

F-7-32

Stronghold Survey District

Ca. 1812; 1900-1954

Dickerson vicinity

Private; some public access at regular times

The Stronghold Survey District, covering about 400 acres including the southern slopes and the summit of Sugarloaf Mountain, contains the principal buildings associated with Henry Gordon Strong (1869-1954) who developed a private enclave with two large Georgian Revival mansions and a network of trails, overlooks, and formal gardens for the benefit of his family and the education of underprivileged children from Chicago. For the more specific education of children both local and from Chicago, Strong built and funded a vocational school and two local schools, one of which, the Halstead School, is located within the survey district. The district also includes a designed plaza at the intersection of Comus and Sugarloaf Mountain Roads, surrounded by the Georgian Revival vocational school, now the headquarters of Stronghold, Inc., which operates the Sugarloaf Mountain Park as a public access nature conservancy, and several vernacular buildings, some occupied as residences by park employees, and others used as storage and maintenance buildings. Most structures date from the period about 1910-1930, but two of the dwellings on or near the plaza have some log structure and could date as early as the first decade of the 19th century. The Strong Mausoleum, a stone funerary structure built about 1954, is located within sight of the plaza.

F-7-32

Stronghold Survey District
Dickerson
Frederick County

Historic Context:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont
(Harford, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery
Counties, and Baltimore City)

Chronological/Development Period:
Industrial/Urban Dominance, A.D. 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Themes
Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning
Social/Educational/Cultural

Resource Types:

Category: District

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function and Use:

Domestic/single dwelling/residence
Domestic/single dwelling/mansion
Education/school/schoolhouse
Education/school/technical school
Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation/park
Agriculture/subsistence/agricultural outbuilding & barn

Known Design Source: None

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. F-7-32

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Stronghold Survey District

2. Location

street & number 7900 blk. Sugarloaf Mountain Road at Comus Road not for publicationcity, town Dickerson vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Maryland county Frederick

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: recreation conservation

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

name Stronghold, Inc.

street & number 7901 Comus Road telephone no.:

city, town Dickerson state and zip code Md. 20842

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Frederick County Courthouse liber

street & number 100 W. Patrick Street folio

city, town Frederick state Md. 21701

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title MHT Inventory of Historic Properties Sugarloaf Mt. Historic District (F-7-120)

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Md. SHPO

city, town Crownsville state MD

7. Description

Survey No. F-7-32

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE COUNT: 13

The Stronghold Survey District encompasses approximately 400 acres on the southern slope of Sugarloaf Mountain, including the 1,282-ft. summit, part of the lands of the Sugarloaf Mountain Park, a privately endowed nature conservancy area and National Natural Landmark, just north of the Frederick-Montgomery County boundary in Frederick County, Maryland. The district is primarily heavily wooded mountain land laid out with winding drives, hiking trails, and paths interspersed with scenic overlooks built of the natural stone of the mountain, but it also includes 13 principal structures built mostly from about 1910 to about 1930, with a few surviving buildings of the last quarter of the 19th century and a 1954 stone mausoleum. The early 20th century buildings and the park structures are associated with Henry Gordon Strong (1869-1954) and his efforts and plans to create a private enclave on Sugarloaf Mountain. The buildings include his own stone mansion, a Georgian Revival design by Philadelphia architect Percy Ashe; Westwood, a somewhat smaller mansion in the same general style built for Mrs. Ella Denison, Strong's sister; a brick vocational school building erected as part of Strong's philanthropic interests; the Halstead School, also erected by Strong and moved to the vicinity of the park entrance in 1991; a frame barn, three dwellings, two of which predate 1900 and one of which was moved from its original location near the barn; and the stone mausoleum in which Strong and his wife are buried, built in 1954. The concentration of buildings is around the intersection of Comus Road and Sugarloaf Mountain Road, at which is located a paved plaza set off by Georgian Revival design brick gates and walls with the more rustic entrance to the park on the north side and the vocational school on the south side. The buildings are in active use as the park headquarters and the homes of the Stronghold corporation's employees or, in the case of the Strong Mansion, as a rental property for private parties and meetings. The park is heavily visited on weekends and for special events during the year. Dates for the buildings were provided principally by Mr. Benjamin Smart, the park superintendent, based on his research in land records, personal interviews with local residents, and newspaper research on the Strong family.

