

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT  
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom Survey Number: HA-1980

Project: SHA--US 1: MD 152 to MD 147 Agency: SHA

Site visit by MHT Staff:  no  yes Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility recommended  Eligibility not recommended

Criteria:  A  B  C  D Considerations:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G  None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom, including two buildings located on the south side of US 1 Business at the intersection with MD 147 (Harford Road), south of Bel Air, is considered eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The property includes two buildings, Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom. The gas station was constructed in 1936 by independent dealer Walter Archer. The site is located immediately off of US Rte 1 and leading into the Harford County seat (Bel Air). Archer had a small trolley car towed to the site immediately north of the gas station and converted it into a roadside lunchroom. Archer expanded the trolley car with frame and concrete block additions; in 1952 its size was doubled with a large concrete block section to the north.

The gas station is a frame and brick structure characterized by its wide porte cochere covered with a hipped roof and clad with Spanish roof tiles. The roof of the porte cochere is supported by wooden columns set upon brick piers. The gas pumps in the island formed between the columns have been removed. The office of the gas station has a brick foundation (raised) and frame walls. The office has a central door flanked by plate glass show windows. Restroom facilities are located at the back of the office with an exterior entrance.

The lunchroom is composed of two sections: the southern section consists of a small trolley car incorporated into a frame structure; the northern section is of concrete block. The trolley car is hardly discernible as such, having been transformed into a building by the frame structure forming a parapet wall above the roof of the car and rear additions.

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom survive as examples of "roadside architecture" and are relics of an early stage in the development of roadside conveniences built for the public travelling by the automobile. As such the property is eligible for listing under Criterion A. The gas station, in particular, is a fine representative of the building form and, despite the loss of gas pumps, retains its primary character-defining features which make it eligible under Criterion C. Due to its major additions, the lunchroom building no longer conveys a strong sense with the past and is thus considered a non-contributing resource to the property.

The property is associated with Walter Archer, whose significance as a person or gas station dealer has not been investigated. Until further research is conducted, it is not known whether the property is eligible under Criterion B.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: Review and Compliance Files

Prepared by: Rita Suffness, Cultural Resources Group Leader, SHA, April 1997

Kimberly Prothro Williams June 5, 1997  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date

program concurrence:  yes  no  not applicable  
Peter R. Kuntz 6/9/97  
Reviewer, NR program Date

*ms*

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

I. Geographic Region:

- Eastern Shore (all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)
- Western Shore (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's)
- Piedmont (Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
- Western Maryland (Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

- Paleo-Indian 10000-7500 B.C.
- Early Archaic 7500-6000 B.C.
- Middle Archaic 6000-4000 B.C.
- Late Archaic 4000-2000 B.C.
- Early Woodland 2000-500 B.C.
- Middle Woodland 500 B.C. - A.D. 900
- Late Woodland/Archaic A.D. 900-1600
- Contact and Settlement A.D. 1570-1750
- Rural Agrarian Intensification A.D. 1680-1815
- Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
- Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930
- Modern Period A.D. 1930-Present
- Unknown Period (  prehistoric  historic)

III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

- Subsistence
- Settlement
- Political
- Demographic
- Religion
- Technology
- Environmental Adaptation

IV. Historic Period Themes:

- Agriculture
- Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning
- Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
- Government/Law
- Military
- Religion
- Social/Educational/Cultural
- Transportation

V. Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): Commerce/Trade/Gas station

Known Design Source: \_\_\_\_\_

**HARFORD COUNTY  
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET**

**SURVEY NUMBER:** HA-1980

**BUILDING NAME:** Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom

**LOCATION:** 1320-1322 US 1 (Bel Air Road)

**BUILDING DATE:** 1936, 1952

**DESCRIPTION:** The Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom are dilapidated and currently unused buildings which were constructed in 1936 on US 1 Business, the main access to the county seat (Bel Air) from the south.

The former gas station was built in a style standardized by gas companies in the 1930's for an independent dealer, Walter Archer. The gas station has overtones of the Spanish Eclectic style in the broad, hipped tile roof which extends from the main block to shelter the gas bays. The pumps are no longer extant and the underground storage tanks have been removed. In 1936 Archer had a small trolley car towed to the site immediately to the north of the gas station. It was installed as the core of his lunchroom and expanded to the rear with a frame addition and to the north with concrete block. In 1952 its size was doubled with the addition of a large concrete block section on the north. In the last few decades, since the time the restaurant business was abandoned in 1958, metal and frame structures have been added in the rear of the building.

