

Property Address <u>Columbia Pike at Dustin Road, Burtonsville, Montgomery County</u>
Owner Name/Address <u>University of Maryland, 2101 Main Administration Building, College Park, MD 20742</u>
Year Built <u>circa 1945</u>

**Description:**

The Burtonsville Forest Fire Lookout Tower, erected circa 1945, was previously surveyed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) in 1973. The structure is currently unaltered from its appearance at the time of the previous survey. However, its condition has degenerated since 1973. The steel frame is rusting, and several wood planks are missing from the landings. Several steps are also missing, and all of the windows and some sections of the cab floor are missing. Adjacent to the tower are two outbuildings which were not noted in the previous survey. In addition, the previous form did not contain a history of the tower. A description of the two outbuildings and a history of the tower follow.

Located at the base of the tower is a 1-story front-gable concrete shed. This shed has a poured concrete foundation, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The structure is clad in asbestos shingles. The second outbuilding is a 1-story concrete privy with a shed roof. The structure is located northwest of the tower.

**Significance:**

Forest fire lookout towers were built from the late 1930s through the 1940s in Maryland, generally in co-operation with Western Union, which used the towers as relay stations. These towers were used to locate fires during the Spring and the Fall, and were run by one operator during daylight hours. The towers had steel frame construction with a "cab" located at the top of the structure. Most cabs were 10' x 10' with steel walls, 4' in height and large awning windows. Tower operators gained access to the cab through a trap door in the floor. The cab was initially equipped with a desk, a telephone, and an alidade. In later years, a two-way radio was also installed.

The alidade, or "fire finder", was used by tower operators to pinpoint the location of fire or smoke. A circular table, 3' in diameter and approximately 4' to 5' in height, was placed in the center of the cab. A map representing a 30 to 50 mile radius around the tower was placed on top of the table, and the alidade was positioned in the middle of the map. Upon seeing smoke, the tower operator would align the alidade with the smoke to determine the compass bearing. The operator then estimated the fire's location based upon its proximity to specific landmarks. An operator was trained to recognize topographic landmarks, and knew the distance from the tower to these landmarks. The nearest tower was then called to repeat the same procedure. Working together, the staff of two or more towers estimated the location of a fire based upon the location of the intersection of the lines from the alidades. This process, based upon a theory of triangulation, was accurate within several hundred yards.

By the mid-1970s, the fire towers in all but Frederick County were no longer used to detect fires. Most of the towers were used as radio units in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, and today, the majority are used for antennae communications. Approximately 40% of Maryland's fire towers are still extant (Oral Interviews with: Allan Zentz—State Fire Supervisor, Department of Natural Resources:March 11, 1996/March 18, 1996 and George Rocky—Regional Fire Manager, Department of Natural Resources:March 11, 1996).

**National Register Evaluation:**

Constructed circa 1945, the Burtonsville Forest Fire Lookout Tower is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its association with the governmental response to the problem of forest fires and coordination of firefighting efforts, dating to the 1930s and 1940s. The property does not meet Criterion B, as it has no known association with historically significant persons. In addition, the structure is not eligible under Criterion C due to its loss of integrity, including the loss of such character-defining features as the alidade and sections of the tower cab. Finally, it is not eligible under Criterion D, as it has no known potential to yield important information.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST ADDENDUM SHEET  
INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR PROJECT

Property Name: Burtonsville Forest Fire Lookout Tower  
Survey No.: M:15-66 (PACS D8.1)

Property Address <u>Columbia Pike at Dustin Road, Burtonsville, Montgomery County</u>
Owner Name/Address <u>University of Maryland, 2101 Main Administration Building, College Park, MD 20742</u>
Year Built <u>circa 1945</u>

**Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:**

The National Register boundary of the Burtonsville Forest Fire Lookout Tower follows the current property lines of Tax Map KS 563, Parcel 898. This .13 hectare (.32 acre) parcel is bounded on the east, north and south by adjacent tax parcels, and on the west by the Columbia Pike (U.S. Route 29). The boundary includes the fire tower and two outbuildings, which contribute to the significance of the property. The parcel and the structures were conveyed to the University of Maryland by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in 1985. The property is now bounded to the west by a six lane highway and to the east and south by open land.