The 400-acre survey district is part of a much larger area of several thousand acres including both Stronghold, Inc. lands and private properties which is the subject of a National Register nomination effort by the Sugarloaf Regional Trails, a volunteer organization of citizens interested in the conservation of the entire Sugarloaf Mountain area, including both the natural and built environment, for recreational and educational purposes. This nomination project has been on-going since the late 1970's and the latest document produced by the group is currently being revised for submission to the Governor's Consulting Committee. This inventory form is intended to document the Stronghold buildings in a more detailed manner than the multiple-resource approach of the NR nomination. Several of the privately owned individual buildings being covered by the NR nomination are the subjects of separate inventory forms. The inventory list for the Frederick County Urbana Planning Regi

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates C. 1812; 1902-1954 **Builder/Architect** Percy Ashe, architect

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
 and/or
 Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G
 Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Stronghold Survey District is highly significant in the theme of architecture for the variety of structures and styles represented in the buildings. The Strong Mansion and Westwood, the formal gates and the vocational school building reflect the Georgian Revival style designs of Percy Ashe, the Philadelphia architect for Henry Gordon Strong (1869-1954), the owner and guiding spirit of the Sugarloaf Mountain enclave which is included in the 400 acres of the survey district. They are representative of Strong's concept of a private architectural village in which he could indulge his appreciation of nature, the arts, and philanthropy. In addition to these high style buildings of the period 1911-1928, the district contains vernacular structures, some partially of logs and most in frame, of the period about 1850-1900, although exact dates are yet to be determined. These include the Halstead School, a barn and a garage, and three dwellings, one of which, the Snyder Cottage, was probably the work of the architect Ashe in about 1909. In addition to Ashe, the landscape architect Robert Marshall was responsible for the overlooks and hiking trails on the mountain slopes and the formal gardens near the Strong Mansion. The district is also representative of the early 20th century conservation efforts of Strong, whose wealth allowed him to acquire over several years from 1899 to about 1910 the summit and surroundings of Sugarloaf Mountain whose striking location with views over the Potomac and Monocacy Valleys and isolated elevation provided a natural landscape of rocks, wooded areas, and farms in which Strong wanted to establish a private reserve for his family's benefit, but also to pursue philanthropic goals involved in his inheritance. In this natural setting, Strong wanted to establish a school for underprivileged boys from Chicago, his hometown, where they could have a basic education and learn skills to support themselves. This involves another theme, education, in which the survey district is also significant. Although Strong's educational aims were not unique, the Buckingham School for Boys near Buckeystown having been established in the 1890's by the Baker family, his vision of locating the schools in an environment of natural and designed features under his supervision and guidance was very enlightened for the first decade of the 20th century. In reality, Strong's goals were only partially achieved. The planned Georgian Revival mansion for himself was completed as only one wing of the design. The vocational school apparently did not operate for a prolonged period, but Strong did build at least two schools both for his Chicago boys and also for the use of local children, funded and furnished largely by him. One of these, the Halstead School, is within the survey district, having been moved twice.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. F-7-32

MHT Inventory form F-7-120 Sugarloaf Mountain Historic District
Smart, Mr. Benjamin, Superintendent, Stronghold, Inc.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 400 acres

Quadrangle name Buckeystown, Md.-Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

Approximately 400 acres as shown on the attached quad map section, encompassing the mountain summit, the principal trails and drives and the buildings associated with Gordon Strong's ownership.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet L. Davis, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization Frederick County Planning & Zoning Dept. date September 1993

street & number 12 E. Church Street telephone 696-2958

city or town Frederick state MD 21701

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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438~~

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

7.1 Description

should be consulted for further information on other individual sites in the vicinity of Sugarloaf Mountain.

Following are brief descriptions of the principal buildings in the survey district:

Strong Mansion: The three-story concrete and stone mansion built in 1911 is the west wing of a much larger symmetrical Georgian design by Percy Ashe with terraces, balustrades, and formal gardens surrounding it. Completion of the entire composition was canceled reportedly by internal family objections to the scale and ostentation of the proposed structure. The existing building is a roughly square plan, hipped roof building with three bays on the west elevation. The walls are ashlar stone and the roof, although not clearly observed in this survey, is probably slate. The entrance is in the center bay on the ground floor, sheltered by an entry portico. The windows on the second story have blind arches in the stone above each opening. French windows fill the second story openings and the third story has smaller casement windows. The interior was not accessible for this survey; however, a photograph of the drawing room or living room published in a 1979 Frederick News-Post article shows a formally designed space with large floor to ceiling French windows with fanlights and furniture probably mostly Classical Revival or Neo-Classical in style.

