

CAPSULE  
VESPER HILL

In the very earliest years of the Picturesque movement Andrew Jackson Downing and his associate Alexander Jackson Davis identified certain materials and construction methods which enhanced a buildings ability to blend in with Nature. Such buildings should be seen as part of the great Romantic movement which had such a profound effect on all of the arts in America in the middle years of the 19th century.

Among the elements of Picturesque architecture are asymmetrical "organic" plans and massing and the unique appearance of board-and-batten siding. Vesper Hill is of the period. It was a large dwelling made larger early in the 20th century, however, the original section remains relatively unaltered. From the outside one sees a sprawling building with many projections that hug a hilltop site. A roof with jerkin-head and triangular gables creates visual interest and the aforementioned board-and-batten siding has a vertical thrust which balances the horizontal massing. The use of wood and the generally vertical movement of trees themselves made this a natural siding in the eyes of Picturesque designers.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Vesper Hill

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

7315 Bellona Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Towson

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ninth

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 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 checked="" 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

Edward K. Dunn Jr.

Telephone #: 377-5641

STREET & NUMBER

7315 Bellona Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Towson

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21204

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Courts Building

Liber #: 5654 842  
Folio #: 842

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

BA-1776

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>May, 1979</u>

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

That there are at least two distinct periods to Vesper Hill is proven by interior examination. In the basement and attic there is structural evidence of a large addition to the east portion of the building and on the first and second floors a stylistic conflict of decorative elements resulting from a Neo-Classical Revival renovation. Nevertheless, the whole exists today as an architecturally impressive mansion and its exterior stands as one of the best in this area's handful of extant board-and-batten Picturesque dwellings.

The two story structure which rests on a high fieldstone foundation sits upon a hill overlooking a valley and Lake Roland. The asymmetrical structure is topped with wood shingle gabled roofs. As a whole, the structure contains six gables, eleven dormers, seven doors and sixty-one windows.

The main facade is the south facade. This facade is equal to eight bays wide which is clearly defined by six second story tall gabled dormers (lighted by 2/2 sash windows) and the two bay two story wing projection occupying the third and fourth bays from the west. The gabled roof is pierced at the ridge in each end by interior-end chimneys.

The first level is covered by a porch which has an extended veranda continuing past the south wing projection and connecting with the porch on the west facade. The porch roof is supported by thin doric columns. The porch itself is decorated with a chinese chippendale fencing.

The main block contains seven evenly spaced french doors interrupted by the projection. This projection is gable-ended, extending two bays to the south, and contains an entrance door on both the east and west sides. The west side also contains a dormer on the second level. The gable end is characterized by a 6/6 sash window on the second level with a three part bay window which has Tudor-like tracings. Decorating this window is a chippendale window box.

The west facade facing the valley is characterized by its asymmetrical arrangement and especially by its large open porch. The main block running east to west is continuous on the second level but stops one bay short on the first level thus creating a gable-end "dormer" which is supported by the first level porch roof and constitutes the master bedroom. The porch continues around to the north facade until it meets the northern projection, however, it has been partially enclosed and has an overhead room.

In the same way the south facade has a two bay projection, the flatness and regularity of the north facade is interrupted by a projecting wing which is further extended by a jerkin-head

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

swell front. A dormer breaks the roofline on either side of this swell front.

The west side of the wing is lighted by a triplet of floor-to-ceiling windows. The upper story contains dormers like those on the south facade which project from the wall surface the same distance as the deep eaves.

What is otherwise an even and regular fenestration of the main block on the east facade is interrupted by an off center second story doorway with transom and a gabled window. The facade of the addition contains tiny 2/2 sash windows which vent the westernmost bays of the south facade while the east bay is windowless. A large corbeled interior chimney occupies that area.

This addition is gabled on the east side and is well vented by six bays. The northernmost bays incorporate the enclosed porch.

