

CAPSULE SUMMARY
Lafayette Motel (CH-561)
9340 Crain Highway, Charles County

Constructed circa 1945, the Lafayette Motel is one of seven motels surveyed as part of the Maryland 301 Transportation Corridor Survey. Typical of many of the motels studied, the Lafayette Motel has a two-and-a-half story central section contains the office, lobby, and restaurant. Flanking this central section are two one-story wings, containing modest motel rooms sheltered by an overhanging porch roof. Characteristic of the period, the rooms were constructed in a continuous row with individual parking spaces directly to the front of the room. The Colonial Revival style motel was laid out in a C-shaped curve the framed Route 301 to the west. The Lafayette Motel was operated by the St. Cyr family until 1971.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH:561

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Lafayette Motel

common/other name _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 9340 Crain Highway not for publication _____

city or town Bel Alton vicinity _____ state Maryland code MD

county Charles County code 17 zip code 20611

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

N/A

=====

4. National Park Service Certification

N/A

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check all that 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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes _____ Name of Listing _____

No

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=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Hotel

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Hotel

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Solid: Concrete Block
Roof Side Gable: Asphalt Shingle
Walls Masonry: Stone and Brick Facing
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

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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.)

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

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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance 1945-1971

Significant Dates c. 1945

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Undefined

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

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=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
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(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Beecher, Mary Ann. "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," In *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press for the Society for Commercial Archeology, 1990.

Brown, Jack D., et. al. *Charles County Maryland: A History*. New Jersey: Custombook, Inc., 1976.

Carley, Rachel. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Charles County Land and Will Records. Charles County Courthouse and the Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland.

Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers. *The Motel in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Margolies, John. *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

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" Postcards from Americana." www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Rivoire, J. Richard. *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 1990.

Watson, James Douglas. *Prince George's County Past and Present*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Lithograph Co., 1962.

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 6.80 acres

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

The property at Crain Highway is designated as Parcel 13, Grid 1 as indicated on Map 64.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The motel at Crain Highway has historically been associated with Parcel 13 since its construction circa 1945.

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title R. Weidlich and C. Novelli, Architectural Historians
revised by L. Trieschmann (July 9, 2000)
organization EHT Traceries, Inc. date February 29, 2000
street & number 5420 Western Avenue telephone 301/656-5283
city or town Chevy Chase state MD zip code 20815
=====

12. Property Owner
=====

name Manu R and Narendra R Patel
street & number P.O. Box 67 telephone _____
city or town Bel Alton state MD zip code 20611-0067
=====

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Section 7 Page 1

Lafayette Motel
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

Constructed circa 1945, the Colonial Revival style motel at 9340 Crain Highway has a two-story office pavilion flanked by wings that are one story in height. The northernmost wing is connected to the two-story office by a side gable hyphen, while the southernmost wing is freestanding. The one-story wings feature stone facing and the two-story, centered section is clad in both brick facing and wood weatherboard. A side gable asphalt shingle roof covers the motel. Situated on an overgrown lot on the east side of Crain Highway, the Lafayette Motel is surrounded by scattered mature trees and shrubs.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The two-story center section is three bays in width and features paired 6/6 windows. The first story is clad in brick facing that is laid in stretcher bond and the windows at this story have rowlock sills. There is a centered, single leaf entry. This entryway was made smaller and the area surrounding the current door was infilled with brick. The second story features wood weatherboard cladding. Across the full width of the two-story section is a two-story, three bay wide porch supported by square wood posts. A four-sided, wood cupola graces the side gable roof. To the south side of the two-story section, there is a one-story side addition laid in brick stretcher bond.

The northernmost motel wing is one story in height and thirty-eight bays in width. It is clad in stone facing and features 6/6 windows, most of which are replacement aluminum sash windows. Nineteen single leaf, metal-paneled doors pierce the façade. Extending the full width of the wing is a one-story, twenty-one bay porch supported by metal posts. The side gable roof features seven gable dormers with a semi-circular opening in each. The southernmost wing is virtually identical in form and design, retaining the original 6/6 windows.

The south elevation of the two-story wing features cornice returns and 6/6 windows with rowlock sills at both the first and second stories. The first story also contains a single leaf panel-and-light door. The two-story shed roof addition has a circular window at the second story and the one-story brick addition is pierced by three 1/1-aluminum windows with rowlock sills.

