

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Oak Street Garage (B-5266)

other names/site number Neely and Ensor Auto Co.; All Service Garage

2. Location

street & number 2600 North Howard Street not for publication

city or town Baltimore vicinity

state Maryland code MD County Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21218-4508

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Mitch
Signature of certifying official/Title

9-4-13
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
 Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD
 County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
0	0	District
0	0	Site
0	0	Structure
0	0	Object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related vehicular

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related vehicular

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: N/A

walls: BRICK, CONCRETE BRICK

roof: N/A

other: N/A

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
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Baltimore City, MD
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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Please see Continuation Sheet.

Narrative Description

Please see Continuation Sheets.

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from the building's construction to a date fifty years in the past. The building continued in at least partial automobile-related use throughout that period.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1924-1963

Significant Dates

1924, ca. 1927, 1943

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Please see Continuation Sheet.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Please see Continuation Sheet (Statement of Significance)

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Please see Continuation Sheets.

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Please see Continuation Sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): B-5266

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>360312</u> Easting	<u>4353476</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is described as Ward 12, Section 4, Block 3639, Lot 96 in Baltimore City, Maryland

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries constitute the legal description of the property.

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird
organization Betty Bird & Associates LLC date January 18, 2013
street & number 2607 24th Street, NW, Suite 3 Telephone 202-588-9033
city or town Washington, District of Columbia state N/A zip code 20008
e-mail betty.bird@verizon.net

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Oak Street Garage

City or Vicinity: Baltimore

County: Baltimore City

State: Maryland

Photographer: Betty Bird

Date Photographed: January 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 12

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD
County and State

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) January 15, 2013 ownership

Name 2600 North Howard Street, LLC
street & number 2601 N. Howard Street, Suite 100 telephone 443-602-7514
city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21218

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Continuation Sheet

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)

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Baltimore, Maryland

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Oak Street Garage, constructed in 1924, is a one-story brick and concrete block garage at the northwest corner of West 26th and N. Howard (formerly Oak) Street. Located across Howard Street from a three-story early 20th century factory, the building occupies a quarter of a block in a neighborhood of modest rowhouses. The trapezoidal Oak Street Garage, which featured a Lord Baltimore gasoline station, is set back from the Howard Street. The simple, Beaux-Arts influenced building exhibits stylish tapestry brick details. A 1927 addition extends the form and detailing of the building to the west. The building, which has been in almost continuous automobile-related use for over 75 years, is in poor condition; the addition is severely deteriorated. Despite alterations and the loss of the projecting canopy over the gasoline pumps (now gone), the property retains its integrity.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Oak Street Garage, constructed in 1924, is a handsome, one-story brick and concrete brick garage at the northwest corner of West 26th and N. Howard (formerly Oak) Street at 2600 N. Howard. The 70 ft. x 306 ft. building, which has a trapezoidal footprint, is functionally separated into a small, triangular retail space and two large, open plan garages. Massing reflects the building's functional divisions. The two garages are treated as two separate entities. The mass of the 1927 addition steps down from the storefront and original garage. The building has a gable roof, hidden from view by a parapet. The rear gable end walls on the west façade of the garage and the addition outline the shape of the roof and its supporting metal trusses.¹

Both the original garage and its addition have their own entrances, centered within roughly symmetrical facades. The five bay retail façade, that once faced the gasoline pumps (now gone), fronts east onto Howard Street. A 16 bay façade (9 bays with a 7 bay addition) associated with garage use faces south onto 26th Street. The secondary facades along the north and west are constructed of concrete brick.

The retail space, which faces east onto Howard, has typical storefront openings, now much altered. Brick detail similar to that of the south façade of the garage and its addition still remains as do its central entrance and the large garage opening on the north. The garage and addition have oversize garage entrances centered along their south façades. The addition has a door for workers at the west end of the rear (west) façade. Openings for pedestrian doors have been cut into the west end of the south façade of both the garage and its addition. There are openings for industrial sash windows on both the north and south facades. Many of the openings have been infilled with concrete masonry units and brick with two courses of glass block allowing light. Industrial sash that survives is 25 light.

The structure offers an excellent example of the architectural attention and skill applied to this relatively new utilitarian property type. The building features handsome brick detail. The street facades are executed in tapestry brick. The brick detail and rhythm of the detail and fenestration pattern provides the Oak Street Garage with its distinctive presence. On its 26th Street (south) façade, the building features large openings that once housed 25-light industrial sash. Each opening sits within a brick frame formed of stretchers outlined with

¹With the exception of the front (east) façade, the other facades angled from the orthogonal compass grid. This nomination adopts the convention of south, west, and north for the southeast, southwest, and northwest facades, respectively.

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projecting headers. Openings alternate with flush brick panels composed of headers with concrete corner blocks.

A wide basket-weave frieze extends around the building below a simple cornice. Three inlaid brick triangles mark the ends of the Oak Street Garage and its addition. The Oak Street Garage and its addition have independent brick stacks rising above the roof. The tapered stack for the garage is more elaborate than the stepped stack that rises from the northwest corner of the addition; the garage stack is topped with an ornamental brick cap.

The Oak Street Garage occupies a seam in the transitional land use zone between light industrial and commercial buildings and rowhouse neighborhoods north of the building.² Howard Street, one of Baltimore's northbound arterials, spans the open B&O belt railroad tunnel at 26th Street. The small rear yards of working class rowhouses abut the narrow alley north of the building. 26th Street faces onto the cut for the B&O tunnel, which is recessed well below street level.

The interior of the building and its addition have been subdivided. Finishes in the retail space consist of dropped ceilings and late 20th century paneling. Wall surfaces in the garage and its addition are exposed. With the exception of recent partitions and recent inserted office modules, the garages consist of 70 ft. wide clear span space; metal trusses resting on brick pilasters support the roof. A later north/south partition divides the original garage; the addition has a partial-height block wall at its west end.

