

## J. MAURICE WATKINS RESTAURANT

The fire of 1878 destroyed this and nearly every other building in the west side of the 500 block of York Rd. It was soon rebuilt, however, for the owner. J. Maurice Watkins was advertising the restaurant "in his new building" in the Baltimore directory of 1879.

Watkins replaced his earlier frame building with this brick structure, and it is one of many along this portion of York Road to possess a stylish Victorian cornice.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

3A- 1454  
MAGI # 0314544631

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

J. Maurice Watkins Restaurant

AND/OR COMMON

presently known as the "Crease", also contains a jeweler's and optometrist

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

525 York Road

CITY, TOWN

Towson

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Baltimore

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

James George

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse (New annex)

Liber #: 3467

Folio #: 523

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>Winter, 77/78</u>

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The building located at 525 York Road presently houses three different commercial enterprises. It faces the east and is situated on the west side of York Road. In its present state it is apparent that the building has been extensively altered on the exterior. Fortunately a photograph of the building in 1880 still exists and is located in the "Crease", one of the business establishments.

As can be reconstructed from the photograph, the building was a 2 story brick building. It was 6 bays wide by 3 bays deep with 2/2 louvered windows. It also appears that the street facade bricks were pointed whereas the other sides were painted over. There were flat brick arches over the windows. The building also had a bracketed cornice and another type of console-like bracket about 1 foot underneath the cornice and attached to the wall itself. There were 2 side entrances and each door had a transom. The southernmost porch had 2 steps whereas the northern had 1 step.

Until recently an alley was located to the south elevation of the building and it is apparent in the photo. The side of the house facing the alley had regular placement of windows but they seemed to decrease in size as one headed towards the back of the house. This is undoubtedly because the house was "stepped". It should also be noted that the house was situated on a stone foundation and there was some type of shed projecting off the back of the house. Presently, most of the original exterior fabric is hidden although there is still some evidence of it. Basically the only original fabric left is apparent in the bracketed cornice. Both types of bracketing exhibited in the 1880 photo are evident. Some of the windows on the second floor also appear to be original, however, the northernmost window has since been converted into a door. Otherwise modern store fronts have been added and at some point (either late 1940's - early 1950's as evidenced by photos) a covered wooden balcony with tongue and groove ceiling was affixed. The balcony also contains square doric columns and iron railings.

The rear of the store, or the west elevation, is a conglomeration which seems to combine with surrounding buildings, also commercial in nature.

The alley was covered over recently and now is used as an annex to the "Crease". The wall still exhibits some of the features of the original exterior wall of the building. The majority of the windows have been bricked in. There is also some evidence that at one point another brick addition might have been added onto the back of the building.

Examination of the basement showed that the foundation was a combination of brick and stone. In most places, the stone was on the bottom.

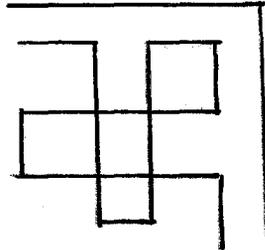
CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## Item Number 7 -- continued

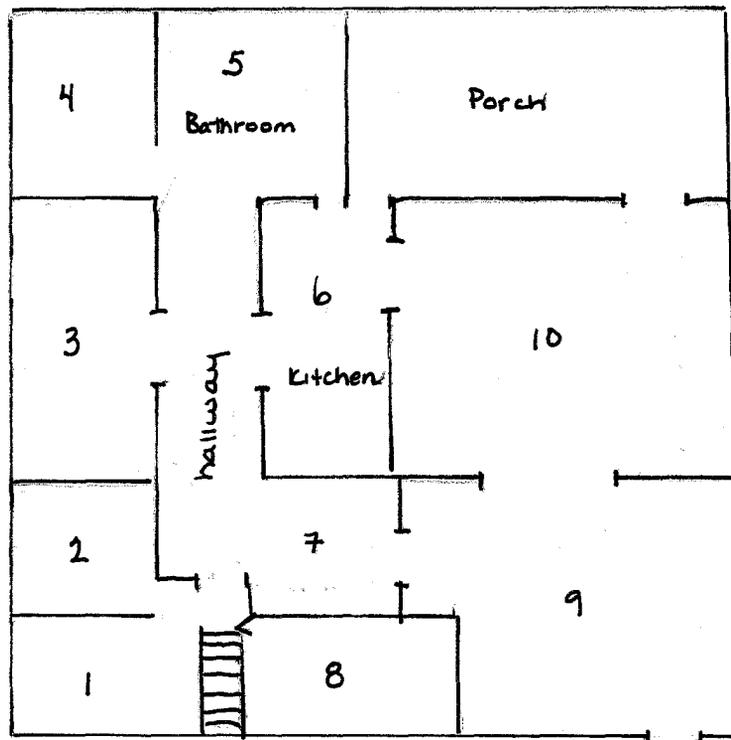
The first floor of the Crease had a pressed tin ceiling. There was also wood working about three feet up the wall. Above this the wall was stuccoed. Apparently this section of the building has been used as a bar for sometime now. It becomes quite promlematical to attempt to perceive purely original fabric as the interior decor has been both maintained and restored to some degree to that of the earlier periods of the building.

