

CAPSULE SUMMARY

Merryman-Bell House

BA-667

137 Pleasant Hill Road

Baltimore County, MD

The Merryman-Bell House is a c. 1866 two-and-a-half story, three-bay, vernacular style, frame, I-house with a central passage. There is a two-and-a-half story, two-bay, addition to east gable end which may have been added in the early twentieth century. There is also a shed-roof addition to the east side of the two-bay addition. A brick chimney pierces the ridge line where the addition has been built to the main block. The original section of the house rests on a partially stuccoed stone foundation, but the shed-roof addition rests on a concrete foundation. The entire house is sheathed with modern vinyl siding, and the shallow-pitched roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The house's cornice and soffit are also covered with a modern synthetic material. A raised front porch with turned posts supporting a hipped roof shields the three-bay façade of the main block. There is a modern, four-bay, shed-roof porch attached to the rear elevation. Five, square posts support the porch on a concrete slab foundation. There is a bulkhead cellar entrance located on the west elevation.

Except for the ribbon window on the first-floor façade of the addition and the second floor, rear elevation bay window of the addition, the windows throughout the house are modern, one-over-one, double hung sash. There is a single modern octagonal window in the façade of the shed-roof addition. There are no windows in the gable ends except the louvered windows at the attic level. All of the windows, except the rear elevation bay window and the octagonal window, have modern louvered shutters attached. The front door is a modern aluminum storm door with rectangular glass panels at the top.

The Merryman-Bell House is also included in the Belltown African American Survey District (BA-3069).

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes
no

Property Name: Merryman-Bell House Inventory Number: BA-667
 Address: 137 Pleasant Hill Road Historic district: yes no
 City: Owings Mill Zip Code: 21117-3223 County: Baltimore County
 USGS Quadrangle(s): Reisterstown
 Property Owner: Aren W. Self and Sheryl L Bruff Tax Account ID Number: 0408031020
 Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 228 Tax Map Number: 58
 Project: BA451A11 Agency: SHA
 Agency Prepared By: McCormick Taylor, Inc.
 Preparer's Name: Jerry Clouse Date Prepared: 2/13/2009
 Documentation is presented in: Elizabeth Anderson Comer/Archeology 2008
 Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended
 Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
 Name of the District/Property: Belltown African American Survey District
 Inventory Number: BA-3096 Eligible: yes Listed: yes
 Site visit by MHT Staff yes no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

The Merryman-Bell House is a c. 1866 two-and-a-half story, three-bay, vernacular style, frame, I-house with a central passage. There is a two-and-a-half story, two-bay, addition to east gable end which may have been added in the early twentieth century. There is also a shed-roof addition to the east side of the two-bay addition. A brick chimney pierces the ridge line where the addition has been built to the main block. The original section of the house rests on a partially stuccoed stone foundation, but the shed-roof addition rests on a concrete foundation. The entire house is sheathed with modern vinyl siding, and the shallow-pitched roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The house's cornice and soffit are also covered with a modern synthetic material. A raised front porch with turned posts supporting a hipped roof shields the three-bay façade of the main block. There is a modern, four-bay, shed-roof porch attached to the rear elevation. Five, square posts support the porch on a concrete slab foundation. There is a bulkhead cellar entrance located on the west elevation.

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MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW	
Eligibility recommended <input type="checkbox"/>	Eligibility not recommended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D	Considerations: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G
MHT Comments:	
<u>Zim Talman</u> ✓ Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	<u>6/17/09</u> Date
<u>[Signature]</u> Reviewer, National Register Program	<u>6/17/09</u> Date

NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

BA-667

Merryman-Bell House

Page 2

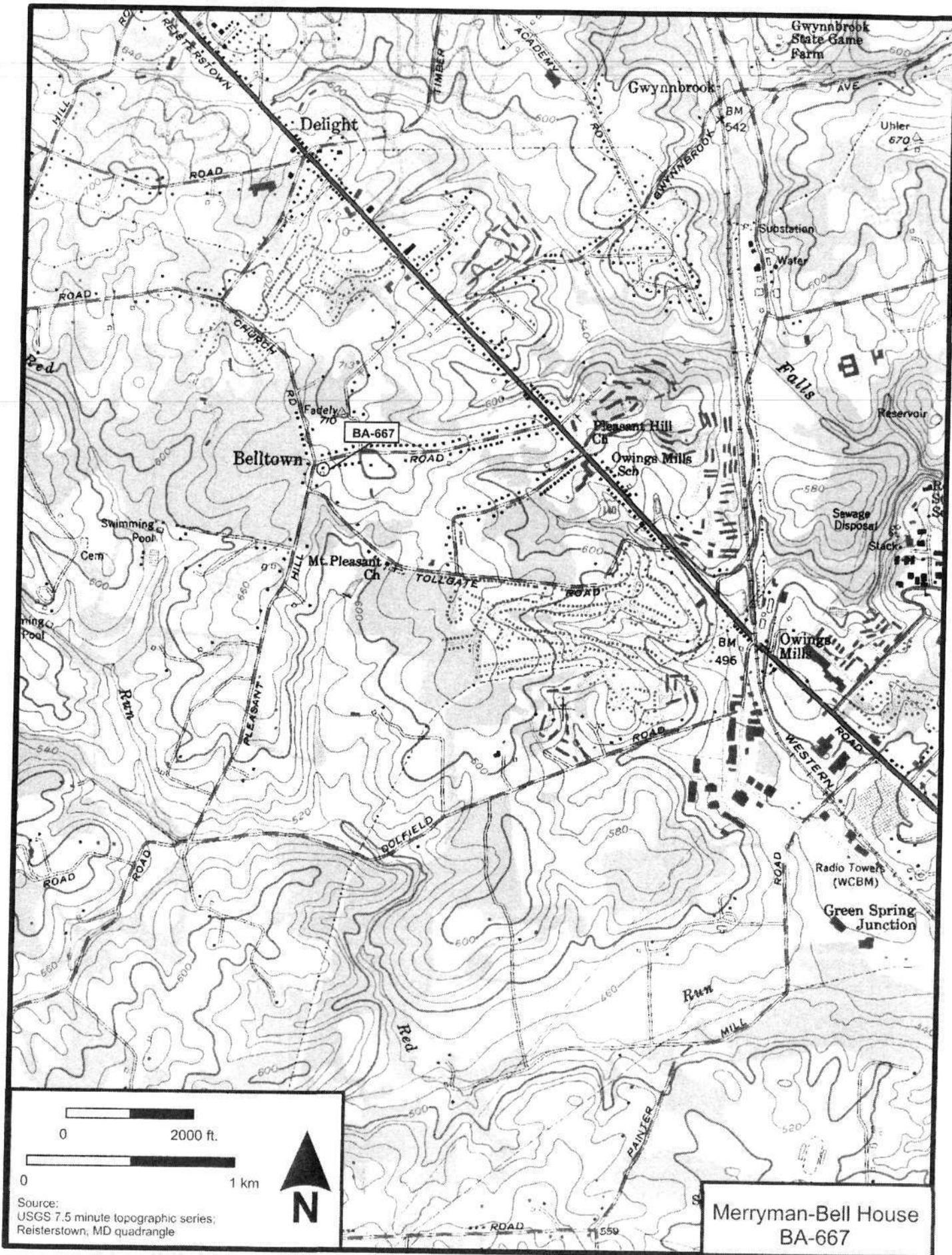
attached. The front door is a modern aluminum storm door with rectangular glass panels at the top.

The Merryman-Bell House is also included in the Belltown African American Survey District (BA-3069).

