at JWB5 475

⁷"Riverdale Park" real estate brochure, "Riverdale Park" article, source unknown, circa 1899

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became one of the most desirable residential suburbs in the Washington area

Research Methodology

The FY 91 survey project was designed with two primary components to provide both general information about all buildings in the survey area and detailed documentation and analysis of a group of selected representative buildings. The general research component focused on analyzing the forms and styles of buildings as well as determining a general date of construction. The detailed analysis phase documented a group of buildings to Maryland Historical Trust Inventory standards.

The scope of the survey project was based on two basic definitions or assumptions. First, based upon prior survey work and existing documentation about the Town of Riverdale, it was assumed that with the exceptions of the Riversdale Mansion (c 1803) and the Calvert Family Cemetery (c 1810-1864), no building or "property improvement" within the survey area pre-dated the subdivision of Riverdale Park in 1889. Second, a "historic building" was assumed to be more than 50 years old, a practice consistent with Federal and local standards.

General Research

Windshield Survey and the Definition of the Survey Area

The initial phase of general research involved a windshield survey of the potential study area conducted with Mayor Ferguson to determine the boundaries of the area to be studied. As preparation for the windshield survey, relevant subdivision plats were collected. At the Mayor's suggestion, the windshield survey focused on the original subdivision of Riverdale Park (1889), and in West Riverdale (1906) across MD Route 1 to the northwest.

Questionnaire

Also part of the initial research phase, a single-page "Riverdale Historic Survey Questionnaire" was produced and delivered to the Town in July 1990 for distribution with the Town's monthly newsletter, the Riverdale Town Crier (circulation 2,200). The questionnaire was designed to elicit interest in the survey project and develop contacts in the community with long-time residents and individuals with a specific knowledge of particular buildings or aspects of the Town's development. Responses to the questionnaire were received by the Historic Preservation Section throughout the fall of 1990 and contacts initiated. Several properties were specifically analyzed and documented with MHT survey forms as a result of questionnaire responses. (For sample questionnaire see Appendix 1.)

Tax Assessment Data

The second phase of general research involved the collection of data designed to provide information about the approximate age of all of the buildings in the survey area. A "period of construction" and where possible, a specific construction date for each building would provide a basic understanding of the chronology of development by location and the evolution of architectural forms and styles.

Prince George's County Property Tax Assessment Records are the most reliable and comprehensive source for dating buildings ("improvements") erected prior to the regular use of building permits in the mid 20th century. Stored at the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, historic tax assessment data is recorded in hand-written volumes bound chronologically by Election District and within each district, alphabetically by the first letter of the property owner surname. Information provided includes the Block, Lot and Subdivision or Parcel Number for a particular property, as well as the assessed value for the land and any improvement upon it, which are identified separately. Using a form developed by Historic Preservation staff, data was transcribed chronologically and alphabetically to reflect its original recordation. In some cases, to provide more effective cross-referencing, data concerning extensive holdings of a particular property owner were transcribed as a group rather than as they appear in the archival volumes.

Assessment record data was collected for the period of greatest development within the survey area, 1892-1940, inclusive. This time period uses the earliest available data and comes as close as possible to the date of the original Riverdale Park subdivision of 1889. By ending in 1940, it conforms to National Register eligibility guidelines. Beginning with 1895, data was collected for every fifth year until 1940, to provide a possible "period of construction" of no greater than five years, which would then be mapped and analyzed.

Reconnaissance Survey

Throughout the fall/winter of 1990/1991, staff conducted reconnaissance level survey work to confirm and augment the data collected from tax assessment records, to verify the existence of buildings and to take photographs. The survey also helped establish a context for building forms and styles and to select individual buildings for detailed analysis.

Detailed Analysis

The second major component of the survey project involved a detailed analysis of a number of individual buildings to gain a more complete understanding of the history and physical character of the historic building population. For this phase of research, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) Inventory forms were prepared. These forms include a physical description of the property, a statement of its history and significance, interior and exterior black and white photographs and color slides, a floor plan, chain of title (where possible) and a general locational map.

Buildings were selected for detailed analysis from a variety of sources including responses to the questionnaire, referrals by the Mayor or Town residents and staff-initiated requests. In addition, specific buildings were selected for analysis based on a number of factors including apparent condition and age, location, the uniqueness or representative nature of the building form or architectural style, and accessibility.

Reference Materials

A number of standard reference works were used throughout both phases of survey project. The stylistic identifications and architectural context in which buildings were categorized and labelled were drawn largely from A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia & Lee McAlester. Additional sources consulted on particular building types included The American Bungalow, 1880-1930 by Clay Lancaster and The Comfortable House, North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930 by Alan Gowans. America's Favorite Homes, Mail Order Catalogues As A Guide to Popular Early 20th Century Houses by Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis and Houses By Mail, A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company by Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl were helpful in providing analysis and context for early 20th century mail order houses. Technical and architectural terms, other than those in common use, were derived from Old House Dictionary, An Illustrated Guide to American Domestic Architecture, 1600-1940 by Steven J. Phillips.

Historic maps that were consulted include "Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland", Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1924, "Washington Suburban, Volume 2" - Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1939, and "Riverdale, Maryland", Franklin Atlas of Prince George's County, Franklin Survey Co., Philadelphia, 1940.

Findings

This section summarizes the results of the research and analyzes the historic character of the survey area and its buildings

General Research

Windshield Survey and the Definition of the Survey Area

The windshield survey did confirm substantial concentrations of older buildings in the Riverdale Park and West Riverdale subdivisions. As a result, the Survey Area was defined to include all street-facing buildings within the boundaries of Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Riverdale Park subdivision and Blocks 1-7 of the West Riverdale subdivision within the corporate limits of the Town of Riverdale (See Figure 1). The windshield survey also confirmed that the overwhelming majority of buildings were residential in use and character and that the single-family detached house was the prevailing house type. The few multi-family dwellings fell into two categories, large single-family houses that had been adapted for use as rooming houses or flats, and multi-family, low-rise garden apartment buildings erected either in the late 1930s or after World War II.

The windshield survey also pinpointed non-historic buildings in several geographic concentrations as well as those scattered throughout the survey area as well. The most noticeable concentrations of non-historic buildings were located in Riverdale Park south of the Riversdale Mansion on Blocks 57, 58, 59, 61, 62 and 63, and at the northeast corner of the subdivision on Blocks 1, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 24 and 29. The field survey also indicated that the majority of buildings within the survey area appeared to have been constructed prior to World War II.

Questionnaire

Between August and November 1990, 15 completed questionnaires were returned to Historic Preservation staff. Telephone contacts and interviews were attempted for all respondents, with varying degrees of success. Five site visits and interviews resulted, from those, three MHT survey forms were completed.

Tax Assessment Data

Prince George's County Property Tax Assessment records proved to be the single most helpful source available to determine the period or date of construction for a building. A typical line entry in the assessment volumes provided the property owner's name, the extent of his holdings within the Election District by block, lot, subdivision name or parcel number, the value of any improvements and often, the specific nature of the improvements, i.e., "filling station" or "new house". In addition, for multiple tax years recorded together, there were often helpful references to the previous or next property owner, the year of transfer and most important, a specific construction date for an improvement. When available, a specific construction



FIGURE 1 Riverdale Historic Survey Area-1991

date was transcribed, otherwise an improvement was understood to have occurred within a particular interval. Specific construction dates were only randomly available and for this reason, were not mapped.⁸ The tax assessment data collected were also helpful as a cross-reference, providing or confirming the names of property owners for the "detailed analysis" phase of the project.

Detailed Analysis

The second part of the research project involved the documentation and analysis of selected buildings to Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Standards. In a number of cases, multiple examples of a building are documented on a single form. A total of 26 buildings were documented on 12 inventory forms. The following is a list of completed MHT Inventory forms with addresses:

- #68-4-34 Palmer House, 4804 Sheridan Street
- #68-4-47 Kilby-Marquis Bungalow, 4709 Sheridan Street
- #68-4-71 6206 44th Avenue
- #68-4-72 6303 46th Avenue
- #68-4-73 6404 46th Avenue
- #68-4-74 Kastler-Kline Bungalow, 6407 45th Place
- #68-4-75 4605 Queensbury Road
- #68-4-76 4606 Queensbury Road
- #68-4-77 Wilson Spanish Cottages, 6101-6102-6103-6104-6106 44th Avenue and 5007 Riverdale Road
- #68-4-78 Wilson Bungalows, 4306-4308-4309-4310-4311 Queensbury Road and 6207 and 6217 43rd Street
- #68-4-79 Wilson Foursquares, 5817 and 6001 Baltimore Avenue and 5001 and 5003 Riverdale Road
- #68-4-80 Paul Hidgon House, 5810 Cleveland Avenue