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A wood frame, shed roof addition with wood German siding, defines the rear elevation of the two-story office. The openings on this addition have been boarded shut with plywood. There is also an exterior end, concrete block chimney with a brick cap. The rear of each side wing is dominated by shed roof extending bays that are two bays in width. Across the back of the building, there are both 6/6 and 4/4 aluminum windows, some of which features rowlock sills.

Due to the curve of the building, the side elevations are turned to face the highway. The west elevations of the side wings are brick with no openings.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Constructed circa 1945, the Lafayette Motel is one of seven motels surveyed as part of the Maryland 301 Transportation Corridor Survey. Typical of many of the motels studied, the Lafayette Motel has a two-and-a-half story central section contains the office, lobby, and restaurant. Flanking this central section are two one-story wings, containing modest motel rooms sheltered by an overhanging porch roof. Characteristic of the period, the rooms were constructed in a continuous row with individual parking spaces directly to the front of the room. The Colonial Revival style motel was laid out in a C-shaped curve the framed Route 301 to the west. The Lafayette Motel was operated by the St. Cyr family until 1971.

Motel History

The introduction of the automobile led to the public's fascination with touring and convenient accommodations soon began to develop across the country for this touring public. Originally referred to as cabin camps or tourist camps, these accommodations became known as auto courts, tourist courts, motor hotels, motor lodges, autel, and most commonly as motels. Motels, like hotels provided lodging for travelers, however, the motel was typically located along a highway and provided the motorist with direct access to individual parking spaces. The number of roadside motels along America's highways increased from six hundred to more than forty thousand between the late 1920s and the 1950s.¹

Predating the motel were other forms of roadside accommodations that were spawned by the automobile. They often consisted of free campgrounds with parking and community restrooms. Hoping to encourage a higher class of clientele, the owners of the campgrounds began to erect

¹ Mary Ann Beecher, "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings. (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press for the Society for Commercial Archeology, 1990), p. 115.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Lafayette Motel
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low-cost cabins. These cabins, the precursor of the modern motel, provided the tourist with comfort, convenience, and privacy. However, the tourist was often expected to provide his own provisions. "At the U-Smile Cabin Camp...arriving guests signed the registry and then paid their money. A cabin without a mattress rented for one dollar; a mattress for two people cost an extra twenty-five cents, and blankets, sheets and pillows another fifty cents. Each guest was given a bucket of water from an outside hydrant, along with a scuttle of firewood in the winter." By the late 1920s, camp cabins became more modernized, with hopes to attract more tourists, thus evolving into motels. Typically, the motels were operated by the owners of gas stations, grocery stores, or food stands. The first motel opened December 12, 1925 in San Luis Obispo, California. James Vail's Motel Inn, with accommodations for 160 guests, was located on one of the busiest U.S. motor routes.³

Although the Depression was very destructive to the hotel industry, the motel industry thrived because Americans continued to vacation by automobile. The small, independently owned, owner managed motel, also referred to as mom-and-pop operations, dominated the motel industry in this period. The resulting competition helped raise the standards of the entire motel industry. New motel development leveled off during the early 1940s, however as gasoline rationing during World War II limited the number of tourists on the roads. Following the war, prosperity prompted the new construction of small-scale, individually owned motels. In fact, many returning veterans entered into the lucrative motel business that was springing up along America's highways. A 1946 manual, funded by the Veterans' Administration, touted the prospects of opening a roadside motel, but also warned of the difficulties it involved.

The manual stated, "The operation of a successful motor court takes hard work, 7 days a week, the year round. This endeavor should not be viewed as one where it is possible to sit in the sun by the side of the road and ring a cash register."⁴ The motels of the 1940s and early 1950s were often small in scale with an average of only twenty-five rooms.

² "Postcards from Americana: Cabin Camps and Cottage Courts," www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

³ *The People's Chronology* is licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1995, 1996 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

⁴ John Margolies. *Home Away From Home: Motels in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995). 90.