## Interior:

The intentional asymmetry of this plan is felt most intensely in the interior where each room is unique, differing not only in size and function from the next but in shape and light quality as well. The result is an "organic" interior space with one cell flowing into another in a manner in which Frank Lloyd Wright insisted upon forty to fifty years later.

In the basement one can see the original plan most clearly for the original foundation is still extant. The sprawling asymmetrical "cruciform" (see attachment) of the original design even incorporates the polygonal walls of the north wing. The present "back" or east portion of the house containing the kitchen, landing and bedrooms above are the result of at least one addition in the late 19th or early 20th century as well as an even later porch enclosure. In the cellar one notices a disparity in the joists of the older section which measure 12 inches by 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches and the addition where they average 10 inches by 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The original exterior wall which now separates the two portions is 2 feet in thickness. While there was a full cellar with a 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  foot ceiling which had its bulkhead in the northwest corner of the polygonal north wing, a simple crawlspace beneath the southeast parlor shows that it did not run under the entire house. Its walls are constructed of coursed rubble. There are inner load bearing walls and massive stone chimney supports with very interesting hearth supports in both the old and new ways. These consist of 10 inch by 3 inch collars mortised into the joists with arched strap iron ribs over which brick supporting sheet iron was laid. Those sheets are now paper thin due to erosion.

The living hall, west parlor and north porch enclosure retain much original fabric but the south parlor (living room) and north parlor (dining room) were altered and made classical in appearance. The entire 4 to 5 feet of the east end of the south parlor is added including the chimney. The mantel of this chimney, although it is an identical motif to the one at the opposite end of the room, is much larger in its dimensions. The west chimney breast is 73 inches wide where its added counterpart at the east end of the room is 101 inches. The dog ear entablature motif, ionic columnettes and egg and dart mouldings on each mantelpiece is early in appearance and lends support to the undocumented story that the mantel of this room came from an older Baltimore area house although the disparity in their size is problematical.

The present dining room and south parlor are connected by a large 17  $\frac{1}{2}$  foot wide doorway that again is classical in appearance by virtue of its long and plain architrave supported by square corner pilasters and full doric columns. The dining room has the same classical mantel as those in the main parlor. The chimney breast, however, is of the same size as that at the west end of the parlor and these smaller 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  foot chimneys are considered to be original eventhough the mantels are later.

On the first level the south projection is occupied by the entrance hall which in size suggests the later Queen Anne characteristic of a "living hall." It is a 14 foot by 13 foot room that is well lighted by both of its doors and the triad of case-

ment windows in the south wall. The entrances from the wrap around porch are in the east and west walls but are only nearly opposite and are not symmetrical. They are identical cut-away doors and have unusual wrought iron rat-tail latches. The stairs are much lighter than one would expect (original?) and consist of an open string with a dark wood rail and very thin turned newel and balusters. A "frieze" revealed by the upper landing is finished with curvilinear brackets suggestive of a Victorian cornice.

The small parlor adjacent to the hall on its north side may have been a somewhat formal "reception" room although its size and southwest exposure (in concept) may have made it a preferred area for winter months. At any rate its very heavy and ornate fireplace (is not original) predates the Neo-Classical renovation. The wood mantelpiece is very organic in design consisting of carved roses and tulips with gothic tracery and fleur-de-lis. The shelf is 4 inches thick, 45 inches above the floor and projects from the wall 1 foot. The surround has chamfered pilasters with the above mentioned carvings and the frieze has a centered cluster of rosettes.

The second level has the same complex arrangement of space with eight rooms of various sizes spilling over into each other. The original portion of the house is relatively unaltered at this level and the addition is readily perceived by way of the difference in style of the mantelpieces.

The largest bedroom of the original block projects out over the west porch below. That it has windows on three of its sides plus its elevated position makes it a well lighted and airy room. Many of these 6/6 windows have what is probably original glass. A relatively plain Tudor arch mantel decorates the fireplace of this space. There is one like it in the opposite room.