The exterior of the Oak Street Garage has been altered over the years in a manner typical of structures in continuous, utilitarian use. Around 1927, shortly after the garage was constructed, an addition extended the building to the west. The east retail façade facing Howard Street is significantly altered. Partial infill of original window and door openings with tapestry brick suggests that show windows and a probable women's restroom entrance at the south were infilled early on. The original flat, tile roofed canopy for the service station was likely removed during a 1941 remodeling. Records at the Board of Municipal Zoning Appeals show that Shell Oil installed two additional tanks and relocated pumps when they assumed control of gasoline operations. It is presently not known whether the beefy, Colonial revival door frame and lintels are original or were applied to mask scars that removal of the canopy created.³ The present storefront entrance, flanking windows, and north entrance to the garage survive as probable early 20th century design elements.

In the garage space and its addition, windows have been infilled with concrete block below glass block. The original parapet has been obscured by alterations to the roof. The building has suffered at least one major fire in the mid-20th century and is in poor condition. Most of the roof and decking in both the 1924 garage and the addition have been replaced and reworked. The addition is in precarious condition. Substantial sections of its roof are missing or collapsing. Exterior paint masks the full extent of the addition's structural problems. Its walls display long structural cracks and appear bowed in several locations.

² The early 20th century Miller Factory of the American Can Company is directly across Howard Street to the east of the building; light industrial use extends south of the building down Howard Street. 25th Street, across the tunnel cut to the south, is an early 20th century commercial district and St. Paul Street, to the east of Howard is mixed commercial and residential use.

³ A historic photograph of the garage depicts a canopy with a flat tile roof. Despite the Lord Baltimore name, many of Blaustein's early gas stations appear to exhibit contemporary industrial design similar to that of the Oak Street Garage.

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Despite exterior alterations and the condition of the 1927 addition, the Oak Street Garage retains integrity of design, location, materials, and workmanship. The basic functional organization of the building can still be easily read, even on the much-altered Howard Street (east) façade. The handsome brickwork and skillful composition of the fenestration pattern along the south façade still remain. Most importantly, the building's significant location on a major arterial street and its functional reading as an early 20th century garage survive.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Oak Street Garage, constructed in 1924 and enlarged in 1927, illustrates the dramatic impact of the automobile. Built and operated by first-generation Italian immigrants, the Oak Street Garage meets National Register Criterion A for local significance because it is associated the far-reaching impact of the automobile on Baltimore's urban fabric and economic life. The evolution of the automobile-related services that it housed and the controversy its construction generated illustrate the striking shifts in the urban landscape and economic fortunes it created in the boom years of the 1920s. The Piraino family owned the one-story storage garage through 1969 and actively operated it most of those years. Neely and Ensor Auto. Co., formerly a high-end carriage manufacturer, was the building's first tenant, occupying a portion of the original garage and all of its addition.

RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

Summary history of the Oak Street Garage

The Oak Street Garage, situated at the intersection of N. Howard (formerly Oak) Street and W. 26th Street was constructed in 1924 as a storage garage and Lord Baltimore gasoline station. The original garage had space for 55 cars; a ca. 1927 addition could hold 40 cars.¹ In 1941, the gasoline station became a Shell station. With the exception of brief periods, the building housed automobile-related uses until the James & Lynn Tire Shop sold it upon their retirement in 2012.

Baltimore and the automobile

The impact of the automobile on Baltimore and the State of Maryland began early on. Baltimore claimed the earliest recorded instance of a gasoline-powered automobile motoring on a city street – in 1890. Maryland boasted a vital, early automobile industry and was the first state to establish authority for building and maintaining state highways.

In Baltimore, electric and gasoline-powered vehicles soon replaced the horse. By 1940, half of Maryland's automobiles were located in Baltimore.² Automobile ownership increased dramatically after Henry Ford introduced the Model T in 1908, making automobile ownership possible for the middle class. With the efficiencies of standardized mass production, the price of the car fell to less than \$300. In 1923, the City's introduction of zoning that forbid mixed-uses further encouraged automobile ownership.³ No longer were walkable neighborhoods created around corner stores and neighborhood businesses on the ground floors of rowhouses. Car registrations tripled from 50,000 to 150,000 between 1920 and 1940. Before World War I, Baltimore had 17,000 licensed horse drawn vehicles. By 1930 only 5000 horses remained; no livery stables or farriers survived.⁴

The disruptive nature of this transformation created enormous potential for entrepreneurs who could seize the

¹ 1928 Sanborn Map.

² Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City*, p. 314.

³ Mary Ellen Hayward, *The Baltimore Row House*, p. 153.

⁴ Olson, p. 314.

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opportunities available. Baltimore's varied industries and skilled labor force were well suited to the ancillary support businesses associated with the automobile boom. However, rapidly changing automobile technology, consolidation of manufacturers, capital requirements, and market shifts created an uncertain climate where success was far from guaranteed.

The automobile and its ancillary services

The early automobile-related functions the Oak Street Garage housed, particularly the Neely and Ensor Auto Co., illustrate how ancillary businesses were essential to spreading this new technology. The availability and distribution of services needed to own and maintain vehicles affected people's desire to purchase an automobile. Individuals and businesses quickly responded to the opportunities and challenges of this massive transformation created. Grocers initially sold containers of gasoline. When the fuel pump came into use, it was installed outside the same small grocers adjacent to the street. By World War I, there were 3000 gas pumps in Baltimore.

Jacob Blaustein, a Baltimore kerosene dealer who went on to develop Amoco Oil Company, pioneered tank truck delivery to stations and constructed the first drive-in gasoline station on Cathedral Avenue and Biddle Street.⁵

Continual improvements refined the car's technical requirements, creating new building typologies and opportunities for ancillary businesses. Early cars and trucks required fully enclosed, heated space. Batteries could not survive cold temperatures; early cars were often mothballed during winter months. Manufacturers didn't offer glass windows and hard tops until 1915 – and then only in luxury models.⁶ Until the mid-1920s, vehicles could not reverse easily, creating a requirement for linear circulation in car-related facilities.⁷ Paint technology didn't allow cars to survive prolonged exposure to weather until the 1930s. Limitations that batteries and vulnerable interior and exterior finishes created placed a premium on heated garages, like the Oak Street Garage, where businesses and rowhouse homeowners in tightly packed areas of the city could store their new vehicles. The early automobile's mechanical parts and bodies also demanded service facilities. The earliest storage garages often included repair shops, facilities for chauffeurs and drivers, and offered car washes and pick-up and delivery.

