HA-237

Bel Air Academy 24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue Bel Air Private

This four bay plastered stone rubble building, now a private residence, was built in 1814 for the Bel Air Academy. The schoolroom door was in the west bay of the facade, and the exterior was entirely unadorned save for the bell cupola astride the roof ridge. The Academy was a state-chartered private college preparatory school from 1814 until it merged with the Bel Air Graded School in 1888, and many of Harford County's most prominent men received a classical education in its two rooms. The building continued to house the primary grades until 1900 when it was sold to J. Robert Ayers who remodeled it as a private residence.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME				
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AND/OR COMMON				
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	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
		_NO	MILITARY	OTHER:
NAME ROBERT	N. Turner		Telephone #: 8	38-6406
	Pennsylvania Avenu	e		
city, town Bel Ai:	r	VICINITY OF	STATE, Maryland	zip code
	N OF LEGAL DESCR		Maryrand	21014
5 LOCATION	Or LEGAL DESCR	IF ITON	Liber #: 723	
COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEEDS,	FTC d 3 m		Folio #: 50	
STREET & NUMBER	Harford County	Courthouse		
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6 REPRESEN	ITATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEYS		
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bel Air Academy, now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Turner, is at 24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. The main block of the building is a two and one half story plastered stone rubble structure, four bays wide with a slate gable roof and two gable roofed, shingle sided dormers. end chimney rises in each gable end. There are no windows in the gable ends save for one in each gable to light the attic. The shutters have been permanently nailed shut over these windows. The present entry is in the second bay from the west. The windows are 6/6 double hung sash framed by louvered shutters. The rear (north elevation) shows two dormers in the roof, three windows in the second story, and two windows and the former back door, which was made into a window in 1945 when that end of the hall was converted into a bathroom. lintel of this last window suggests that the back door was cut through in 1900 when the school building was converted into a residence. The two story frame ell at the northeast corner was added at that time. In 1900 there was a porch around the L-shaped back, which accounts for the door in the west elevation of the ell. The front (south) elevation has an entrance into what was once the kitchen. The remaining portion / of the back porch was enclosed and is now the kitchen. It has a pair of 9 pane casement windows in the north and west elevations and a door in the south part of the west elevation.

An old newspaper photograph shows the structure when it was a school. The major changes are the removal of the bell tower from the roof and the addition of dormers as well as the moving of the entrance one bay to the east, the addition of the porch, and of shutters to the front windows. The interior was one big room downstairs and one one up. The chimneys served stoves, not fireplaces. The staircase was probably in the northwest corner.

The interior of the present building has two rooms of different sizes with the hall between them on the ground floor. The single run, closed-string staircase rises in the east side of the hall. The north end of the hall was enclosed to make a bathroom in 1945. It has turned balusters and the fat, late 19th century newel post so common in Bel Air. The windows are set deep in the walls. They and their deep sills and the aprons appear to be original. The door surrounds (c-1900) come so close to matching that only a close inspection reveals the difference. The west chamber (the bed-sitting room) has a wide hall door with French doors. This change was made in 1945 to accommodate a wheelchair. A fireplace with knotty pine mantel, over-mantel, and cupboards in the northwest end of the room were also added in 1945. The chimney breast projects into the east chamber in the east wall, but there never was a fireplace there. There are long narrow chimney cupboards in both ends, however. The back (north) window has been blocked in the east room by the enclosure of the porch. The ground floor room in the ell was formerly the kitchen. It is wainscotted in tongue and groove boards taken from an old built in cupboard. Against

W-327

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
—PREHISTORIC —1400-1499 —1500-1599 —1600-1699 —1700-1799 X 1800-1899 X 1900-	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORICARCHEOLOGY-HISTORICAGRICULTURE	COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSERVATION ECONOMICS EDUCATION ENGINEERING EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT INDUSTRY	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LAW LITERATURE MILITARY MUSIC PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	— RELIGION —SCIENCE —SCULPTURE —SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN —THEATER —TRANSPORTATION —OTHER (SPECIFY)
SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1814	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This charming "colonial" building is one of the most significant of the remaining early 19th century buildings in Bel Air. From its construction in 1814 until the turn of the 20th century it was the home of the Bel Air Academy. The academy system was a semi-state-supported education system which provided schools with classical curricula which prepared students for college entrance. From 1814 to 1858 several academies were established in Harford County. The state provided an enabling act, and the local communities provided finance and a Board of Trustees. The Bel Air Academy (Harford County Academy) was incorporated in 1811. The cademy opened in 1814 in this building on property owned by merchant Thomas Hays. Hays's 1814 tax return shows "the walls for a stone still house 23 feet by 30 feet two stories high" on Scotts Improvement. It is possible that this building was completed and donated for the use of the school. Hays conveyed title to the property to the Academy in 1839 (23/136). The consideration was \$1.00.

The first headmaster was the Rev. Reuben H. Davis, a Presbyterian Minister. He married Mary Archer Hays, a sister of Thomas Hays. The classical curriculum was supplemented by an English department which included grammar, geography, bookkeeping, history and science as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic..

