

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes   
no

Property Name: Hamilton Court Concrete Post Inventory Number: HA-2246  
 Address: Hamilton Court (MD 22) Old Post Road at S. Hanover Street Historic district:  yes  no  
 City: Aberdeen Zip Code: 21001 County: Harford  
 USGS Quadrangle(s): Aberdeen  
 Property Owner: MSB Squared at Hamilton Court LLC Tax Account ID Number: 02-016834  
 Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 2280 Tax Map Number: 0204  
 Project: MD 22 at Old Post Road (BRAC) Agency: MD State Highway Administration  
 Agency Prepared By: MD State Highway Administration  
 Preparer's Name: Rebecca Crew Date Prepared: 11/16/2012

Documentation is presented in: \_\_\_\_\_  
 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inventory Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligible:  yes  no Listed:  yes  no  
 Site visit by MHT Staff  yes  no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Description**

The concrete obelisk that stands at the east corner of Hanover Street and Post Road in Aberdeen, Maryland (Harford County) is a relic of a United States Post Office mail collection box post adjacent to the former site of a World War II defense housing development. The post is approximately 4 feet tall, with a base measuring approximately 5 inches square. The obelisk tapers slightly to an approximately 4 inch square, then tapers more sharply to form a pyramidal cap which has partially disintegrated. The concrete has a rough pebble aggregate. Two pieces of iron rebar are exposed at the top of the pyramid. The northeast and southwest faces of the obelisk shaft are pierced by round metal rings approximately 1 centimeter in diameter. A metal letterbox would have been attached to the post using these holes. The obelisk's southeast face is inscribed "1942". A void measuring approximately three inches tall by two inches wide is absent from the obelisk's west corner at a height of about one foot above ground level, suggesting damage from a vehicle's bumper.

The concrete obelisk sits near the State Highway Administration right-of-way on Parcel No. 2280, containing garden apartments built ca. 1971 owned by MSB Squared at Hamilton Court, LLC. The apartments occupy several buildings facing parking lots accessed via Hanover Street.

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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
<b>MHT Comments:</b>	
<u>Jim J. Amico</u> Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	<u>12/18/12</u> Date
<u>[Signature]</u> Reviewer, National Register Program	<u>12/18/12</u> Date

Reinforced concrete posts were applied for a variety of uses in the early twentieth century, as they were considered inexpensive yet strong and long-lasting, requiring little maintenance. They were used as rail road markers, fence posts, sign posts, and boundary markers (1). This example however, was erected by the United States Post Office as a support post for a mail collection box. The United States Post Office allowed the use of concrete posts to support mail collection boxes beginning in 1927; the use of these kinds of letter boxes discontinued later in the twentieth century. The mail collection box would have been metal, with only an opening sized for postcards, letters, and very small packages. It would have originally painted drab green. In the 1950s, these boxes were painted blue and red. These small, mail collection boxes fell out of use later in the twentieth century. Most likely any remnant examples of the boxes were removed following September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

**Property History**

The land upon which the Hamilton Court project was built was acquired by the Federal Public Housing Authority in the District Court of the United States for the District of Maryland in Civil Case No. 1995 on July 1, 1943. Defendants William O. Michael, J. Smith Michael, and Beatrice P. Michael were paid \$3,925 and forced to surrender the property on July 10, 1943. The Judgment of Declaration was recorded in Harford County Land Records Liber GCB 278, folio 329, and the land taken was described, "Beginning for the same at a point on the Southeast side of Old Post Road located the two following courses and distances from a railroad spike set in the center line of Old Post Road and at the beginning of the eighth or South 30 degrees 31' East 20 feet line of the United States Government Easement leading from Old Post Road to the Sewage Disposal Plant, serving Defense Housing Project No. MD-18011 at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, South 30 degrees 31' was East 20.00 feet and South 58 degrees 28' West 5.00 feet to the true point of beginning and binding on the Southwest side of said United States Government Easement South 30 degrees 31' 00" East 640.00 feet; thence South 44 degrees 25' 00" West 20.71 feet; thence North 77 degrees 26' 00" East 20.71 feet; thence South 32 degrees 38' 00" East 173.39 feet; thence leaving said Easement, and running South 58 degrees 28' 00" West 784.67 feet to the land which by deed dated April 6, 1906 and recorded among the Land Records of Harford County in Liber W.S.F. No. 117 folio 295, was conveyed by William N. Adams and wife to Henry Rigdon; thence with said land North 31 degrees 16' 00" West 825 feet to the Southeast side of Old Post Road and thence binding on the southeast side of Old Post Road, North 58 degrees 28' 00" East 789.37 feet to the place of beginning containing 14.86 acres of land, more or less." (2)

