

**CAPSULE SUMMARY**  
**BA-2911**  
**Catonsville Firehouse**  
**22 Bloomsbury Avenue**  
**Catonsville, Baltimore County**  
**ca. 1888**  
**Public**

The former Catonsville Firehouse was constructed circa 1888 at 22 Bloomsbury Avenue. The building of the firehouse was authorized in 1886 by the local legislature, which provided the funds for the combined police and fire station. The firehouse, originally dressed in Queen Anne style detailing, appears to have been the first fire station with paid firemen, rather than volunteer forces, to be erected in the town of Catonsville. William Gerwig, a local Catonsville builder, is credited with the construction of the red brick firehouse for the cost of \$2,000. The masonry building was subsequently altered and enlarged by the construction of several additions, particularly at the rear. The building ceased to function as a fire station in 1928.

Significantly altered and enlarged since its construction, the building is two stories high with a series of ell and rear additions. The main block of the former firehouse is constructed of brick, laid in Flemish bond. It is covered by a cross-gable roof, clad with asphalt shingles, and pierced with projecting bays and gables. The building's original fenestration, indicating its use as a firehouse, is obscured by a one-story addition that wraps around the façade and side elevation.



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## 7. Description

Inventory No. BA-2911

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### Condition

excellent       deteriorated  
 good             ruins  
 fair               altered

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

The former firehouse at 22 Bloomsbury Avenue in Catonsville was built in 1888. Significantly altered and enlarged since its construction, the building is two stories high with a series of ells and rear additions. The main block of the former firehouse is constructed of brick, laid in Flemish bond. It is covered by a cross-gable roof, clad with asphalt shingles, and pierced with projecting bays and gables. The building's original fenestration, indicating its use as a firehouse, is obscured by a one-story addition that wraps around the façade and side elevation. Historic photographs of the building, supported by remnants of stylized fabric, indicate the firehouse originally exhibited the Queen Anne style. The many alterations and additions to the building have diminished its architectural design, therefore it no longer reads as a Queen Anne style building.

### EXTERIOR

The façade, facing east on Bloomsbury Avenue, is dominated by the shed-roofed addition one-story addition dating from the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Three bays wide, the brick-clad addition features a slightly off-center entry with a single-leaf wood door. Fluted pilasters and a dentiled lintel frame the opening, which holds a paneled and glass door flanked by ten-light sidelights. On either side of the entry bay are two-light fixed wood windows with rowlock-coursed brick sills. These large picture windows are finished with narrow wood surrounds and undersized, paneled shutters. Above the shed roof of this modern addition is the original main block of the firehouse. Indicative of the Queen Anne style, the main block has an asymmetrical projecting bay in the northernmost bay. This is balanced by the remnants of the steeply pitched front gable dormer in the southernmost bay, where the wide fire truck openings were located originally. The asymmetry is further accentuated by corresponding gablets piercing the roof above the dormer.

The projecting bay in the northernmost bay contains a paired 1/1 replacement window with a continuous wood sill. This opening is flanked at the base by two quarter-circle wood brackets, with a sunburst motif, applied to the plane of the wall. The front gable has an enclosed tympanum framed by raked moldings. Two wood brackets visually support the pent-like roof of the gable. A multiple-light lunette window with a soldier-course brick lintel and a lug sill pierces the tympanum. The window is set directly above a row of ornamental terra cotta tiles with paterae. The large gable dormer to the south now features a sliding one-light wood window and plywood siding in the tympanum. The two smaller gablets contain louvered vents.

The north elevation is completely obscured by the late-20<sup>th</sup> century two-story brick-faced building at 20 Bloomsbury Avenue. The south elevation is comprised of the two-bay wide main block of the building, a three-bay wide wood frame ell, a two-bay wide brick addition, and a wood frame rear addition. The brick addition marking the first story of the façade continues around the southeast corner, obscuring the first story of the main block and a portion of the ell. The addition continues the fenestration exhibited on the façade, with a two-light plate glass window in the easternmost bay. This fixed window is framed with a rowlock-coursed brick sill, wood surrounds, and undersized wood shutters. Moving westward, the addition is

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Catonsville Firehouse, 22 Bloomsbury Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland  
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pierced by a long window opening set high in the plane of the wall. This window has three fixed lights, a rowlock-coursed brick sill, and wood surrounds. The addition terminates at the beginning of the two-story rear brick addition.