As early as 1902, *Scientific American* noted that the lack of well-located facilities for car storage and repair hindered car ownership.⁸ Just as the Pirainos seized the opportunity to provide car shelter with their storage garage, Neely and Ensor Auto Co., the first tenants in the Oak Street Garage, stepped into the breach for service.

Accommodating the automobile within the urban fabric

The relationship that automobile-related businesses had to arterial roads, owners of commercial and personal vehicles, other automobile-related concerns, and residential neighborhoods was an important factor in this rapidly changing environment. The Oak Street Garage and the building's continued survival housing automobile-related businesses highlights the functional relationships that became critical as the automobile spurred relentless change.

⁵ Olson, p. 289.

⁶ John J. Jackle and Keith A. Sculle, *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture*, p. 49.

⁷ Shannon McDonald, *The Parking Garage: Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form*, pp. 12 and 18; Jackl, pp. 48-50 and 114-115.

⁸ James J. Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile*, pp. 216-17.

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In the first three decades of the 20th century, local entrepreneurs established hundreds of businesses to sell, service, and support gasoline-powered vehicles. The heterogeneous economic landscape of this emerging industry prior to manufacturing consolidation created a myriad of opportunities for small business. In Baltimore, automobile-related goods and services clustered in an “automobile triangle” roughly bounded by Guilford and Mount Royal avenues, North Avenue, 29th Street and North Remington Avenue. In 1917, there were fifty dealers selling vehicles made by sixty-five manufacturers. While high-end dealers were situated near Charles, Cathedral, and Mount Royal, dealers of more affordable cars located near North Avenue.⁹

The area north of North Avenue incorporated an uneasy mix of industrial concerns, as well as rapidly developing rowhouse neighborhoods. The Oak Street Garage was constructed on a vacant lot directly across Oak (Howard) Street from the H.F. Miller Factory, which located there in 1890 and remained active until 1953.¹⁰ Working class rowhouses backed onto the alleys north and west of the garage site.

In 1905, prolific Baltimore developer Edward Gallagher purchased the property on which the garage is now located. In July 1923, when he sold it to Josephine Piraino, Gallagher understood the growing importance of the automobile and, more importantly for successful rowhouse development, automobile shelter. In 1921 more building permits were taken out for garages than for houses. When Gallagher developed Ednor Gardens during this period, he provided a basement garage in each house.¹¹

The Piraino family had to reconcile the uneasy relationship, which continues to this day, between the physical requirements of the ever more essential automobile and the public’s notions of appropriate proximity to services their vehicle requires. Despite the industrial use across Oak (Howard) Street and the below grade open rail tunnel to the south, the garage property was zoned for residential use. Litigation over zoning regulations Baltimore promulgated in 1923 and plans to extend Howard Street as a major arterial encompassing Oak Street created an unstable situation reflected in the controversy surrounding the garage’s construction.¹²

Concurrently with Josephine Piraino’s purchase, her attorney filed for a variance to change the property from residential to industrial use. The variance requested a new building “to be used as a public garage and show and sales.” The Oak Street Garage application was among the most prominent of a number of early zoning variance cases involving the insertion of automobile filling stations and garages in newly zoned neighborhoods. Newspaper articles describe the “bitter fight” over the zoning variance.

It was only after a vigorous and prolonged campaign that the property owners in the neighborhood were successful in having the section immediately surrounding the corner [Howard and 26th Streets] zoned for residential purposes. Near by are streets classed in the second commercial zone, and there are already a few business houses and one or two factories located

⁹ Rector Seal, *Maryland Automotive History, 1900-1942*, p. 154.

¹⁰ After the business was consolidated into the American Can Company in 1901, American Can continued to modernize and invest in the premises.

¹¹ Hayward, pp. 147-150. The Pirainos may have served Gallagher’s interests by constructing a facility that could make sales of garage-less rowhouses on tight lots similar to the modest houses across the alley from the Oak Street Garage a bit easier. An automobile owner in those years required indoor storage, which could be difficult to accommodate on rowhouse lots. The 1928 Sanborn Map shows two small garages, almost completely filling the rear yards of two of the rowhouses north of the Oak Street Garage.

¹² In the planning stages from the early 1920s, the extension wasn’t complete until the mid-1930s.

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here. Residents are said to prize highly the zoning classification of their "residential island" and are prepared to fight to the finish any move they believe would destroy the residential character of the neighborhood.¹³

The hearings before the Board of Zoning Appeals drew large numbers of proponents and opponents. The Pirainos' attorney noted that the "empty lot ... was a dumping place for garbage and refuse." The Rev. George John Kromer of the Church of the Guardian Angel around the corner from the site spearheaded the opposition for the Wyman Park Improvement Association.¹⁴

The Zoning Commission declined to grant a variance, but in February 1924 the City Council disregarded their recommendation. The Mayor signed an ordinance that changed the zoning for their parcel from residential to second commercial use, enabling the Piraino family to move forward.¹⁵ One month later, Piraino applied for a building permit to construct a 70 ft. x 166 ft. "public garage and service station." In April, the *Sun* noted that Neely and Ensor Auto Co. had leased a portion of the space and that plans were being prepared for an addition. A *Baltimore Sun* photograph from May 10, 1925 shows the original garage and the gasoline pumps under a flat tile canopy similar to the one Blaustein employed at his first gas station. Cars snake around the building from southbound Howard Street to the garage entrance on 26th Street.