Westwood: The smaller Georgian Revival mansion was built about 1913 for Gordon Strong's sister, Mrs. Ella Denison. It is currently the home of the park superintendent. The two story mansion has five bays and a full-height columned portico over the center three bays. The walls are plastered and the ground floor windows have blind arches and casements as in the Strong Mansion, although on a smaller scale. The center bay on the first story has a fanlight entrance and the second story center bay has a decorative cast iron window basket railing. The roof, not visible from the park road in front of the building, is probably hipped and covered with slate. The interior was not accessible for this survey.

Vocational school (Park Administration offices): The long, rectangular, one-story brick school building erected about 1915 is located on the south side of the plaza at the intersection of Comus and Sugarloaf Mountain Roads. It has a center entrance to a hall which originally gave access to the two sides of the building in which were located workshops and classrooms. The exterior has windows in a regular progression along the north side flanking the slightly projecting center bay and entrance. Subsidiary entrances with molded Classical Revival surrounds are located at the east and west ends of the north elevation. The interior was not fully accessible for the survey, but at least some rooms have been partitioned for use as offices.

Snyder Cottage: The 1-1/2 story frame Colonial Revival Cape Cod house was built about 1909, probably to house school employees or students at the vocational school. It stands on the east side of the plaza at the point of

7.2 Description (Continued)

intersection between the two roads meeting at the plaza. It is currently occupied by Stronghold personnel as living quarters. It has a three-bay west elevation with clapboard siding and a shingle roof with three dormers on the west side. The center entrance has a pediment above the door and a molded architrave.

Plaza gates: Located in front of the Snyder Cottage and on the opposite or west side of the plaza are two formal gateways in the Georgian Revival style with brick wing walls topped by stone caps. The eastern gate has globe finials and a wood picket gate. The western one has a decorative cast iron gate, through which a man-made pond is visible in the western quadrant of the plaza. The gates were presumably designed by Percy Ashe, as were most of the early 20th century buildings, and built about 1910-1915.

Baxter House: The Baxter House is located on the south side of Comus Road east of the vocational school and southeast of the Snyder Cottage. It was possibly built about 1900 and was originally located about 75 yards northwest of its present location within the current park entrance, the location being marked by the free-standing stone chimney stack left when the house was moved about 1914. It apparently had some log structure in its original form, indicating that it may have been a smaller, mid-19th century building to which the frame surviving section was added in the last quarter of the 19th century. Currently it has five bays with a center entrance under a cantilevered hood and artificial siding. The sash is 6/6 flanked by replacement shutters. The Baxter House was Strong's original residence prior to the erection of the mansion. It is occupied as a residence by a park employee.

Halstead School: The frame one-story schoolhouse is currently located north of the park entrance, having been moved twice since its construction about 1910. Its original location was possibly just on or over the Montgomery County border and was moved in the mid-20th century to a position behind the vocational school temporarily until plans for its restoration could be finalized. In 1991, it was moved to its present location and its exterior was rehabilitated. The interior is not yet complete and plans are to use the school as an interpretive display area about Sugarloaf and its history. The school is in the typical late 19th century-early 20th century form of rural schoolhouses, having a gable facade with three bays and large 6/6 windows. The side elevations have three bays each. The exterior is covered with board and batten and a modern replacement wood porch rises to the center entrance, a paneled door under a plain transom. A small gable window lights the attic level. The school was named for Strong's mother, whose maiden name was Halstead.

Barn: The one-story frame barn is a rectangular frame structure which was built about 1910, although parts of it may pre-date Strong's ownership, since it was associated with the Baxter House. Currently it is a long, shingled building with attached storage sheds incorporated in it. Some of these have open sides on the south, while others have sliding or garage-type doors.

Garage: Located directly east of the barn is a frame garage, probably also dating from about 1910. It has vertical board siding and sliding doors on the west gable end.