<b>MHT CONCURRENCE:</b>		
Eligibility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> recommended	<input type="checkbox"/> not recommended	
Criteria <input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/> None
Comments: _____		
_____		
_____		
E. Hannold/K. Williams	8/13/1996	
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	Date	
	<i>[Signature]</i>	3/11/02
	Reviewer, NR program	Date

Preparer:  
P.A.C. Spero & Company  
October 1996



MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST WORKSHEET

NOMINATION FORM for the NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

<b>1. NAME</b>					
COMMON:					
AND/OR HISTORIC: Burtonsville Lookout Tower					
<b>2. LOCATION</b>					
STREET AND NUMBER: Southeast corner of Burtonsville Road and Route 29					
CITY OR TOWN: Burtonsville					
STATE Maryland		COUNTY: Montgomery			
<b>3. CLASSIFICATION</b>					
<b>CATEGORY</b> (Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object		<b>OWNERSHIP</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public    Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered		<b>STATUS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<b>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</b> Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____	
<b>4. OWNER OF PROPERTY</b>					
OWNER'S NAME:					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
CITY OR TOWN:			STATE:		
<b>5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION</b>					
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Montgomery County Courthouse					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
CITY OR TOWN: Rockville			STATE: Maryland		
Title Reference of Current Deed (Book & Pg. #):					
<b>6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS</b>					
TITLE OF SURVEY: None					
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local					
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
CITY OR TOWN:			STATE:		

M: 15-66

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure is a fire look-out tower of steel frame with a look-out station.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century
- 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Historic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Architecture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Art</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Commerce</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communications</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Engineering</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invention</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Literature</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Military</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Music</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Political</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Science</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Theater</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|--|

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

M.15-66

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Empty box for Major Bibliographical References.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

Acreage Justification:

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:		COUNTY:	

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Christopher Owens, Park Historian

ORGANIZATION: M-NCPPC      DATE: 1/24/73

STREET AND NUMBER:  
8787 Georgia Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Silver Spring      STATE: Maryland

12. State Liaison Officer Review: (Office Use Only)

Significance of this property is:

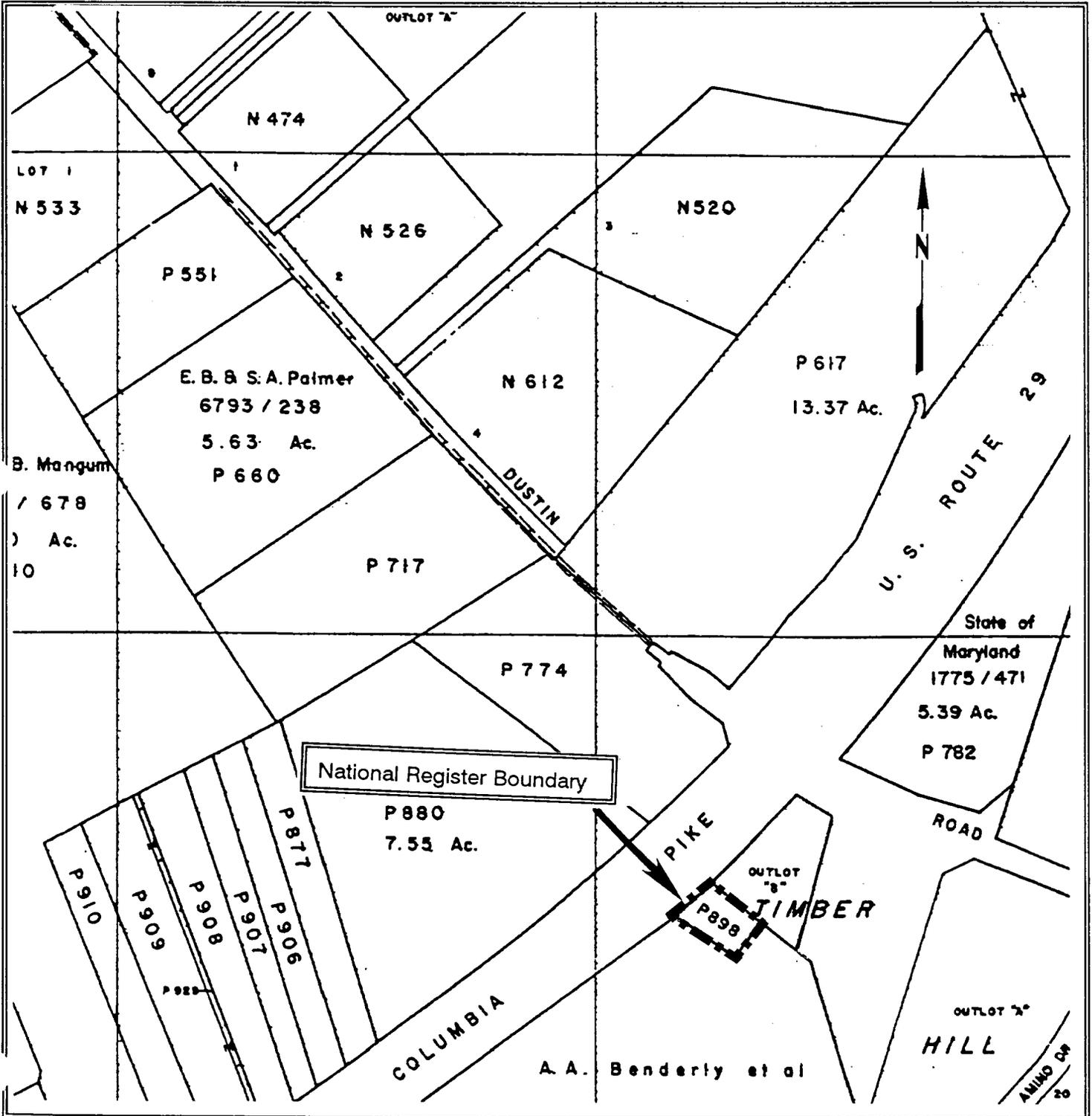
National  State  Local

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Property Address Columbia Pike at Dustin Road, Burtonsville, Montgomery County  
Owner Name/Address University of Maryland, 2101 Main Administration Building, College Park, MD 20742  
Year Built circa 1945

Resource Sketch Map and National Register Boundary Map:



57°30'

55'