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Lafayette Motel
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In the late 1950s and the 1960s, motel construction boomed. These motels no longer took the form of individual cottages, but took the form of fully integrated buildings under a single roof.⁵ Corporate chains with systemized and centralized operations brought an end to the individually operated motel during the 1950s.⁶ Local builder Kemmons Wilson erected a motel with a community swimming pool, and air conditioning and a television set in every room. Additional provisions included free ice, free baby cribs, free kennels and dog food for family pets, and no charge for children under 12 who shared their parents' accommodations. In 1951, Wilson decided that the motel business was "the greatest untouched industry in America" and opened the first Holiday Inn on U.S. 70 in Memphis, Tennessee the following year. He went into partnership in 1953 with builder Wallace E. Johnson to found the motel chain.⁷ By 1964, there were at least 61,000 motels in the country.⁸

During the period between 1930 and 1955, motel design and construction were regularly featured in builders' journals and architectural publications. Although vastly outnumbered by domestic designs, both sources printed plans and photographs of motel units and site plans of their overall organization with some regularity. While there was little discussion of style, the exterior appearances and landscaping of the motels was emphasized in order to attract the passing tourist. Originally, nearly all of the motel units were freestanding with the covered gasoline station as the focal point. During this period, most motels consisted of small cottages, often interconnected by covered parking places. Covered parking spaces were later walled in to provide additional rooms, resulting in the single-story, continuous row motel form. Moreover, it was more economical to join the rooms in a continuous row. Rather than having to provide individual heating, electricity, and plumbing for each cabin, the joined rooms could share mechanical and electrical systems. As the exterior designs became more elaborate, so did the interior spaces. The interiors

5 "Postcards from Americana: Motor Courts, Inns, and Highway Hotels," www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html, accessed 22 November 1999.

6 Beecher, p. 116.

7 *The People's Chronology* is licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1995, 1996 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

8 John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 45.

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of the early units were single-spaced and small with little ornamentation. The units often included combined living rooms, sleeping rooms, and kitchenettes. However, by the 1950s, motels began to eliminate kitchenettes from the plans because of the addition of restaurants in or near the motels.⁹

The motels of the 1940s and 1950s had relatively few amenities. "Fewer than 6 percent of all motels had pools; fewer than 8 percent had restaurants, even within walking distance; fewer than 20 percent had room phones; and fewer than 28 percent had any carpeting on the floors of the rooms. There would be a very small registration area, but there were few lobbies, lounges and meeting rooms."¹⁰ The basic unit shapes remained primarily the same since the 1940s and single row layouts continued to be popular for their economy. However, in the late 1950s and 1960s, the one-story buildings gave way to two- and three-story buildings, blurring the distinction between the motel and the hotel. In fact, these multi-story buildings resembled hotels much more than the motor courts that they replaced. The motels of the 1960s contained between 150 and 300 rooms, which were most often arranged back-to-back along a central utility core. These larger motels also provided many amenities that their predecessors lacked, including swimming pools, bars, restaurants, coffee shops, meeting rooms, lobbies, and telephone switchboard service. The aim of the motel proprietors was to provide the traveling guest with the amenities and comforts of a downtown hotel with the convenience of being located along the interstate.¹¹

Motels tended to be more utilitarian in nature than a palette of architectural expression. There were six main stylistic trends used in motel construction between 1930 and 1955. These styles were rooted in the popular housing forms and were seen on domestic buildings in the trade literature of the times. The motels most frequently exhibited features of the Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Modern styles. Other themes seen in motel construction were the rustic aesthetic theme and those based on the western style ranch house, while others were simply vernacular.¹² There were even thematic representations, but for the

9 Beecher, pp. 115-117.

10 *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*, pp. 91-92.

11 *Home Away From Home: Motels in America*, pp. 95-96.

12 Beecher, pp. 117-120.

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Lafayette Motel
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most part, the buildings were one-story, relatively nondescript, interconnected lines of rooms. "Owners employed stucco, adobe, stone, brick, whatever was handy, to attract guests."¹³ One of the main attractions which was used to differentiate one motel from the other was the use of elaborate signage. "Motor courts began to sport giant signs that dominated the motel grounds visually. The sign, with its elaborate neon display, was intended to provide a vertical dimension to an otherwise low-to-the-ground building configuration."¹⁴ The signs, typically located by the side of the highway at the motel's entrance, advertised the amenities and services available for the traveler.