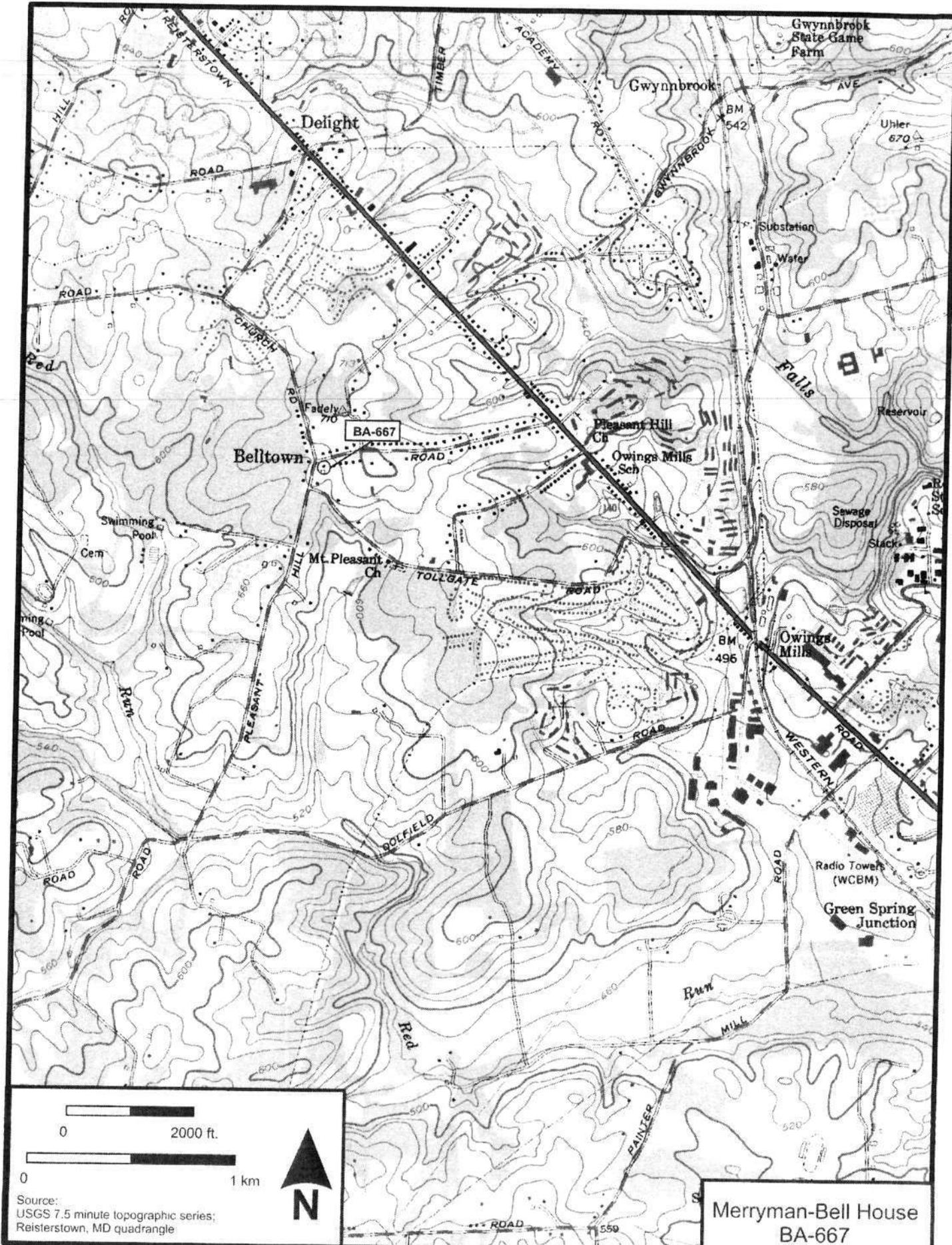
The Merryman-Bell House does not retain sufficient integrity to be individually eligible for its architectural significance but does retain sufficient integrity to be a contributing element of a historic district if one were present.

The Merryman-Bell House is not directly associated with events or patterns significant to local, state, or national history (Criterion A). The property is not associated with any person important to local, state, or national history (Criterion B). The building does not possess exceptional characteristics of homes of the period, is not a work of a master, and does not possess high artistic value (Criterion C). The property does not appear likely to yield significant archaeological information about history or prehistory (Criterion D). The Merryman-Bell House is recommended not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW	
Eligibility recommended _____	Eligibility not recommended _____
Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D	Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G
MHT Comments:	
_____	_____
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	Date
_____	_____
Reviewer, National Register Program	Date