In the northwest room one sees a mantel of different motif with raised decorations, chamfered pilasters, etc. The small room next to it shares the same stack but its mantel decorations are decidedly a later style reminiscent of the Neo-Classical Revival featuring the common wreath-and-garland. It is like its counterpart in the room below as both are part of the same addition.

The basement and more specifically the attic show quite clearly how the house has been constructed and that its sections date from at least two distinct periods.

In the basement one sees a heavy stone foundation supporting a balloon frame structure above. The original block had a cellar with 6½ foot by 2 foot thick rubble walls although there was only a crawlspace beneath the present living room. It was entered both by interior stairs and a now non-functional bulkhead in its southeast corner. The organic shape of the house is defined clearly at this level especially by the polygonal north projection. There are some differences in construction with an example being heavier 12 inch by 2 ¾ inch joists in the older section and 10 inch by 3½ inch joists in the newer. There are massive

stone chimney supports in both sections with hearth supports being made by mortising 10 inch by 3 inch collars into the joists and nailing strap-iron ribs over which curved sheet is placed. Oxidation has left them very thin. That this construction is identical in both sections might indicate a rebuilding or renovation of all of the stacks at the time of the addition.

It is the attic which most clearly demonstrates the added areas. Both sections have mechanically sawn principal rafters mitered at the ridge and there is no tremendous difference of materials. However, at the juncture of the original and added sections in the area of the chimney which serves the present dining room fireplace, one can see part of the original roof. This section still retains ornate fishscale shingles that are fortunately well preserved. One can also see that a portion of the chimney here has been rebuilt and that its lower portion was once exposed in its role as an exterior stack (ie. finished pointing, partial corbel, weathered brick, etc.).

Furthermore, in that attic area over the present living room one can see evidence of a 10 foot addition on the east end. In addition to different flooring this section does not have the typical 3 inch by 4 inch mitered rafters but instead later 2 inch by 6 inch rafters with a ridge board.

Springhouse:

A frame board-and-batten spring house stands about 200 yards Southwest of the main house close to Bellona Avenue. The battens are fixed with wire nails. The structure rests on a fieldstone foundation and is topped with a curvilinear hipped roof covered with wood shingles. There are rounded exposed rafters.

The building measures 15 feet 6 inches on the south side and 11 feet 9 inches on the west. The foundation measures 1 foot 9 inches on the southeast corner, 3 feet 6 inches on the southwest corner and 5 feet 6 inches on the northwest.

The north facade is vented by one centrally located double casement window as is the south facade. The east side has a centrally located door, the west side is blind.

The interior is nicely finished with the lower portion being masonry stuccoed and whitewashed and the upper portion being frame finished with 2 3/4 inch tongue-and-groove. There is a shelf projecting approximately 11 inches from the wall.

Bank Barn:

A frame board-and-batten barn stands to the north of the main house and is presently used as a garage. The gable end structure rests on a high fieldstone foundation and measures 32 feet 5 inches by 22 feet 5 inches. Each gable end has louvered vents and there is a corbeled flue chimney(interior) on the southeast corner. There are exposed rafters, circular sawn materials and wire nails. The inner frame is suggestive of a tripartite plan. The interior of the second level has a tongue-and-groove partition in the east bay. This is one wall to an east-end room which is entirely paneled with tongue-and-groove and is only accessible from the exterior.

The foundation level has 7 foot high rubble walls and vertically sawn joists covered with thick coats of white wash. There are two casement windows in the west end, a centrally located window in the north wall with doors in the outer bays.

**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 Third quarter 19th century BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the very earliest years of the Picturesque movement Andrew Jackson Downing and his associate Alexander Jackson Davis identified certain materials and construction methods which enhanced a building's ability to blend in with Nature. Such buildings should be seen as part of the great Romantic movement which had such a profound effect on all of the arts in America in the middle years of the 19th century.