The attention devoted to the design of this garage may owe a debt to its architectural context and to the contentious zoning fight prior to its construction. Unlike contemporary showplace garages (and the now demolished Maryland Automobile Association Headquarters), the Oak Street Garage eschewed Renaissance palazzo tendencies in favor of simple, straightforward industrial design. The low scale and modest street presence of the garage before the construction of its addition along 26th Street relates as well as a building of its type can to a residential rowhouse neighborhood. In an interesting coincidence, the architectural style and tapestry brickwork of the building bear a striking resemblance to the Stieff Silver Factory, constructed across from nearby Wyman Park in 1924-25. The architect for the Oak Street Garage is unknown; the building permit has a slash through the blank for architect's name.

The Beaux Arts design principles that informed the articulation of the Oak Street Garage provided a means of expressing the different functions it housed. The structure effectively incorporated one-way automobile circulation and allowed for horizontal expansion.¹⁶ Though constructed of brick, the one-story Oak Street Garage conformed to the latest thought on architectural expression of the garage :

The appropriateness and character expression for garage design will be attained by architects without conscious effort. Ferro-concrete construction with the demarcation of floor levels, steel sash and the omission of cornice and base will endow the garage with frankness and modernity. There should be no applied ornament and the surface treatment where concrete is used should be

¹³ "Wyman Park folk will fight garage," *Baltimore Sun*, 18 August 1923.

¹⁴ "Wyman Park folk will fight garage," *Baltimore Sun*, 18 August 1923; "Zone Board passes two building plans," *Baltimore Sun*, 22 August 1923; "Corner is expected to cause zoning fight," *Baltimore Sun*, 18 February 1924. "Real Estate Deals and Building News," *Baltimore Sun*, 18 April 1924.

¹⁵ The Use District Maps that established residential zoning for this property appear to have been promulgated in May 1923. Given how quickly things moved, Piraino may have already made plans for construction.

¹⁶ Shannon McDonald relates that early 20th century architects commonly employed Beaux Arts design for garage buildings with great success. Flexibility, organization based on circulation patterns and bilateral symmetry produced dignified buildings that could blend with their immediate architectural context. (p. 192).

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N/A

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*no other than that suggested by the nature of the material.*¹⁷

Its corner location on a wide street opposite the cut for the rail tunnel proved ideal. Neither the south garage façade nor the retail façade was directly opposite dwellings. The garage was likely less objectionable than the Miller Factory manufacturing activity opposite Oak Street from the gas pumps.

Neely and Ensor Auto Co.

Neely and Ensor Auto Co.'s evolving business model illustrates the impact of the automobile's disruptive changes, particularly on concerns developed for horse-drawn transportation. It also exemplifies the rapidly changing nature of ancillary businesses servicing automobiles. Originally a high-end carriage builder, Neely and Ensor scrambled to jump on the automobile bandwagon. In 1909 they moved from their downtown location to a location in the emerging automobile triangle, purchasing the United Railway & Electric Company Car Barn at McMechen Street and Mount Royal Avenue. *The Automotive Manufacturer* noted, "they will establish a carriage factory where they will build automobile tops and bodies and do a general painting, trimming, and repair business."¹⁸ The 1910 description of Neely and Ensor's business proudly noted that they "make a practice of approximating the cost of all machine work on first inspection of the car, and the repair bills with them do not amount to any more than is necessary for first class results."¹⁹

The facility contained waiting rooms and lockers for chauffeurs, washing rooms, a paint and varnish shop, a drying room, a machine shop, a trimming department for tops and cushions, and a carriage department. Neely and Ensor continued to repair horse-drawn vehicles as late as 1913.²⁰

Neely and Ensor Auto Co. began selling automobiles and commercial vehicles. In the first decades of the 20th century, automobile dealers were similar to manufacturers' representatives. Dealers might represent several of the myriad concerns producing cars and trucks. In 1913, Neely and Ensor sold Alco and Kline-Kar pleasure cars and Alco and Lippard Stewart commercial vehicles. Members of both the Automobile Dealers' Association and the Carriagemakers' Association, Neely and Ensor were also agents for Cole and Jackson automobiles in the years prior to 1920. They were the defendant in an important, much-cited 1923 court case that established that mechanics' liens could be placed on motor vehicles. *Myers v. Neely and Ensor Auto Co.* (143 Md. 107, 121 Ati. 916) determined that a service garage could retain a vehicle for which service bills were not paid and that the mechanic's lien took precedence over repayment of an automobile loan.

Neely and Ensor moved into the Oak Street Garage by May of 1925. A newspaper photo caption noted, "this plant is said to offer a great increase in room and is more fully equipped than the old building on Mount Royal Avenue" and that "the company will continue its business of general repair work, but on a larger scale."²¹ By 1928, Neely and Ensor moved closer to their original location at Mount Royal and North avenues, relocating to

¹⁷ *Architectural Record* (probably February 1929) as quoted by McDonald, p. 193.

¹⁸ "Neely and Ensor make big purchase," *The Automotive Manufacturer*, Volume 51 (1909), p. 212.

¹⁹ *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1910.

²⁰ *The Carriage Monthly*, June 1910. *The Automobile Journal* (Vol. 35, 1913), p. 28; Entry for Joseph H. Neely in *Men of Mark*, p. 19.

²¹ "New Plant Which Houses Neely and Ensor Co.," *Baltimore Sun*, 10 May 1925, pg. FA10; The statement was only partially correct. The former street car barn on Mount Royal had over 33,000 sq. ft. Even when an addition was later attached to the west end of the building, the Oak Street Garage enclosed less than 22,000 sq. ft.

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)
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Section number 8 Page 6

102 E. Lafayette south of North Avenue. The company survived through 1937, when its business is listed as "auto estimating."²²

Josephine Piraino and Piraino family ownership

In contrast to the Neely and Ensor Auto Co.'s search for an ever more specialized niche, the Piraino family prospered as the building's owner. Immigrant ownership of parking facilities was a pattern frequently seen in the early decades of the 20th century.²³ The opportunity proved irresistible to enterprising small businessmen with access to capital. While there was high turnover in parking lot and garage ownership in other cities, the Piraino family owned the garage through 1969. The family continued their association with the garage until World War II rationing and limitation on automobile use made operations impossible. City Directories show that Josephine and her son Anthony actively operated the garage through most of these years. During the years in which Neely and Ensor occupied the facility, Josephine's residential City Directory continues notes her association with the Oak Street Garage.