**SIGNIFICANCE:** Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom are relics of an early stage in the development of roadside conveniences for the public traveling by automobile. Because of loss of integrity due to changes in their material fabric, as well as setting, and use for other commercial purposes in the last 30 to 40 years, they fail to evoke a strong association with the past.

**HA-1980**  
**ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**BENSON, MARYLAND**

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA**

**GEOGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION:** Piedmont

**CHRONOLOGICAL/DEVELOPMENTAL PERIOD (s):** AD 1930-Prehistoric

**PREHISTORIC/HISTORIC PERIOD THEME (s):** Economic/Commercial and  
Industrial

**RESOURCE TYPE**

**CATEGORY:** Buildings

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT:** Suburban

**HISTORIC FUNCTION (s) AND USE (s):** Economic/Commercial/Lunchroom  
Economic/Commercial/Gas Station

**KNOWN DESIGN SOURCE:** None

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM

## 2. Location

street & number 1320-1322  
~~XXXXXX~~ BEL AIR ROAD N/A not for publication

city, town BENSON \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district \_\_\_\_\_

state MARYLAND county HARFORD

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <b>UNUSED</b>

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

name MRS. WILLARD ARCHER

street &amp; number 203 CONNOLLY ROAD telephone no.: 410 879 2548

city, town FALLSTON state and zip code MARYLAND 21047

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. COURTHOUSE liber 726

street &amp; number \_\_\_\_\_ folio 27

city, town BEL AIR state MARYLAND

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local \_\_\_\_\_

pository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

# 7. Description

Survey No. HA 1980

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved    date of move \_\_\_\_\_

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 7.1 & 7.2

# 8. Significance

Survey No.

HA 1980

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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	1936, 1952	Builder/Architect	UNKNOWN
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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.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 8.1



**HA-1980**  
**ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**BENSON, MARYLAND**

**CONTINUATION SHEET 7.1**  
**DESCRIPTION**

**DESCRIPTION SUMMARY**

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom are two dilapidated structures on the south side of Bel Air which have been unoccupied and unused for years. The station was built under the Esso Gas trade name for an independent dealer, Walter Archer. In the same year, 1936, he had a small trolley car transported to the site, which he encapsulated in frame and concrete block additions, taking its present shape when it was doubled in size in 1952 with a large block addition to the north. He operated the station until 1968 and the lunchroom until 1956. The gas station very small one-story office with a covered driveway and gas pump island. A hipped tile roof covers the entire stucco. Devoid of architectural embellishment generally, the station reflects the Spanish Eclectic style because of the roof treatment, composed of American Spanish tile. The lunchroom, boarded up with a partially collapsing ceiling, barely reveals the incorporated trolley car in the southeast corner.

**DESCRIPTION**

This complex is composed of two structures, both built in 1936: a concrete block, frame and brick gas station and a metal, frame and concrete block restaurant, both dilapidated and unused for the last few years. They are located on an acutely angled, 1 acre shallow strip of land on the east side of US 1 Business near its intersection with the Bel Air Bypass. Both structures face east at the edge of deteriorating pavement sections adjacent to the roadway. They are the sole contributing resources on the site: a large illuminated signboard at the northern edge of the tax parcel is of later construction and does not contribute to the site's significance.

The one-story former restaurant is located north of the gas station. Extended on the west by new frame and metal additions, the original part is composed of two sections: the one on the south, which is frame, had a former very small trolley car incorporated into the southeast corner. (The one on the north is concrete block). The junction between the top of the barely discernible trolley car and a concrete block extension (terminating with a coping above a false parapet section) above this section is demarkated by a metal strip, painted dark red. A double door is located in the north bay near the seam of the addition. Windows have been boarded over. A concrete ramp accesses this doorway. The trolley car appears to have been partially mounted on a brick foundation. In that the windows are obscured with boards, painted white like the walls, the metal car is hardly discernible. It is expressed entirely in the metal strips riveted over the seams, especially in the southeast corner where the corners are angled in the form of a projecting bay. The rest of the south section is frame, clad with German siding with cornerboards. The basement level is reached by means of a steep concrete ramp, accessing a double door in the rear, or east side. Two sets of narrow screened windows are located near the eaves, with boarded Windows directly beneath them at the basement level on either side of the entrance bay.