Motel History along US 301 Corridor

The greatest increase in commercial development along U.S. 301 was seen in the years following World War II. This was a result of the expansion of Route 301 across the Potomac River. "Motels and restaurants sprang up to accommodate tourists, sportsmen and others who passed through or stopped in Charles County."¹⁵ This same expansion took place in Prince George's County, providing travelers with accommodations as they traveled from New York to Florida. The 1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland indicates one such enterprise. The Marlboro Hotel was located along Crain Highway near Main Street and consisted of the motel, a restaurant, an office and an auto sales building. Nearby amenities included another restaurant, a movie theater, a filling station and an auto repair and service station. By 1958, there were a total of 43 establishments in Prince George's County that provided hotel, motel, or trailer park services. Road maps also promoted the motel trade along U.S. 301, attracting tourist with advertisements touting such places as Waldorf of the Highways, a 90-unit motor court and restaurant with an Olympic size swimming pool. The tourist trade and commercial transportation networks relied heavily upon these services as they traversed the highways of the nation and numerous examples continue to dot the landscape of Prince George's and Charles Counties.

13 "Postcards from Americana: Motor Courts, Inns, and Highway Hotels."

14 Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers. p.47.

15 Jack D. Brown, et. al., *Charles County Maryland: A History*, (New Jersey: Custombook. Inc., 1976), p. 66.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Lafayette Motel
name of property
Charles County, Maryland
county and state

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Building History

The Lafayette Motel was constructed in the mid-1940s on property owned by J. Spencer Irwin. Irwin maintained the motel until 1951, when it was sold to the St. Cyr family. It was ultimately conveyed to Lafayette Motel, Inc., a Maryland company.

National Register Evaluation:

All of the essential physical features are present and visible to properly represent its significance within the thematic context of Motels on the US 301 Corridor. The building is one of only a few Colonial Revival style motel complexes remaining along this highly traveled commercial corridor, and stands as a final representative of the thousands of motel courts erected during the mid- to late 20th century. Continuing to serve as a motel, the property retains integrity of design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

Thus, the Lafayette Motel has been determined eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C. Within the thematic study of transportation-related resources along the US 301 Corridor, the motel would then be a contributing resource and potentially eligible under criterion A.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST	
Eligibility recommended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not Recommended <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: _____ _____ _____	
Review, OPS: <u><i>D. [Signature]</i></u>	Date: <u><i>10/25/00</i></u>
Reviewer, NR Program: <u><i>B. [Signature]</i></u>	Date: <u><i>11/3/00</i></u>

Buy

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period (s):

Modern Period (1930-present)

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):

Architecture, Landscape, and
Community Planning
Commerce

RESOURCE TYPE(S)

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s): DOMESTIC/Hotel

Known Design Source: Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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Lafayette Motel
name of property
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Chain of Title:

- October 25, 1935: Mathilde Owen to J. Spencer Irwin
Land Records of Charles County
Liber WMA 61 Folio 592
- August 31, 1951: J. Spencer Irwin to Hervey A. St. Cyr and his
wife, Dorothy E. St. Cyr, and to Albert J. St.
Cyr.
Lands Records of Charles County
Liber PCM 97 Folio 442
- December 22, 1953: Hervey A. St. Cyr and his wife, Dorothy E. St.
Cyr, and Albert J. St. Cyr to The Crystal Door
Restaurant, Inc.
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 109 Folios 435, 437, and 439
- December 19, 1958: The Crystal Door Restaurant, Inc. to Hervey A.
St. Cyr and his wife, Dorothy E. St. Cyr, and
Albert J. St. Cyr
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 139 Folio 464
- June 18, 1962: Hervey A. St. Cyr and his wife, Dorothy E. St.
Cyr, and Albert J. St. Cyr and his wife,
Arlene F. St. Cyr, to Milroy C. Hoffman and
his wife, Tekla K. Hoffman
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 158 Folio 442
- February 16, 1970: Milroy C. Hoffman and his wife, Tekla K.
Hoffman, and Edward S. Diggs, Assignee to
Albert J. St. Cyr and his wife, Arlene E. St.
Cyr
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 215 Folio 267
- June 9, 1971: Albert J. St. Cyr and his wife, Arlene E. St.
Cyr, to G. Glenn James and Stuart W. Dorset
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 237 Folio 89