In contrast to Neely and Ensor, which relied on highly skilled artisans and mechanics, the Pirainos focused on service functions requiring less highly developed and specialized skills. While the improved automobile continued to require extensive service and maintenance, over the years technology and standardization created vehicles with increasingly sturdy bodies and engines. With the gasoline station and the flexible, open-plan space they owned, the Pirainos were better positioned to accommodate the shift to concerns devoted to a single service such as automobile painting.

Josephine (Giuseppina) Piraino (1879-1933), the original owner of the garage, and her husband Joseph (Giuseppe) Piraino (1864-1929) were first generation Italian immigrants from Palermo, Sicily. After coming to the United States at the end of the 19th century, Joseph Piraino became a successful entrepreneur. He fared well in Baltimore, living in an impressive house on Park Heights Avenue and Pinkney Street at the time of his death. He first established a confectionary business, moving into cigar manufacturing and importing around the turn of the century, later working with fruit and retiring around 1925. At the time of his sudden death in 1929, he was an important figure in Italian American affairs in Baltimore, serving as president of the Sons of Italy, the Society of Umberto J., and the Society of the White Cross.²⁴

Garage owners and tenants

By 1930, City Directory street address listings document a Lord Baltimore Filling Station at 2600 Oak. George C. and Charles F. Getz operated the Oak Street Garage. In 1937 Anthony Piraino managed the All Service Garage at the Howard Street address, which was listed under automobile garages but not under auto repair. By 1940 City Directories show that the garage had shifted to auto repair. AW Body & Fender and B&W Auto Painting, both under Piraino management, occupied the facility.

²² City Directories. Joseph Neely, who was once a vice president of Noxzema, became president of the Rekeen Tool Company, which held a patent on a tool-sharpening device. Rekeen was located at the same address as Neely and Ensor.

²³ Jackle, *Lots of Parking*, pp. 50-51.

²⁴ <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/38298795/person/19216241952/media/1?pgnum=1&pg=0&pgpl=pid%7cpgNum> & City Directories; "Joseph Piraino Dies Suddenly," *Baltimore Sun*, 31 July 1929.

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Shell Oil Company altered the building when it took over gasoline sales in 1941, relocating three pumps and adding two 1000 gallon tanks. During World War II, the Shell Station, American Can, and Hutzler all occupied the building. While automobile-related uses returned to the building after the war years, by 1958 Capital Bakers and Elite Dry Cleaners were tenants. In 1962, the building was used as an auto painting shop, private storage garage and office, bakery warehouse and laundry pick up store. By 1963 the bakery warehouse was gone; Veterans Enterprises used the premises for baling used clothing into rags for wiping cloths. The baling operation was situated at the 2606 Howard Street portion of the building. The garage, at the rear of the building, was vacant; Veterans Enterprises used one of the storefronts. In 1963, the highly regarded James & Lynn Tire Service moved into the retail and east half of the original Oak Street Garage. The building is now vacant and will soon be rehabilitated and adapted for new use.²⁵

²⁵ Baltimore City Directories; Baltimore Municipal Zoning Appeal No. 63-0024 (15 January 1963) and No. 41-0461 (8 July 1941).

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Oak Street Garage (B-5266)

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Oak Street Garage
Name of Property

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Baltimore City, MD
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Index to Photographs

The following information applies to all photographs which accompany this documentation:

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) Number: B-5266
Name of Property: Oak Street Garage
Location: Baltimore City, Maryland
Photographer: Betty Bird
Date taken: January 2013
Location of original digital files [or negatives]: MD SHPO

Photo captions:

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0001.tif
View from SE showing original garage

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0002.tif
View from SW showing west wall and addition

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0003.tif
East façade from SE

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0004.tif
South façade from SE

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0005.tif
North façade from NE

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0006.tif
View from SE; Miller Factory on right

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0007.tif
View from NE; rail tunnel below billboards and trees

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0008.tif
South façade of original garage; view from SE

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Oak Street Garage
Name of Property

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Section PHOTO Page 2

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0009.tif
Detail of brickwork, south façade

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0010.tif
Detail of basketweave frieze, south façade

MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0011.tif
Detail of diamond brickwork, south façade, junction of original garage(right) and addition (left)

