

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

AttachC – Maryland Historical Trust

Inventory No. M

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Inventory No.

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name) Rockville Regional Library

historic Rockville Regional Library

other 1971 Rockville Library

2. Location

street and number 99 Maryland Avenue not for publication

city, town Rockville, Maryland vicinity

county Montgomery

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

name State of Maryland

street and number 300 West Preston St., #601

telephone

city, town Baltimore

state MD

zip code 21201-2308

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Land Records

liber 24372

folio 366

city, town Rockville, Maryland

tax map

tax parcel

tax ID number

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
- Other: Peerless Rockville collection

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7. Description

Inventory No.

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Rockville Regional Library, one of the City's most distinctive modernist buildings, is an outstanding example of International Style architecture, a hallmark style of mid-20th century civic and commercial design. Designed by noted Bethesda architect Stanley H. Arthur and completed in 1971, the library is harmoniously situated within the natural topography of an irregular 1.5-acre site. Broad bands of light colored brick wrap the two-story facades, alternating with panels of tinted ribbon windows – prime characteristics of the International Style. Cantilevered facades, carried on slender pilotis, shelter the principal entrance and express the building's ingenious spatial relationship to the natural contours of the site. The landscaped entry plaza establishes a focal point and softens the transition from street grid to building. Horizontal massing provides a versatile configuration of interior spaces and offers panoramic views of Rockville's eclectic architectural streetscape. With the exception of minor interior changes, the Rockville Regional Library is unaltered, intact, and in good condition.

Completed in 1971, the Rockville Regional Library was designed as both a County library headquarters and a regional library facility. Site selection criteria included proximity to Rockville's downtown area and availability of public parking. A 1.5-acre parcel, located opposite the County Office Building at the intersection of Jefferson and Perry Streets (today Maryland Avenue), was within walking distance to a County parking garage, then under construction, behind the COB offices. Situated prominently within the civic architecture of County offices and courthouses, the Rockville Regional Library was a flagship facility among several new library construction projects of the late 1960s.

The library is an outstanding example of International Style architecture and site-related design. Stanley Arthur's sweeping horizontal design triumphed over the irregular shape and sloping topography of the five-sided property. Making full use of the site's east-west axis, Arthur aligned the full length of the two-story building along Jefferson Street, breaking the horizontal mass with a six-foot corner jog and a secondary entrance approximately midway at ground level. The main entrance is located under a sheltered cantilevered walkway on the south façade opposite Rockville City Hall on Vinson Street. A spacious entry plaza with public seating, landscaping, and flagstaff signals the principal entrance, providing an architectural focal point and softening the transition from street grid to building. Public parking with handicapped entry and delivery bays occupy the southwest corner of Arthur's T-shaped design. Cantilevered façades, buttressed by white steel pilotis, line the entrance walkway along Vinson Street and Maryland Avenue, the latter providing access to maintenance and utility areas at grade level.

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The library is constructed of a steel framework, brick masonry, and glass. Broad bands of light-colored masonry, laid in stretcher bond, wrap the library's exterior, alternating with panels of tinted ribbon windows – prime characteristics of International Style design. A dark brick veneer covers recessed foundation panels along the south and east facades, enhancing the effect of cantilevered construction along the plaza entryway. A thin brick cornice defines the crisp roofline, emphasizing the rectilinear geometry and horizontality of the design.

The first floor housed the public library collections. A lobby area with exhibit cases, children's books, elevator, and staircase led into open stacks, reference collections, and research resources. A network of offices was located behind the main checkout counter. The interior was well illuminated and enhanced by views of Rockville's historic courthouses, public buildings, and streetscapes. County library headquarters, with administrative offices, conference rooms, and book depository were located on the second floor, which was accessible by an entrance ramp from the southwest parking lot. With the exception of minor interior changes, the library is unaltered, intact, and in good condition.

