

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
For
June 17, 2010
MEETING NO. 9-2010**

APPLICATION: HDC2010-00511
ADDRESS: 408 Great Falls Road
ACCEPTED: 5/21/10
OWNER: Richard Culp Jr., personal
representative of the estate of
Elizabeth W. Nicholson
REQUEST: Historic significance evaluation
STAFF: Rosemary Faya Prola



PROJECT SUMMARY:

The applicant requests Evaluation of Significance review by HDC, a step required by Article 25.14.01.d.1.(c) of the City's Zoning Ordinance if demolition is intended.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HDC find that the property is eligible for historic designation since it does meet the City's criteria I-C, I-D, II-A, II-E. It is a highly visible example of Colonial Revival style residences constructed just before World War II in Rockville.

[DRAFT MOTION OF APPROVAL:]

Finding that the property at 408 Great Falls Road does possess significance and meets criteria I-C, I-D, II-A, and II-E, I recommend the property for historic designation.

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, the owner of 406 Great Falls Road and the owner of 408 Great Falls Road requested an Evaluation of Historic Significance on these properties prior to development of the site as a residential subdivision (see Circle 11). At the time, staff documented both properties with MHT Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties forms. On this occasion, the property owners withdrew the evaluation request prior to the HDC consideration.

In April 2007, the owner of 406 Great Falls Road applied for an evaluation of historic significance as a single-site historic district. While staff considered the property significant for its history, cultural associations and architecture, staff recommended that 406 Great Falls Road did not have sufficient integrity for historic designation due to architectural alterations.

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Now, the owner of 408 Great Falls Road requests an Evaluation of Historic Significance for his property, currently offered for sale, in the expectation that a potential buyer would either expand the residence or demolish it (See Circle 1).

This report records current conditions and adds information not included in the 2005 inventory form for 408 Great Falls Road (See Circle 3).

408 Great Falls Road HDC2010-00511

Previous Requests:

Evaluation of Significance
(2005)

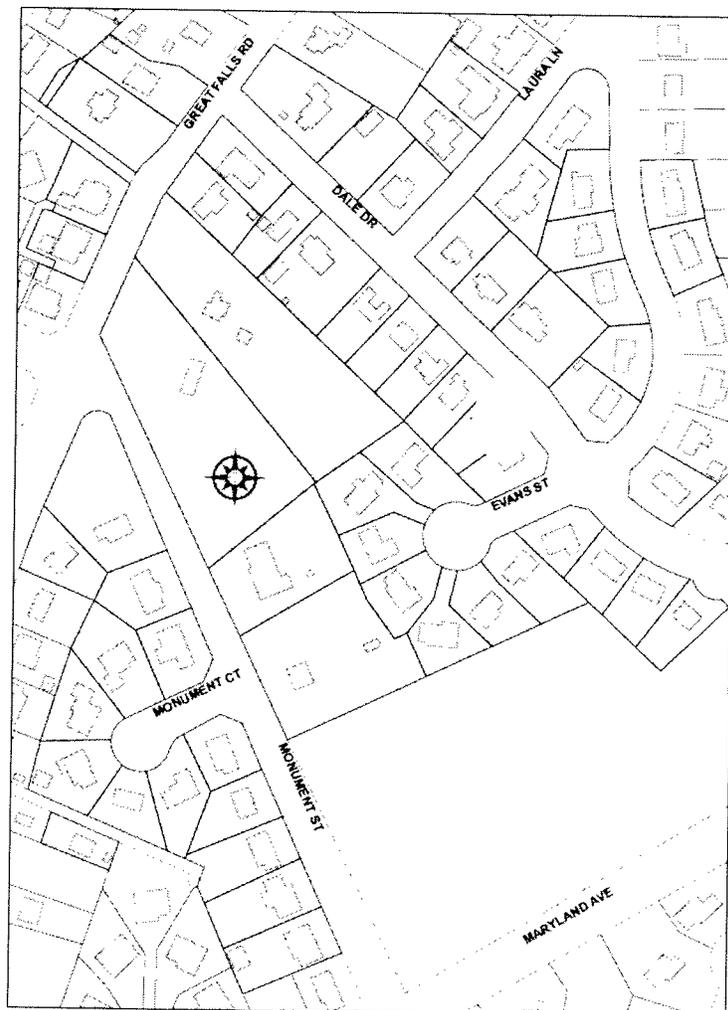
Property Area:
67,583 sq. ft.

Structure Area:
1,610 sq. ft.

Zone:
R90

**City of Rockville Permits
Required:**

Demolition permit
Building permit



June 17, 2010
Evaluation of Significance for Demolition

Property Description

This two-story, three-bay Colonial Revival house was built c. 1940. The brick veneer is laid in an American bond, with six rows of brick stretchers separated by single courses of alternating stretcher-headers. The enclosed area includes approximately 1,600 square feet, not including basement or attic space. It has a slate side-gabled roof and a brick veneer foundation. There are porches on each side and an exterior brick chimney on the left side. A built-in two-car garage is

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accessed on the right side at the basement level. According to a set of building plans now in the family's possession, the house's architect was Joseph W. Wheeler.