Analysis of Growth Patterns

The Town of Riverdale has grown substantially since its establishment as the subdivision of Riverdale Park in 1889. Throughout the last decade of the 19th century, the town grew steadily. Most development was focused in the area just north of the Riversdale Mansion, the area just to the west around the train station at Lafayette and Madison avenues (now Lafayette Avenue and Queensbury Road), and the areas to the north and west near the old Washington-and-Baltimore Turnpike (Baltimore Avenue-MD Route 1) on either side of East-West Highway (MD Route 410). Throughout these developing areas, commodious frame houses in popular late Victorian styles were built, often on multi-lot parcels with extensive gardens. By the early years of the 20th century, Riverdale Park was already a thriving, largely self-sufficient community with

⁸Transcribed tax assessment data containing selected specific construction dates are available for inspection at the offices of the Historic Preservation Section of M-NCPPC in Upper Marlboro.

numerous modern amenities and a verdant suburban setting ⁹

In 1906, the area at the northwest corner of Riverdale Park, across Baltimore Avenue and north of Hyattsville, was subdivided as West Riverdale by Francis S. Carmody, a Prince George's County contractor and builder who was also the founder of the Southern Maryland Trust Company in Seat Pleasant. Carmody had acquired a 55-acre tract on the west side of the old Washington-and-Baltimore Turnpike (Baltimore Avenue) from George H. Calvert and Edward S. McCalmont, trustees of the estate of Charles Benedict Calvert ¹⁰. The acreage acquired by Carmody had been part of the larger tract of Ellaville, located due west of the main gate to the Riversdale Plantation (at Oliver Street and Baltimore Avenue), purchased by Charles Benedict Calvert from John Bowie in 1853. Calvert named the subdivision after his daughter Ella (1840-1902) ¹¹. As subdivided in the 19th century, Ellaville was composed of 17 lots ranging in size from 3 to 8 acres ¹². By the early 20th century, several lots in the southern portion of Ellaville had been sold and houses built on them. It was not until 1906, when Carmody resubdivided a number of the northernmost lots in Ellaville as West Riverdale, that development in that area began. (See Figures 2 and 3)

Initially Carmody succeeded in selling a number of lots along Baltimore Avenue, close to the developing sections of Riverdale Park to the east. For the first ten years of the subdivision, the development of the blocks west of Baltimore Avenue was slow. In June 1915, Carmody sold his remaining lots (numbering more than 200) to Walter R. Wilson, who was largely responsible for the development of the subdivision in the two decades following his purchase ¹³.

⁹"Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland", Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1924

¹⁰Prince George's County Land Records, 38 101, see "F. S. Carmody Dies, Prominent in Maryland", The Evening Star, 16 April 1921, p. 7

¹¹Across the Years in Prince George's County by Effie Gwynn Bowie, Baltimore Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1947, p. 108

¹²Ellaville Plat recorded at JWB7 286, Prince George's County Land Records and Case #509, Prince George's County Equity Records, 1906

¹³Prince George's County Land Records, 109 36, 18 June 1915

MAP OF ELLAVILLE

Scale of 12 Perches to an Inch.

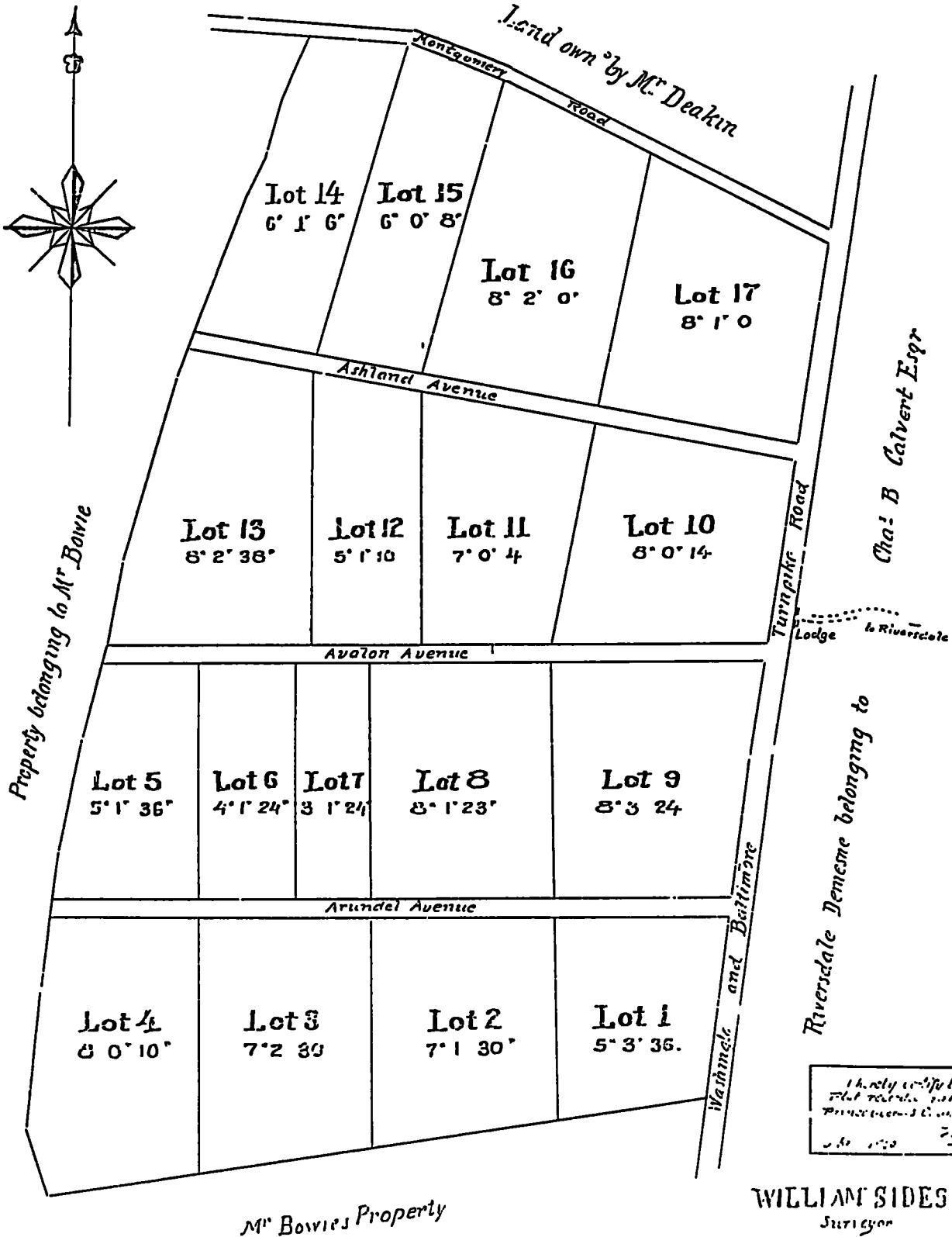


FIGURE 2. 1853 Plat of Ellaville

MAP OF WEST RIVERDALE.

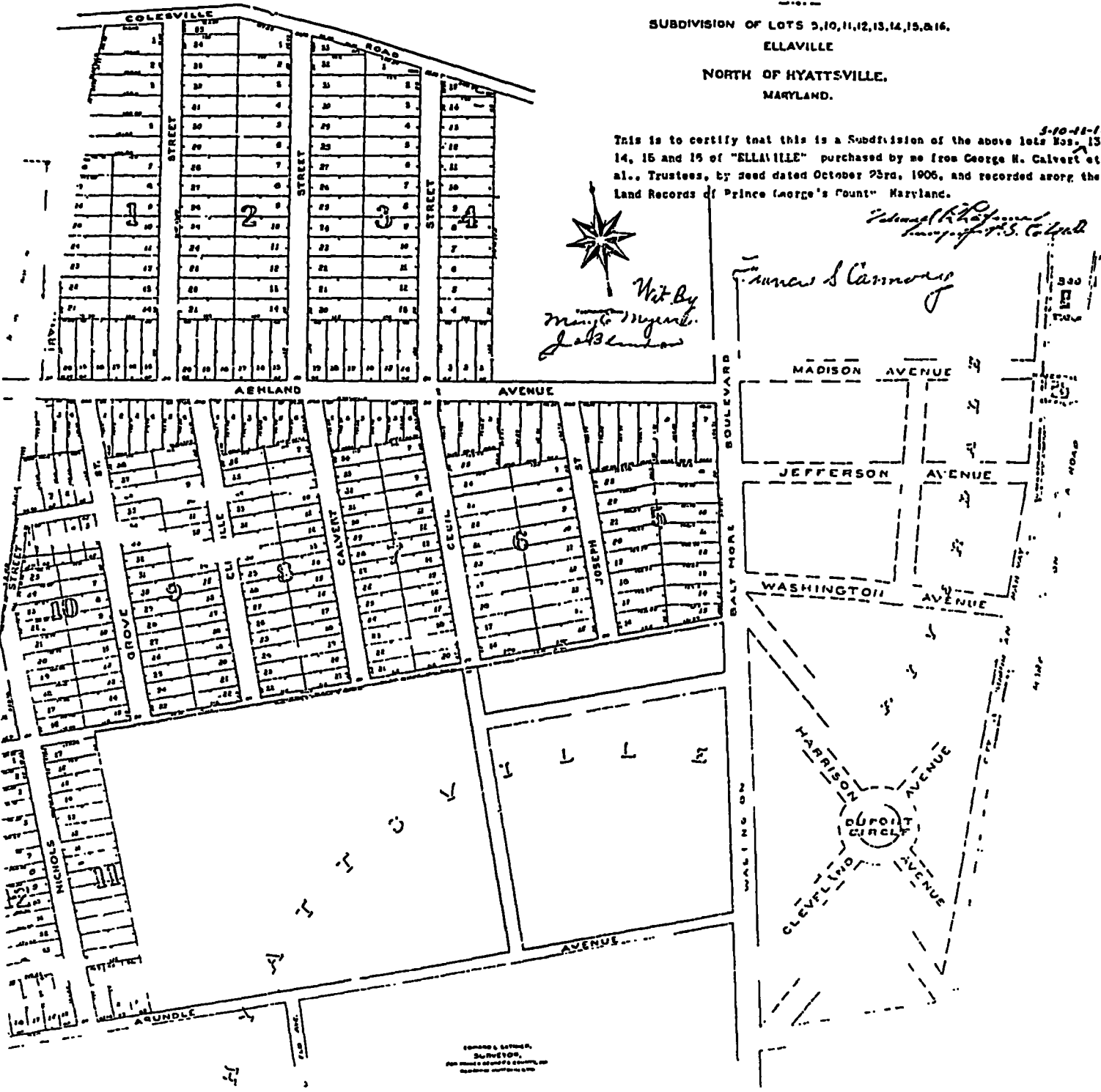
SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16.
ELLAVILLE
NORTH OF HYATTSVILLE,
MARYLAND.