8. Significance Inventory No.

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

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<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates: 1971

Architect: Stanley H. Arthur, AIA

Construction dates: 1971

Builder: Gardner and Van Epp

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Rockville Regional Library was the City’s first full-service public library, the culmination of a century-long odyssey to provide a permanent facility for library services and an emblem of Rockville post-World II emergence as major suburban center. Completed in 1971 and designated a regional library three years later, this International Style building was designed by noted Bethesda architect Stanley H. Arthur and is one of Rockville’s most distinctive modernist buildings. Prominently situated at the intersection of Jefferson Street and Maryland Avenue, the Rockville Regional Library catered to the needs of a rapidly growing suburban population. The library was a flagship facility that also served as the administrative headquarters for the Department of Public Libraries. When it closed in 2006, the Rockville Regional Library was recognized as having offered residents an accessible and diverse range of literary, educational, and research resources.

The 1971 dedication of the Rockville Library was - in effect - the culmination of a century-long odyssey to establish a permanent library facility in Rockville. This movement originated in 1869 with the founding of the Rockville Library Association of Montgomery County, which amassed a small collection of 150 books housed in the law offices of Anderson and Bouic on Montgomery Avenue.(1) This early initiative, however, failed to sustain momentum, and it was not until 1916 that Rockville women's groups organized a small lending library staffed by volunteers at the Woman's Club on Montgomery Avenue. By 1921, the Rockville Library Association had relocated its collection of 1,500 books and periodicals to Dr. Stonestreet's former medical offices and adopted articles of incorporation for a membership-based organization.(2) Under their leadership, the collection grew steadily, and by the late 1920s, the RLA was searching for larger quarters. In 1937, and with more than 5,000 books in circulation, the RLA leased space in the Rockville Academy (built 1890) at the corner of Adams and Jefferson Streets and hired its first paid librarian.(3) The library remained in the Rockville Academy building until 1966.

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~~In 1948, the RLA reorganized as the Rockville Public Library and voted to offer free library service to all Rockville residents. Non-residents were charged an annual fee of \$3 per family. The following year, the Mayor and Council of Rockville allocated \$3,600 to assist the operation, a stipend which became a major source of revenue.(4)~~

The post-World War II population boom profoundly impacted Montgomery County, particularly Rockville which experienced a 276% increase in population between 1950 and 1960, compared with a 107% increase County wide.(5) The Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries was created in 1951, but Rockville opted not to join the new system until 1957. Still operating in antiquated quarters at the Rockville Academy, the Library Board weighed its limited options for building an addition and expanding services to neighborhoods with bookmobiles or small branches.(6) Urban renewal of Rockville's downtown area in the mid-1960s offered the promise of a long-awaited permanent facility. In 1966, the library relocated to a stylish new office bank/office building at 255 North Washington Street designed by Arthur Anderson for the Suburban Trust Company. Conveniently situated near Town Center with shopping and ample parking, the library's 40,000 volume collection filled its temporary space as plans for a permanent facility were being formulated.(7)

By 1967, plans for new libraries in Aspen Hill, Chevy Chase, and Kensington were in varying stages of development; libraries in Rockville and Twinbrook were identified as priority capitol projects, with \$800,000 earmarked in the budget for the Rockville facility. (8) Since the late 1950s, Rockville had been a preferred location for both a central library headquarters and a regional library, the latter a model for distributing reference and research collections in libraries at major population centers throughout the County.(9) Plans for a building to accommodate both administrative and regional library functions made site selection a critical process. Planning criteria emphasized accessibility to Rockville's urban center and convenient parking. According to Montgomery County Library Board records, three sites were considered, including 2 acres at Jefferson and Monroe Streets, a large parcel at the intersection of Interstate 70-S and Route 28, and a smaller 1.5-acre site opposite the County Office Building at the intersection of Jefferson and Perry Streets. The overwhelming preference was for the third site with its proximity to Rockville's urban renewal area and the promise of a new parking garage adjacent to the County Office Building.(10)

In June 1968, the site selection of Perry Street was finalized and Stanley H. Arthur, a well-known Bethesda architect who designed the Davis Memorial Library in 1964, was named project architect for the new Rockville Library. In September, Arthur presented preliminary drawings and a scale model of his design to the Library Board, which gave its unanimous recommendation. Arthur's original plans included a two-level parking deck on Vinson Street, a feature that was eliminated in the final stages of the design process to reduce construction costs and to encourage use of the new COB parking garage across Perry Street.(11) In addition to the plaza entryway, the Library plan included handicapped entrance ramp and elevator, audio-visual facilities, and a Children's Room. Construction on the 46,000 square foot building began in the spring of 1970. (12)