Work took place quickly at Hamilton Court. Housing Manager, George Edward Cunningham, Senior, who also managed Swan Creek Park, began working at his position with the Federal Public Housing Administration on August 2, 1943. Cunningham, a 1933 alumnus of the historically-black Lincoln University, had previously managed a housing project in New Haven, Connecticut, where he had been a member of the National Guard. In 1946, Cunningham lived with his wife and two young sons at 17 Fenway Street, within the Hamilton Court project.

The Hamilton Court project included 140 dwelling units contained in 28 buildings and a community building, occupying 11.86 acres. The buildings were frame construction, clad with cemento board siding, with rolled asphalt roofs, oak floors, and sheet rock interior walls set on concrete pier foundations. Coal-fired space heaters provided heat, and the kitchens included coal-fired or gas-fired cooking ranges, wood cabinet sink, wood cabinets, and oil hot water heater. (3)

In August 1956 the United States Public Housing Administration advertised the sale of the Hamilton Courts Project, MD. 18260, noting that the community (which was still segregated) had an extremely high occupancy rate and an estimated net yearly return of \$26,044. The sale's winning bidder was the Hamilton Properties Corporation, a body corporate of the State of Maryland, and the U.S. Government deeded the streets, roadways, sanitary and storm sewer mains and water distribution mains within the property to the Town of Aberdeen on September 25, 1956, and transferred ownership effective October 1, 1956 to Hamilton Properties Corporation.

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In 1969, a fire at Hamilton Court killed two small children in a Fenway Street apartment. The Aberdeen Fire Department chief noted that the fire department received many calls on small fires in the Hamilton Court community that then consisted of 75 converted World War II barracks. Shortly thereafter, in 1971, the Hamilton Court apartments were replaced with two-and-a-half-story garden apartments called Washington Park Apartments, built and developed by the Baltimore firms Admiral Management Company and Southwest Properties Incorporation. The new apartments, with clustered arrangement, were built before the older apartments were demolished, allowing the tenants a seamless transition to their new homes. The first of the new apartments was located at 105 Hamilton Place. The Baltimore Sun published a photograph of the older housing, describing it as substandard, reported that the first four of 148 tenants were moving from nearby substandard housing to the new Washington Park Apartments at 105 Hamilton Place. The Federal Housing Administration insured the project that was one of the first public housing projects built without aggravating dislocation.

#### Historic Context

Hamilton Court served a population associated with Aberdeen Proving Ground. Established in 1917 for designing and testing weapon, Aberdeen Proving Ground displaced many residents of a large part of Harford County; many of the African Americans who had been displaced from farms moved to an Aberdeen neighborhood called Baltimore Park. During the build-up to World War II, the growth of jobs at Aberdeen Proving Ground resulted in huge population growth in Aberdeen and the surrounding areas causing overcrowding. The shortage of housing for African Americans was especially severe, and Hamilton Court, while not glamorous, provided decent housing for its residents. Hamilton Court provided homes for African-American war workers and the families of soldiers.

For several years prior to the attack of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States anticipated its involvement in World War II, building weapons and vehicles, manufacturing ammunition, and training soldiers. Realizing that defense workers needed places to live near their new places of employment, thousands of housing units, both temporary and permanent, were built by the federal government. Some of the earliest defense housing projects were designed by well-known, prominent architects, and some developments in prefabrication lent a style of modernity. As the war progressed, the need for quicker and less expensive housing overcame aesthetic considerations, using prefabrication methods on traditional housing styles.