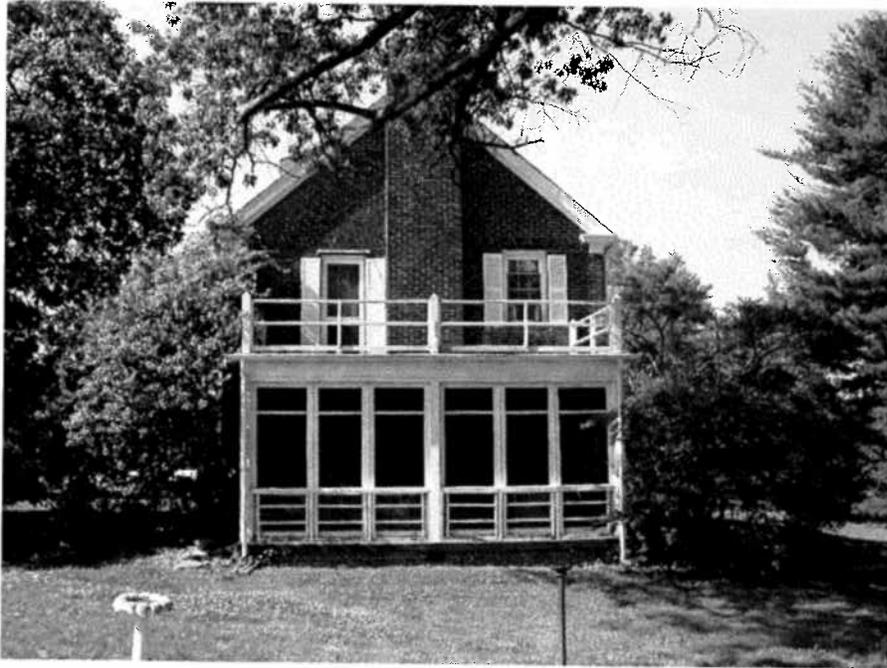


View of 408 Great Falls Road looking east. Former William Nicholson property at 406 Great Falls in the background. (All photos, June 2010)

View from southwest showing enclosed porch above garage on west elevation



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East elevation

As stated in the 2005 inventory form, the windows are mainly 6/6 double-hung vinyl sashes with snap-in grilles. The wood exterior doors appear to be original, as does a 6/6 wood sash on the south (rear) elevation nearly hidden within the shed-roofed screened porch. Also, while the shutters are vinyl replacements, the iron s-shaped holdbacks appear to be original.

The Colonial Revival style is clearly expressed on the façade by the symmetrical arrangement of the windows, the boxed cornice, and by the six-panel wood entry door with classical surround. The one-story, side porches are also typical expressions of the style.



View from northwest



Front entry

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View of yard from west
 A 30-foot Magnolia tree stands behind the house in a group of shrubs and trees that includes a mature evergreen and holly.

The house faces northwest toward Great Falls Road and is deeply set on the property, with mature trees shading the house on its south and east elevations. It was vacant for about three years until the current tenant moved in the summer of 2009.¹ The property includes an open yard along Monument Street (Lots 7, 8, 9 of Rockville Heights subdivision). The house straddles the property line between lots 6 and 7. The house and grounds appear to be in good condition.

Historic Significance

As noted in the 2005 inventory form, the dwelling at 408 Great Falls Road, like the house at 406, is located in the Rockville Heights subdivision. The Rockville Heights subdivision was platted in 1890. Like the West End Park subdivision (1890), and Reading’s First Addition to Rockville (1888), Rockville Heights was platted with large lots, parks, and picturesque roads, similar to garden suburbs being built nationwide. Building in these subdivisions progressed slowly, with much of the platted lots remaining vacant until well into the twentieth century. Development in this vicinity picked up again in the 1930s. This area was annexed into the City of Rockville in 1937, with subsequent annexations of the remaining portions of Rockville Heights in 1939 and 1941. The *Historic Resources Management Plan*, at Context #7 notes that the area suffered during the Great Depression, but perhaps less than the rest of the nation because of the proximity of the Federal Government. The subject house, and the Tudor Revival style house at 406 Great Falls Road, were constructed on multiple lots within Rockville Heights, contributing to the low-density “estate” character of the properties and the neighborhood.

James Brawner Nicholson and his wife Mary Trail Nicholson purchased the land for both 406 and 408 Great Falls Road from John Maury Dove and his wife Nannie Carter Dove according to

¹ Richard T. Culp Jr., nephew of James B. and Elizabeth Nicholson and current property owner. Telephone interview, 2 June 2010.

deeds recorded on January 3, 1913 and on January 26, 1923.² James Brawner Nicholson was born in 1869, the son of Leonard Lispernard Nicholson and Susan C. Brawner. Leonard lived in Rockville since about 1905. James married Mary Trail at her family's home in Rockville in 1906. Mary Trail was the daughter of Hezekiah and Elizabeth Trail who owned property along Great Falls Road. The Nicholsons had four children, one of whom, Elizabeth Brawner Nicholson, died in infancy. The remaining children were James Brawner Nicholson, Jr., William Trail Nicholson and Mary Forest Nicholson. James B. Nicholson, Sr. died in 1932 and is also buried at the Rockville Cemetery. His widow died in 1965.