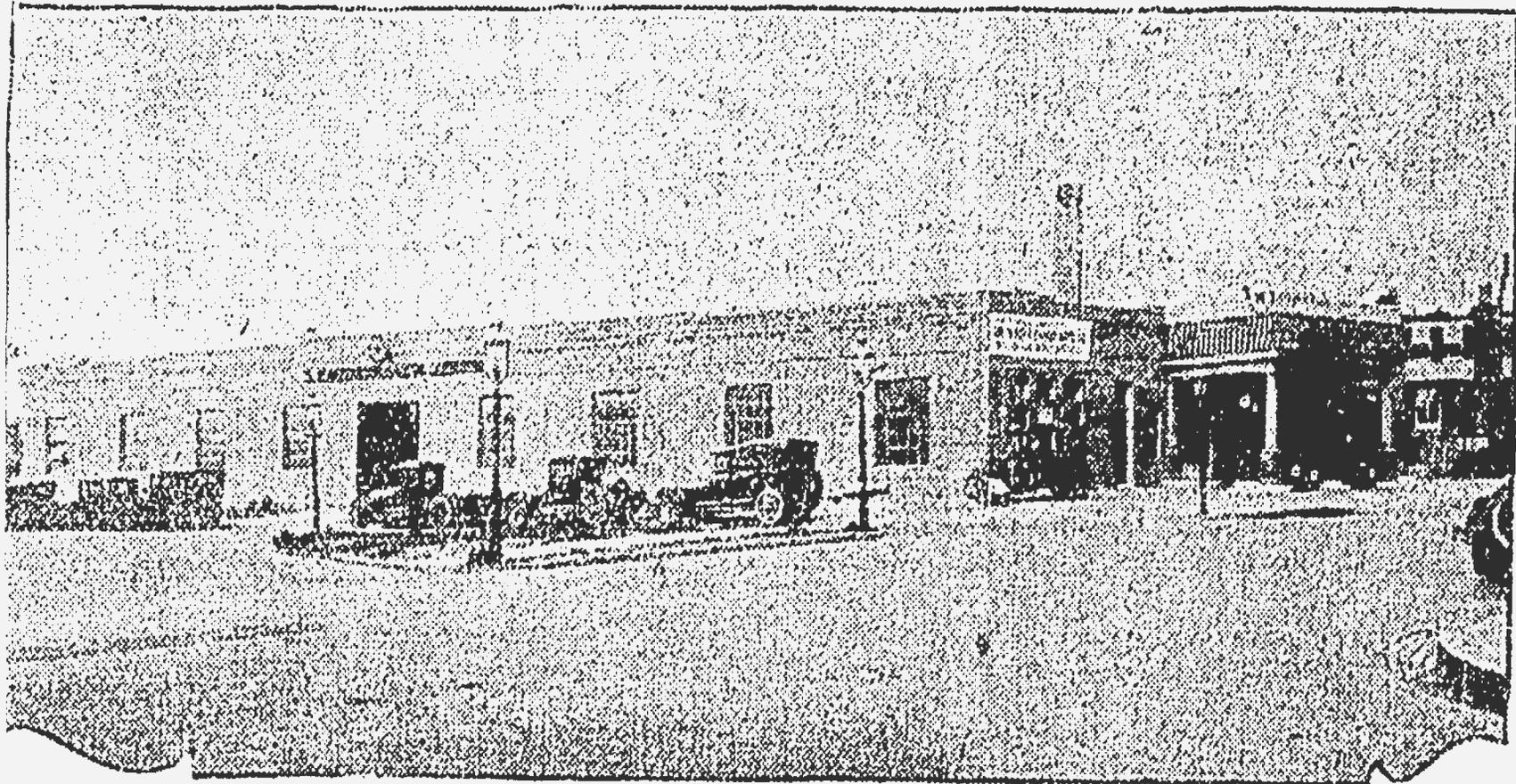
MD_BaltimoreCity_OakStreetGarage_0012.tif
Interior: addition, view to NE

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH

Oak Street Garage (B-5266)

Baltimore, MD

Source: *The Sun* 20 May 1925



The photograph is of the new building of the Neely & Ensor Auto Company, which is located at Oak and Twenty-sixth streets. This plant is said to offer a great increase in room and is more fully equipped than the old building on Mount Royal avenue. The company will continue its business of general repair work, but on a larger scale, according to officials.