Clark Foreman served as Director of the Division of Defense Housing, an agency of the Federal Works Administration created in 1941 by the Lanham Act. A native of Atlanta, Foreman had previously headed the effort to build Rosenwald schools throughout the south. Foreman, who was white, commissioned well-known modern architects, such as Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Richard Neutra, Louis Kahn, and Frank Lloyd Wright to design defense housing projects, but he was fired due to some of his radical ideas about racial equality. His successor, Charles Forrest Palmer, also an Atlanta native, had a background as a developer, and Palmer decided to only build "demountable" temporary housing that did not require an architect at all, and this is the kind of housing that was built at Hamilton Court.

The Hamilton Court dwellings bear strong resemblance to the dwellings constructed for African-American workers in Detroit called the Sojourner Truth Homes. The Sojourner Truth Homes were the site of a race riot in February 1942 when black tenants moved in, and white residents of the nearby neighborhood reacted violently. Like Hamilton Court, the Sojourner Truth Homes included single-story, multi-unit frame dwellings with medium-pitched roofs with close-set eaves and rakes. The Sojourner Truth Homes differed from Hamilton Court in that the Sojourner Truth Homes had solid brick foundations were arranged in straight lines, while the Hamilton Court homes had concrete piers and were arranged on curved roads. Other defense homes projects built specifically for African Americans include Altgeld Gardens in Chicago; San Felipe Homes in Houston; Carver Court and Griffin Park in Orlando; Mitchell Village in Tuskegee; Lake View and Desoto Bass Homes in Dayton; many of these also resemble the houses built at Hamilton Court. (4)

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Date

Some African-American housing that were exceptions to this traditional design include Langston and Stowe Halls in Washington, DC, and the Ernest Lyon Homes in Baltimore County that adjoined Turner's Station. Both were designed by the African-American architect Hilyard Robinson. The Langston and Stowe Halls were dormitories for female workers; they are now part of Howard University. Lyon Homes are brick, row-houses with flat-roofs above one- and two-story sections, offering a more Modern design and more permanent construction. African-American contractor Samuel Plato of Louisville, Kentucky, employed African-American construction workers to build the Lyon Homes- and readers of the Afro-American newspaper selected its name, honoring a local African-American minister.

Hamilton Court was one two areas in Aberdeen segregated for African Americans. The other, called Baltimore Park, was platted in 1917 (around the time Aberdeen Proving Ground was established during the first World War), along the north side of Baltimore Avenue at 1st and 2nd Avenues, near the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks. A description in the Baltimore Afro-American on November 15, 1960 indicated that old-timers, including those who had been displaced by the building of Aberdeen Proving Ground occupied Baltimore Park and that the homes there were neat and well-kept. Hamilton Court, on the other hand, while located in a less dense, quieter setting, hosted a transient population, perhaps due to the condition of the homes and to the status of the community as rental housing. A resident was quoted as saying he wished the Army would take Hamilton Court back. Aberdeen Proving Ground's leadership banned segregated housing in 1967.

During World War II, the placement of defense housing projects for African Americans was often a matter of public and political debate, but the federal government selected sites in accordance with the approval of local government. In addition to race, politicians and cities debated whether defense housing should be temporary or permanent. Many feared that following the war, temporary housing units would become slums, and real estate developers opposed permanent government-owned housing units that would lower the number of potential homeowners. However, the Korean War required housing near the same places where many temporary projects were built, including Aberdeen Proving Ground. Thus, some temporary housing projects, including Hamilton Court, remained in use long after its original intended use. When the project was eventually rebuilt, it was done so in phases, preventing displacement of residents.

Significance of the Concrete Post

The Hamilton Court Concrete Post is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The post, on its own, without its metal mail collection box, has lost its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as a significant illustration of the role of the United States Post Office during the World War II period.