This is to certify that this is a Subdivision of the above lots Nos. 13, 14, 15 and 16 of "ELLAVILLE" purchased by me from George H. Calvert et al., Trustees, by deed dated October 23rd, 1905, and recorded among the Land Records of Prince George's County, Maryland.

5-10-11-12

John H. Calvert
Trustee of G.S. Calvert

Witness
John H. Calvert
John H. Calvert



EDWARD S. GIBSON,
Surveyor,
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR.

FIGURE 3 1906 Plat of West Riverdale

Walter R. Wilson (1867-1953) was a Washington, D C , builder and real estate investor. Before his extensive activity in West Riverdale, Wilson was active in Riverdale Park. An early real estate brochure for Riverdale Park indicates that Wilson was building houses for himself and others at least by 1904. Little else is known about Wilson although land records indicate that he was active in Riverdale and in nearby areas of Hyattsville through the 1930s.¹⁴

Both Riverdale Park and West Riverdale had developed sufficiently by 1920 for the local residents to desire increased control over their growing community. On April 16, 1920, all of Riverdale Park and Blocks 1-7 of West Riverdale were incorporated as the Town of Riverdale.¹⁵ Throughout the early decades of the 20th century, the suburb and Town continued to grow. After World War I, the character and location of development in the town changed. Development began to spread out in all directions beyond the nodes of early settlement and also began to fill in those areas with older Victorian houses with several lots, which accounts for the varied character of many of the streetscapes. West Riverdale was largely developed by between 1915 and 1940. Several areas of the present Town of Riverdale remained largely undeveloped throughout the pre-1940 period. These areas were largely within the floodplain of the Northeast Branch along the eastern edge of Riverdale Park and the low-lying blocks south of the Riversdale Mansion which formerly served as a lake for the Plantation.¹⁶

By the 1920s, architectural preferences also changed. The two-story vernacular clapboard and shingle house with a front-gable or cross-gable roof and Victorian trim no longer solely defined the residential character of Riverdale. Smaller houses, usually one or one and one-half story bungalows, Cape Cods and cottages, most frequently built on a single lot, were favored by those building houses between 1920 and 1940. While clapboard and shingle were still popular materials, others including stucco, brick, stone and molded concrete grew in favor, if only as ornament. These new materials, and the new ways in which old materials were used, were part of a new architectural aesthetic that was sweeping the nation. The Craftsman style (and the related Prairie style popular in the midwest) emphasized the use of natural materials in picturesque combinations and the placement and design of the house within a landscaped setting, and both became dominant themes in early 20th century residential architecture.

¹⁴"Riverdale Park" real estate brochure, circa 1904, Historic Preservation Section, M-NCPPC, which includes photographs of houses under construction by Wilson. No other secondary source material about Wilson is known to exist. The dates given are derived from the Wilson family crypt at Fort Lincoln Cemetery.

¹⁵Chapter 731 -Section 2, Laws of Maryland, 1920

¹⁶"Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland", Washington Suburban, Volume 2, Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1939 and "Riverdale, Maryland", Franklin Atlas of Prince George's County, Franklin Survey Co., Philadelphia, 1940

Other newly favored architectural styles included those inspired by historic European and American architecture. Small one- or one-and-one-half story cottages were ornamented with details derived from medieval or Norman cottages, the English and Dutch colonial houses of New England and the Mid-Atlantic States and the Spanish Colonial houses of the American southwest. In addition to strictly historical influences, houses of the post World War I period also began to utilize modern materials including metal-clad casement windows and asbestos shingle siding.

Throughout the 1930s, houses were built with the same modesty of scale that had prevailed since the early 1920s and decorative features were further simplified and were often only vaguely reminiscent of their inspiration. This trend would continue after World War II, when post war prosperity and housing needs spurred large-scale building. By this time, the remaining developable land in town consisted of the lake behind the mansion and the northeast corner of Riverdale Park. By the late 1940s, the lake was drained and houses were under construction both there and along the floodplain of the Northeast Branch, which was channelized by the early 1950s. Post World War II construction frequently employed synthetic materials and modern building forms resulting in houses of radically different character.

Topography and Plan

As platted in 1889, Riverdale Park was laid out with a rectangular grid. The grid contained blocks defined by generally perpendicular streets running north-south and east-west and was designed to reflect the presence of pre-existing topography and manmade features. The original subdivision's grid also included circular drives, diagonal avenues and small parks to provide open space and a more baroque plan than was typical of Prince George's County subdivisions of the period. While the majority of blocks are rectangular and provide rectangular building lots, a number of blocks have rounded corners or triangular lots at traffic circles and intersecting diagonal avenues. Several streets terminate with a vista of the Riversdale Mansion or its park. Both the irregular course of the Northeast Branch to the east and the right of way for the B & O Railroad, roughly centered in the subdivision, continue to define the Town and its neighborhoods as they have since the initial years of settlement (See Figure 4).

Although a number of changes have been wrought on the Town in the 20th century to accommodate modern transportation needs and flood control, the plan of original plan of the subdivision is largely intact. The construction of East-West Highway (MD Route 410) and the channelization of the Northeast Branch, both done in the 1950s, have had positive and negative effects on the Riverdale Park subdivision and its original plan. The channelization removed the threat of flood, a continual problem in low-lying areas since the 19th century, and enabled the pattern of streets to be expanded or filled in with houses. The construction of East-West Highway removed only small portions of building lots in its path but created north and south sections to the Town, traversable at selected points largely by automobile. The two original traffic circles, Beale Circle and Dupont Circle, remain intact while a third, Clay Circle, at 49th Avenue and Sheridan Street, was planned but never built.

RIVERDALE PARK

RIVERDALE, PRINCE GEORGE CO., MD.

Showing the re-subdivision of certain parts of the original Plat recorded in Liber J.W.B No.5 folio 474 also the Riverdale Park Company's first Addition thereto



Exploratory Note:-
 This plat shows the "RIVERDALE PARK COMPANY'S" Original platted subdivision of RIVERDALE PARK with original Blocks 27, 61 & 63, part of 28, blocks 49-56 re-subdivided. Blocks 49 & 56 encompassed with Blocks 48 and original Block 65 with additional land with Block 71.
 The original platted subdivision was surveyed by D.J. Howell in AD 1889.
 This plat also shows the Riverdale Park Company's first Addition to Riverdale.
 The re-subdivision and first Addition were surveyed by Mark Rogers, Civil Engineer.

Surveyed and Map made by
 (Signed) Mark Rogers
 MAY 26, 1904.

SCALE 200' = 1"

THAT I Certify that this is a true and correct copy of the original plat recorded in Liber J.W.B No. 5 folio 474 Prince Georges County, Md. and the same was filed for record in the office of the Clerk of the said County on the 26th day of May 1904.