Many prominent Harford County men were educated at the school: Gov. Augustus Bradford, Judge Henry D. Harlan, Judge James D. Watters, Dr. John M. T. Finney, Mayor James H. Preston, Col. Otho S. Lee, Judge William H. Harlan, Judge William P. Maulsby, Attorney General Thomas H. Robinson, the Rev. William P. Finny, and Dr. William S. Archer. As well, men prominent in Maryland education taught at the school.

The Academy was united with the Graded School in 1888, and classes were held in the brick building on Gordon Street. C. Milton Wright, long time Harford County Superintendent of Schools and local historian, was the principal. Some classes may also have been held at the old building because it was not sold until 1900 after a law suit (equity 70/157, 1897) over debts resulting from work done by Joseph Gorrell on the building in 1859.

Robert Ayres bought the building in 1900 for \$425. It was probably in bad shape if an old newspaper picture is any indication. Mr. Ayres planned to turn the building into a private residence. According to a story handed down in the family of the present owners, Mr. Ayres had a job that took him away from home a lot. Another source says he was a sea captain. At any rate, Ayres intended to have the door where it was in the west bay and turn the large downstairs room into two rooms, a parlor

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

C. Milton Wright. Our Harford Heritage.
Harford Democrat
Interview with Mrs. Robert Turner, 18 May 1979.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

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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

The Shaw House, 21 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

(301) 267-1438

the north wall, covering where the old cookstove went, is a cupboard and the door to the corkscrew back staircase. These are made of the same tongue and groove material. Parallel to this room is the new kitchen, made by enclosing part of the old back porch.

The second story has its hall running along the back (north) side of the house, lighted by the three back windows. The west chamber in the second story is a bit oddly shaped because of the intrusion of the enclosed attic staircase in the east end of the room. The second bedroom (the east one) in the old school block is more conventionally shaped. A third bedroom and a bath are in the second story of the ell. The back staircase comes up the north wall of that bedroom.

With the exception of the window surrounds and aprons, all of the interior woodwork, the stairs, and the disposition of the rooms dates from 1900 or later. The chimney cupboards in the east chamber may be original.

and a dining room. The second story would have been a repeat - two bedrooms. The ell on the northeast side was to be a kitchen. Mrs. Ayres, however, had other plans. She had always wanted a center hall plan house and the fact that her house lacked one bay in width to make a symmetrical center hall plan bothered her not a whit. As soon as her husband left town she altered the plans. The door was shifted one bay to the east, and a new staircase was built. The result was an off-center hall plan with the west chamber being smaller than the east. Mr. Ayres was so annoyed, it is said, that he refused to move into the house. Whatever the truth of the legend, the hall is off center, and Mr. Ayres sold the property to George Yarish 18 months later for \$660.70 provided Yarish assumed the mortgage (102/473). Mrs. Yarish was related to the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Turner, so the house has been in the family since 1901, although it has gone through several conveyances since then. Mrs. Katherine Thorn Turner's name entered the title for the first time in 1946 (309/315). She brought an invalid sister back to Bel Air from Baltimore after World War II. At that time the west chamber was altered to make it a bed-sitting room. The hall door was replaced by a wide entry with French doors to accommodate a wheelchair and a small bathroom was made by partitioning off the north end of the hall and closing off the back door. The old front porch which ran the length of the south elevation was replaced by the present small entrance porch at the same Subsequently the Robert Turners turned the old kitchen in the ell into a dining room and enclosed part of the old back porch as a new kitchen. The ell has recently been covered in aluminum siding.

> (#8 cont'd) Page 2 of 2

Bel Air Academy

723/50 13 September 1966 Zero, Inc. to Katherine Turner, widow a life interest with power to sell, convey, mortgage, or lease, but not to will. At her death the property is to go to Robert N. Turner and Anita, his wife. (Robert Turner is the present owner.) 723/48 13 September 1966 Katherine T. Turner, widow to Zero, Inc. Straw 582/144 1 September 1961 H. Elizabeth Esley Katherine T. Turner, widow Straw 582/142 1 September 1961 Katherine T. Turner, widow, & Agnes D. Thorn, unmarried H. Elizabeth Esley Straw 501/365 19 April 1958 H. Elizabeth Esley Katherine T. Turner, widow, & Agnes D. Thorn, unmarried Straw 501/363 19 April 1958 Katherine T. Turner, widow

H. Elizabeth Esley

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2 December 1953 406/3 The Gralan Corporation Katherine T. Turner, widow 2 December 1953 406/1 Katherine T. Turner to The Gralan Corporation 309/315 30 September 1946 Leo B. Lathroum & Mary, wife, of Baltimore City Anna C. Plock, Katherine Thorn Turner, and Agnes D. Thorn 309/314 30 September 1946 Anna C. Plock, widow Leo B. Lathroum & Mary, wife 198/431 8 June 1926 Evelyn Yarish, widow, Frances Yarish, Charles and Helen Yarish and George Leo Yarish to Anna C. Plock The property of George H. Yarish, deceased. 102/473 6 December 1901 J. Robert Ayres and Sadie J. Ayres George Yarish \$660.70 Yarish to assume the mortgage (1901, 103/452) 100/131 14 July 1900 Thomas H. Robinson, Trustee J. Robert Ayres at private sale \$425 Robinson was trustee for the sale of the property in an equity suit (1897, equity 70/157) Daniel Scott and Anne G. Winchester vs Harford Academy. Scott and Winchester were the heirs of Otho Scott