The second story of the main block has two standard window openings holding 2/2 replacement sash with horizontal muntins. The openings are framed with wood sills, jack-arched lintels, and paneled wood shutters. Like the main block, only the second story of the ell is visible above the one-story addition. Clad with asbestos shingles, the ell is three bays deep, fenestrated by a single-leaf entry, an octagonal window, and two 2/2 replacement windows with horizontal muntins. The second story entry, reached by a metal fire escape on the side of the building, has a wood door with horizontal panels set below four lights. The octagonal window is fixed, with wide muntins dividing it into nine lights. The shallow cross-gable roof of this ell is clad with asphalt shingles and has a slight overhang. The tall shaft of a brick chimney with a corbeled cap is located between the ell and the brick addition constructed to the west.

This two-bay deep addition, constructed of brick laid in stretcher bond, has a gable roof clad with asphalt shingles. The first story features a wide opening that originally served as a garage door. This double-wide opening, at the time of the survey, had two of the entry doors and the double-hung window. The window and entries have since been infilled and the double-wide garage opening covered with vertical board. To the west is an industrial-style sixteen-light metal casement window with a rowlock-coursed brick sill and a single-leaf door. The second story is asymmetrically marked by two equally spaced metal casement windows with sixteen lights. Fronting east, the second story of this brick addition has a 6/6 window.

The rear, or west, elevation is two stories high and three bays wide. The first story features a pull-up wood garage door on the north end, a single-leaf wood door with three lights, and two six-light metal casement windows. One sixteen-light metal casement window on the north end and a six-light metal casement window mark the second story. The wall is clad with asbestos shingles with a portion of the first story clad with weatherboard siding.

The building was surveyed from public right-of-way as the owners denied access to the property.

# 8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-2911

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**Significance dates** circa 1888-1928

**Architect** Unknown

**Specific dates** circa 1888, 1928

**Builder** William Gerwig (Contractor)

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

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

The former Catonsville Firehouse was erected circa 1888 at 22 Bloomsbury Avenue. Construction of the firehouse was authorized in 1886 by the local legislature, which provided the funds for the combined police and fire station. The firehouse, originally dressed in Queen Anne style detailing, appears to have been the first fire station with paid firemen, rather than volunteer forces, to be erected in the town of Catonsville. William Gerwig, a local Catonsville builder, is credited with the construction of the red brick firehouse for the cost of \$2,000.<sup>1</sup> The masonry building was subsequently altered and enlarged by the construction of several additions, particularly at the rear. The building ceased to function as a fire station in 1928.

## HISTORY

Although the firehouse was constructed circa 1888, the land on which it stands was not actually transferred to the County Commissioners of Baltimore County until 1917, at which time Albert Smith was paid \$1,400 for two parcels of land. Once constructed, the building was used not only as the firehouse and police station, but also as the local jail and the meeting place for the Catonsville Supreme Bench. In 1894, the fire company acquired a Holloway Chemical Engine, which featured two tanks and had a 180-gallon capacity. Dr. F. Carlier of Paris invented the first chemical fire engine in 1864.<sup>2</sup> Two companies, the Holloway Company of Baltimore and the Babcock Company of Chicago, produced the first American-made chemical engines in 1872. These chemical engines followed the soda-acid principle of fire extinguishing. When the soda and acid were mixed together, they created a gas that forced the water from the tank through the hose.<sup>3</sup> The tanks were mounted on a cart with an engine connected to the hose and the soda and acid pressuring mechanism. By 1886, Babcock and Holloway had manufactured over 2,000 chemical engines and, by the 1920s, over 10,000 had been produced by more than a dozen companies.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, (Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979), pp. 304-305.

<sup>2</sup> "The First Chemical Fire Engine in the U.S." Located on the Internet on March 16, 2000 at <http://www.conwayfiremuseum.org/exhibits/chemical/main.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael L. Dixon, "North East Needs Fire Protection." Located on the Internet on March 16, 2000 at <http://cchistory.org/osnel.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> "The First Chemical Fire Engine in the U.S."

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In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, growing communities like Catonsville were erecting new buildings to house fire departments with paid firemen. Towns often constructed monumental buildings that served as symbols of city government. "After 1870 red brick architecture, incorporating new styles taken from industrial and commercial design, came to dominate municipal building. In these years the red brick fire station became as ubiquitous as the red brick schoolhouse."<sup>5</sup> These larger stations were constructed to have room not only to house the newer and advanced fire fighting equipment and sleeping room for the paid firemen, but for public meeting space. The second and third stories of these firehouses were often devoted to living quarters, while the first story housed the equipment and in many cases the stables for the horses.