James Brawner Nicholson Jr. was born October 6, 1908. He married Elizabeth Williams White, the daughter of Dr. Elijah Wootton White and Florence Pyles in 1936. Their wedding announcement states that they were married in the bride's hometown of Poolesville and that the "bride and groom are well-known in the county and have a host of friends".⁴ Ushers included Charles Beard and William Bouic of Rockville. The couple lived in Washington, D.C. where James Jr. was employed before eventually returning to Rockville. For a time, Nicholson was partner in The Fairway Sports Shop, located at 1328 G Street, NW.³ Later, he worked for Maryland National Bank in Rockville.⁴ According to the couple's 1936 wedding announcement, Elizabeth Nicholson was a graduate of the Union Memorial School of Nursing in Baltimore, and worked at least briefly as a registered nurse.⁵ James died in 1979 and Elizabeth died at the age of 96 in January 2007. The couple had no children.

Local builder Brawner Harding built the house at 408 Great Falls Road for James and Elizabeth Nicholson; the company also built the house at 406 for James' brother William. The brothers acquired the land by deed from their widowed mother on October 11, 1941. Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation data shows that 406 Great Falls Road was built in 1945 and 408 was built in 1941. Both houses appear on the 1949 F.H.M Klinge Atlas of property in Montgomery County. Family history indicates that the houses were built earlier, perhaps in the late 1930s, according to Kebba. In 2005 the architect of 408 Great Falls was unknown, however, Richard Culp now has in his possession the building plans that lists Joseph W. Wheeler as the architect. Further research would be necessary to determine if Wheeler was architect of another c. 1941 Colonial Revival house in the neighborhood at 124 Monument Street. Part of the land on which this house stands was owned by the Nicholson family, and conveyed by Mary Trail Nicholson, mother of James B. Nicholson Jr. and William Nicholson, to Bradley C. and Mary G. Karn in 1939 (Liber 753, Folio 404).⁶

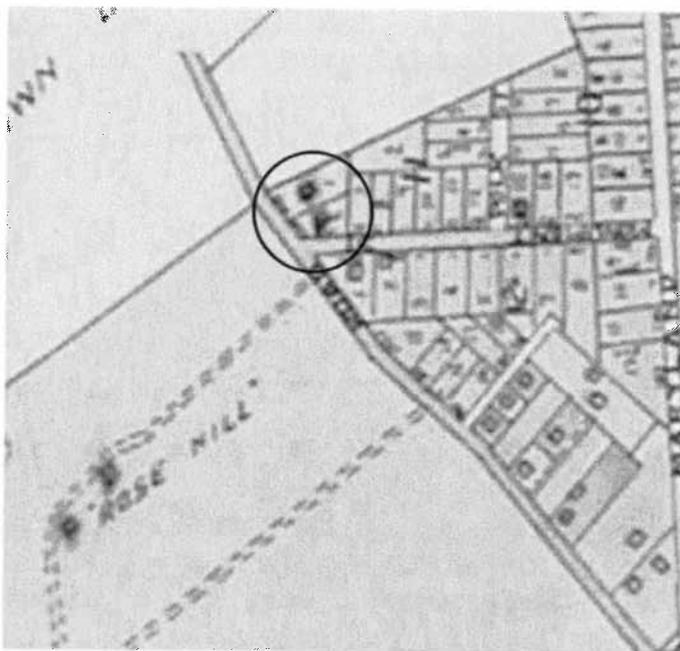
² The information in this paragraph is taken from the MHT form for the property (Cindy Kebba, November 2005).

³ Richard T. Culp Jr. interview. Mr. Culp was not familiar with the name of the store, however, it appears in the 1958 Polk Rockville City directory as part of the James B. Nicholson listing [Polk Rockville City Directory, 1958, p. 147]. Nicholson sold his share of the business in the 1950s, his nephew says.

⁴ Culp interview.

⁵ Wedding announcement. The Washington Post, 11 July 1936 (Nicholson family file, Montgomery County Historical society); Elizabeth Nicholson obituary. *The Washington Post*, 14 January 2007.

⁶ Bradley Karn was a local builder, who joined his father's firm, the Frank H. Karn co., in the 1920s. He established his own company, the Bradley Karn Co., in 1954. [*Washington Post* July 15, 1982, obituary].



As shown in the Klinge Atlas, there were few houses in the immediate vicinity of 40 Great Falls Road in 1949, and only a few pre-date the house: 500 Great Falls Road was built in 1917 and 402 Great Falls was built in 1931.

Detail from 1949 Klinge Atlas showing 406 and 408 Great Falls Road

Aerial photograph showing locations and surroundings of 406 Great Falls Road and 408 Great Falls



PROJECT DISCUSSION

City staff has determined that, consistent with the Zoning Ordinance, the four record lots included in the 408 Great Falls property, which were platted with the Rockville Heights subdivision, are buildable lots (see Circle 11).

In the future, staff notes that the environmental setting of the house could be reduced, as the house at 408 Great Falls Road straddles lot lines (Part of Lot 6 and Lot 7), and the buildable lots make up the remainder of the property. There is potential for an adjustment of the lot lines, through a Minor Subdivision process, to achieve building lots for three additional houses while retaining the historic house on its own lot. If the entire property is designated, the HDC would have review authority over the design of the new homes. Staff notes that the HDC is directed by Section 8.08 of Article 66B of the Maryland State Code to provide a lenient review of new construction.

CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Standing structures and sites, including archeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for designation:

I. Historical and cultural significance:

A. Is the site of a significant historic event

No. The building is not the site of a significant historical event.

B. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.

No. The building is not identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.

C. Pattern of events

Yes. Following a hiatus after the original platting of the Rockville Heights subdivision during the building boom of the late 19th century, sporadic construction that followed a pattern of large lot development occurred on the fringes of the city of Rockville prior to World War II. While other parts of the nation were struggling with economic decline, the area around the nation's capital continued to have a strong economy supporting the construction of new houses of this scale.