The Rockville Library was dedicated on September 10, 1971, with County Executive James Gleason, County Council President Idamae Garrott, Rockville Mayor Achilles Tuchtan, and Library Board members in attendance. The new facility, which was dedicated to George P. Moreland, the first director of County Library Services, officially opened to the public on September 11 and soon took its place as a long-awaited community resource.(13) Monthly reports from 1971 through 1973 prepared for the Library Board by Head Librarian Geraldine Wooldridge indicate steady, sometimes dramatic, increases in book circulation, library registrations, and acquisitions of new materials, including reference resources and special collections. In her initial report on October 4, 1971, Wooldridge cited a circulation of more than

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~~19,000 titles and a daily average of 61 library registrations, noting that the “physical size of the library and its unusually large holdings present an insurmountable problem for the present-size staff.”(14) Despite an acute and on-going shortage of library staff, Wooldridge and her associates pursued an impressive outreach program to community groups, civic organizations, and County government and institutions, including public schools and Montgomery College. Committed to the idea of making the Rockville Library “a focus for community activity,” staff members helped organize exhibits on Black History Month, works by members of the Rockville Arts League, and information programming on public safety, aging, and retirement. (15)~~

Early in 1972, Wooldridge reported that the Library “was a very exciting place to be,” quoting one patron who commented that “she had never known that libraries could be so lively.” (16) But as new registrations and circulation statistics continued to increase, acquisitions of new materials created a backlog for overworked library personnel. Hampered by budgetary restraints, overworked staff reported complaints about library service and lack of parking space – the latter a perennial problem for the Rockville Library. By the spring of 1972, Wooldridge concluded that her staff “must make a concerted effort to educate the patron to help himself ... [by making] better use of the book catalog.” (17) Despite problems with staff morale, the Library continued its outreach to community groups and local institutions, including a cooperative program on Maryland history with Montgomery College and long-term plans for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration.(18)

Since the mid-1970s, the Department of Public Libraries has adapted to the innovative technologies of the Information and Computer Age, establishing a Telephone Reference Service in 1982, and subsequently providing electronic databases, computer stations, and Internet access in libraries, including Rockville, throughout Montgomery County. Kristine N. Tuckerman, who worked at Rockville from 1975 to 2006, reports an exponential increase in the number of email inquiries, also noting that libraries provide an important public service to County residents and students who do not own or have access to computers. Tuckerman observes a dramatic shift in the number of non-English speaking patrons who depend on libraries for foreign language information on essential services and resources.(19)

The 1971 Rockville Library closed in 2006, following the completion of a new and larger facility three blocks north in Rockville Town Center. In its 35 years of operation, the Rockville Library provided County residents with service, information, opportunity, and access to a wider and rapidly changing world . It remains one of Rockville’s best-known architectural landmarks.

Stanley H. Arthur, A.I.A.:

Stanley Arthur (1912-1999) was a native of Louisville, Kentucky and a 1937 graduate of the University of Illinois. He served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II and practiced architecture in Louisville and Cleveland before coming to the Washington area in the late 1940s. (20). In 1951, Arthur established his own firm in Bethesda, which, by the 1960s, employed 3 architects, associates in mechanical, structural, and civil engineering, a landscape architect, and consultants in acoustics, lighting, interior design, art, and sculpture.(21) A prolific and versatile architect, Arthur designed numerous buildings throughout the Washington area, principally in Montgomery County. Clients included commercial and office developers, non-profit organizations, churches, and government agencies, notably the Montgomery County Board of Education for whom he designed more than 60 schools and educational facilities (Travilah Elementary School, 1960; Winston Churchill High School, 1966; Thomas W. Pyle High School, 1962, among

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~~others). (22) Arthur's firm completed a number of noteworthy office buildings including the Vaughan building (1956), the Chevy Chase Medical Building (1959), and the Bethesda Medical Building (1955), all still in use and relatively unaltered. Arthur's design for the Calvary Lutheran Church (1962) in Silver Spring was praised by *The Washington Post* for its striking modernist design. (23)~~

By the early 1970s, Arthur's firm had completed 5 major projects in Rockville including the IBM building (1959), Rockville Unitarian Church (1964), Rockville Civic Center Auditorium (1960), Southlawn Middle School (1969), and Thomas S. Wootton High School (1970). Prior to the Rockville Library, he designed the Davis Memorial Library (1964) on Democracy Boulevard in Bethesda.