7.3 Description (Continued)

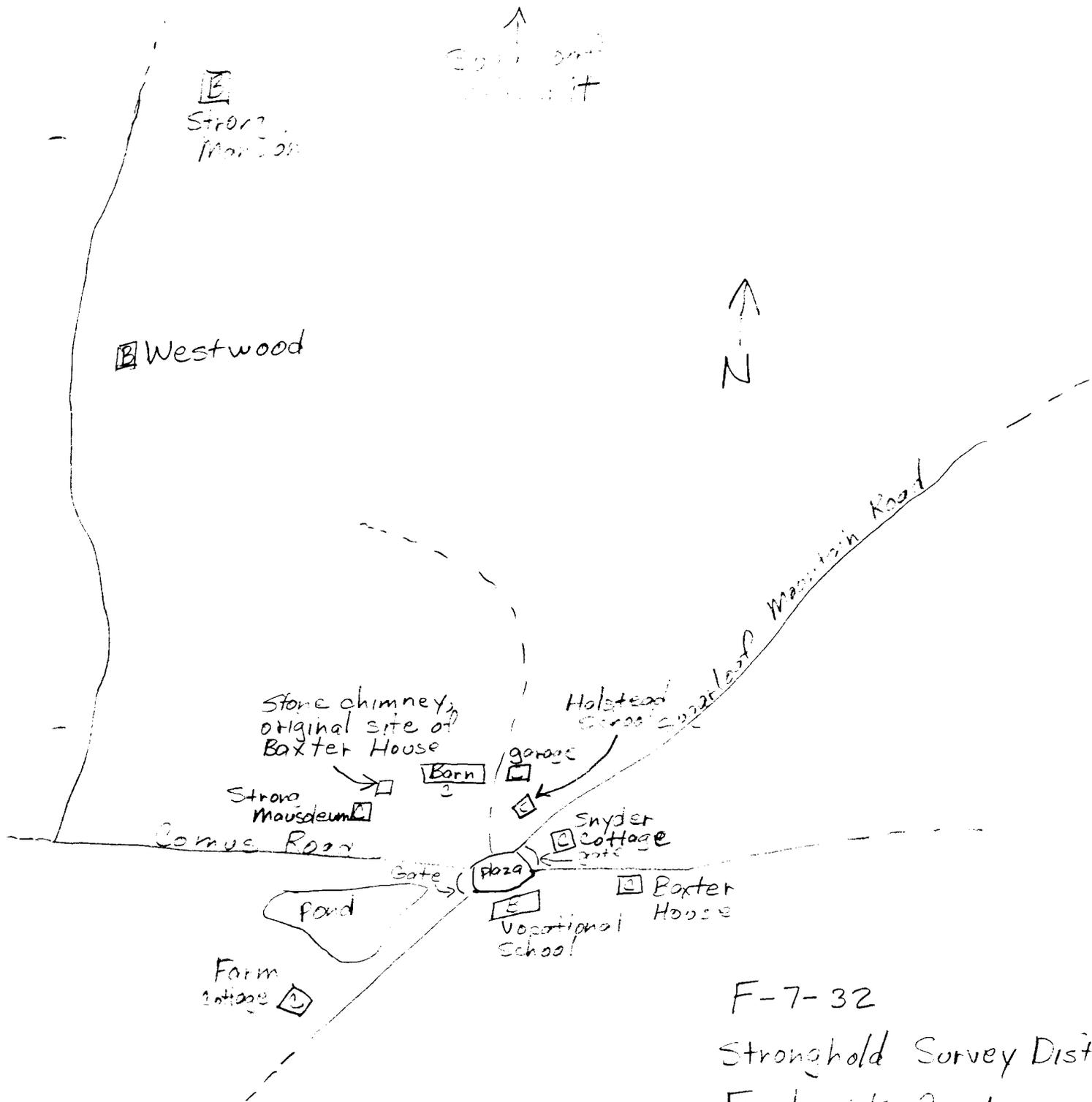
Mausoleum: The small stone mausoleum was built in 1954 after Strong's death. It has ashlar limestone walls and an entrance on the south gable end. The roof is covered with wood shingles. The entrance has a cast iron gate through which the interior with the undecorated tombs of Strong and his wife, who died in 1949.

Farm Cottage: The 1-1/2 story building was not closely observed for the survey, but the park superintendent described it as having some log structure with alterations in about 1948. It is said to have served as a field hospital in the Civil War during a skirmish near an observation post on the mountain in 1862. In 1977, its date was estimated by Sugarloaf Regional Trails as 1812, but no descriptive information was provided at that time to support this date. Further examination is required.

Formal gardens, trails and overlooks: The many trails and overlooks around the mountain summit include four scenic viewpoints, West View, East View, Potomac Overlook, and Bill Lambert Overlook. They are terraced and buttressed with native rock from the mountain and are designed to blend with the natural surroundings. Near the Strong Mansion are formal gardens with terraces, planting beds, balustrades, and lawns. All of these features were the work of Robert Marshall, landscape architect, in the period 1910-circa 1920.