FIGURE A (part) 1889 Plat of Riverdale Park-Section One

MAP OF RIVERDALE PARK

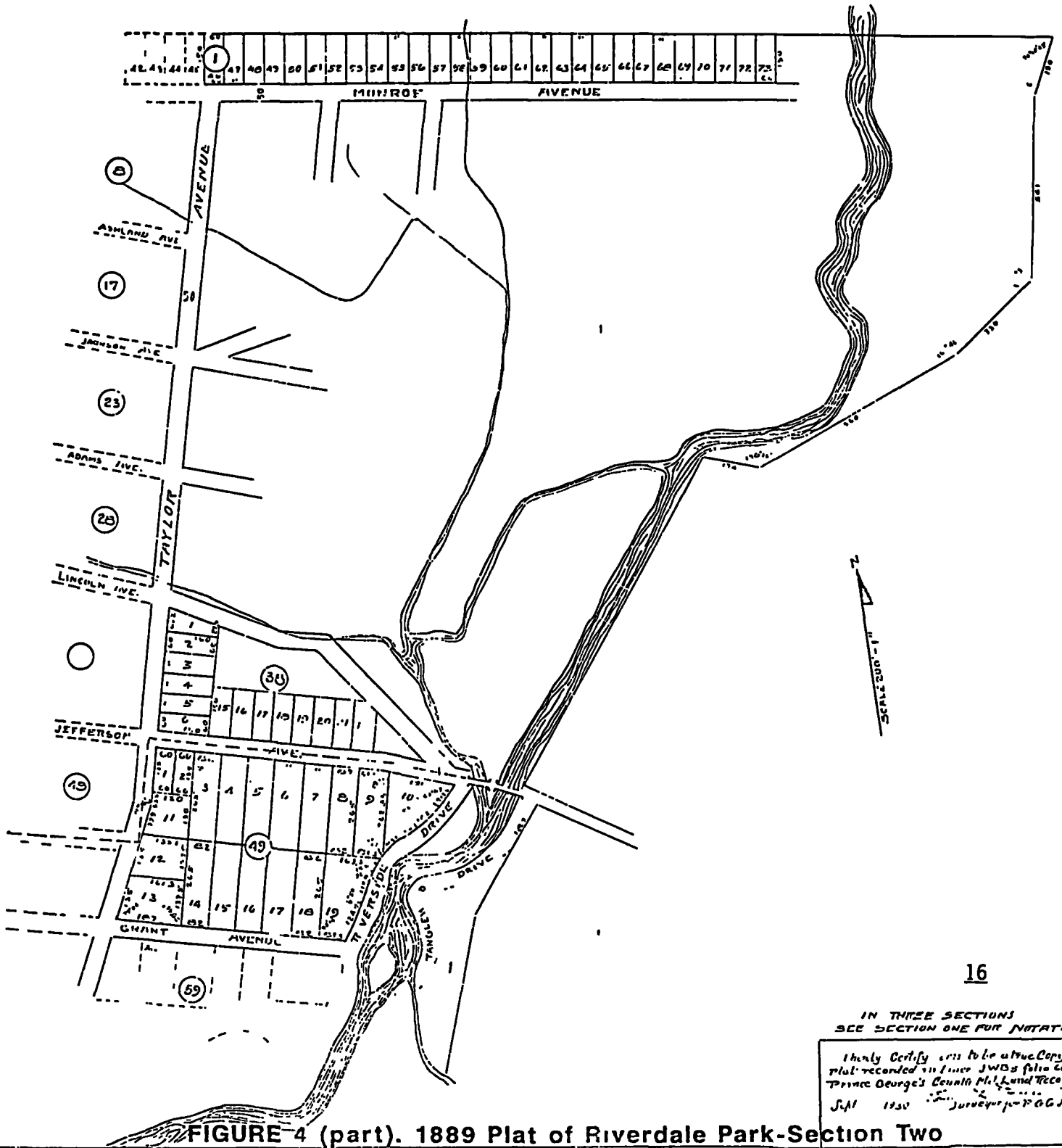


FIGURE 4 (part). 1889 Plat of Riverdale Park-Section Two

IN THREE SECTIONS
SEE SECTION ONE FOR NOTATIONS.

*I hereby certify this to be a true copy of
plat recorded in favor JWBs folio 685
Prince George's County Md. Land Records.
J.A. 1950 Surveyor J.W. G.M.H.*

OF RIVERDALE PARK



FIGURE 4 (part). 1889 Plat of Riverdale Park-Section Three

NOTE: - SEE SECTION ONE FOR NOTATION

17

THREE SECTIONS

Therby Lathif
Patterson
Preston George C. Smith
1889

The plan of West Riverdale is a simple rectangular grid. Six blocks are within Riverdale corporate boundaries. The blocks contain rectangular building lots and all blocks access Queensbury Road as it extends west from Riverdale Park. The northern part of West Riverdale shares the level topography of the northwest corner of Riverdale Park.

Building Forms and Styles

The Riverdale survey area contains a variety of residential building forms and architectural styles common to late 19th and early 20th century railroad and streetcar suburbs in Prince George's County. The detached single-family house is the predominant building type within the survey area. The range of forms and styles is evident throughout most of the survey area. A typical streetscape is an eclectic collection of houses of varying size, age, form and style, although more consistent streetscapes are also present.

Bungalows and Cape-Cods from the 1920s and 1930s alternate with Victorian houses from the 1890s and 1900s in much of the area surrounding the Riversdale Mansion and north of Route 410, reflecting the initial phase of development and a second phase that completed the most centrally located and desirable areas of Town near the railroad and Baltimore Avenue. The extreme ends of Town, to the north along Tuckerman Street and to the east along Taylor Road and immediately south of the Mansion, were less convenient or subject to flooding and as a result developed later, more consistently with a smaller range of forms and in a shorter period of time.

The "form" of a building is determined by its most basic attributes including size, plan, structural system and roof shape. Aspects of form are largely concerned with the ability of a building to perform its function and may only marginally relate to its outward appearance. Aspects of form may be determined by ethnic tradition, geographic location and climatic conditions, certain forms are characteristic of certain regions, while others are more universal. On the other hand, the "architectural style" of a building, the aesthetic and decorative elements not necessarily related to function, may be derived from a building's form or be based on ornamentation designed to conceal its form and improve its appearance.¹⁷

The building forms and architectural styles found in the Riverdale survey area derive from vernacular sources, they were developed by local builders employing generally available plans, materials and construction methods without academic training in design or engineering. Most commonly with vernacular buildings, the architectural style is limited to the straightforward application of modest ornament in a manner which does not effectively conceal the traditional nature of the form. The result is not a fully articulated, "high style" building with substantial embellishments achieved at substantial expense, but a straightforward house with a

¹⁷For a more complete discussion of form and style as they relate to high-style and vernacular architecture, see A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia and Lee McAlester

traditional form decorated to evoke a grander inspiration

Vernacular buildings frequently hybridize form and style in a way that makes it difficult to determine which term more accurately defines the character of a building. Although this was frequently the case in Riverdale, form rather than style was judged to be the aspect by which the characteristics of a building could be most accurately and comprehensively identified. For this reason the glossary is organized by the chronological appearance of the relevant building forms. Each form definition includes a reference to relevant architectural styles and the time period in which both the form and style appear within the survey area, with the understanding that examples may pre- or post-date the date range. Architectural style terminology in the glossary is derived from A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia & Lee McAlester.

A Glossary of Building Forms

The following is a brief description of nine common house forms as found in the Riverdale survey area. In some instances, buildings may appear to combine attributes of several forms or match the description of more than one. The forms and their accompanying descriptions are designed to be general enough to accommodate the range of examples found. All forms, except "Post War", are illustrated in Appendix 2.

Front Gable

A one- or two-story house with a rectangular plan and a roof gable (with or without dormers) above a narrow street-facing facade. Front Gable houses, as they appear in Riverdale, are Victorian Vernacular in their form and style. They are typically decorated with simple ornament derived from popular late 19th century styles including the Queen Anne, Shingle and Stick styles. The houses commonly have wraparound porches with jigsaw posts and brackets and bracketed cornices and eaves, and occasionally colored glass lights in large wood-sash windows. The interiors of a Front Gable are typically organized with a side hall and double parlor plan, as commonly built throughout the 19th century. Front Gables are among the earliest house forms to appear in the survey area and were generally built between 1890 and 1920. (Photographs 1, 2)

Cross Gable

A larger variation of the Front Gable, the Cross Gable has an irregular plan, commonly there is a main block and one or more perpendicular wings sheltered by a multi-gable roof. Multiple wraparound porches frequently connected the wings of the house with each other. The interior plan of a Cross Gable is based on the side hall and double parlor arrangement, but frequently, an additional adjoining parlor or bedroom is found on each floor. The Cross Gable was also typically decorated with Queen Anne, Shingle and Stick style ornament and popular between 1890 and 1920. (Photographs 3, 4)