D. Character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation.

Yes. The Nicholson homes (406 and 408 Great Falls Road) are historic markers of the Rockville Heights subdivision, representing pre-World War II development, before the advent of modern suburban residential development after World War II. While the Tudor Revival style home at 406 Great Falls Road was evaluated and found to lack integrity, this Colonial Revival style home retains integrity. The property embodies the generational development of the City, and reflects the position of Rockville as both a small town with families with longterm city and county roots, and a Washington suburb that benefited from the proximity of the nation's capital for economic health. The Nicholson and Trail families illustrate this duality.

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II. Architectural and design significance:

A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

Yes. The house is a good example of the Colonial Revival style, which dominated new construction in this era prior to World War II. The building displays distinctive characteristics of the Colonial Revival style such as the symmetrical façade, classical trim at the front door, and single-story flanking porches, with a new component: the integral, basement-level, garage.

B. Represents the work of a master.

The architect, Mr. Joseph W. Wheeler, has been identified, and original house drawings are available. Further research is needed to understand Mr. Wheeler's contributions.

C. Possesses high artistic values.

No. The building does not possess high artistic values.

D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

No. As a single building, this criterion does not apply.

E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county.

Yes. The house is a distinctive feature along Great Falls Road, resulting from a combination of topography and siting of the house. The house sits significantly above the level of the street and is angled towards the street corner. The subject property constitutes one of the gateways to what was the town of Rockville.

III. Historic Integrity of structure and site:

The property possesses architectural integrity, retaining its location, design, workmanship, and most original materials, feeling, and association with the Nicholson family. While the windows and shutters are vinyl replacements, there is no evidence the window openings have been altered and the multi-pane, double-hung sashes are consistent with the Colonial Revival style. The aluminum covering the original wood cornice is a reversible alteration. This house also presents an early example of the integral garage.

The environmental setting of the property remains essentially intact, with large lot development in the neighborhood within the Rockville Heights subdivision. While modern buildings have replaced the farmland across Great Falls Road, the historic setting is preserved with the house's deep setback that provides the view across the front yard expanse. Viewed as a unit, the house design and setting exemplifies the large lot suburban residential architecture of the period.

IV. Level of site significance:

Local: Yes

State: No

National: No

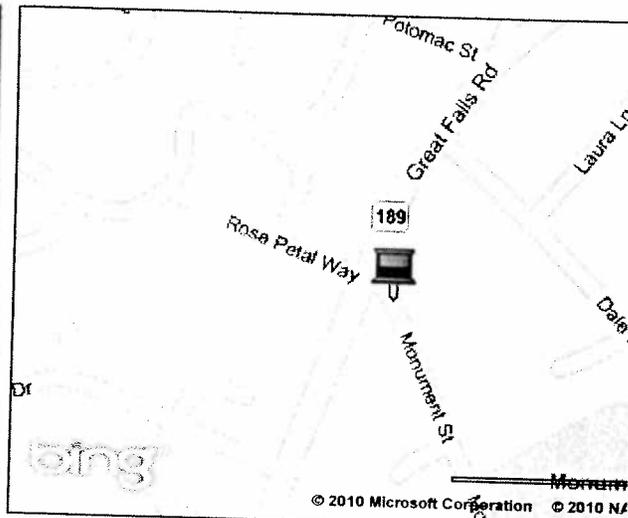
Rory S. Coakley Realty, Inc.
 20 Courthouse Square, Suite 106
 Rockville, MD 20850-2337
 Phone: (301)340-8700 Fax: (301)340-6380
 michelle@coakleyrealty.com http://www.coakleyrealty.com

MLS# MC6586103

Listing Report - Residential

06/07/2010
 02:29:06 PM

408 GREAT FALLS RD ROCKVILLE, MD 20850



BASIC INFORMATION:

MLS #: MC6586103

LIST PRICE: \$ 1,250,000

STATUS: ACTIVE

Ownership: Fee Simple, Sale
 Style: Colonial
 HOA Fee: \$ 0
 Total Taxes: \$ 13,587

Sale/Rental: Sale
 Type: Detached
 Condo Fee: \$ 0
 Tax Year: 2007

Year Built: 1941
 Subdivision: ROCKVILLE HEIGHTS
 Model:

| TOTAL | MAIN | UPPER1 | UPPER2 | LOWER1 | LOWER2 | SCHOOLS |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------|
| BR: 3 | BR: 0 | BR: 3 | BR: 0 | BR: 0 | BR: 0 | ES: BEALL |
| FB: 2 | FB: 0 | FB: 2 | FB: 0 | FB: 0 | FB: 0 | MS: JULIUS WEST |
| HB: 1 | HB: 1 | HB: 0 | HB: 0 | HB: 0 | HB: 0 | HS: RICHARD MONTGOMERY |

ROOM DIMENSIONS:

Lower 1: Garage 22x22
 Lower 1: Unfinished Bsmt 22x20
 Main: Dining Room 13x13
 Main: Family Rm 19x10

Main: Foyer 20x6
 Main: Kitchen 9x8
 Main: Living Room 22x13
 Upper 1: Bedroom-Master 18x13