8.1 Significance (Continued)

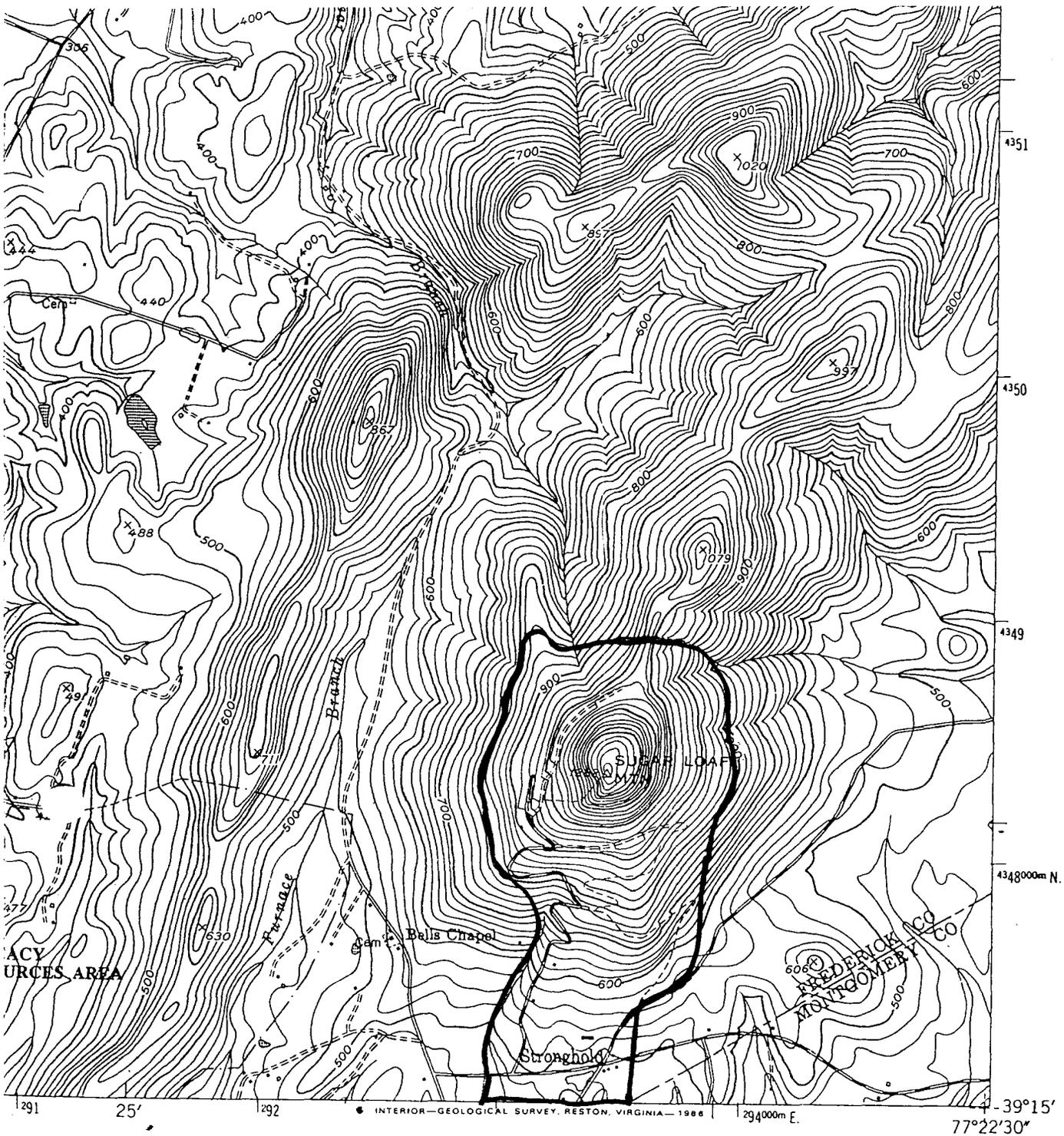
The Stronghold Survey District is unique in Frederick County, but its statewide context is unclear. Certainly wealthy patrons established private schools in other parts of the state. One example is the Tome Institute in Cecil County, which is a National Register-listed property of the early 20th century with architectural and educational significance. The Buckingham School for Boys in Frederick County is another NR-listed complex of the same importance. Stronghold may be the only such assemblage of both natural and built features under the themes of architecture, landscape architecture, and education.



F-7-32

Stronghold Survey District
 Frederick County

Janet Davis
 September 1993
 Not to Scale.



F-7-32
 Stronghold Survey District
 Frederick County
 USGS Buckeystown, Md.-Va.
 1:24000

Heavy-duty

