The United States Post Office placed a letterbox in this location to accommodate the residents of Hamilton Court, a housing development for African American defense workers in World War II, but due to the lack of integrity, the post does not represent the association with Hamilton Court and is not eligible under Criterion A. The post is not associated with the lives of significant persons and is not eligible under Criterion B. While the post exhibits a standardized plan issued by a federal agency, it exhibits only one component of the letterbox and is missing the component, the letterbox, which conveys the use of the design. Therefore, the post is not eligible under Criterion C. The post was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Significance of Hamilton Court

In 2007, the National Park Service issued World War II and the American Home Front historic context to assist evaluation of properties for National Register of Historic Places eligibility and as National Historic Landmarks. Of the six property types included in the context, Hamilton Court could be considered an example of three property types as a place associated with manpower, civil rights, and morale and propaganda. Places associated with manpower that are likely to be eligible for the NRHP

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Under Criterion A include housing built or adapted to accommodate the needs of new residents during World War II; Hamilton Court was built as defense housing in 1943 near Aberdeen Proving Ground and Edgewood Arsenal. Places associated with civil rights likely to be eligible for listing under Criterion A include segregated housing for African Americans; Hamilton Court was an example of segregated housing for African Americans. Places associated with morale and propaganda likely eligible under Criterion A include USO clubs; it is possible that the community center at Hamilton Court was a USO club for African Americans. Places associated with the World War II home front likely eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C include buildings that used innovative construction techniques or materials or building or districts that exemplify standardized planning and construction guidelines developed by federal agencies. Hamilton Court used a new material (Cemesto) and standardized construction. Its building design and landscape plan were typical of projects developed by federal housing agencies. If extant, Hamilton Court would likely be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, representing multiple aspects of the World War II home front.

However, Hamilton Court is not extant and does not retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historical significance. The 28 barracks-type buildings and one community building that were built in 1943 as Hamilton Court are no longer extant; they were replaced in the 1970s by the current apartment buildings at the site which do not share the design, materials, arrangement, or construction methods of the original buildings. The landscape plan retains one semicircular street (Hanover Street) connecting Post Road and Michael Lane, but Monroe Street and Fenway Street have been removed. Further, the setting has been moderately altered. When Hamilton Court was constructed, it was located on former farmland near Aberdeen Proving Ground and near the sewage treatment facility that is still adjacent, but expanded. The North Deen neighborhood on the north side of Post Road (MD 7) opposite the site of Hamilton Court was built ca. 1952, and the construction of Aberdeen Thruway (MD 22) alters the accessibility relationship between Hamilton Court and Aberdeen Proving Ground. The concrete post is one of few property features remaining from its World War II association, but the mere imprint "1942" does not convey information regarding the property's identification as a World War II defense housing project segregated for African Americans. Thus, the Hamilton Court Concrete Post is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

Hamilton Court and likewise the Hamilton Court Concrete Post were not closely associated with individuals who played important roles within the World War II home front context at the state or local level in the areas of production, manpower, politics and government, civil rights, morale and propaganda, or home defense (Criterion B). Hamilton Court was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Endnotes

(1) Concrete obelisks are found nearby in the adjacent trailer park surrounding the Michael Family cemetery on Wood Road. These concrete obelisks are bulkier than the slender post at Hamilton Court, two parallel rows of metal pipes attached to the posts form a fence. The Michael family previously owned large parcels of land along Swan Creek since the eighteenth century, beginning with Baltsher Michael and descending eventually to J. Smith Michael, William O. Michael, and Beatrice P. Michael, from whom the U.S. Government seized various property in the 1940s, including property for a sewage disposal system, the Hamilton Court housing project, and the Swan Meadows trailer park now surrounding the Michael family cemetery. It may not be coincidental that in 1936, J. Smith Michael, along with Joel B. Pusey, claimed that a Works Progress Administration road reconstruction project occurred on a private road leading into the Oakington property of Senator Millard Tydings (see MIHP # HA-9, Oakington) and two others: H.A. Brehm (see MIHP # HA-243, Swan Harbor Farm) and Dr. S. Griffith Davis (see MIHP # HA-242, Swan Harbor Farm). Tydings, first elected U.S. Senator in 1926, remained in office until 1951, and it is possible Tydings' political power influenced the selection of the Michael property for condemnation.