Upper 1: Bedroom-Second 13x11
 Upper 1: Bedroom-Third 11x9

PROPERTY INFORMATION:

of Levels: 3
 # of Fireplaces: 2
 # Garage Spaces: 2
 Parking: Drwy/Off Str, Garage, Street

Basement: Yes
 Basement Type: Full, Outside Entrance, Side Entrance
 # Carport Spaces:
 Sewer/Septic: Public Sewer

Lot Acreage: 1.551492
 Lot Square Feet: 67,583
 # Assigned Spaces:

Appliances: Disposal, Oven/Range-Electric, Refrigerator
 Exterior: Porch-screened, Porch-side, Roof Deck
 Exterior Constr.: Brick
 Roofing: Slate

HEATING/COOLING/WATER:

Heating System: Radiator
 Heating Fuel: Oil
 Cooling System: Ceiling Fan(s), Window Unit(s)
 Cooling Fuel: Electric
 Water: Public
 Hot Water: Oil



WATER ACCESS:

Water Access: No Waterfront: No Water View: No Dock Conveys: No

REMARKS:

Incredible opportunity to own this LANDMARK LEVEL MANICURED 1.55 ACRE corner level lot w/ development potential. Renovate & expand this period style home, or tear down & build your dream home. Subdivide & sell off lots to maximize profit potential. Storybook solid brick colonial. Hdwd flrs & new windows thruout; sunroom & two screened porch adds; 2 roof decks; 2 FPs; walk-up attic.

LISTING INFORMATION:

Listing Broker: Rory S. Coakley Realty, Inc.

RECENT NEARBY SALES:

| Address | Sold Price | Beds | Full Baths | Partial Baths | Date Sold | Listing Broker | Selling Broker |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------|------------|---------------|------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 14019 MANORVALE RD, ROCKVILLE, MD | \$358,000 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 06/04/2010 | Llewellyn, REALTORS | Long & Foster Real Estate, Inc. |
| 1498 DUNSTER LN, POTOMAC, MD | \$635,000 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 06/03/2010 | Spicer Real Estate | Long & Foster Real Estate, Inc. |
| 9469 COPENHAVER DR, POTOMAC, MD | \$700,000 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 06/03/2010 | Llewellyn, REALTORS | RE/MAX Realty Group |
| 625 MURIEL ST, ROCKVILLE, MD | \$560,000 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 06/02/2010 | Wallace & Associates | Wallace & Associates |
| 2461 MCCORMICK RD, ROCKVILLE, MD | \$455,000 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 06/01/2010 | Long & Foster Real Estate, Inc. | Weichert, REALTORS |

Information is believed to be accurate but should not be relied upon without verification.

2

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic 408 Great Falls Road
other

2. Location

street and number 408 Great Falls Road
city, town Rockville vicinity
county Montgomery

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

name Elizabeth W. Nicholson
street and number 408 Great Falls Road telephone 301-762-2783
city, town Rockville state Maryland zip code 20350

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County liber 3097 folio 288
city, town Rockville tax map GR22 tax parcel P667 tax ID number 00205097

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: _____

6. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Current Function | Resource Count |
|---|---|--|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | Contributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> defense | _____ buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic | _____ sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | | <input type="checkbox"/> education | _____ structures |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary | _____ objects |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> government | _____ Total |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> health care | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> religion | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> social | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> unknown | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: | |

Number of Contributing Resources
previously listed in the Inventory

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.

This brick-veneer two-story, three-bay Colonial Revival house was built c. 1940. The enclosed area includes approximately 1,600 square feet, not including basement or attic space. It has a slate side-gabled roof and a brick veneer foundation. There are porches on each side and an exterior brick chimney on the left side. A built-in two-car garage is accessed on the right side at the basement level.

The symmetrical front façade faces northwest toward Great Falls Road and is deeply set on its 1.5-acre lot. The center six-panel wood door has a decorative architrave with hood and fluted pilasters. Single 1/1, double-hung vinyl-sash windows flank the door on the first floor. Each has six-light snap-in grilles and fiberglass shutters. There are three vinyl-sash double-hung windows on the second story. Two are directly above the first floor windows and have 8/8 snap-in grilles. A smaller four-light vinyl-sash double-hung window is directly above the door. The cornice, vergeboard and soffit appear to be clad with aluminum.



Front and
West
Elevations



The west elevation includes an enclosed porch on the first floor above a basement-level two-car garage. The porch framing is clad with aluminum siding. The front and rear walls of the porch each contain a triple double-hung 6/6 vinyl-sash window. The west façade of the porch has two of these triple windows. The porch is accessed from the interior space via a multi-light wood door. The second floor contains a 12-light door that accesses the rooftop of the porch. This roof has a two-rail balustrade along the perimeter. There is also a 1/1 double-hung vinyl-sash window with six-light snap-in grilles. A smaller window is located in the apex of the gable. Each opening is flanked by synthetic shutters. Cornice returns and vergeboards are sheathed with aluminum. The submerged garage has a full-width overhead door.

The rear elevation has a nine-light door which is contained within a small shed-roofed screened porch. Windows are double-hung, vinyl-sash. A shed dormer breaks the rear slope of the roof and is clad in aluminum siding with a standing seam metal roof. There are three double-hung vinyl-sash windows in the dormer.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1



East (porch)
and Rear
Elevations



The first floor of the left (east) elevation is taken up by a wood-framed screened porch and a brick exterior end chimney. The porch is accessed by doors that flank the fireplace in the living room. The chimney is flanked by a wood door and a double-hung vinyl-sash window on the second story.