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
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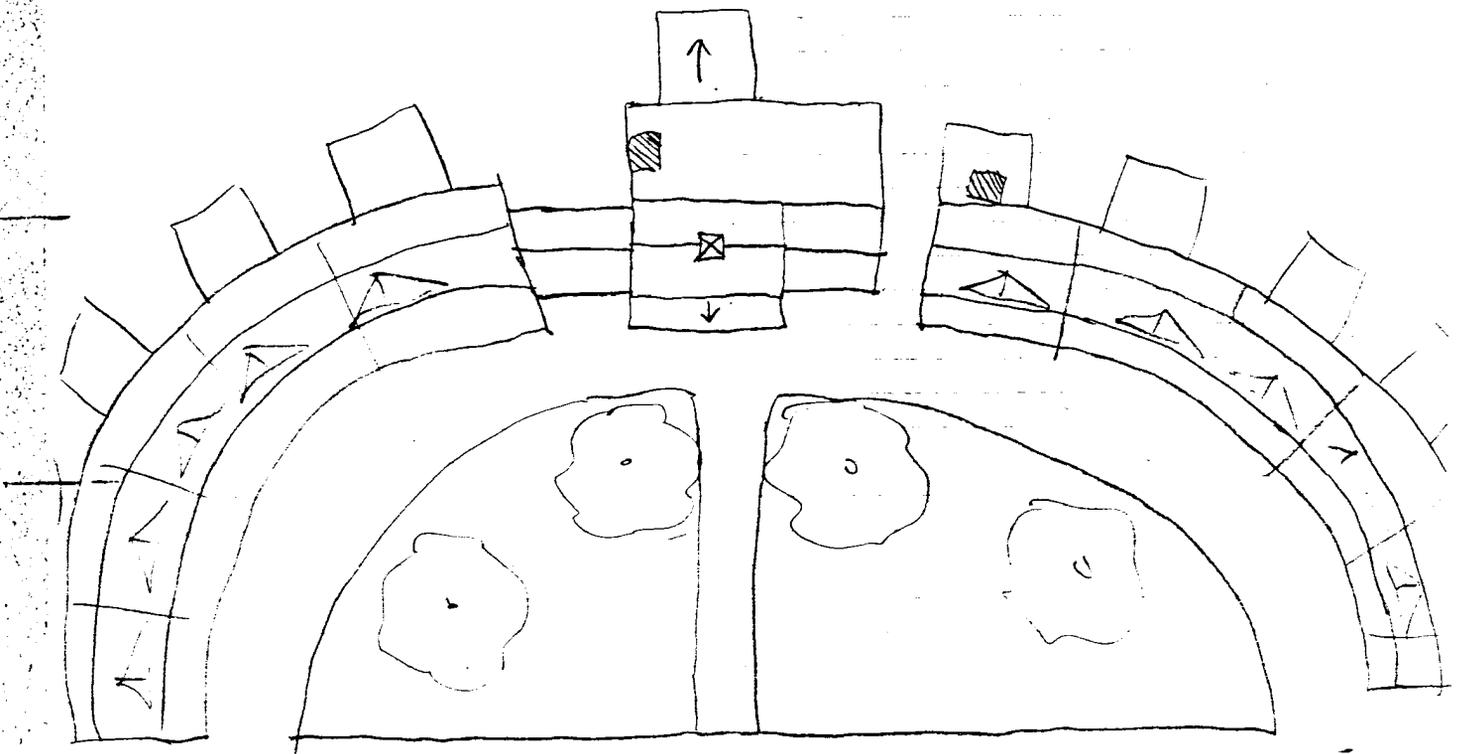
Inventory No. CH: 561

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January 7, 1977: G. Glenn James and Stuart W. Dorset to
Lafayette Motel, Inc.
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 483 Folio 266

December 18, 1986: Lafayette Motel, Inc. to Manu R. Patel and
Narendra R. Patel
Land Records of Charles County
Liber 1176 Folio 370