An active professional, Arthur served on the Maryland Architectural Registration Board (1963-1977) and he was a founder and president of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the Maryland American Institute of Architects (1960-1961). Following his retirement in 1978, Stanley Arthur exhibited and won prizes for his watercolor paintings, a pastime of his early career. (24) He died in 1999, leaving an impressive legacy of architectural achievement and professionalism.

Stanley Arthur was a master of the modernist idiom, which he skillfully adapted to a variety of building types and contexts. Former associates describe his deep-seated commitment to the design process and architectural standards. Arthur's school buildings, typically one or two stories, support bold horizontal rooflines and deep sheltering pavilions that define spatial relationships to site. Office buildings, composed of crisp geometric blocks, evoke the urban scale and character of the period. Calvary Lutheran Church, adjacent to the I-495 Beltway in Silver Spring, features a striking 78-foot chancel that forms a steep 25-degree angle, a combination that Arthur described as a "blend of the Gothic and the contemporary." (25) Arthur's design for the Rockville Regional Library is a skillful synthesis of International Style architecture and an ingenious site plan. Designed late in Arthur's career, the Library demonstrates Arthur's mastery of modern technologies, form, and design principles. Although we are just beginning to document Arthur's impressive body of work, he contributed much to the architectural diversity and character of Rockville and Montgomery County.

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Notes

1. *Minutes of the Rockville Library Association, 1869 – 1876* [Montgomery County Archives]; Eileen S. McGuckian, *Rockville: Portrait of a City* (Franklin, Tennessee: Hillsboro Press, 2001), p. 83; Rockville Library Chronology prepared by Eileen McGuckian, November 2006. [Peerless Rockville Collection].
2. Constitution of the Rockville Library Association; History of the Rockville Library, 1871 – 1971 [Montgomery County Archives]; McGuckian, Rockville Library Chronology, 2006. [Peerless Rockville Collection].
3. McGuckian, *Portrait*, p. 107; Noma Thompson, *Western Gateway to the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Stewart Printing, 1950), pp. 49-50; *Montgomery County Sentinel*, November 4, 1937.
4. Minutes of Mayor and Council, June 29, 1949; former Mayor Alexander J. Greene, interview of 1985, pp. 42-43 [Peerless Rockville Collection]; McGuckian, *Portrait*, p. 143.
5. Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1776 – 1976* (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery County Government and Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976), pp. 329-330; McGuckian, *Portrait*, pp. 129-136.
6. McGuckian, *Portrait*, pp. 143-144; former Mayor Dickran V. Hovsepian, interview of 1984 [Peerless Rockville Collection]; Bill McAda, "Rockville Library Relic of Past," *Montgomery County Sentinel*, October 18, 1962, B:1; B. Farquhar, "Methodist Church Buys Old Rockville Library," *Montgomery County Sentinel*, August 19, 1965, B:9.
7. History of Rockville Public Library, September 1980 [Montgomery County Archives]; Minutes of Montgomery County Library Board, August 11, 1966; Lease Agreement for Suburban Trust building, July 12, 1966 [Montgomery County Archives].
8. Minutes of Montgomery County Library Board, February 10, 1966; March 10, 1966; August 11, 1966; September 15, 1966; March 9, 1967; May 11, 1967. Note: The \$800,000 earmarked for the Rockville Library in the March 9, 1967 Minutes.
9. Montgomery County Library Board – Long-Range Planning Committee, Report on Facility Needs: 1956 – 1961, April 1856; Robert M. Bor, Chairman Montgomery County Library Board, to County Councilmember Idamae Garrett, July 25, 1969; Alan W. Trick, Chairman Montgomery County Library Board to County Councilmember David Cahoon, October 20, 1962. [Montgomery County Archives]. Note: Proximity to County government was frequently cited as a rationale for locating a major/regional branch in Rockville.
10. Ibid., Trick to Cahoon; Fernallen A. Auxier, Chairman Montgomery County Library Board, to County Manager Mason A Butcher, July 20, 1967; Minutes, Montgomery County Library Board, September 14, 1967 and May 9, 1968 [Montgomery County Archives]; "Site for Regional Library Is Shifted in Renewal Area," *Montgomery County Sentinel*, June 10, 1968, A:2.
11. Minutes of the Montgomery County Library Board, June 13, 1968; September 19, 1968; "Library for Rockville," *Montgomery County Sentinel*, January 15, 1970, A:3.
12. The Montgomery County Archives has 1970 – 1971 photographs of site excavation and library construction.