According to historic photographs of the firehouse dating to 1915, the masonry building was two-and-a-half stories in height and three bays in width.<sup>6</sup> The building, with its cross gable roof, features a projecting front gable bay with a pedimented gable end and a pyramidal frame bell tower. Double-leaf wood doors with six lights in each leaf punctuated the first story of the gable bay. To the south of the projecting gable bay, the side gable extended to form an inset one-story, two-bay wide porch that was supported by turned wood posts. Beneath the porch, there appears to have been a multi-light window and a single leaf door opening. Centered above the porch was a triangular-shaped, front gable dormer with paired four-light windows beneath a triangular six-light window. Above this large dormer lie two small triangular-shaped front gable dormers that contained louvered vents. The three dormers remain today, although the fenestration has changed. Additionally, there was a center interior brick chimney with a corbeled cap and a cupola that rose from the rear of the building, both of which no longer exist. Due to extensive alterations, the first story of the façade has been completely obliterated by a one-story addition and the original Queen Anne style detailing is no longer evident.

The Catonsville Firehouse is listed as Fire Station Number 5 on the 1904, 1910, 1919, and 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. First appearing on the Sanborn Map in 1904, the firehouse featured a two-story main block with numerous one-story rear additions. Although the footprint remains the same on the 1910 map, there is a one-story frame wagon shed and a small one-story outbuilding, both to the rear of the station. Additionally, the map indicates the presence of the bell on the roof at this time. By 1919, significant changes had taken place, according to the Sanborn Maps. The one-story additions on the rear of the firehouse were extended, practically reaching the rear of the lot. In fact, the new additions were now connected to the wagon shed, which had been converted to an auto house. On two adjacent lots, there was also a wagon shed and a stable, possibly related to the firehouse as no primary resources were on these lots. These two outbuildings flanked Smith's Lane, which was a dead-end street running behind the fire station. Most significant at this time is the description of the engines housed at the Catonsville Fire Department, Station Number Five. In 1919, the station had an A.M. La France auto triple combination pumper hose and chemical engine with one forty-gallon tank, 1,250 feet of

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<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*, (New York, NY: Abbeville Press, 1982), p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Orser and Joseph Arnold, *Catonsville 1880 to 1940 from Village to Suburb*, (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 1989), p. 131.

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Catonsville Firehouse, 22 Bloomsbury Avenue, Baltimore County  
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twenty-one inch hose and thirty-six foot ladder. Additionally, there was a Ford combination hose and chemical engine with two thirty-five gallon chemical tanks, 3,500 feet of twenty-one inch hose and thirty-one feet of ladders. There was also a hand-reel with five hundred feet of twenty-one inch hose and six paid firemen.<sup>7</sup>

In 1925, the map reflects numerous changes to the property. The one-story rear additions have been altered, resulting in the transformation of the additions into garage space, one portion of which was used as an automobile painting shop. Additionally, the freestanding auto house was demolished, the lot was enlarged, and a gas tank was added to the property. In 1928, a new firehouse was constructed at the northeast corner of Eges Lane and Frederick Road. This new building housed the police station, firehouse, and a hose tower. With the construction of a new station, the original building was sold to Morris and Bessie Scop for \$7,525. The Scops were the highest bidders in a sale that was published in both *the Argus* and the *Union News* for three weeks.<sup>8</sup> Following the sale of the property to the Scops, the building was converted to use as an automobile repair shop with a garage and three gas pumps. According to the 1958 Sanborn map, the building continued in its role as a filling station. It is unknown when this use was discontinued. Currently, the former firehouse serves as a community mental health center, called Revisions.

#### Chain of Title:

May 9, 1865:	John K. Smith to Albert Smith Land Records of Baltimore County Liber 45 Folio 152
October 9, 1889:	John K. Smith of Tippacano County, Indiana to Albert Smith of Baltimore County, Maryland Land Records of Baltimore County Liber 177 Folio 445
August 14, 1917:	Albert and Mary E. Smith to County Commissioners of Baltimore County Land Records of Baltimore County Liber 486 Folio 110
November 21, 1928:	County Commissioners of Baltimore County to Bessie and Morris Scop Land Records of Baltimore County Liber 662 Folio 125
August 13, 1947:	Morris Scop, widower, to Myra S. and Ira E. Mather Land Records of Baltimore County Liber 1579 Folio 559

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<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Catonsville, Maryland: 1919.