Crain Highway

Lafayette Motel
9370 Crain Highway

CH: 501



Charles County
Maryland

Resource Sketch Map 1999
Not Drawn to Scale

CHARLES COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
CH-559

BEL ALTON SURVEY DISTRICT
CH-560

9030 CRAIN HIGHWAY
CH-565

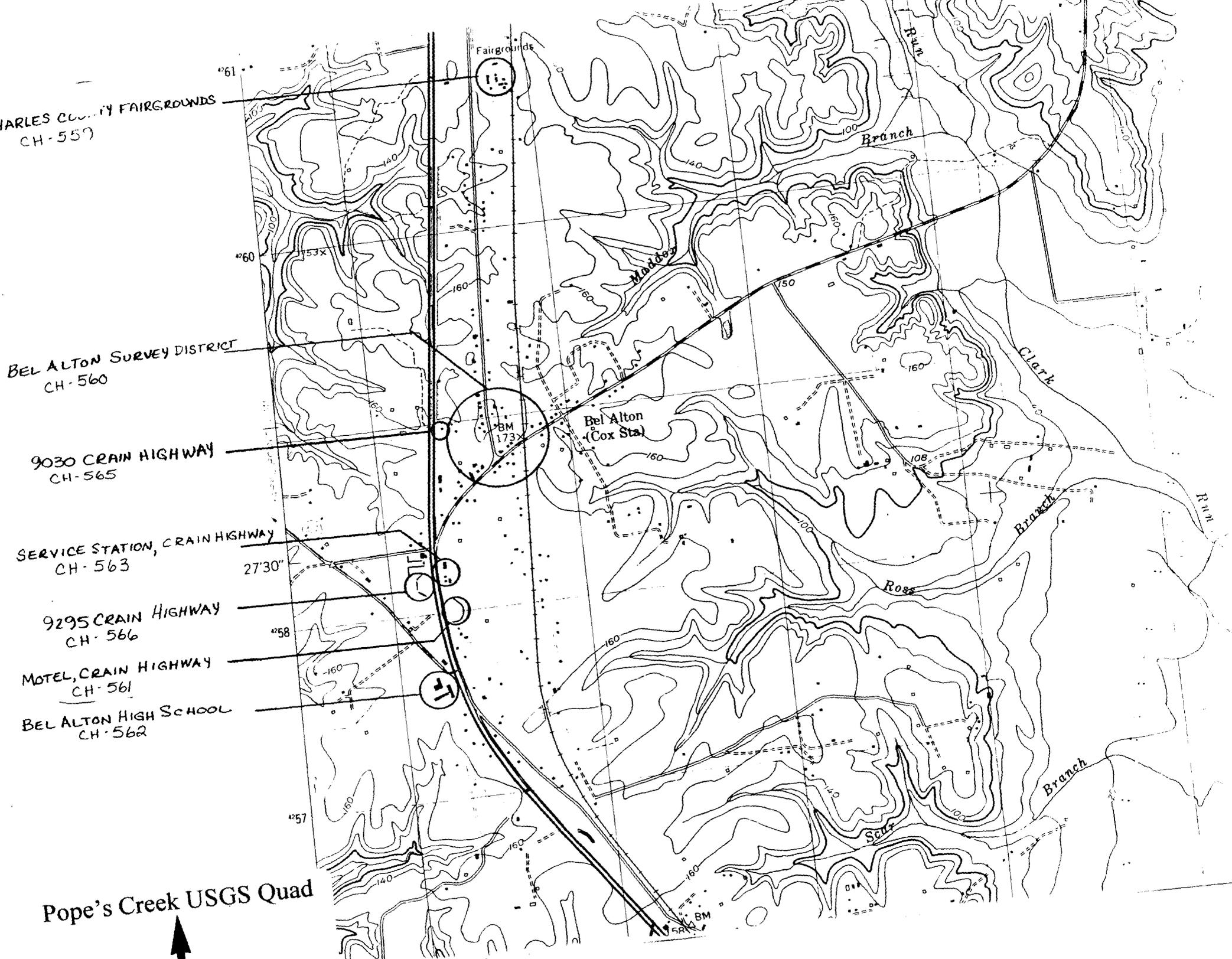
SERVICE STATION, CRAIN HIGHWAY
CH-563

9295 CRAIN HIGHWAY
CH-566

MOTEL, CRAIN HIGHWAY
CH-561

BEL ALTON HIGH SCHOOL
CH-562

Pope's Creek USGS Quad





CH:561

LAFAYETTE MOTEL
9340 CRAIN HIGHWAY
CHARLES COUNTY, MD
TRACERIES
JUNE 1999
MID SHPO

west elevation

1 of 4



CA-561

LAFAYETTE MOTEL

9340 CRAIN HIGHWAY

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SAPO

southwest corner

2 of 4



CH:561

LAFAYETTE MOTEL

9340 CRAIN HIGHWAY

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

southeast corner

3 of 4



CH:561

LAFAYETTE MOTEL

9340 CRAIN HIGHWAY

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

JUNE 1999

MD SHPO

north elevation

4 of 4