The northern section is entirely concrete block, unpainted on the rear, and extended to the west (or rear) with a free standing metal shed and a free standing plywood shed connected to the back of the restaurant by a shed roofed open breezeway. The false front parapet continues across entire frontage of the entrance (east) facade. A doorway, sheltered by a semi-conical metal roof, is centered between two large single pane windows. A large concrete porch with pipe rails is located immediately in front of the door. The north wall is the location of a partially destroyed nine light metal casement window to the east and a projecting bay to the west with two double light windows, symmetrically balanced in the forward plane.

**HA-1980**  
**ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**BENSON, MARYLAND**

**CONTINUATION SHEET 7.2**  
**DESCRIPTION**

The former gas station is located closest to the sharply acute angle of the south boundary of the property. The original structure, utilized as a gas station by Walter Archer (and later his son Willard) from 1936 to 1968, is a simple rectangle composed of a concrete block cubical office and the drive through gas bay on the east, surmounted by a continuous hipped tile roof, with a small pyramidal roofed extension, at a lower level, to the rear. The structure was extended further with a south-facing gable roofed section on the rear (west) which was extended to the north with a long shed roofed section.

The original rectangular block, composed of the office and service bay, exhibits strong horizontal line (in the roof, cornice and architrave moldings, plus the 4-foot high brick cladding of wall and supports) to offset the height of the one-story commercial structure. The height of the basic original rectangular structure is emphasized by the regularly-laid, American Spanish tile roof, with raised hip tiles covering the seams of the roof angles at the hips and ridge. The ridge is further emphasized by vertical crest tiles at either end. The east face of the office includes a simple door centered between large windows to either side and three windows above them. Secondary sash windows are located in the north and south walls, with a side entrance in the one-story addition on the west. The raised concrete pad between the two porch supports, partially clad with brick, was formerly the location of two gas pumps.

The frame addition on the rear of the structure, approximating a simple gable roofed cabin extended on the north with a deep shed-roofed section, was constructed after the main block for use as a garage. It was extended during the period it was leased to Kent Island Seafood, a seafood distributing complex. Numerous secondary doors and window are boarded up. Much debris such as seafood crates, furniture and wood are piled against the west or rear of this addition.

1979  
**HA-1979**  
**ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**BENSON, MARYLAND**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET 8.1**

**SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom are relics of an early stage in the development of roadside convenience for the public traveling by automobile. Because of loss of integrity due to changes in their fabric and setting, and use for other commercial purposes in the last 30 to 40 years, they fail to evoke strong associations with the past.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom, although evoking an association with early stage in America's response to the automobile culture, and illustrating a stage in the evolution of gas station architecture to simplified cubic forms in the 1930's, are dilapidated and unused structures that have lost much integrity in the last thirty years. They currently have little association with their original function. Remodeled and revamped to suit a variety of commercial purposes since the abandonment of their original functions (1958, 1968) they have deteriorated badly.

Increasingly lost in an area overcome by commercial development, especially mammoth car dealerships and lumber companies, they no longer retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The lunchroom, mostly concrete block with frame/metal additions, so thoroughly encapsulates a small trolley car brought to the site in 1936 that the trolley form is scarcely discernible.

**CONTEXT:**

Archer's Esso Station and Lunchroom have minimal significance as modest remnants of America's response to the automobile in the 1930's. The emergence of the drive-in culture with structures such as diners, motels, roadside stands and gas stations reflects the altered life-style that the automobile created. The gas station, the first structure built in response to the automobile, may be the most widespread type of commercial building in American and is one of the few building types that has been standardized and distributed across the entire country. Echoing larger architectural movements, gas stations were often the only examples of current design trends in areas isolated from the architectural mainstream. The Archer Station, operated under the Esso flagship by independent dealer Walter Archer, utilized a simple form with Spanish Colonial features, reflective of the standardization that occurred in the 1920's and 1930's as petroleum retailers strove to legitimize the gas station in general by creating an aura of prestige and grandeur, capturing the flavor of buildings of great stature or civic importance. The use of such a lofty architectural vocabulary, such as the Spanish Colonial style for a gas station, which was a widespread practice given its promotion by many petroleum companies, was also in response to the sentiment of urban reformers and design professionals that service stations should be made a civic asset. Advocates of civic reform recognized that gas stations had become an indispensable part of urban development.