(2) The land was previously owned by the Michael family, and its history is described in Land Record Liber 575, Folio 196: "The

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and was originally acquired by one Baltsher Michael in the middle of the Eighteenth Century by Deed of Patent recorded among the Land Records of Baltimore County (now Harford County). The land devolved to Daniel Michael upon the death of Baltsher Michael, and Daniel Michael by his Last Will and Testament recorded among the Will Records of Harford County in Liber C.W.B. No. 7 folio 2, devised the said land to John Calvin Michael. By deed dated September 29, 1894 and recorded among the Land Records aforesaid in Liber W.S.F. No. 82 folio 17, the said J. Calvin Michael conveyed the said land to his wife, Ann M. Michael, who, by her Last Will and Testament dated September 5, 1910, and recorded among the Will Records of Harford County in Liber J.A. No. 15 folio 446, devised the said land to her two sons, William O. Michael and John M. Michael, subject to a 25 feet right-of-way. The said William O. Michael died intestate in 1945, leaving two daughters, Martha G. Michael and Georgie B. Michael, two of the grantors herein, as his sole heirs, to whom his one-half interest in the said land vested and descended (Estate Docket 5, Folio 131). The said John M. Michael died in 1921, leaving a Last Will and Testament dated July 12, 1921, and recorded among the Will Records of Harford County in Liber J.A. No. 16 folio 315, in which he devised his one-half interest to his son, J. Smith Michael.

(3) Cemesto (a blend of cement and asbestos) panels were also used at the Aero Acres housing development in Middle River which was designed by the renowned architecture firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, as well as some 3,000 houses at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which were quickly erected at a rate of one every two hours.

(4) During World War II, housing projects dedicated for African Americans were often named for prominent African Americans, making clear the space's intended inhabitants, such as Detroit's Sojourner Truth Homes and Orlando's Carver Court. The name Hamilton Court and its streets- Fenway Street, Hanover Street and Monroe Street- do not present an obvious connection to African American history, and for that matter, lack a unifying theme of any kind. Monroe is presidential; the fifth president of the United States suggested freed slaves should return to Africa; thus the African nation of Monrovia is named for him. Fort Monroe, in Hampton Roads, Virginia, is also named for President Monroe; during the Civil War, Fort Monroe stayed in Union hands, and escaped slaves who reached Fort Monroe were granted freedom. Following the Civil War, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at Fort Monroe. Hamilton suggests Alexander Hamilton, the Founding Father, who supported a strong federal government and may have been an abolitionist, as a member of the New York Manumission Society. Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, New York, and Hamilton College in Hamilton, New York, are also named for Alexander Hamilton, but these do not appear to have held associations for African Americans. Hanover is a town name in many states, but perhaps best known as the location of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Dartmouth College had allowed African American students early in the nineteenth century. Finally, Fenway, which has a meaning related to brackish water, is most famous as the Boston baseball stadium, Fenway Park. The curved street layout may be a reference to the shape of a baseball diamond. While major league baseball was still segregated during World War II, Negro League and military teams played exhibition games at Fenway in 1942, and baseball was seen as an important American past-time.

References

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_____	_____
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Aberdeen Has Housing Need: Water Pollution At Edgewood Another Tydings Problem. The Sun (1837-1986); Jul 12, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1986) pg. 26.