Foursquare

A two-story house with a square plan, low-pitch hip or pyramidal roof with a balanced facade. Front and rear porches are common to Foursquares as are shed or hip roof attic dormers. Foursquares are decorated in a number of popular styles including Prairie, Craftsman and Colonial Revival. Interiors are arranged with four rooms of roughly equal size, one in each of the house's four corners. An off-center entry leading to an entry/stair hall is most common, although centered entries are occasionally found. The Foursquare was an extremely popular house form from 1890 through the 1920s (Photographs 5, 6)

Side Gable

A two-story house with a generally rectangular plan, balanced facade and a side-gable roof with or without dormers. A classic American house with exterior decoration and interior plan details inspired by American Georgian and Colonial period design. Typically, there is a centered entry/stair hall flanked by paired adjoining rooms. In Riverdale, the Side Gable was sometimes decorated with Craftsman motifs and was popularly built between 1915 and 1940 (Photographs 7, 8)

Bungalow

A small one- or one-and-one-half story house with a generally rectangular plan, and most commonly, a side gable roof with or without attic dormers. Bungalows in Riverdale almost exclusively have front porches that extend the slope of the main roof. The most prevalent architectural aesthetic of local bungalows is the Craftsman style which employed a variety of materials and textures in a single building, along multi-paned windows, broad eaves and exposed structural members used for decorative effect. Bungalow interiors typically have a series of connected public rooms on one side of the house and bedrooms and bath along a small hallway on the other side of the house. Bungalows were extremely popular from 1915 through the 1930s (Photographs 9, 10)

Cape Cod

A one and one-half story frame or brick house with a rectangular plan and, most commonly, a steeply-pitched side gable roof sheltering an expandable attic (with or without front and rear dormers). Cape Cods are most popularly decorated in the Colonial Revival style and emphasize simplicity, symmetry, enframed doorways, and multi-paned double-hung windows with or without shutters. Less frequently, Cape Cods were decorated with European vernacular details derived from Tudor, Norman or Medieval buildings with projecting entry vestibules with round-arch, vertical panel doors and brick or stone trim. The style appeared initially in the early 1920s and remains popular today (Photographs 11, 12)

Cottage

A modest, one-story house, with or without porches, sheltered by a variety of roof shapes including pyramidal, hip, side and front gable. These houses are simply detailed, often with no discernable stylistic influence, although motifs from the Victorian Vernacular, Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles can be found. Both the exterior forms and interior plans of cottages vary, reflecting the trend to expand the dwellings over time with shed or gable roof additions to the side or rear. Because of their modest size, most cottages contain a series of small rooms, connected to each other without hallways. These simple dwellings were likely hand built by their original occupants and were popular between 1900 and 1930. (Photographs 13, 14)

Ranch

A one-story house with a distinctly horizontal emphasis, a rectangular or irregular plan, side-gable or cross-gable roof with a shallow pitch. Smaller versions of the form can have a contained, box-like appearance. The interior of the Ranch frequently contains a combined living/dining space with an L-shaped plan at one end of the house, and bedrooms and baths on one or both sides of a hall at the other end of the house. Although the exteriors are often minimally decorated, frequently motifs reminiscent of the Prairie and Colonial Revival styles are present. Multiple exterior materials are common. Isolated examples of the Ranch, an essentially modern house form, began to appear in Riverdale in the late 1930s. It became one of the most popular post-war forms and is still in favor today. (Photographs 15, 16)

Post War

A general term used to describe a variety of house forms common to late 20th century suburbs (including Ranch). Most forms are variations on the theme of a split foyer or multi-level plan, subtypes are commonly referred to as Split Level, Raised Ranch or Contemporary houses. Multiple materials are frequently used and though stylistic influences are often unattributable, decoration can be derived from the Colonial Revival, Prairie Style and the California Contemporary styles. As the names imply, these forms often have multi-level, open interior plans. Public rooms adjoin each other without the traditional separation of space. These forms proliferated after 1945 and remain popular.

Maps

Two maps were developed to graphically represent the findings of tax assessment research and the field survey

Map 1 - Buildings By Construction Date, finalizes a draft graphic board presented to the Town of Riverdale as "Historic Tax Assessments Riverdale Park/West Riverdale, 1892-1940 " The board represented in color the mapping of historic assessment record data. The board represents archival data only and does not reflect the findings of the field survey which verified the existence of individual structures, their exact location and property descriptions. Map 1 reflects both the archival assessment data as corrected by the findings of the field survey. A single-letter code to describe the general period of construction.

Map 2 - Building Forms represents the general architectural character and form of each residential building within the survey area based on the field survey and the foregoing Glossary of Building Forms. Map 2 employs a symbol code to represent each of the nine general forms found throughout the survey area.

Both maps are included with this report, folded and unbound after Appendix 2

Statistical Breakdown

A total of 867 buildings were identified from the survey area. This number excludes the Riversdale Mansion, all commercial buildings (and all residential buildings adapted for use as commercial buildings) and all buildings designed as multi-unit dwellings. The following tables represent statistical breakdowns of Maps 1 and 2.

Of all identified buildings, 489 or 56% were erected before 1940. The following table represents the distribution of all buildings erected after the date of subdivision and recorded by 1892 through the present.

Table 1 Buildings By Construction Date

<u>Period of Construction</u>	<u>Total # of Buildings</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1892 - A	6	1
1895 - B	7	1
1900 - C	15	2
1905 - D	21	3
1910 - E	26	3
1915 - F	81	8
1920 - G	70	8
1925 - H	52	6
1930 - I	53	6
1935 - J	50	6
1940 - K	108	12
Post 1940 - L	378	44
TOTAL	867	100

Of the 867 identified buildings, 598 or 69% represent building forms commonly found in late 19th and early 20th century railroad and streetcar suburbs. Of the remaining 269 buildings (31%), the vast majority of these (207 or 77%) are ranch houses built after 1940. The following table groups buildings by form; the first seven forms generally pre-date 1940 and the last two are almost exclusively post World War II construction.

Table 2 Building Forms

<u>Building Form</u>	<u>Total # of Buildings</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Front Gable - ☉	34	4
Cross Gable - ☒	47	5
Foursquare - ☐	31	4
Side Gable - △	64	7
Bungalow - ●	203	23
Cape Cod - ■	191	22
Cottage - ▲	28	3
Ranch - *	207	25
Post War - △	62	7
TOTAL	867	100

Conclusions

This project has produced both general and specific information about the growth and development of the Town of Riverdale and the character of the buildings found there. Research has provided information about the age of buildings and their general physical attributes. No appraisals of integrity were made beyond the notion of a general consistency of age and appearance. Nevertheless, the survey has shown that more than 50% of the 872 total buildings are 50 years old or older, a sizeable pool of buildings potentially eligible for designation either on the County and/or Federal levels (National Register).

Previous survey work had focused largely on the area's late Victorian houses with Front Gable and Cross Gable forms popular at the end of the 19th century that defined the community's first phase of growth. This project highlighted several noteworthy examples of the important early and mid 20th century forms including the Foursquare and the Bungalow. Many of the highlighted buildings were the work of one local contractor/builder, Walter Wilson. Although extensive research on Wilson has not been completed, it is clear that he had a substantial role in shaping the character of West Riverdale, and in a less comprehensive manner, the character of Riverdale Park, from the early 1900s through the 1930s.

Noteworthy concentrations of historic buildings were found throughout the survey area. The Riverdale Park Subdivision, platted in 1889 around the Riversdale mansion and the pre-existing railroad line, contains collections of historic buildings representative of the community's major phases of development. These concentrations of historic buildings exist largely in areas of the subdivision completed before 1940 and represent the boom construction periods of the 1890s, 1910s and the 1930s. The greatest concentrations of historic buildings are found north and west of the Riverdale mansion, around the B & O Railroad station, and north and west of East-West Highway and Taylor Road. Because development in these areas was more protracted, there is a significant variety of houses by both age and form.

On the other hand, the West Riverdale Subdivision represents a more specific period of development and its popular forms and styles. Developed largely by one individual within a relatively brief number of years, West Riverdale has a more consistent character as an early 20th century community. Streetscapes are filled with a more limited number of house forms, essentially variations on the Craftsman Bungalow and the Colonial Revival Side Gable and Cape Cod, all from the 1920s and 1930s.

In conclusion, the Riverdale Historic Survey has broadened the understanding of one of Prince George's County's oldest and largest railroad and streetcar suburbs with an analysis of general trends and specific details. A project of this scope does not allow for the type of in-depth research a community like Riverdale warrants, but does establish a framework in which that work can be continued.