(d. 1864) who had a lien against the Harford Academy assigned to him by paying the debt. The debt was owed by the Academy to Joseph Gorrell

a contractor who had done some work on the Academy and had furnished the materials (to the tune of \$802.06) in 1859. When the Academy didn't pay Gorrell sued in 1860. Scott paid Gorrell, and the lien was assigned to him. Scott died in 1864. His heirs revived the suit in 1884. This suit was dated 1897, and the sale was dated January 3, 1898. It was confirmed by the court and this is the deed.

23/136

26 December 1839 Thomas Hays

to

The Harford Academy

It is not clear why the conveyance was made in 1839 since the school was built and went into operation in 1814.

Form 10-300 (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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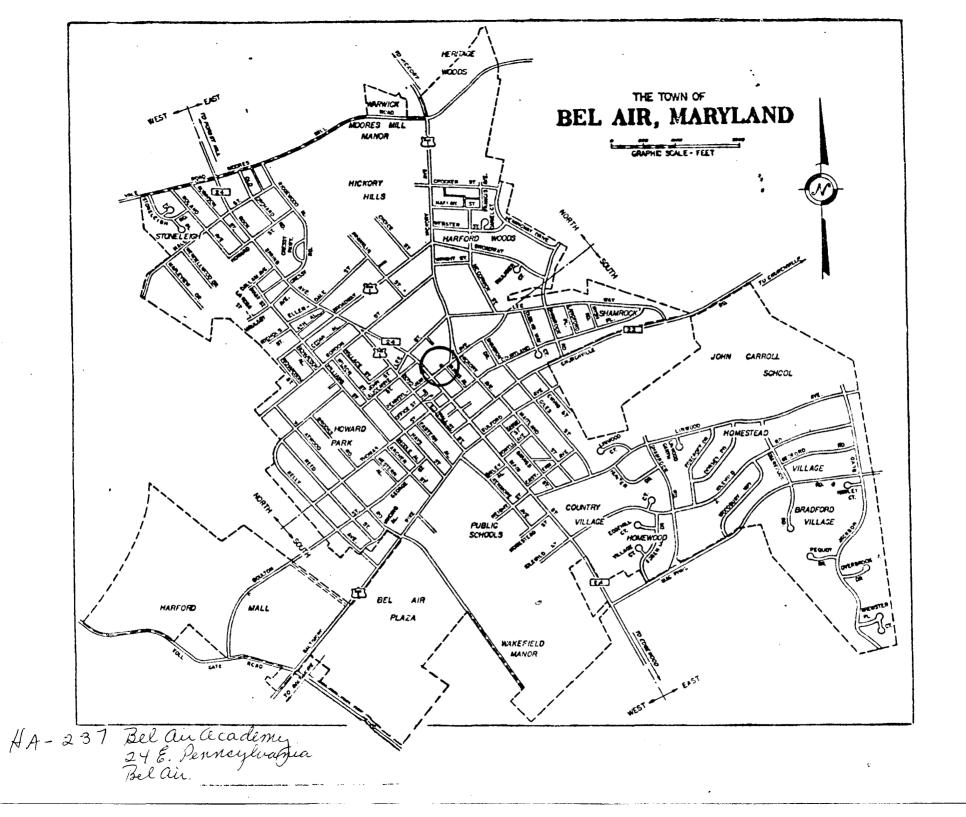
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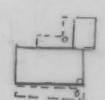
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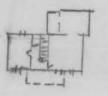
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9.	MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES											
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	longht. C. Nitton Our Hayland Herstage, 255-57 402,-5,-7,-11,-14,-23.											
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11.	FORM	PREPARED BY		<u> </u>	L							
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t	ORGANIZ	CATION					DATE					
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	CITY OR		NIBIZ COMO LICO		s	MARYLAND		CODE				
12	STATE	LIAISON OFFICER	NNAPOLIS	····	L		ED VEDICICATION					
14.	SIAIL	LIAISON OFFICER	ERITICATION	<u> </u>	╄	NATIONAL REGIST	ER VERIFICATION					
	tional 89-665 in the	e designated State Liai Historic Preservation (5), I hereby nominate the National Register and ated according to the co	Act of 1966 (Publ. is property for inc certify that it has	ic Law clusion been	I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.							
	forth by the National Park Service. The recommended Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation											
		of significance of this ational 🗀 State										
						Date						
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	Title											
		-				Keeper of The N	lational Register	<u>-</u>				
	Date					Date						





1904



PRESENT

TRACED by

M. LAREW

BEL AIR ACADOMY 24E. PENNA. AUX. BEL AIR, MO HA-237

SCALE 1"= 50 "



e portion of 5 elev M. Larew 1979



HA-237 Bel an academy 24 % Penna Bel an nelev of main block nxe gell



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CAST ASSESSMENT

24 E. Penno FUE My SELEVALAS