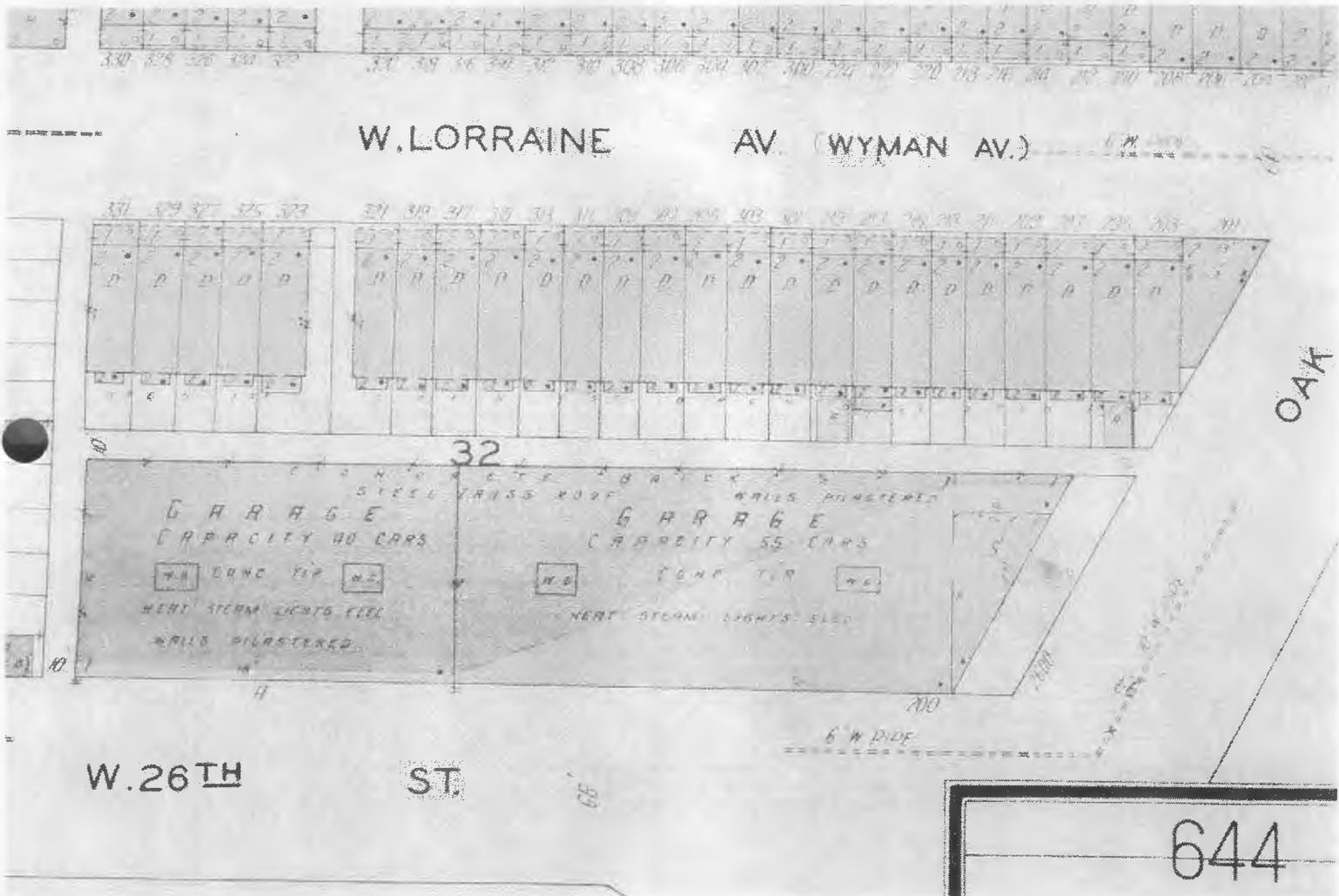
FLOOR PLAN

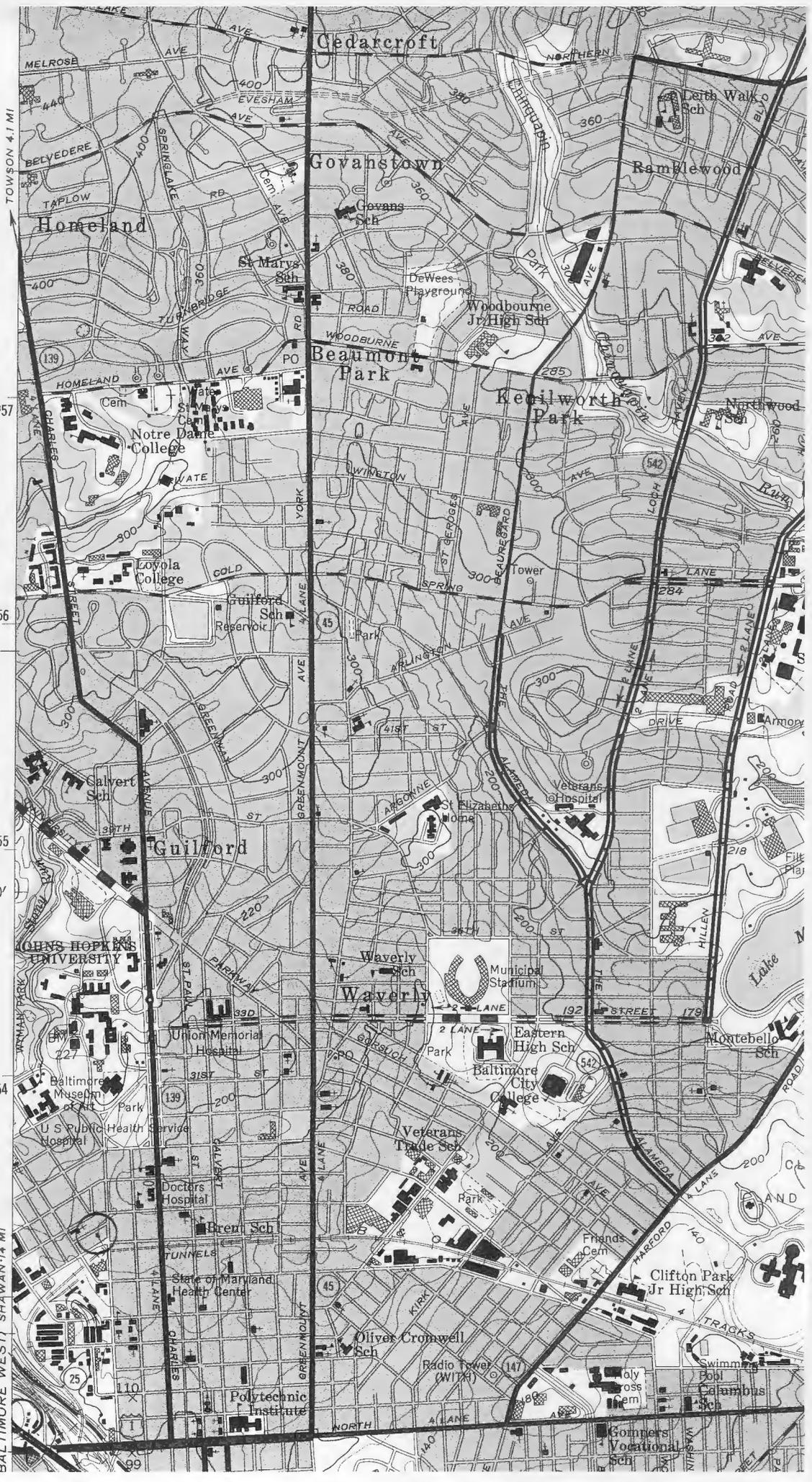
Oak Street Garage (B-5266)

Baltimore, MD

Source: Edited 1928 Sanborn Map

(Gasoline pump canopy removed)





B-5266
 BALTIMORE CITY
 MARYLAND
 OAK STREET
 GARAGE
 18-360312-
 4353476

LAUREL 20 MI.
 5662 I SW
 BALTIMORE WEST
 SHAWAN 14 M

TOWSON 4.1 MI

4357

4356

4355

20'

4354

110

99

25

147

140

140

MELROSE AVE
 BELVEDERE
 TAPLOW
 SPRINGLATE RD
 EYESHAM AVE
 CEDARCREFT
 GOVANSTOWN
 RAMBLEWOOD
 HOMETOWN
 GOVANS SCH
 ST MARYS SCH
 DEWEES PLAYGROUND
 WOODBOURNE JR HIGH SCH
 BEAUMONT PARK
 WOODBOURNE RD
 WINGTON
 NEILWORTH PARK
 NORTHWOOD SCH
 HOMELAND
 HOMELAND AVE
 NOTRE DAME COLLEGE
 LOYOLA COLLEGE
 GUILFORD SCH
 GUILFORD RESERVOIR
 GREENMOUNT AVE
 WILKINSON ST
 ARGONNE ST
 ST ELIZABETHS HOME
 VETERANS HOSPITAL
 GUILFORD
 SALVERT SCH
 JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
 WAWLEY SCH
 WAWLEY
 MUNICIPAL STADIUM
 EASTERN HIGH SCH
 BALTIMORE CITY COLLEGE
 VETERANS TRADE SCH
 BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART
 U S PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
 DOCTORS HOSPITAL
 BRENT SCH
 STATE OF MARYLAND HEALTH CENTER
 POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
 OLIVER CROMWELL SCH
 RADIO TOWER (WITH)
 FRIENDS CEM
 CLIFTON PARK JR HIGH SCH
 GOMPERS VOCATIONAL SCH
 MONTABELLO SCH
 LAKE M
 HILLEN
 DRIVE
 284
 542
 192 STREET
 179
 542
 140
 TRACKS
 SWIMMING POOL
 CARLAMBUS SCH
 GOMPERS VOCATIONAL SCH