Products

The final products of the project included a slide presentation to the Town illustrated with graphic boards that outlined survey findings, this final report, and 12 MHT Inventory Forms

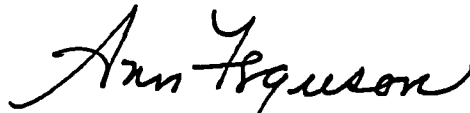
- 68-4-34 Palmer House, 4804 Sheridan Street
- 68-4-47 Kilby-Marquis Bungalow, 4709 Sheridan Street
- 68-4-71 6206 44th Avenue
- 68-4-72 6303 46th Avenue
- 68-4-73 6404 46th Avenue
- 68-4-74 Kastler-Kline Bungalow, 6407 45th Place
- 68-4-75 4605 Queensbury Road
- 68-4-76 4606 Queensbury Road
- 68-4-77 Wilson Spanish Cottages, 6101-6102-6103-6104-6106 44th Avenue and 5007 Riverdale Road
- 68-4-78 Wilson Bungalows, 4306-4308-4309-4310-4311 Queensbury Road and 6207 and 6217 43rd Street
- 68-4-79 Wilson Foursquares, 5817 and 6001 Baltimore Avenue and 5001 and 5003 Riverdale Road
- 68-4-80 Paul Hidgon House, 5810 Queensbury Road

Appendix 1

RIVERDALE HISTORIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Town of Riverdale is sponsoring an architectural survey of Riverdale's older buildings, from its founding (1889) to World War II. This work is being undertaken by staff of the Historic Preservation Section of M-NCPPC's Planning Department. The resulting Historical Inventory will be available to all Riverdale residents at the Mayor's Office. To begin the gathering of information, I hope you will take time to fill out and return this questionnaire. If you have questions, call Howard Berger at the M-NCPPC Planning Department at 952-3972.

Thank you for your interest!



Ann Ferguson, Mayor
July 1990

Do you have old photographs, yearbooks, scrapbooks, newspaper articles or memorabilia which you would be willing to share? _____

Do you have information about early commercial activity in the Town, early church activities or commuting by the railroad and streetcar? _____

Do you know of any specific buildings in Riverdale which were constructed from mail order catalogues (e.g., Sears, Montgomery Ward or Aladdin)? _____
Address _____ Other information. _____

Are there any sites, buildings, landmarks or historic features in Riverdale which you consider particularly important for this survey? _____

Would you be willing to be interviewed for this survey? _____

Do you know of any long-time residents who might like to be interviewed?

Name and address _____

Your name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ (home) _____ (work)

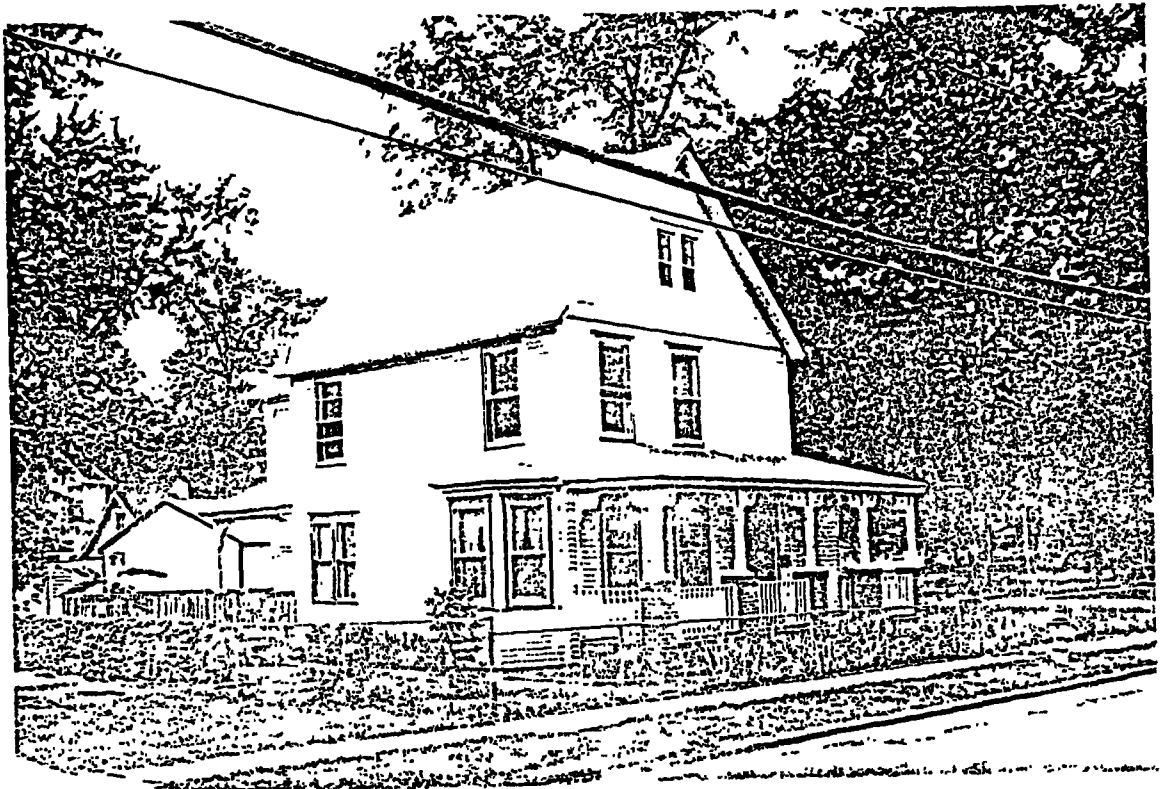
To mail, just fold in thirds, stamp, and staple