<sup>8</sup> Baltimore County Land Records, Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.

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- December 1, 1948: Myra S. and Ira E. Mather to Solomon H. Snyder  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber TBS 1720 Folio 171
- December 9, 1953: Janet and Solomon H. Snyder to Dolores E. and Chester E. Grimes, and Mildred and Jack Garland  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber GLB 2405 Folio 316
- February 14, 1972: Dolores E. and Chester E. Grimes and Mildred and Jack Garland to Dorothy M. Beaman  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber 5249 Folio 660
- February 14, 1973: Dorothy M. Beaman to Chester E. Grimes and Jack Garland  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber 5249 Folio 664
- June 19, 1973: Chester E. Grimes to Jack Garland  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber 5368 Folio 789
- July 22, 1993: Jack Garland to Mildred G. Garland  
Land Records of Baltimore County  
Liber 9981 Folio 413

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Catonsville Firehouse, 22 Bloomsbury Avenue, Baltimore County  
**Continuation Sheet**

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## HISTORIC CONTEXT:

### **MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PRESERVATION PLAN DATA**

Geographic Organization:	Piedmont
Chronological/Developmental Period(s):	Industrial/Urban Dominance (1870-1930) Modern Period (1930-Present)
Historic Period Theme(s):	Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning Government/Law
Resource Type:	
Category:	Building
Historic Environment:	Town
Historic Function(s) and Use(s):	GOVERNMENT/Fire Station COMMERCE/TRADE/Service Station
Known Design Source:	William Gerwig (Contractor)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. BA-2911

Baltimore County Land Records. Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Maryland.

Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. *A History of Baltimore County*. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.

Dixon, Michael L. "North East Needs Fire Protection." Located on the Internet on March 16, 2000 at <http://cchistory.org/osnel.htm>.

"The First Chemical Fire Engine in the U.S." Located on the Internet on March 16, 2000 at <http://www.conwayfiremuseum.org/exhibits/chemical/main.htm>.

Orser, Edward and Joseph Arnold. *Catonsville 1880 to 1940 from Village to Suburb*. Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 1989.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Catonsville, Maryland: 1904, 1910, 1919, 1925, 1930, and 1958.

Zurier, Rebecca. *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*. New York, NY: Abbeville Press, 1982.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of project area	<u>Less than one acre</u>	
Acreage surveyed	<u>Less than one acre</u>	
Quadrangle name	<u>Baltimore West, MD</u>	Quadrangle scale <u>1:24,000</u>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

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The Catonsville Firehouse is located at 22 Bloomsbury Avenue in Catonsville, Maryland as noted on Tax Map 101, Parcel 1592. The fire house has historically been associated with this property since its construction in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Robin J. Weidlich and Laura Trieschmann, Architectural Historians
organization	EHT Tracerics, Inc.
street & number	5420 Western Avenue
city or town	Chevy Chase, Maryland