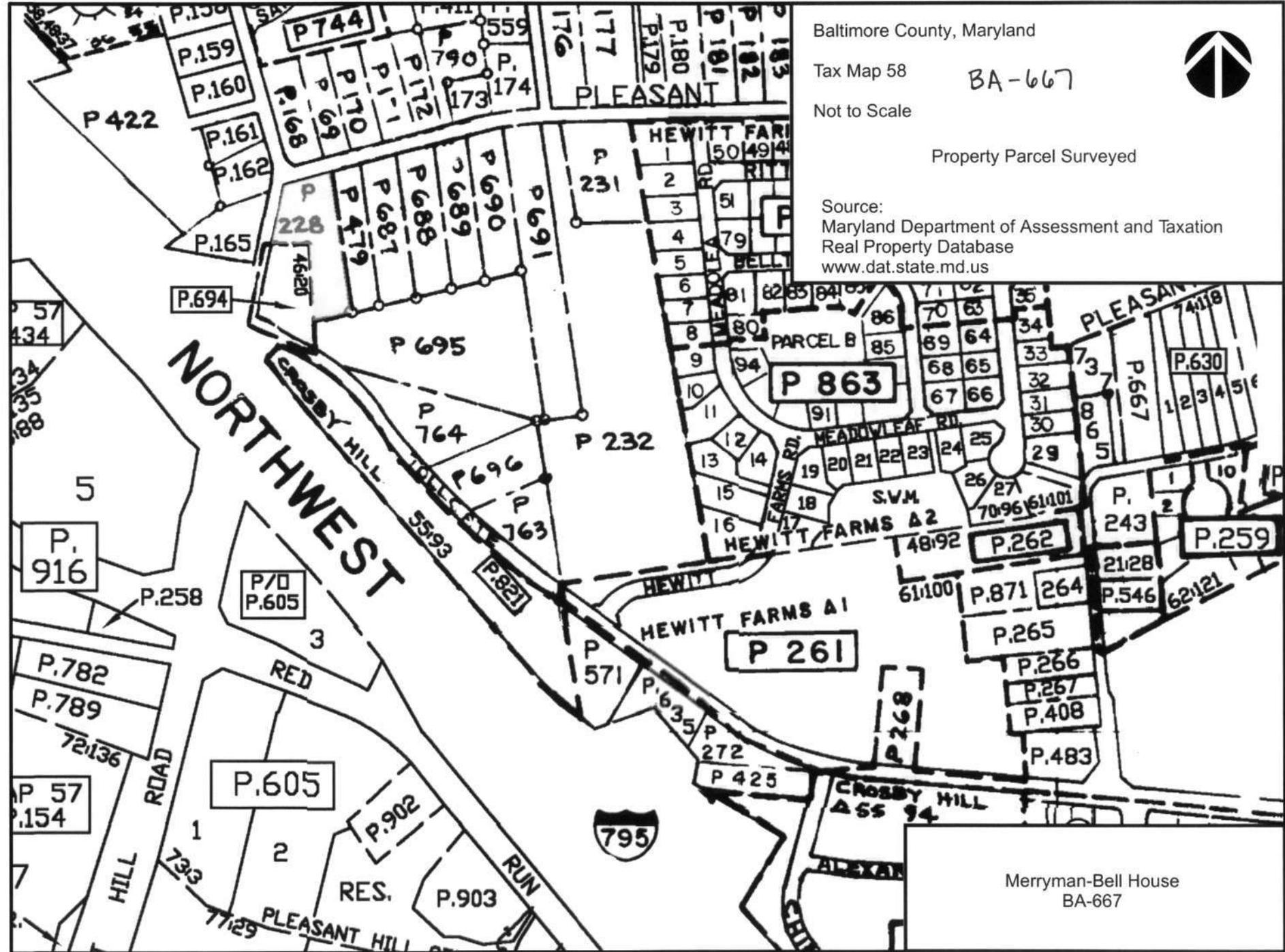


Merryman-Bell House
BA-667



0 2000 ft.
0 1 km
Source:
USGS 7.5 minute topographic series;
Reisterstown, MD quadrangle

Merryman-Bell House
BA-667



Baltimore County, Maryland

Tax Map 58 BA-667

Not to Scale

Property Parcel Surveyed

Source:
Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation
Real Property Database
www.dat.state.md.us

Merryman-Bell House
BA-667



BA-667

Merryman-Bell House
137 Pleasant Hill Road
Baltimore County, MD
Charles Richmond

2/2009

MD SHPO

Looking northeast at South and West elevations

1/3

METROPHOTO & VIDEO > 015 EN
0797 03342-1 N-6-33 Ach-01 GR08 HoF 2079.0/100.0

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BA-6607
Merrymont Bell House

137 Pleasant Hill Road

Baltimore County, MD

Charles Richmond

2/2009

MD 5470

Looking southwest at northeast east elevation

METROPHOTO <No. 10 > 008 BN

0797 033+2-1 N-7-49 AC+01 ACH-01 GR08 2079.0/100.0

BA-667
Merryman-Bell House
137 Pleasant Hill Road
Owings Mills
ca. 1866
private

The Merryman-Bell House is a vernacular I-House. This house is a wood frame building covered with aluminum siding with a large interior chimney, back and front porches, a side addition, and a lean-to addition. The Merryman-Bell House is one of the few examples of vernacular architecture that was built in this area of Belttown before 1900 that is still standing. The house appears to be the oldest structure in the Belttown community.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-667