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**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Baltimore County Land Records

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

WAYNE L. NIELD, II

D. Owings Schultz

ORGANIZATION HISTORIC TOWSON, INC.

DATE

STREET &amp; NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

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

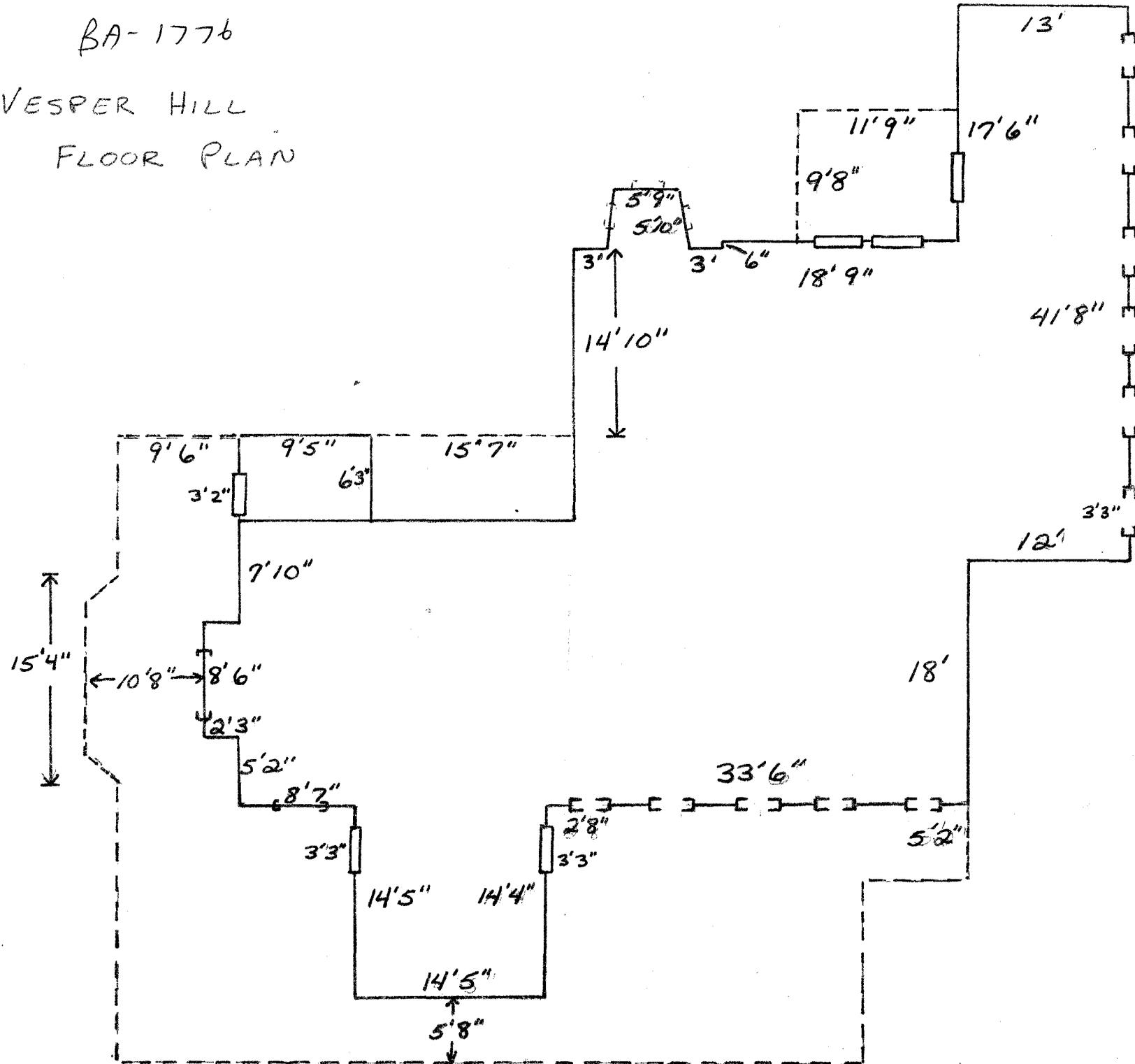
CHAIN OF TITLE FOR VESPER HILL  
Parcel 713, Map 69