The center hall first floor plan includes a living room with fireplace. The living room extends the full length of the house on this left side of the entrance hall. Exterior doors, symmetrically placed on either side of the fireplace, open onto the screened porch. To the right of the entry hall, the dining room and kitchen occupy the right side of the house. The entry hall includes a stairway with a winder 4/5 of the way up and a narrow hall which leads to a coat closet. The second floor includes three bedrooms and a full bath, arranged along the stair hall.

Aerial photograph
showing locations and
surroundings of
406 Great Falls Road
408 Great Falls Road



8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance | Check and justify below | | | Inventory No. |
|---|--|---|---|--|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> performing arts | |
| <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history | |
| | <input checked="" 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 | | Architect/Builder | | Brawner Harding, Builder | |
| Construction dates c.1940 | | | | | |
| Evaluation for: | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Register | | <input type="checkbox"/> Maryland Register | | <input type="checkbox"/> 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.)

Statement of Significance

The house at 408 Great Falls Road is an example of revival-style period architectural design. The original environmental setting is intact, as is its massing and its footprint. The windows have been replaced with vinyl-sash, but the openings have not been changed. The house illustrates the early incorporation of a garage into the body of a house. Both 406 and 408 Great Falls Road are remnants of the large and elaborate Rockville Heights subdivision, being built on originally platted lots in the 1930's. The Nicholson homes are historic markers of the Rockville Heights subdivision, before it was resubdivided and developed with split levels and ranch style homes. These two properties are associated with the Nicholson and Trail families, both large and prominent families, each with a long presence in Rockville and Montgomery County.

History and Support

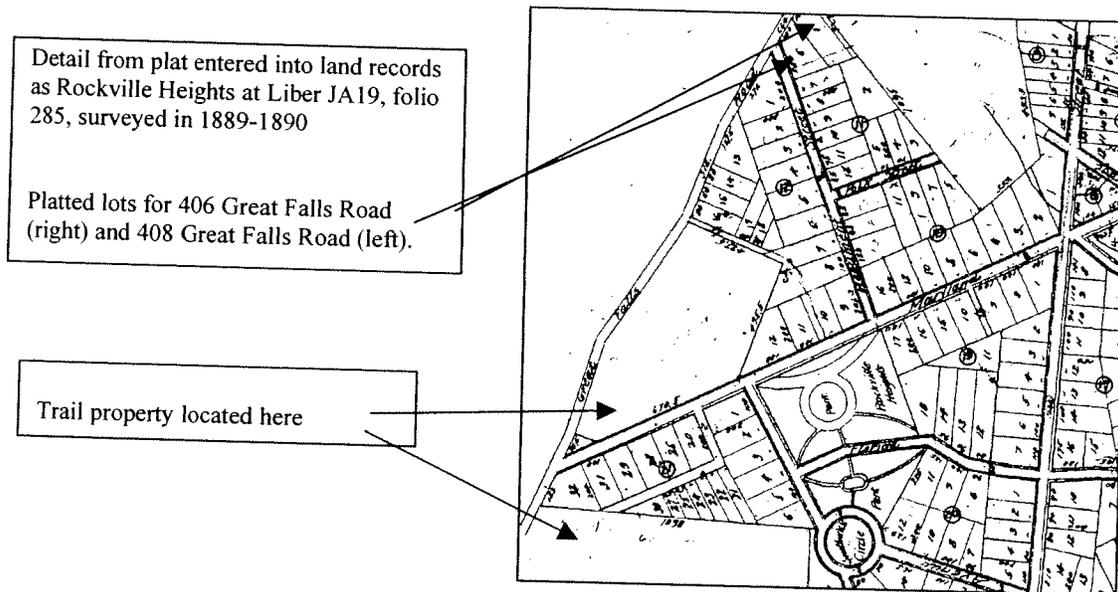
The Rockville Heights subdivision was platted in 1890, with large lots, parks, boulevards and circles in anticipation of attracting upscale residential development. This subdivision created Maryland Avenue, Argyle Avenue, and Monument Street. Other rights-of-way, including Polk Street, and Florida and New York Avenues were later abandoned. The Rockville Heights subdivision was similar to the platted West End Park subdivision (1890), and to the first subdivision in East Rockville called Reading's First Addition to Rockville (1888). All of these subdivisions were platted with generous lots and picturesque roads, in the time-honored fashion of the late 19th century garden suburbs being built nationwide. All of these subdivisions were viewed as largely unsuccessful because they developed slowly. Many of the platted lots in all of these subdivisions remained vacant until well into the 20th century, and this is part of the history of the development of City of Rockville.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1



The land for both 406 and 408 Great Falls Road was purchased by James Brawner Nicholson and his wife Mary Trail Nicholson from John Maury Dove and his wife Nannie Carter Dove according to deeds recorded on January 3, 1913 and on January 26, 1923.¹ J. Maury Dove moved to Washington, DC after selling the last of his Great Falls Road property to the Nicholsons and he died in 1924. His wife, a native of Rockville, died in 1929 in D.C. and is buried in Rock Creek Cemetery.²