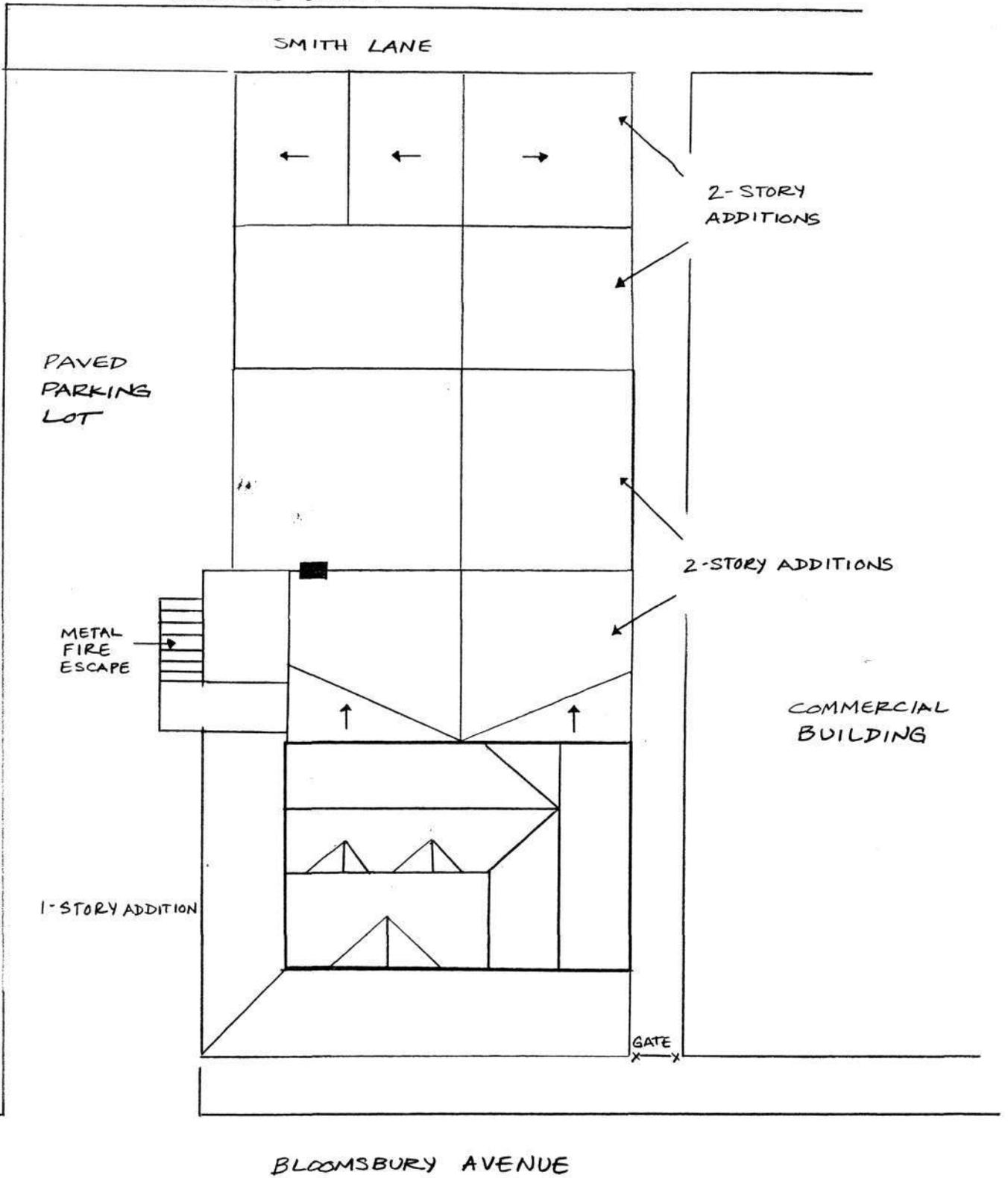
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The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032  
410-514-7600

BA-2911  
CATONSVILLE FIREHOUSE  
22 BLOOMSBURY AVENUE  
CATONSVILLE, MARYLAND  
BALTIMORE COUNTY



NOT DRAWN TO SCALE N →

9

FREDERICK RD. (AV.)

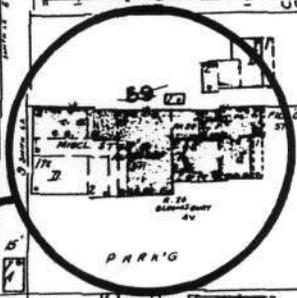


AUTO PARKING

J. S. WILSON & CO.  
CORL. LUMBER

BA 2911  
CATONSVILLE FIREHOUSE  
22 BLOOMSBURY AVENUE

CATONSVILLE FIRE CO.  
CAMP TERRY  
CAMP CENTER



PLANING MILL

MELLOR AV.

CABLE STGE YARD  
STOCK PILE  
PAV GARAGE

BLOOMSBURY AV.