In response to the outcry for more dignified stations, gas companies built small pavilion stations that appeared as monuments of civic beauty, and drew upon the vocabulary of high style buildings. By the 1930's the Spanish Colonial style, in all of the various manifestations, was a popular idiom throughout the United States, and especially in the Western states, where stations were designed as miniature missions with arcades, hexagonal towers, smooth stucco walls and Spanish tile roofs. In the mid to late 1930's, Gulf and other companies created standardized designs and simpler forms, like the cubical

1980  
**HA-1979**  
**ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM**  
**BENSON, MARYLAND**

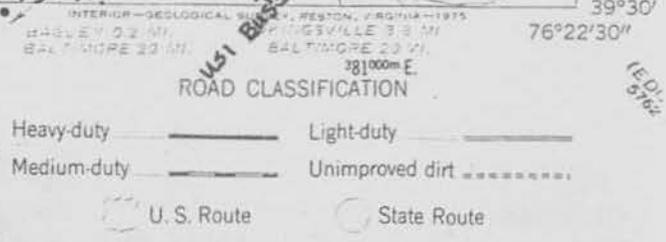
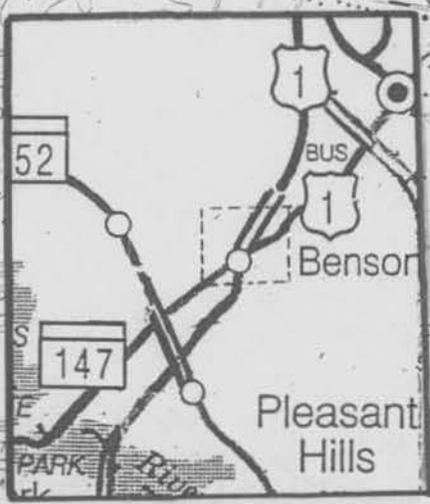
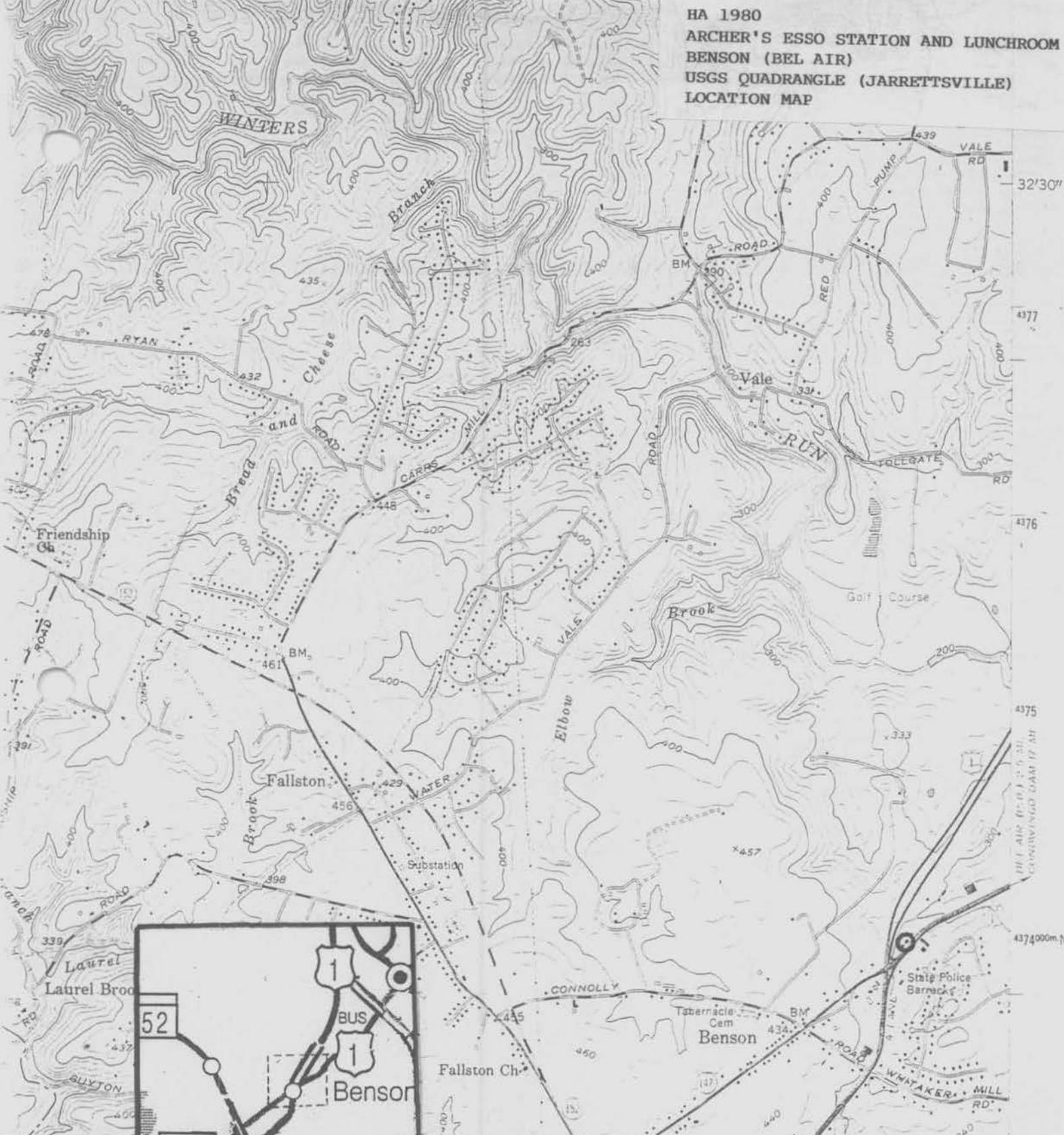
**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET 8.2**