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- ~~13. Rockville Library Dedication Program, September 10, 1971; History of Rockville Public Library, September 1980.~~
[Montgomery County Archives] Note: Moreland served as director of Library Services from 1951 to 1969.
14. Gerry [Geraldine] Wooldridge to Norman Finkler, Memorandum of October 4, 1971. [Montgomery County Archives]
15. Wooldridge to Finkler, Memoranda of October 4, 1971; November 2, 1971; December 4, 1971; January 5, 1972; February 5, 1972. [Montgomery County Archives]
16. Wooldridge to Finkler, Memorandum of March 2, 1972. [Montgomery County Archives]
17. Wooldridge to Finkler, Memorandum of May 30, 1972. [Montgomery County Archives]
18. Wooldridge to Finkler, Memoranda of November 6, 1972 and December 7, 1972. [Montgomery County Archives] Note: In 1976, Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Historical Society jointly published *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County Maryland, 1776 – 1976* written by Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert. In his foreword to the book, County Executive James Gleason credited the “County History Project” established by the Department of Public Libraries in 1973 for producing “a comprehensive body of historical knowledge about Montgomery County from a which a book could be written.” MacMaster and Hiebert, *Grateful Remembrance*, pp. v-vi.
19. Kristine N. Tuckerman, interview of September 30, 2006, Rockville, Maryland.
20. Stanley H. Arthur, Architect, A.I.A.. Undated portfolio [Mary T. Arthur]; “Stanley Arthur Jr. Dies; Designed Area Buildings,” *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1999, B:5; “Arthur, Stanley Houghton, A.I.A. 37,” A.I.A. biographical entry. [American Institute of Architects Archives]
21. Stanley Arthur, undated portfolio.
22. “Bethesda’s Busily Building Toward a Big Real Estate Future,” *The Washington Post*, October 11, 1953, R:1; “Ocean Beach Housing Outlook,” *The Washington Post*, September 5, 1954, R:2; “New Office Building for Bethesda,” *The Washington Post*, July 17, 1955, G:1; “Bethesda Building Planned,” *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1956, G:5; “New Maryland School,” *The Washington Post*, March 16, 1957, B:2; “Chevy Chase Medical Building,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1959, C:10; “New Home for Army Times,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1955, G:18; “A Chancel Reaching Up to God,” *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1962, D:1; “Ground-Breaking for Unitarian Church,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1964, C:10.
23. “Chancel,” *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1962; Jerold E. Williamson, interviews of September 13 and 21, 2006, Rockville, Maryland; David McClure, telephone interview of August 25, 2006.
24. “Arthur,” A.I.A. biographical entry; George M. Thompson, Assistant Chief, Building Technology Division, National Bureau of Standards. Letter of recommendation submitted on behalf of Stanley Arthur to the Maryland Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects, April 7, 1949. [Peerless Rockville Collection]
25. “Chancel,” *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1962.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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1. Primary sources: Peerless Rockville Collection; Montgomery County Archives; Minutes of Mayor and Council; *Montgomery County Sentinel*; *The Washington Post*; interviews and oral histories; Stanley H. Arthur portfolio.
 2. Secondary sources: McGuckian, Eileen S. *Rockville: Portrait of a City* (2001); MacMaster, Richard K. and Ray Eldon Hiebert. *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, 1776-1976* (1976).
 3. Archival photograph courtesy Mary T. Arthur; library photographs courtesy Scott Robinson (September 2006).
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1.5 acres
Acreage of historical setting same
Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name/title Teresa B. Lachin and Eileen S. McGuckian

organization Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.

street & number P.O. Box 4262

city or town Rockville

date May 2007

telephone 301-762-0096

state Maryland 20849

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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