The second floor, which is presently the office of the Crease, is entered by an outside entrance and stairway. The ceiling of this entranceway is also pressed tin. Included at the end of this write-up is a rough floor pain to illustrate room circulation and placement.

The doorways on the second floor are about 7 feet high and have 3 pane transoms over them. There have also been some alterations on this floor to convert the previous living space into office and storage areas and once again there is some confusion concerning strictly original materials. Some highlights are in the northenmost front room overlooking York Road. There is a 2 tone wood inset floor with the following pattern in the corners:



The darker wood is used for the design. There are also what would seem to be old copper and caste iron ceiling lights in this room and numbers 10 and 7 on the floor plan. In additon the building has a skylight in the kitchen and room number 7.



Floor plan - 2nd floor

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1878-9      BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The date of this building can be ascertained to be 1878-9. This is backed by the fact that on January 26, 1878 the 500 block of the west side of York Road was destroyed by a fire. All the buildings with the exception of the Odd Fellows Hall were totally destroyed. We do, however, know that in 1879 J. Maurice Watkins, the owner of the building situated there had rebuilt it. (An advertisement for Watkins' restaurant "In his new building" appears in the Directory for Baltimore, Carroll and Harford Counties)

It should be noted here that the previous building had been a frame structure (as evidenced by photos, e.g., Hahn & Behm pp. 76-7) whereas the new one was totally brick. This change in building material may have reflected the owners fear that another fire might strike and brick appeared to be more durable. This same thing was also true of several neighboring buildings.

Even though only a little of the original fabric exists in this building, it is important for a couple reasons. First of all, the local stone cellar was significant in this area as it appeared as a feature in numerous Towson houses. Also, the building itself is important as a type of symbol of the businesses which grew along the "Yorktown Turnpike". The mere fact that it was so quickly rebuilt after the fire seems to imply that the now York Road was a well traversed and locally important throughfare and commercial interests took advantage of this.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Baltimore American, January 28, 1878 p. 1.

Hahn, H. George and Carl Behm III. A Pictorial History of a Maryland Town: TOWSON, Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1977.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of 1877  
 CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

See Attachment

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Susan M. Cook Student/Surveyor

WAYNE L. NIELD, II  
 HISTORIC TOWSON, INC.

ORGANIZATION

Goucher College

DATE

January 20, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Dulaney Valley Road

TELEPHONE

(301) 825-3300

CITY OR TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438

Item Number 9 -- continued

Plat of Towson Town, December 1853.

Wilson, Hilda N., ed. Then...Now: Towson Bicentennial 1768-1968, Towson, Md.:  
Junior Press, 1968.

1879 Directory for Baltimore, Carroll and Harford Counties, Baltimore:  
J. Frank Lewis and Co., 1879.

Bromley 1898 map

## TITLE SEARCH FOR WATKINS HOUSE

Liber 3467, Folio 523 December 23, 1958  
Grantor: James & Tassea George  
Grantee: Harris George

Liber 552, Folio 542 May 3, 1922  
Grantor: Mary L. Watkins  
Grantee: James & Tassea George

Lot adjoins land leased by Aug. Loose from Enos Smedley Oct. 8, 1857.

"Beginning...on west side of Baltimore and York Trunpike...  
152'6" to alley...northeast corner of alley 10' wide...38'6" on turnpike."

Mary L. Watkins received property via the will of John Maurice Watkins.

Liber 108, Folio 76 July 17, 1877  
Grantor: Eliza Watkins  
GrantorL John Maurice Watkins

Liber 21, Folio 208 October 8, 1857 (Lease)  
Grantor: Enos Smedley  
Grantee: Eliza Watkins

Liber 9, Folio 222 July 24, 1854  
Grantor: Grafton Bosley  
Grantee: Enos Smedley





BA-1454

J. MAURICE WATKINS REST.  
#525 YORK RD.  
S.E. CORNER

W. NIELD  
WINTER 77/78