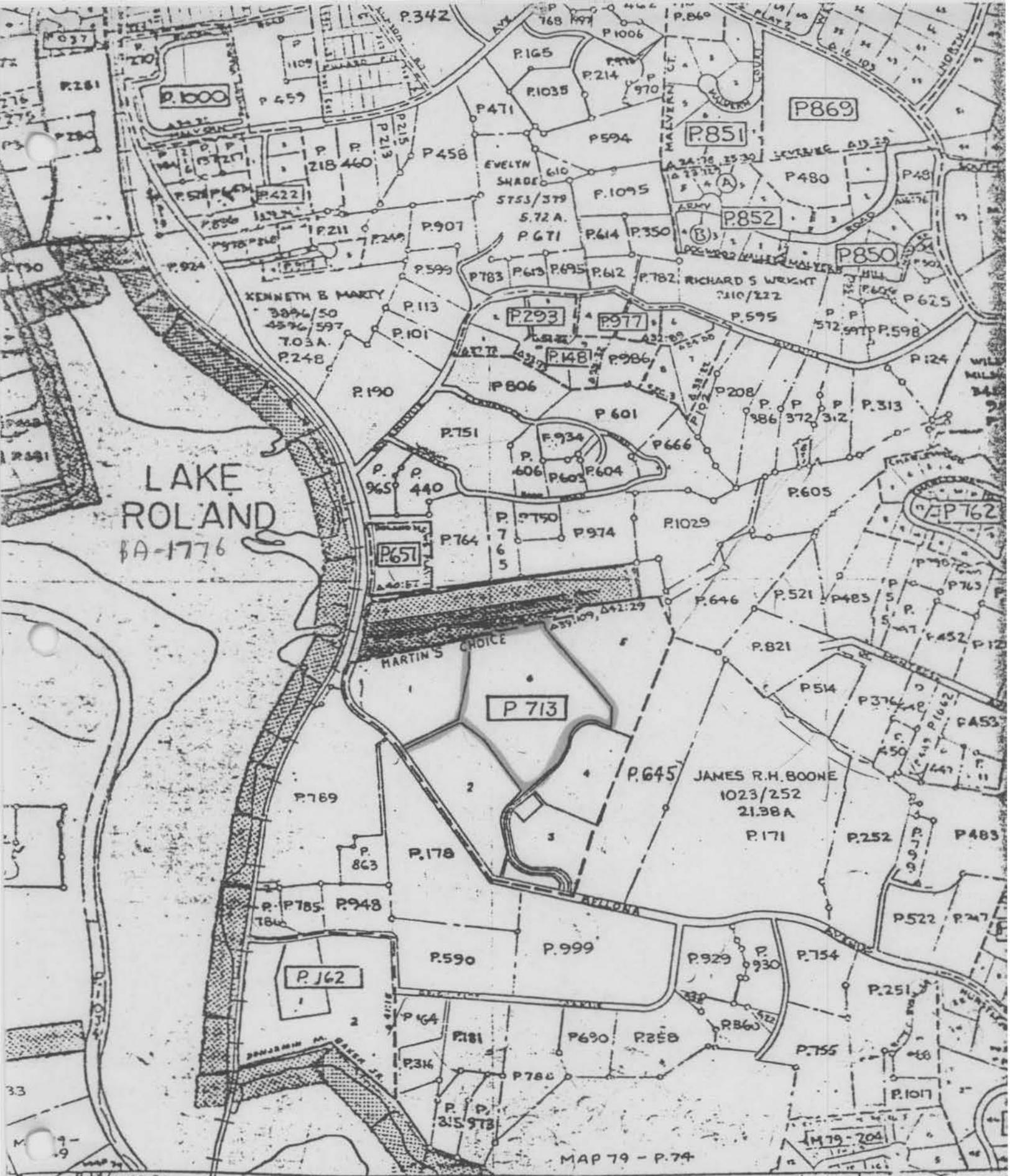
<u>LIBER</u>	<u>FOLIO</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>
Plat Book 39, folio 109 "Mertin's Choice" June, 1979 Owner - Edward K. Dunn, Jr. Being lot # 6				
5654	842	July 2, 1976	James R. H. Boone	Edward K. Dunn, Jr.
Beginning on the east side of Bellona Avenue at the 13th line of the land conveyed in deed 1444, folio 267, Containing 31.4887 acres.				
1444	267	April 2, 1946	Martha E. Smith	James R. H. Boone
1444	265	April 2, 1946	James R. H. Boone	Martha E. Smith
1056	248	April 27, 1939	Elizabeth C. Richards	James R. H. Boone
Containing 21.38 acres				
1056	247	April 27, 1939	James R. H. Boone & wife	Elizabeth C. Richards
1023	252	February 2, 1938	Anne H. Boone & husband	James R. H. Boone & wife
246	93	June 1, 1900	William L. Straugh & wife	Anne H. Boone & husband
Containing 27 acres, 2 roods, 19 perches				
246	92	June 1, 1900	Anne H. Boone & husband	William L. Straugh & wife
223	273	April 1, 1897	Jessie C. Johnson	Anne H. Boone
Containing 18 acres, plus acreage from deed 228/321 from Henry N. Hanna				
213	239	August 5, 1895	Benjamin F. Pope	Jessie C. Johnson
161	128	April 23, 1887	Franklin F. Pope	Benjamin F. Pope