Calvary Ch

RATON

M: 15-66  
Burtonsville Fire Tower  
Beltsville Quad, 1951

BURTONSVILLE  
FIRE TOWER

Burtonsville

UNION  
CEM

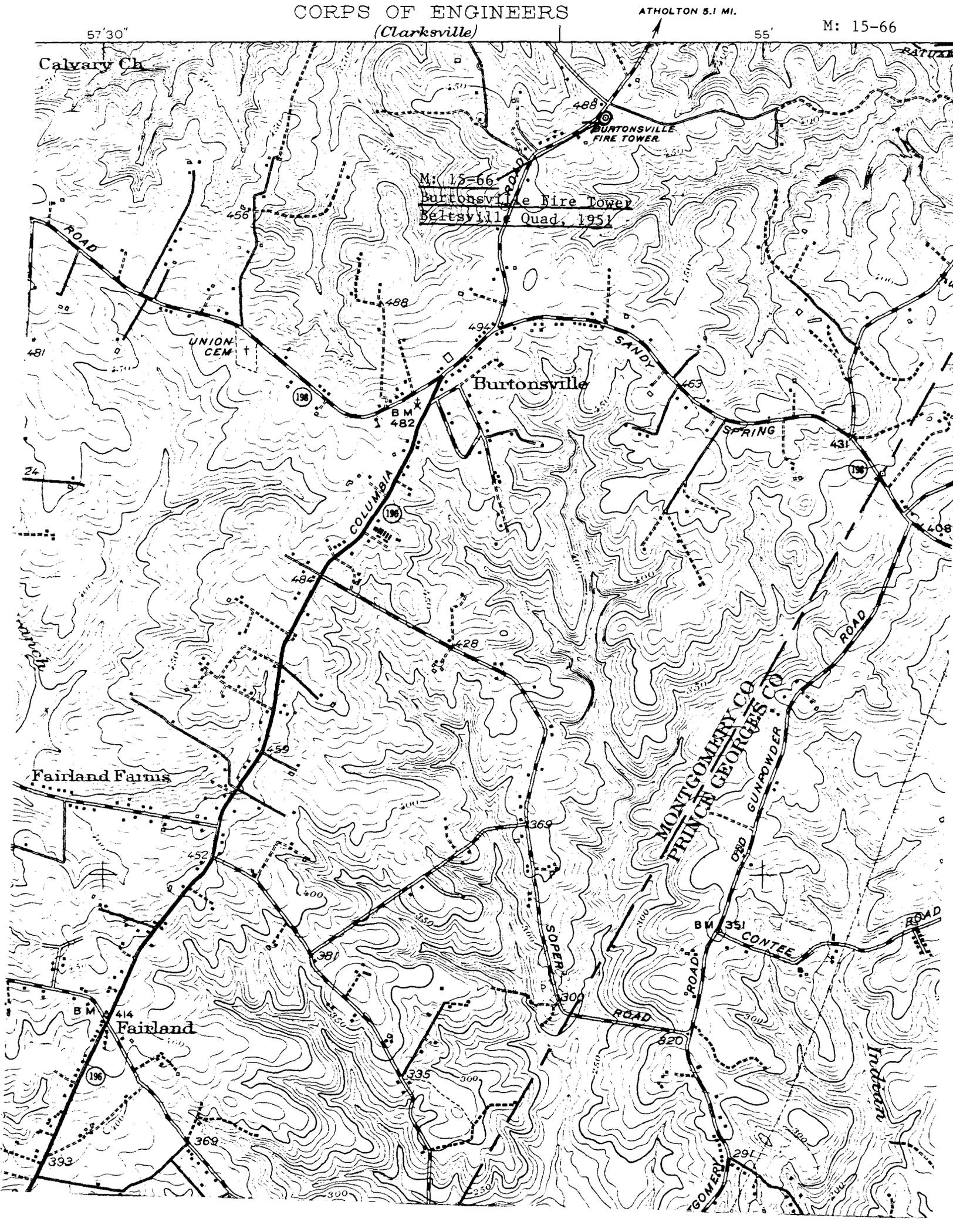
COLUMBIA

MONTGOMERY CO  
PRINCE GEORGES CO  
GUNPOWDER CO

Fairland Farms

Fairland

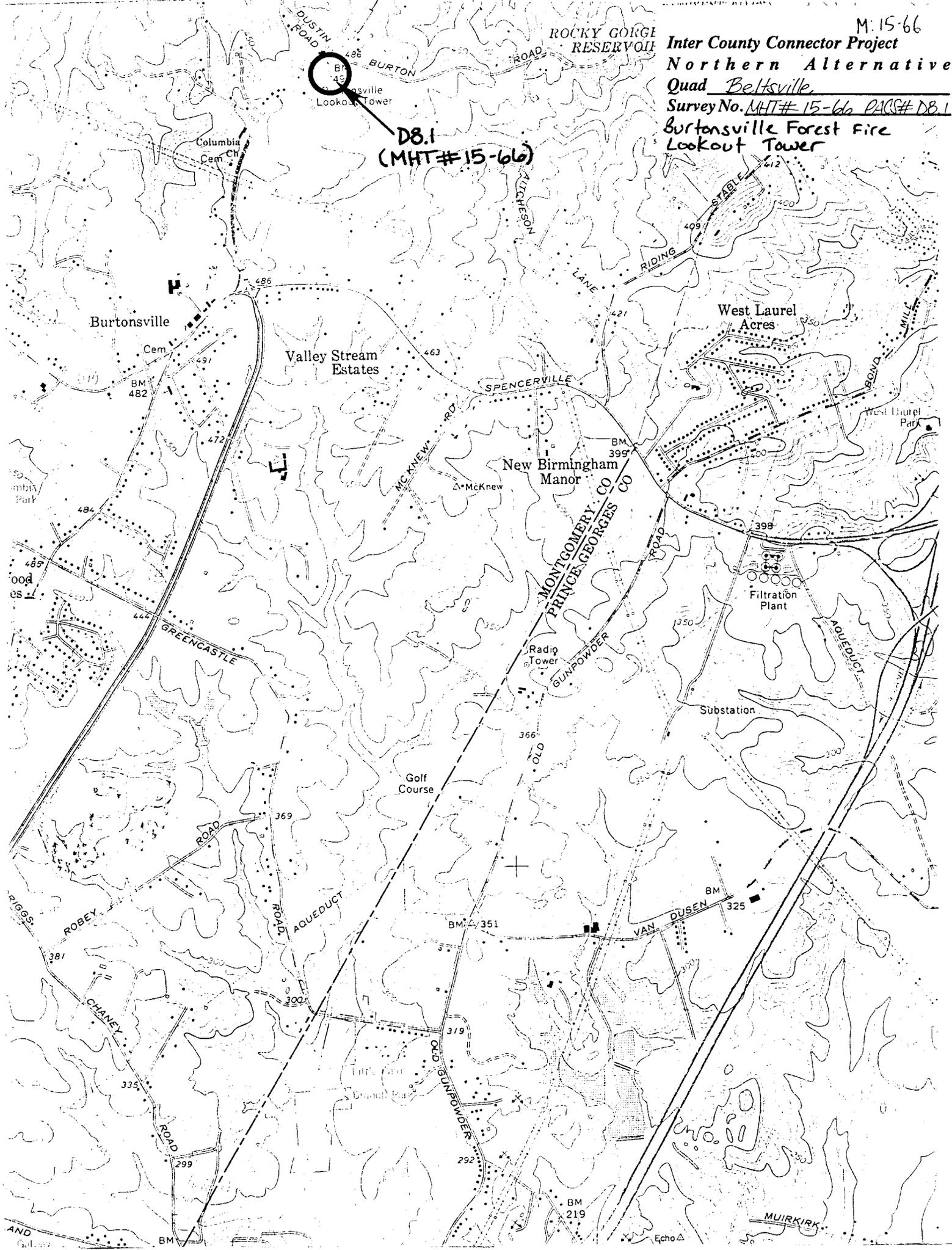
Indian



M: 15-66

Inter County Connector Project  
Northern Alternative  
Quad Beltsville  
Survey No. MHT# 15-66 PACS# D8.1  
Burtonsville Forest Fire  
Lookout Tower

D8.1  
(MHT# 15-66)





- 1 MHT# 15-66
- 2 Burtonsville Fire Look-out Tower
- 3 Montgomery County
- 4 Adrienne Cowden
- 5 February 1996
- 6 PAC Spero and Company, Towson MD 21204
- 7 Burtonsville Fire look-out Tower, Fire Tower  
NYI
- 8 1 of 5



- 1 MHT # 15-66
- 2 Burtonsville Fire lookout Tower
- 3 Montgomery County
- 4 Adrienne Cowden
- 5 February 1996
- 6 PAC Speco and Company, Towson MD 21204
- 7 Burtonsville Fire look-out tower, Detail-Deck

8 2 of 5



1 MHT# 15-66

2 Burtonsville Fire Look-out Tower

3 Montgomery County

4 Adrienne Cowden

5 February 1996

6 PAC Spero and Company, Towson MD 21204

7 Burtonsville Fire Look-out Tower, Detail  
Watch (Look-out)  
Tower

8 3 of 5



- 1 MHT # 15-66
- 2 Burtonsville Fire look-out Tower
- 3 Montgomery County
- 4 Adrienne Cowden
- 5 February 1996
- 6 PAC Spew and Company, Towson MD 21204
- 7 Burtonsville Fire look-out Tower, Outhouse



- 1 MHT # 15-66
- 2 Burtonsville Fire look-out Tower
- 3 Montgomery County
- 4 Adrienne Cowden
- 5 February 1996
- 6 PAC Speco and Company, Towson MD 21204
- 7 Burtonsville Fire look-out Tower, station house
- 8 5 of 5



MI # 15-66e

NAME FIRE LOOKOUT TOWER

LOCATION RT. 29 BURTONSVILLE, Md.

FACADE LOOKING WEST

PHOTO TAKEN 1/16/73 M. DWYER