prototype seen in the Archer Station, to distill an image more readily recognizable to motorists who were traveling at greater speeds.

HA 1980  
ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM  
BENSON (BEL AIR)  
SITE PLAN



HA 1980  
 ARCHER'S ESSO STATION AND LUNCHROOM  
 BENSON (BEL AIR)  
 USGS QUADRANGLE (JARRETTSVILLE)  
 LOCATION MAP





HA 1980

Archers Esso Station

4-1 (June 1957)

Benson (Bel Air) Pond

R. Saffers 1957

11-12 State Hwy 12-1000

Knowledge

SE 1000

11-3



HIA-1980

Archives Esso, Cont. v. 1  
heretofore

Benson (200 Am)

R. S. Safford 4/17/72

2/13/72 The Henry St. -

For the ...  
in ...

2/13



4 p 1980

Archie - ESSO - 1400000

Benny - 1400000

1400000

1400000

1400000

1400000



VLE RATER REPAIR

4/13/1980

Esso

Benson (Puffin)  
Puffin  
Miss Kate Honey

Lunch

4/13

4/13

STAMPED BY: MINDA



11A 1980

Andrews Esso Station and  
purchase

Benson (1980)  
R. Guffey 1980

17th State Hwy, Adams

Leitchville (Reno, Wash. Co.)

Swanton

5/11 B



HA 1980

Write, Issue note

responsible

Constitution

11

the very place

least

as far as

6(73)



4A 1980

Archers Esso Station  
Lunches -

Benson (Bet Ann) Harford Co

R Suffren 4/97

11:00 State Hwy Adm -

Perkins

E facade

7/13

PRODUCE  
SALES  
877-7706

L A 1980

10/10/80 Esso

10/10/80

10/10/80

10/10/80

10/10/80

10/10/80

10/10/80

8/13

10/10/80



11/1980

Esso

purchase

Benn (3000)

Rings

3000

Jos Station

11/1980

9113



11/4 1980

Asheboro Esso Station and

Keeneland  
Zoo (Bel Air)

R. Sullivan

10/15/80

NW corner of frame add.

10/13

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



HA 1980

Circle - ESSO (further)

3rd floor (Bas Area)

1st floor - 1st floor  
2nd floor - 2nd floor

Garage

SE corner (address)

11/13



PRODUCE  
SALES  
877-7706

W A 1980

Andrews Esso Station -

and Lewis & Clark  
(see next page)

12/19/80 - 4/9/77

Mid State Heavy Adm. in

Gas Station

in Brown

12/13



PRODUCE  
SALES  
877-7761

HA 1980

Archers Essc Section and  
Luncheon

Belton (Bel Air)

Ruffner 4/97

MD State Highway Act =

Gas Hall

NE Corner

13/13