Beginning and being part of Samuel's Hope which lies to the North of the road leading from Beatty's Powder Mills to York Road passing the land of Samuel Pickering, Sr. purchased from Ellen H. Stevenson described in a deed from Samuel Pickering to Franklin F. Pope by deed dated March 31, 1853 recorded in land record 4, folio 490

BA-1776

VESPER HILL  
FLOOR PLAN





LAKE ROLAND  
BA-1776

HARTIN'S CHOICE

JAMES R.H. BOONE  
1023/252  
21.38A  
P.171

KENNETH B. MARTY  
3896/50  
4576/597  
T.03A  
P.248

RICHARD S. WRIGHT  
210/272  
P.595

DENNIS M. SAUER JR.

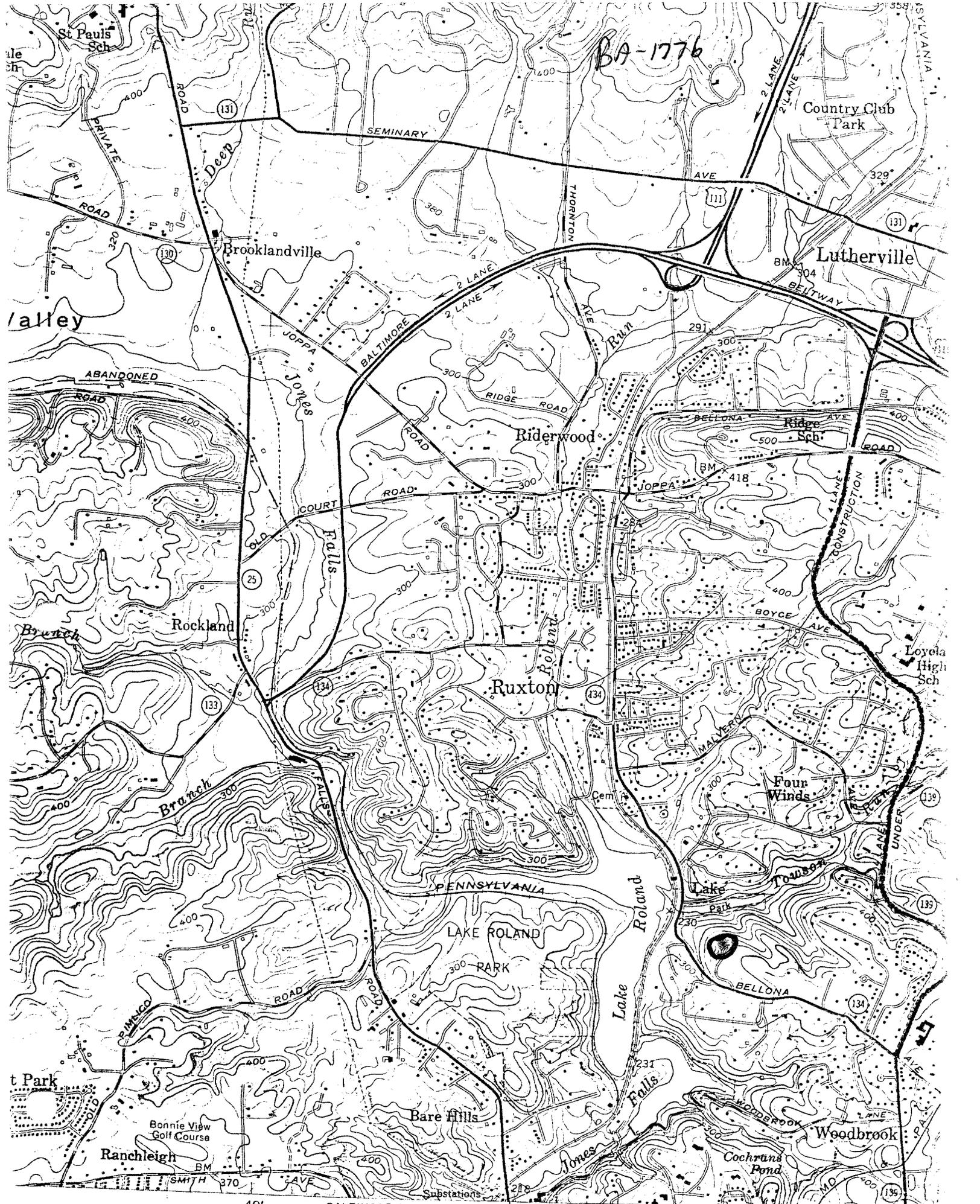
MAP 79 - P.74

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENTS & TAXATION  
TAX MAP DIVISION

INFORMATION SHOWN HEREON HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM PUBLIC RECORDS AND IS NOT AN ACTUAL SURVEY. IT SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS. USERS OF THIS MAP ARE URGED TO NOTIFY THE DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENTS & TAXATION IF ANY ERRORS ARE FOUND.

PROPERTY LINE  
SUB-DIVISION BOUNDARY  
CONTINUING OWNERSHIP - Z I.E. - Z - Z - Z  
PARCEL NUMBER - P. 349 (ASSIGNED TO IDENTIFY AND INDEX OWNERSHIP. MUST BE PRECEDED BY PARCEL NUMBER)

69



BA-1776

40' BALTIMORE (JUNC. U.S. 1) 5 MI.

INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C., 1958-NS  
359000m.F. MR 4867  
BALTIMORE (JUNC. U.S. 1) 4.5 MI. 176°31'



BA- 1776

VESPER HILL  
S.W. CORNER

J. CORCORAN  
7/79



BA-1776

VESPER HILL  
S.E. CORNER

J. CORCORAN  
7/79



BA-1726

VESPER HILL

N.W. CORNER

J. CORCORAN

7/79



BA-1776-B

SPRING HOUSE -  
VESPER HILL  
S.E. CORNER

J. CORCORAN  
7/79



BA- 1776-A

BANK BARN.

VESPER HILL

S.E. CORNER

J. CORCORAN

7/79.