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic

other Merryman-Bell House

2. Location

street and number 137 Pleasant Hill Road __ not for publication

city, town Owings Mills x vicinity

county Baltimore

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

name Aren W. Self and Sheryl Bruff

street and number 137 Pleasant Hill Road telephone

city, town Owings Mills state MD zip code 21117-2424

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courts Building liber 20999 folio 503

city, town Towson tax map 58 tax parcel 228 tax ID number 0408031020

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: Baltimore County Office of Planning Survey 2003

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	1
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	1
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Noncontributing
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> social	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	_____
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	_____
			Total

			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			1

7. Description

Inventory No. BA-667

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

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

The Merryman-Bell House is a vernacular I-House. The house is a two-story, wood frame building covered with aluminum siding. The house has a gable roof, a stone foundation, a large interior chimney, back and front porches, a side addition, and a lean-too addition. The house is five-bays wide and one-bay deep. The original portion of the house is three-bays wide.

The side-gable roof has a steep pitch and is covered with asphalt shingles. The large interior chimney is constructed of brick with corbelling and is located where the original portion of house and the side addition meet. The stone foundation has a bulkhead on the west façade constructed of the same stone as the foundation.

All windows are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with levered shutters. On the first floor of the side addition, there is small triple window with casement sashes. There are no side window openings only gable-peak windows. There is a centered small-levered window in the west façade gable-peak. There is an off-center small-levered window in the east façade gable-peak. The off-centered front doorway is located two-bays from the west façade (it is in centered in the original portion of the house).

The front wood porch is one-story with a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles. The porch is four steps above grade and extends the length of the original portion of the house. The porch has a center stairway with two turned columns flanking either side of the stairway. There is a balustrade between the columns and on either side of the stairway. The back concrete porch is one-story with a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles. The rear porch roof is supported by four posts along the front.

The side addition is on the east façade of the original portion of the house, and is two-stories and two-bays wide. The side addition shares the same roof as the original portion of the house. The lean-too addition is on the east façade of the side addition. It is one-bay wide and one-bay deep. East of the lean-to is an open carport.

8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-667

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input 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: _____

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates ca. 1866

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 projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Merryman-Bell House is one of the few examples of vernacular architecture that was built in this area of Belltown before 1900 that is still standing. The house appears to be the oldest structure in the Belltown community. The Belltown community includes two communities living side by side: the African-American community of Belltown which is centered around the Mount Pleasant A.M.E. Church on Tollgate Road and in the early twentieth-century expanded on to Featherbed Lane, and the European-American community located around the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Church Road where the Bell store was once located.

The Merryman-Bell House was part of several different larger properties and had several different owners from 1754 (date of land patent for "Soldiers Delight" to Thomas Harrison) to 1861. In 1861, Oliver Disney purchased forty-eight acres from George F. and Rebecca M. Weagley for \$1600. In 1865, Disney sold 12.25 acres to Paul Trout for \$918.75. The 1877 Atlas of Baltimore County shows the residence of P. Trout near the corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Tollgate Road. It appears that this is the Merryman-Bell House. This indicates that current dwelling was constructed before 1877. It is probable that Paul Trout had the house built after he purchased the property in 1865.

In 1889, Jacob Gist, the executor of Paul Trout's estate, sold the 12.25 acres to Charles H. Bell for \$1500. In 1890, Charles H. and Fannie Bell sold the property to Benjamin M. Davis for \$2000. Then ten years later in 1900, Benjamin M. and Marietta Davis sold 11.25 acres back to the Bells for \$2400. Then a year later in 1901, the Bells sold the property again but this time to James A. and Nancy E. Jones for \$2800. In 1905, the Jones sold the property to J. William and M. Emma Merryman for \$3100. In 1917, the Merrymans sold the property to Senion J. and Enid B. Schneider for \$4300. With an increase of \$1200 in property value in only 12 years, this could indicate that the side addition could have been added during the Merrymans ownership. In an oral history interview with Lee and Roland Fox, who were raised on Pleasant Hill Road, the brothers say that the house looks the same as it does today as long as they can remember. This backs up the possibility that the additions were constructed during the Merrymans ownership.