James Brawner Nicholson was born in 1869, the son of Leonard Lisperard Nicholson and Susan C. Brawner. Leonard lived in Rockville since about 1905. James married Mary Trail at her family's home in Rockville in 1906. Mary Trail was the daughter of Hezekiah and Elizabeth Trail who owned property along Great Falls Road. Hezekiah Trail was born in Rockville in 1845 and he and his wife are buried at Rockville Cemetery. The Nicholsons had four children, one of whom, Elizabeth Brawner Nicholson, died in infancy. The remaining children were James Brawner Nicholson, Jr., William Trail Nicholson and Mary Forest Nicholson. James B. Nicholson, Sr. died in 1932 and is also buried at the Rockville Cemetery. His widow died in 1965.³

¹ Montgomery County Land Records 226/169; 234/46

² Montgomery Sentinel Newspaper, Genealogical Abstracts

³ Nicholson Families, Our Maryland Heritage Series, Book 40, William Neal Hurley, Jr., 2002

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

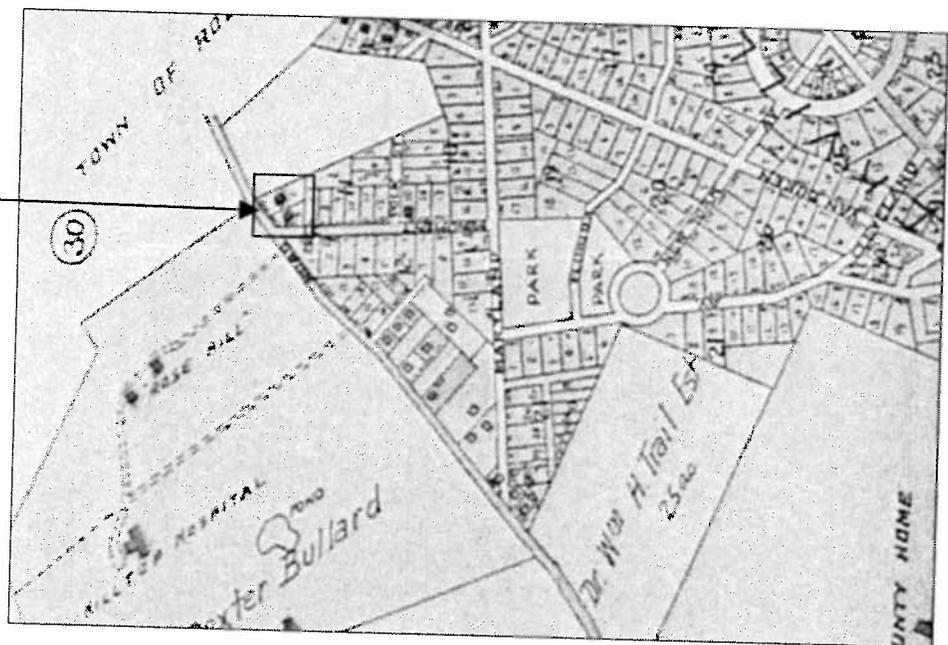
Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

406 (top) and 408
(bottom) Great
Falls Road houses

Detail from 1949 F.H.M. Klinge Atlas of Property in Montgomery County Maryland showing Rose Hill Farm, Rockville Heights, and the Great Falls Road. Trail property is located between Maryland Avenue and Great Falls Road and a 25-acre parcel on the right side of Great Falls Road.



James Brawner Nicholson, Jr. was born October 6, 1908. He married Elizabeth Williams White who was the daughter of Dr. Elijah Wootton White and Florence Pyles in 1936. Their wedding announcement states that they were married in the bride's hometown of Poolesville and that the "bride and groom are well-known in the county and have a host of friends".⁴ Ushers included Charles Beard and William Bouic of Rockville. The couple lived in Washington, D.C. where James Jr. was employed before eventually returning to Rockville. They had no children. James died in 1979 and is buried in Monocacy. His widow, Elizabeth, is 95 years old and resides at a nursing home in Rockville. Her sister, Helen White, presently occupies the house at 408 Great Falls Road.

William Trail Nicholson married Amelia Somervell Farmer, daughter of Robert Watt Farmer of Redland in 1934 at his mother's home on the Trail family farm in Rockville. They did not have any children either.

⁴ Montgomery County Historical Society, Nicholson family file

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name
Continuation Sheet

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Mary Forest Nicholson married Richard Theodore Culp from Silver Spring in 1943 and they lived in Annapolis. They had two sons, Richard T. Culp, Jr. and James Nicholson Culp. Mary Nicholson Culp still resides in Amberley, Annapolis.

The houses at 406 and 408 Great Falls Road were built for sons William and James Jr., respectively, after their marriages by local builder Brawner Harding. The brothers acquired the land by deed from their widowed mother on October 11, 1941.⁵ Mary Trail Nicholson's Last Will and Testament states that her personal effects were left to her daughter because she had "heretofore given to my said sons substantial sums for the acquisition of their homes."⁶ Mary T. Nicholson also left her three children her 35.774-acre farm on Falls Road (described as 13.334 acres within the City of Rockville and 22.44 acres in Rockville "outside") with single-family dwelling and various outbuildings, as well as her Washington, D.C. property.

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation data shows that 406 Great Falls Road was built in 1945 and 408 was built in 1941. Both houses appear on the 1949 F.H.M Klinge Atlas of property in Montgomery County. Family history indicates that the houses were built earlier, perhaps in the late 1930s, and that 406 Great Falls Road was built before 408. If this is true, it would indicate that the houses were built before the land was deeded to each brother. According to the family, 408 Great Falls Road was designed by an architect rather than from a pattern book. Friends of the Nicholsons who lived in Poolesville, Charles Elgin and his wife, asked the Nicholsons' for permission to use the plans for their house, although they enlarged it slightly.