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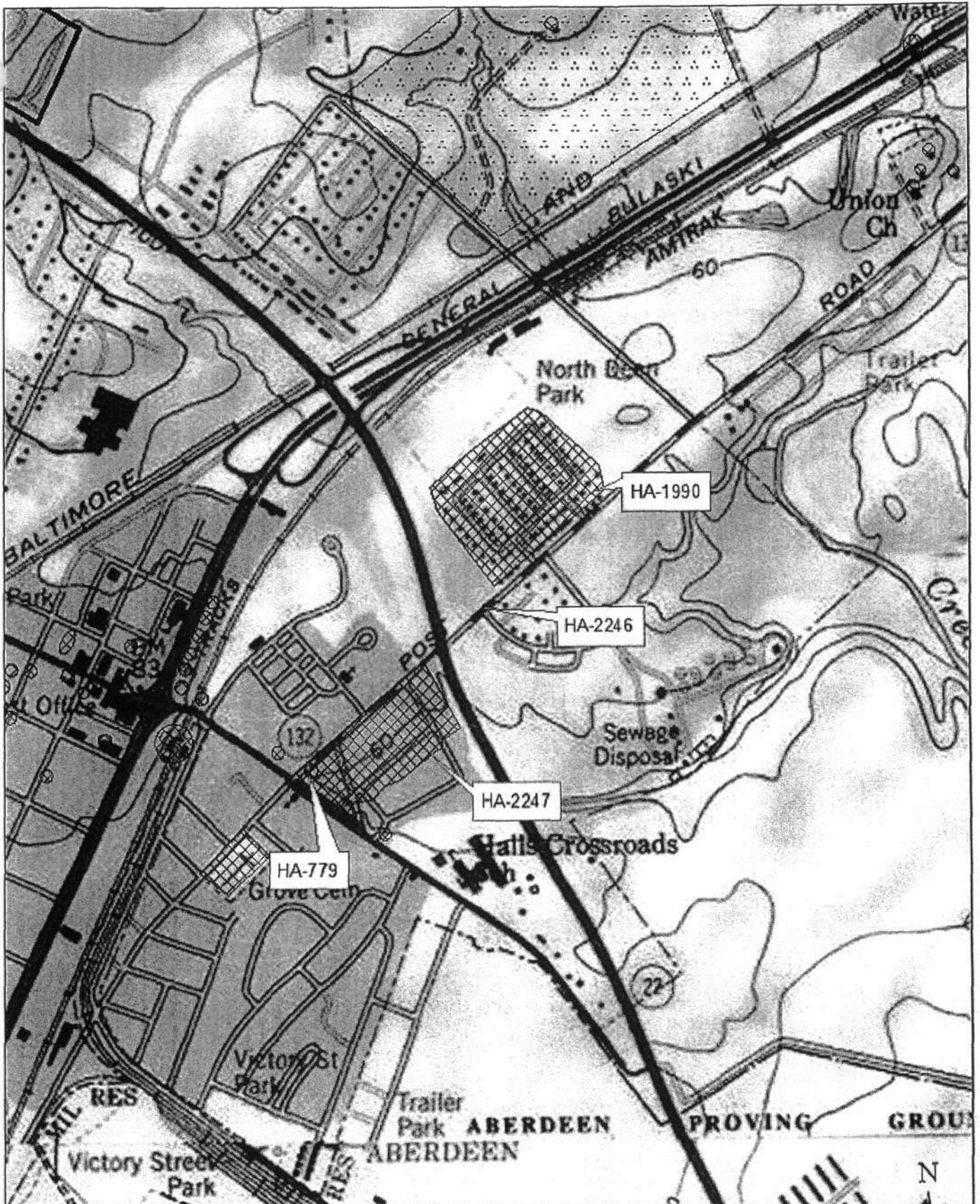
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USGS Topographic Map  
 Hamilton Court Concrete Post, MIHP # HA-2246  
 Aberdeen, Maryland  
 (Harford County, Aberdeen Quad)

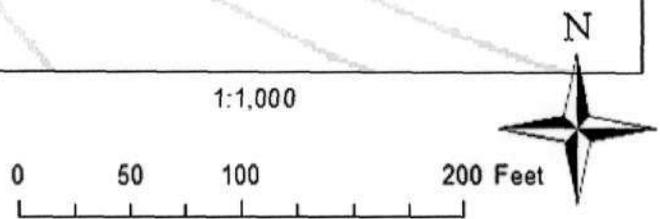
1:12,000

0 600 1,200 2,400 Feet





Property Tax Map  
Hamilton Court Concrete Post, MIHP # HA-2246  
Aberdeen, Maryland  
(Harford County, Aberdeen Quad)





Affinity  
**OLD POST**  
APARTMENTS  
COMMUNITY & LEASING CENTER  
101 Hanover St.   
410-272-1630

HA-2246

Hamilton Court concrete Post

Harford, Co. MD

R. Crew

8/14/2012

MD. SHPO

View facing northeast towards  
concrete post at MD 22  
and S. Hanover Street

1/2



HA-2246

Hamilton Court Concrete Post

Hartford Co, MD

R. Crew

8/14/2012

MD SHPO

Detail of "1942"

inscribed in concrete post

2/2