Within four months of purchasing the property, the Schneiders sold 11.5 acres to Joshua G. and Bessie H. Harvey. In 1933, Guy B. Browne was assigned the mortgage rights for the foreclosure on the Harveys. In 1934, Guy B. Browne sold the 11.5 acres to Goucher Tase in a 1933 public sale. In 1950, Goucher and Maude W. Tase sold two acres, Lots Six and Seven on the unrecorded plat of Goucher Tase, to James B. and Rose Marie McCloskey. In 1957, McCloskeys sold one and quarter acres, Lot Seven on the unrecorded plat of Goucher Tase, to John C. and Ruth C. Heid. Since 1957, the property has had several owners and the acreage has stayed the same.

It was mentioned to the Elizabeth Comer Archeology, Inc. crew by Mrs. Spencer, who has lived across the street at 136 Pleasant Hill Road since the late 1950s, that there is a local oral tradition about the Merryman-Bell House. The tradition says that this house was used in the Underground Railroad. If this oral tradition is accurate, this could indicate an earlier date of construction or that there was a previous building on this property.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. BA-667

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1.24
Acreage of historical setting 1.24
Quadrangle name Reistertown Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property has a L-shape and is located on the south side of Pleasant Hill Road at the right angle of Pleasant Hill Road where Pleasant Hill Road and Church Road intersect. The property is bounded on the north by Pleasant Hill Road, on the south by Tax Parcel 695 and 205 Pleasant Hill Road, on the west by Pleasant Hill Road and on the east by 135 Pleasant Hill Road.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Christine Toms/Architectural Historian		
organization	Elizabeth A. Comer Archaeology	date	December 2007
street & number	4303 N. Charles Street	telephone	410-243-6767
city or town	Baltimore	state	MD

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
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-667

Name Merryman-Bell House
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

E.H.T. Tracerics

2003 *Baltimore County Architectural Survey: African American Thematic Study, Final Report.* Report prepared for The Baltimore County Office of Planning and The Landmarks Preservation Commission, Towson, MD.

Fischler, Benjamin R., Jean W. French, and Elizabeth A. Comer

2007 *Phase I Archaeological Investigation of the Proposed Dolfield Boulevard Extension Between Reisterstown Road and Tollgate Road, Baltimore County, MD.* Draft report prepared by Elizabeth A. Comer Archaeology for Patton Harris Rust & Associates, P.C., Columbia, MD.

McGrain, John

2003 Pleasant Hill Road, Historic Houses Survey. Located at the Baltimore County Office of Planning, Towson, MD.

Richardson, Claire

1978 Notes from a conversation with Lee Fox and Roland Fox, brothers, and sons of Henry Louis Fox (known as Harry Lee Fox), who were born and brought up on Pleasant Hill Road, Owings Mills. Manuscript on file at Baltimore County Historical Society.

1877 Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland. Philadelphia, PA: G.M. Hopkins.

Baltimore County Deed and Plat Books. Baltimore County Court Clerks Office, Baltimore County Courts Building, Towson, MD.



BA-667
Merryman-Bell House
Baltimore County, MD
Christine Toms
October 2007
view southeast, front and west façades
#1 of 3



BA-667
Merryman-Bell House
Baltimore County, MD
Christine Toms
October 2007
view south, front façade
#2 of 3



BA-667
Merryman-Bell House
Baltimore County, MD
Christine Toms
October 2007
view southwest, front and east façades
#3 of 3

BA-667

Before 1877

Merryman-Bell House
137 Pleasant Hill Road, Owings Mills
Private

MERRYMAN-BELL HOUSE - Before 1877 - 137 Pleasant Hill Road, southeast corner with Church Road. The oldest house of the area, owned at one time by the Bell family who gave name of Belletown to community. Shown as J. Trout's in 1877 atlas and D. Norris's in 1915 Bromley atlas. Frame and clapboard house, two stories, five bays wide; painted white; vernacular style. Victorian scroll-sawn porch railing. Asphalt roofing material, gable roof. One inside chimney, and on the west, one inside end-chimney. House built in two segments: east (2 bays) and west (3 bays); porch across three west bays. Red frame stable to southwest. Owner: George W. Gamber. Being re-habbed, June 10, 1986.