Photograph 1



Front Gable at 4900 Queensbury Road

Photograph 2



Front Gable at 4601 Queensbury Road

Photograph 3



Cross Gables at 4606 and 4608 Queensbury Road

Photograph 4



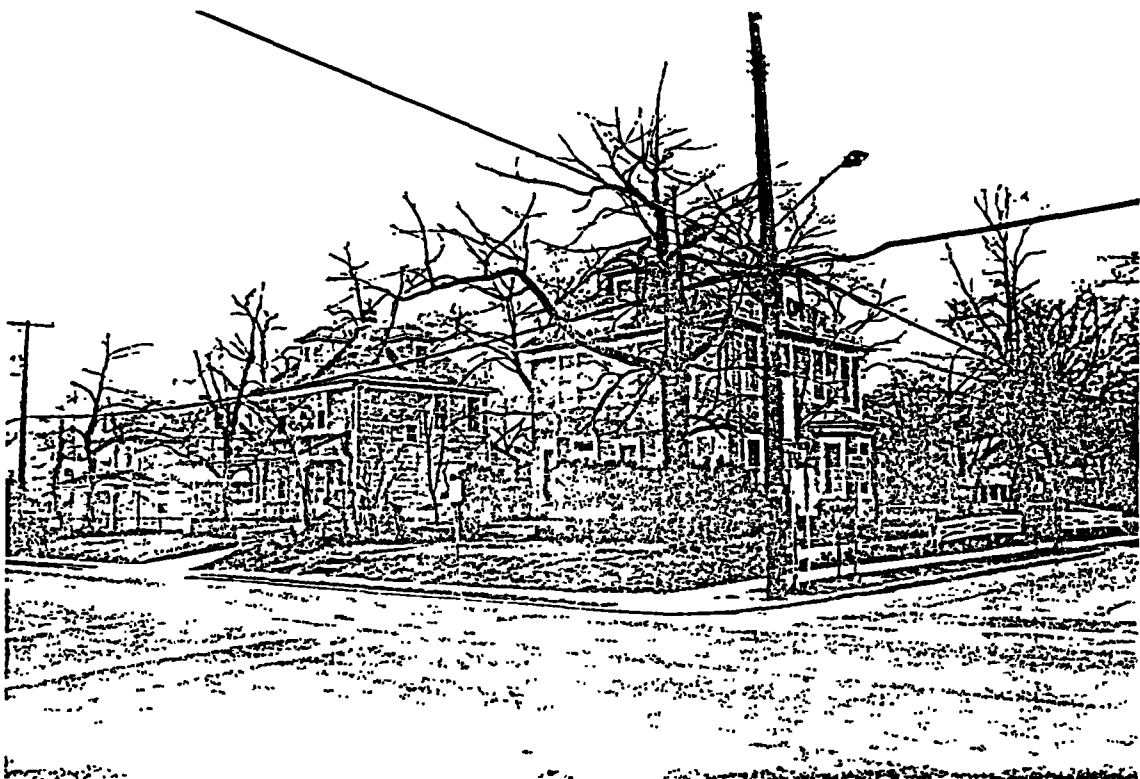
Cross Gable at 4906 Queensbury Road

Photograph 5



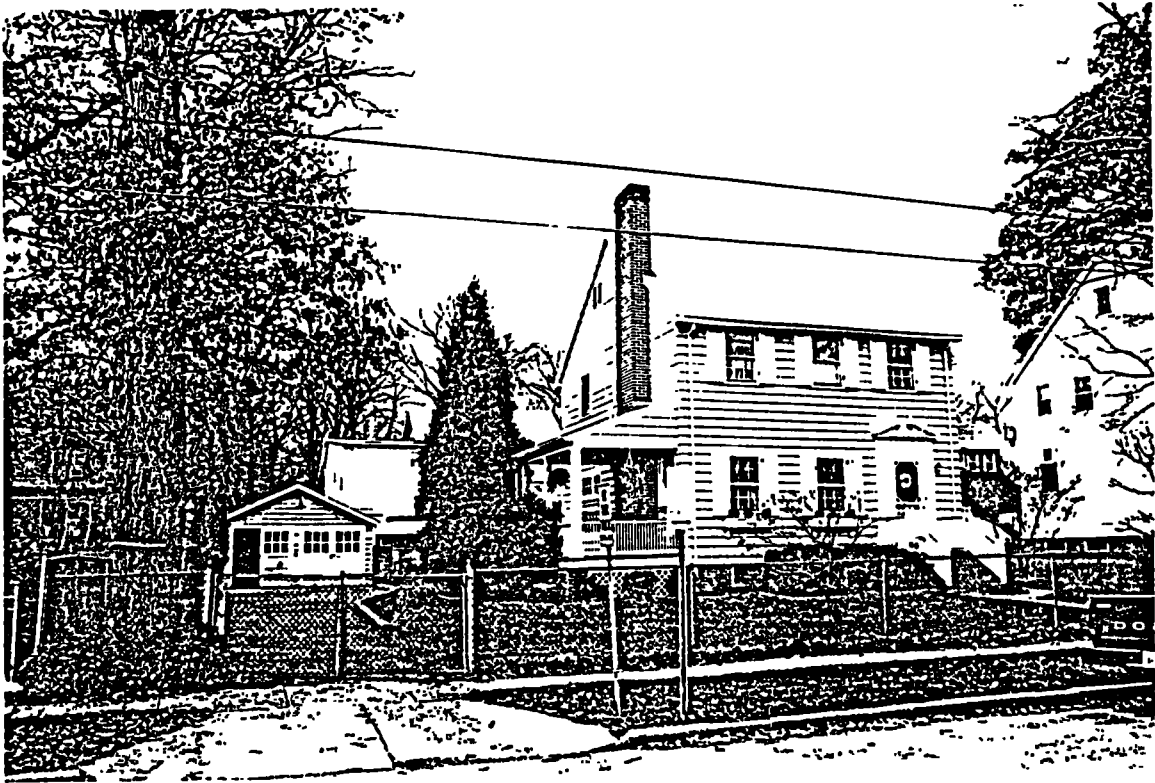
Foursquare at 4804 Sheridan Street

Photograph 6



Foursquares at 5003 and 5001 Riverdale Road

Photograph 7



Side Gable at 6206 44th Avenue

Photograph 8



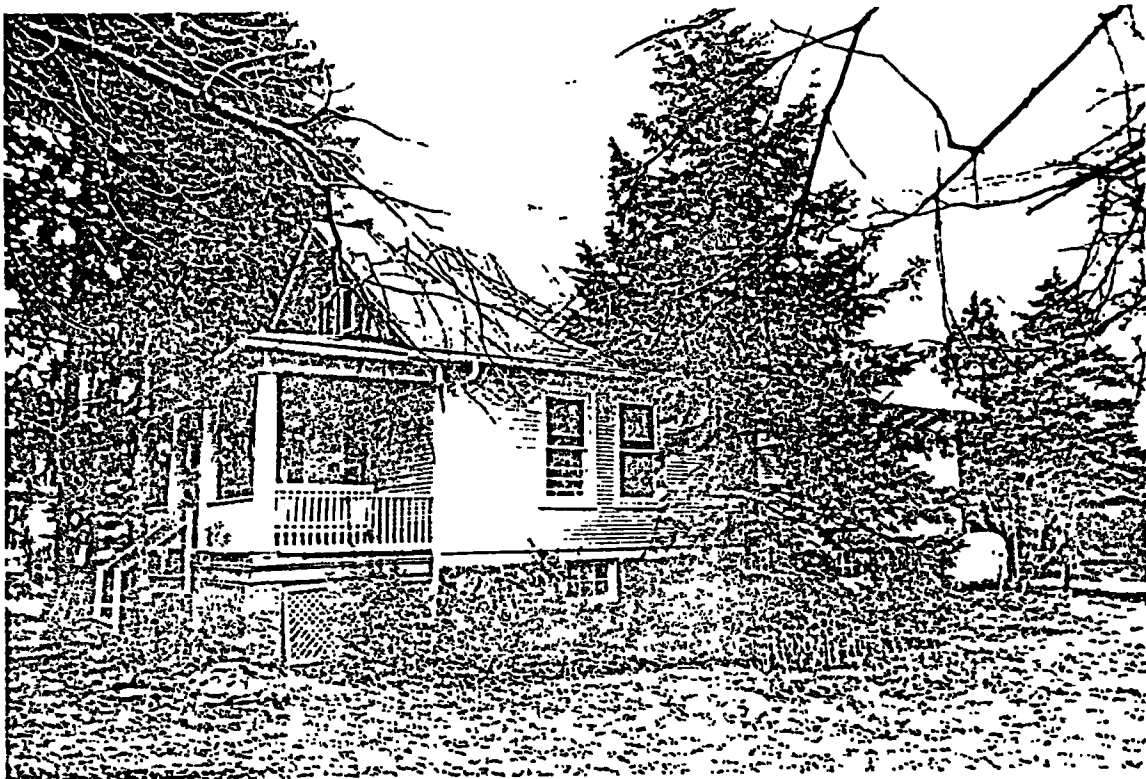
Side Gable at 4809 Sheridan Street

Photograph 9



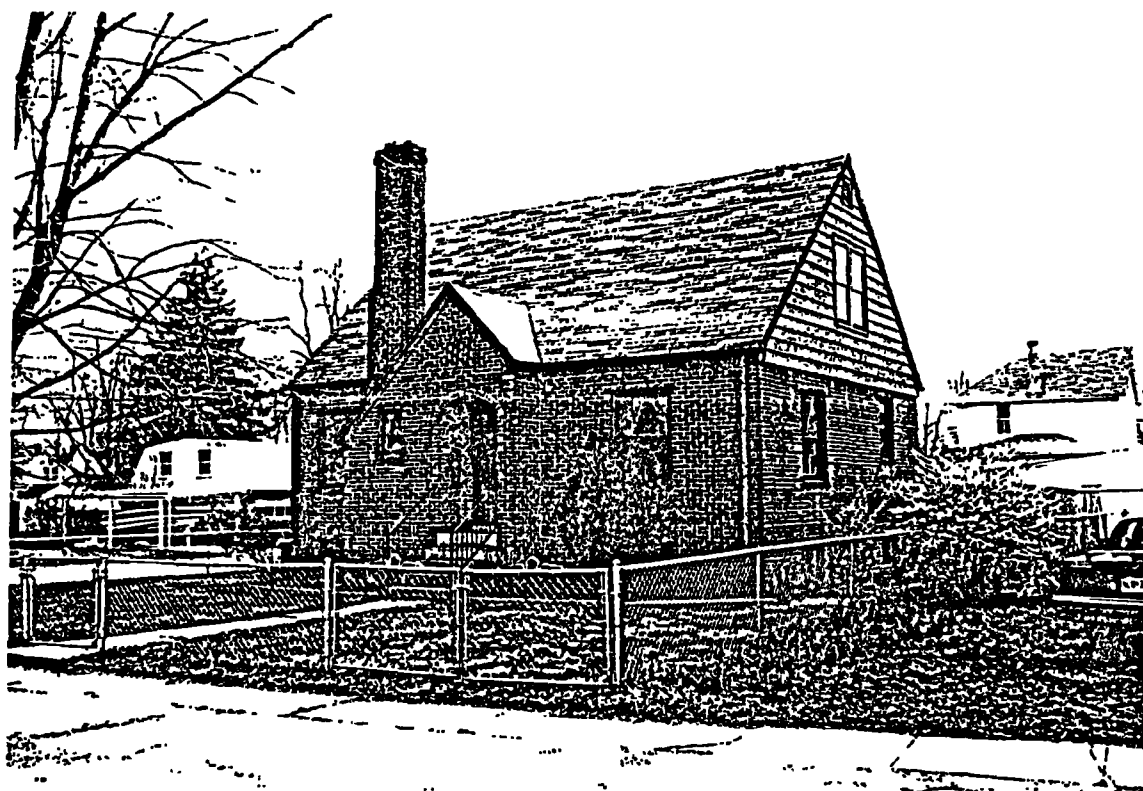
Bungalows at 4306-4308-4310 Queensbury Road