CHARMINGTON'S

STOP

FIRE SERVICE

TRUCK
MUSIC
MUSIC

B- 5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

VIEW FROM SE SHOWING ORIGINAL GARAGE

1 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0001



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

VIEW FROM SW SHOWING WEST WALL & ADDITION

2 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0002



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NEW & USED TIRES 410-388-2909

B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

EAST FACADE FROM SE

3 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0003



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

SOUTH FACADE FROM SE

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MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0004



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

NORTH FACADE FROM NE

5 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0005

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Help A Youth Be Ready by 21
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033500



27 
NO STOPPING
ANYTIME



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

VIEW FROM SE; MILLER FACTORY ON RIGHT

6 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0006



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

VIEW FROM NE; RAIL TUNNEL BELOW BILLBOARD & TREES

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MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0007



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OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

SOUTH FACADE OF ORIGINAL GARAGE; VIEW FROM SE

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MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0008



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OAK STREET GARAGE
BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

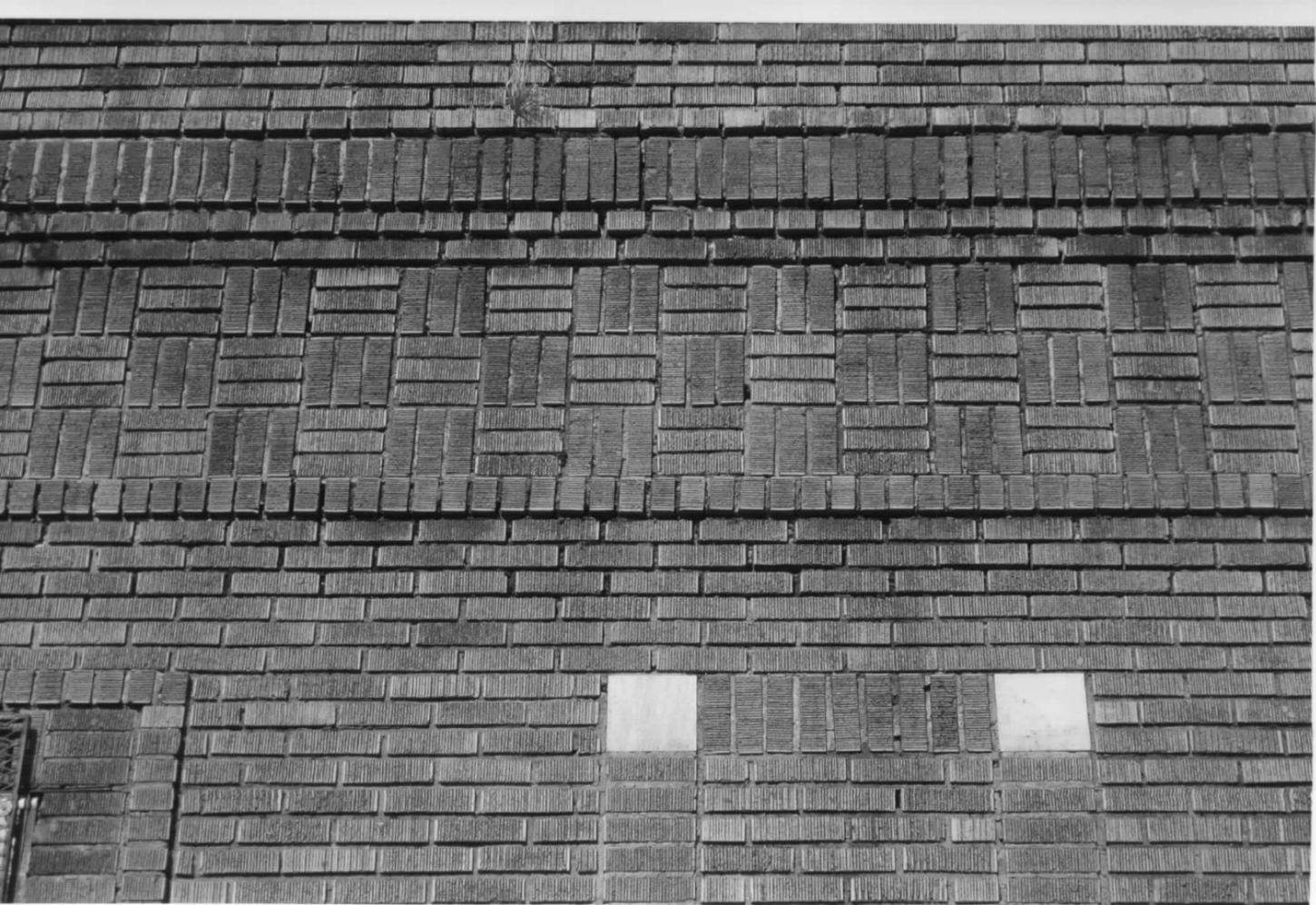
JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

DETAIL OF BRICKWORK, SOUTH FACADE

9 OF 12

MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0009



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

DETAIL OF BASKETWEAVE FRIEZE; SOUTH FACADE
10 OF 12

MD-BaltimoreCity-OakStreetGarage-0010



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

DETAIL OF DIAMOND BRICKWORK, S. FACADE

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MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0011



B-5266

OAK STREET GARAGE

BALTIMORE CITY, MD

BETTY BIRD

JANUARY 2013

MD SHPO

INTERIOR: Addition, view to NE

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MD - Baltimore City - Oak Street Garage - 0012