The Klinge Atlas shows Polk Street, Florida and New York Avenue still present in 1949. Dr. Dexter Bullard's Rose Hill property was directly across Great Falls Road. There were not many other houses in the immediate vicinity at the time and only a few pre-date the houses at 406 and 408 Great Falls Road. Immediately to the west and across Monument Avenue, 500 Great Falls Road, was built c. 1917 and 402 Great Falls to the immediate east of 406 was built c. 1931. Portions of Rockville Heights were later resubdivided and cul-de-sacs were added off Monument Street and Dale Drive.

⁵ Montgomery County Land Records 857/117; 857/116

⁶ Montgomery County Register of Wills, Case # 15,641, August 15, 1955

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. _____

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation Records, Montgomery County Plat and Land Records, Montgomery County Register of Wills, 1949 FF.H.M. Klinge Atlas or Real Estate in Montgomery County, City of Rockville Utility Service Records, Nicholson Families/Trail Families, Our Maryland Heritage Series, William Neal Hurley, 2002.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property _____ 1.55 acres _____

Acreage of historical setting _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared by

name/title Cindy Kebba

organization City of Rockville

date November 2005

street & number _____

telephone _____

city or town _____

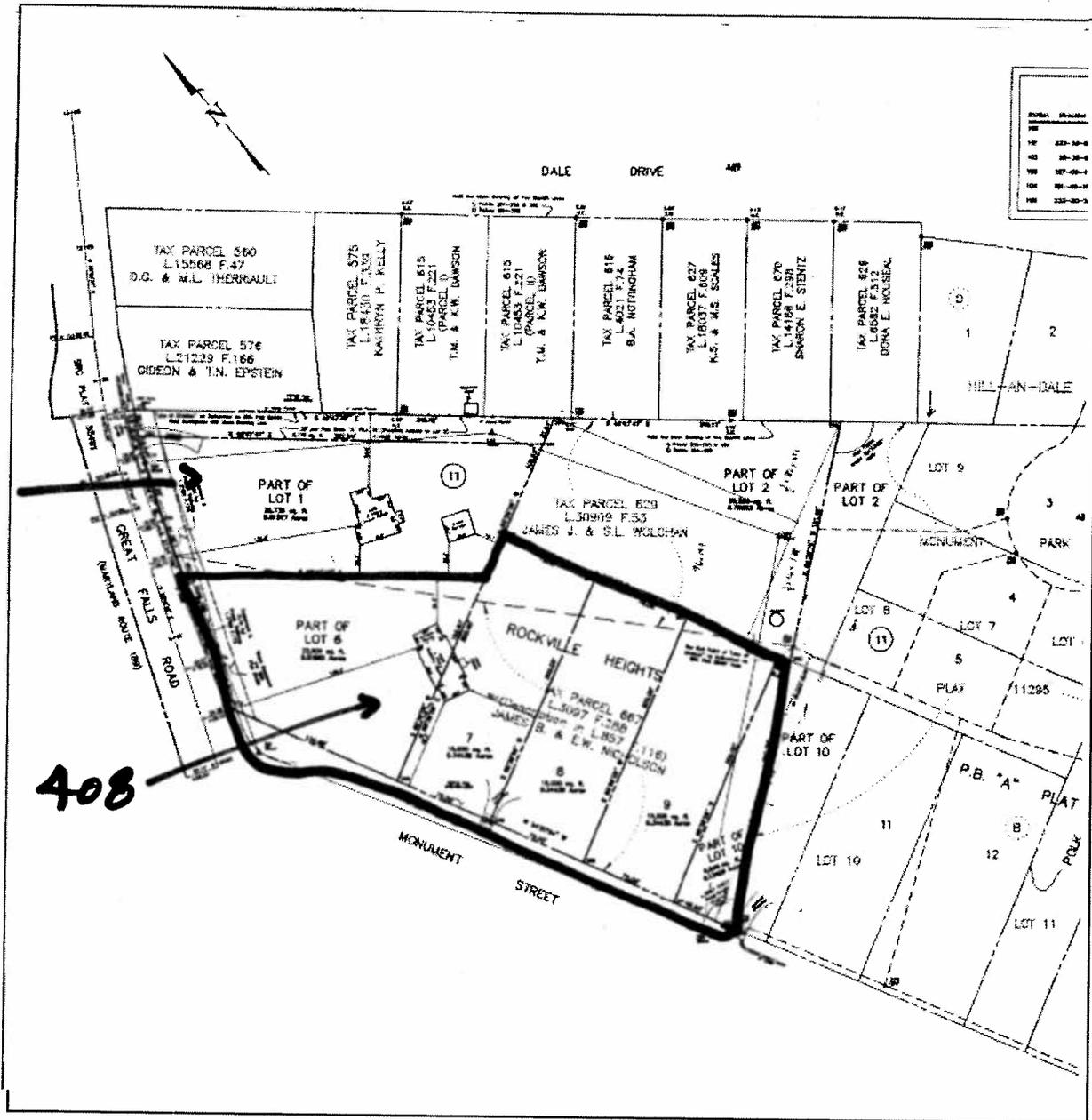
state _____

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

Vicinity Map: Existing subdivision plat



406

408

408 GREAT FALLS RD.