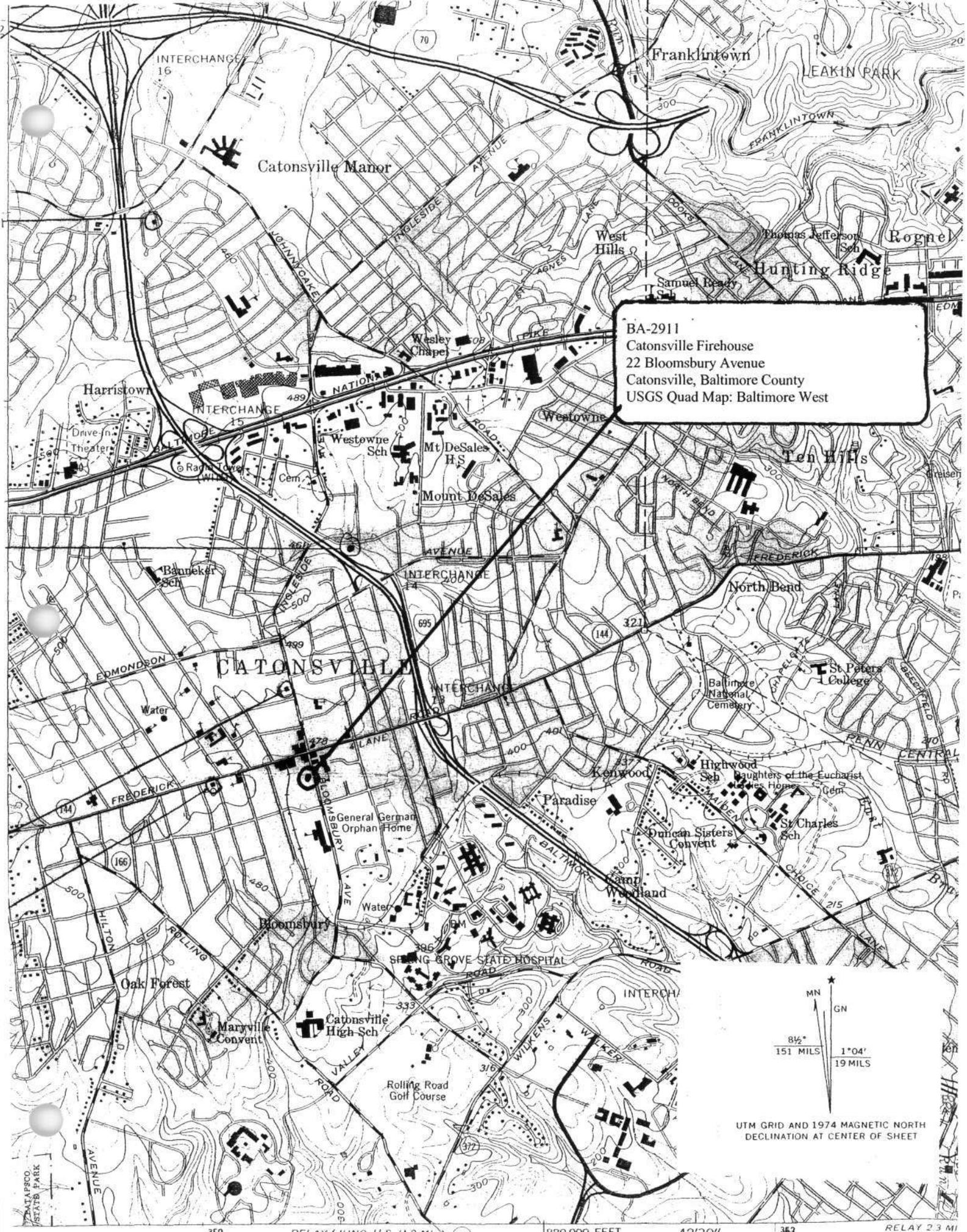
MEADOWBROOK RD. (LANE)

BLOOMINGDALE AV.

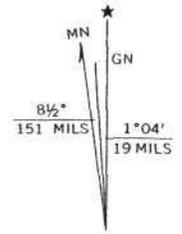
MAGRUDER AV.

PARKING

Catonsville, Maryland  
Baltimore County  
Sanborn Map 1930, Updated 1958



BA-2911  
 Catonsville Firehouse  
 22 Bloomsbury Avenue  
 Catonsville, Baltimore County  
 USGS Quad Map: Baltimore West



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



BIT 2911

CATONSVILLE FIREHOUSE

22 BLOOMSBURY AVENUE, CATONSVILLE

BALTIMORE COUNTY

TRACERIES

3/00

MARYLAND SHPO

EAST ELEVATION LOOKING SOUTH

1 OF 3



BA 2911  
CATONSVILLE FIREHOUSE

22 Bloomsbury Avenue, Catonsville

Baltimore County

Traceries

1/00

Maryland SHPD

south elevation LOOKING NORTHWEST

2 OF 3



BH 2911  
CATONSVILLE FIREHOUSE  
22 BLOOMSBURY AVENUE CATONSVILLE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY  
TRACERIES

3/00  
MARYLAND SHPO  
WEST ELEVATION LOOKING EAST  
3 OF 3