Photograph 10



Bungalow at 4709 Sheridan Street

Photograph 11



Cape Cod at 4713 Tuckerman Street

Photograph 12



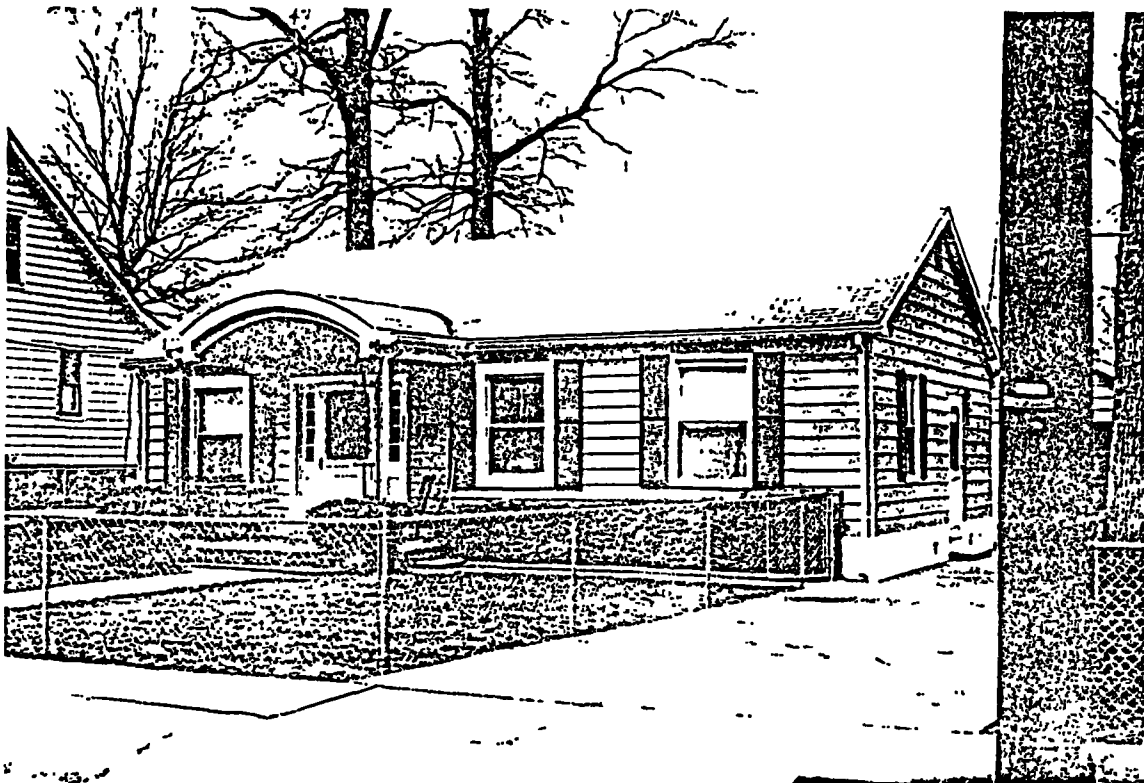
Cape Cods at 6100 block 43rd Avenue

Photograph 13



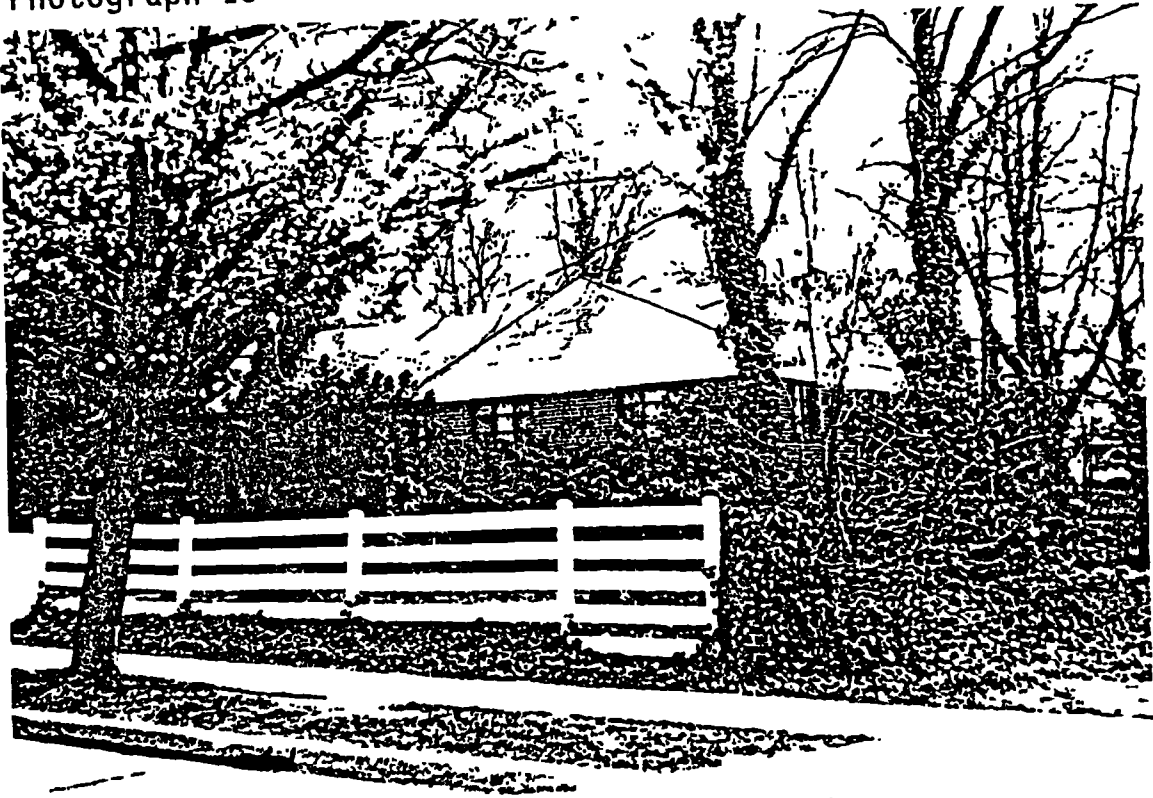
Cottage at 4701 Longfellow Street

Photograph 14



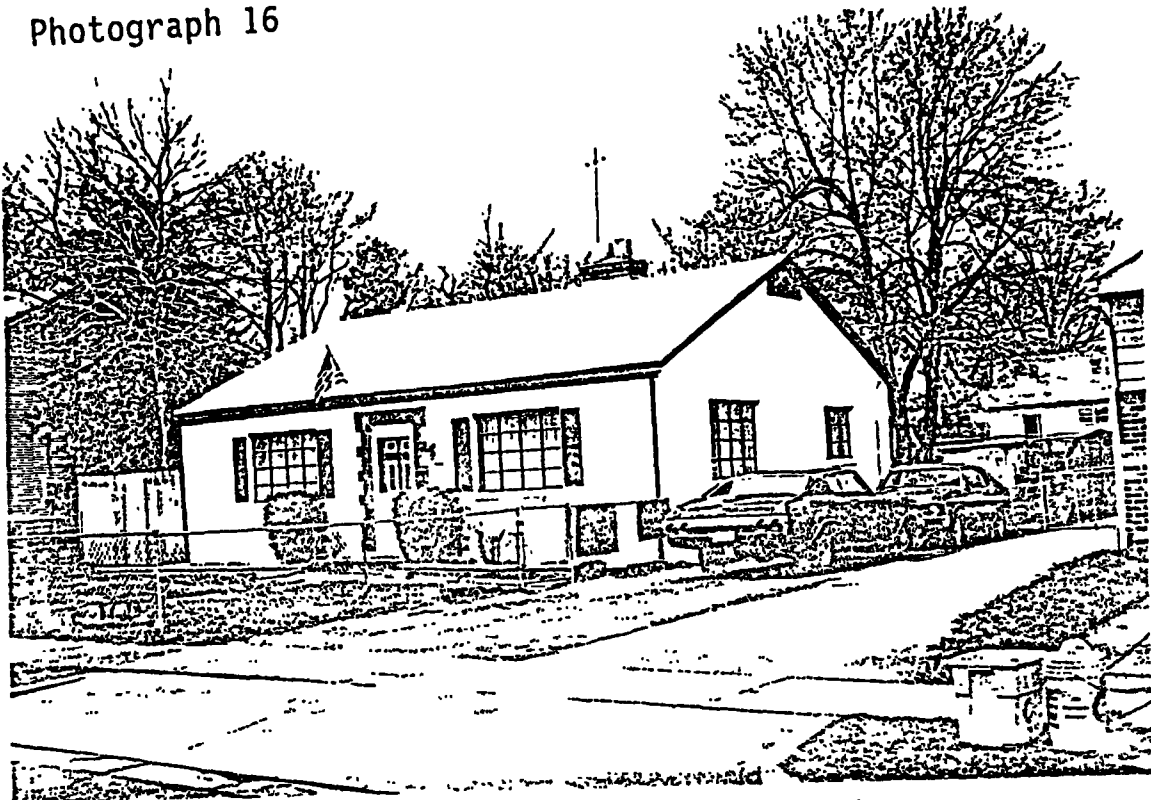
Cottage at 4810 Tuckerman Street

Photograph 15



Ranch at 6009 Taylor Road

Photograph 16



Ranch at 4908 Sheridan Street

PREPARED BY

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND
PLANNING COMMISSION

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