

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Belt, J. A., Building

and/or common Belt, J. A., Building

**2. Location**

street & number 227 East Diamond Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town Gaithersburg n/a vicinity of congressional district Ninth

state Maryland code 24 county Montgomery code 031

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Bruce A. Hendricks

street & number 11844 Beekman Place

city, town Potomac n/a vicinity of state Maryland 20854

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number 50 Courthouse Square

city, town Rockville state Maryland 20850

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Maryland Historical Trust  
Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date January 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Belt, J. A., Building  
Montgomery County, MD Item number 7 Page 1

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The John A. Belt Building stands on the southwest corner of East Diamond and Summit Avenues, the main intersection of the early commercial district. The present building was constructed in 1903 to replace an 1889 structure which had been destroyed by fire; the present building may incorporate elements of the earlier structure. The main two-story rectangular brick building is four bays wide by two bays deep. The principal (north) facade has three large plate-glass display-type windows on the first story. Originally, the window space in the left (easternmost bay contained a double 1/1 sash window; set off by a quoined and paneled brick pilaster. This portion of the building is expressed almost as a separate entity. The remaining three bays hold a storefront. The second bay from the right contains a recessed entrance with double doors. There are display windows on either side of the entrance. Above all windows and the entrance are diamond-paned leaded glass windows. The area above the left bay display window is distinct from the other three bays in that the leaded glass is arched, whereas the other leaded glass areas are straight-topped. The four bays of the second-floor alternate between single and paired double-hung sash windows. Each opening is topped by a slightly projected splayed brick arch with projecting keystones.

The two-bay-wide first-floor east elevation contains a single door in the right bay topped with a transom the same dimension as the upper half of a single double-hung window. Originally, this opening appears to have contained a Queen Ann-type glass with small multi-colored panels around its periphery. The left bay contains a single 1/1 window which also originally contained a Queen-Anne-type window in the upper sash. The second-floor east elevation contains a 1/1 sash window in each bay. There are slightly projected splayed brick arches with projecting keystones above each opening on the first and second floors.

On the north facade, there are three slightly projected brick pilasters with ten recessed courses spaced five rows apart which create an illusion of classical quoins. The pilasters extend to the entablature; however, at the second-floor level, the simulated quoins are replaced by long rectangular recessed panels. Capping each of the three pilasters is a square recessed panel. The overall effect is that of columns which add to massiveness of the building. These pilasters occur on all corners of the building, and between the east bay and the storefront on the north facade. There are square recessed panels under each window between the first and second floors, except above the storefront, where an awning was originally attached.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

There is a brick water table approximately 18 inches from ground level on all elevation. The brick is laid in common bond.

The main building is flat-roofed. There is a wide three-part entablature with brick dentil course and a sculptured pressed-metal parapet. There are four evenly spaced square, recessed panels in the parapet on the north facade which project slightly above the main parapet line. In the center of the east elevation parapet is a raised half-lunet inscribed "1903" and underneath, "J. A. Belt."

Extending from the rear corner of the east elevation is a two-story flat-roofed brick section, four bays wide. The roofline is parallel to the brick course just below the entablature on the main building. There is a small, square window located in each of the four bays and situated between the first and second stories. Originally, these appear to have contained Queen Anne-type decorative glass panes. On the second floor of the east facade of the rear section are four double-hung sash windows, one in each bay. There are small splayed brick arches with keystones above all openings. A one-brick projecting string course runs above the second-floor windows, even with the top of the upper sash. The west facade is treated similarly, extending a full depth of six bays from the corner of the pressed-brick north facade.

There is a later brick shed-roofed addition located in the rear of the building on the southeast corner.

The interior of the building retains few, if any, of its original architectural elements due to the many changes of use and renovations it has undergone. Neither original floors, ceilings surrounds nor walls are visible.

# 8. Significance

M-21-135

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 checked="" 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      1903                      Builder/Architect      unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Applicable Criteria: B, C  
 Applicable Exceptions: none  
 Level of Significance  
 for evaluation: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The J. A. Belt Building is significant for its association with John A. Belt, a well-known and substantial entrepreneur in Montgomery County in the late 19th and early 20th century. Belt had established a store in Gaithersburg by 1879; over the next 25 years, Belt was influential in many areas of the city's civic, commercial, and cultural affairs. He served two terms as Postmaster and also as a member of the Board of Commissioners; was a leading exponent of the 1888 extension of the city's corporate limits to double their former area; provided library, stage, and meeting facilities for the use of city residents; and endowed the construction of a Masonic Lodge. The Belt Building derives additional significance from its architecture, which expresses the prominence of its owner in the rich detailing of its pressed-brick facades. When constructed, the building was the most ornate and substantial commercial structure in Gaithersburg; today it remains the only substantially unaltered early 20th century commercial building in the city's business district, which is predominantly characterized by buildings of more recent date and severely compromised integrity. The richly ornamented brickwork of the Belt Building, incorporating pilasters, quoins, corbeling, paneling, splayed and keystone arches and a molded and dentiled cornice, is especially noteworthy, as are the leaded-glass transoms above the storefront and first-floor windows on the principal facade.

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Belt, J. A., Building  
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HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

John A. Belt is first recorded as a merchant in Gaithersburg in Montgomery County Sentinel, April 18, 1879, reporting a robbery at his Gaithersburg Store. The location of the store referred to is unknown. In 1889, Belt erected a new store building, apparently in the same location as the present brick structure according to City land records. However, this structure was destroyed by fire at the turn of the 20th century. The present structure, completed in 1903, may incorporate elements of the 1889 building.

Mr. Belt was not only a prosperous merchant, but a public spirited citizen as well, serving as postmaster from 1885-1890 and again from 1893-1897, and twice as elected member of the town's Board of Commissioners from 1890 to 1894.

In 1888, he was a leading proponent of expanding the town's boundaries which, when accomplished, almost doubled the size of Gaitherburg.

Ironically, in 1893, Mr. Belt helped to establish the first volunteer fire organization in Gaithersburg only to lose his store building to fire in 1903. This led to the construction of the existing brick structure. The building, with its elegant brick work and parapet, is as imposing a structure now as it was then in the townscape of downtown Gaithersburg. It combined delicate Victorian diamond-paned leaded glass windows with massive projecting brick pilasters with quoins. These pilasters lighten on the second floor by the use of vertical recessed panels.

The visual effect is to bring the eye upwards to the elaborate entablature with its brick dentil molding and pressed-metal parapet.

The building facade has remained virtually unchanged during the past 80 years. It has housed the Gaitherburg Post Office, the first Pontiac car dealership in Gaithersburg in 1928, and numerous commercial establishments, and is still considered by the downtown merchants to be the key structure of the commercial area.

John A. Belt was born on May 29, 1851, in Three Springs, Montgomery County, Maryland, and died at the age of 74 in 1925. In 1872, aged 21, he opened a store in Beallsville, Maryland, which he operated until 1878 when he was succeeded by Chiswell and Davis. (Sharf, History of Western Maryland, 1882, this edition Balto. 1968, page 737). G. M. Hopkins' Atlas of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1879,

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

shows Belt's store as the site of the Beallsville Post Office, thus Belt would have been postmaster of that town before coming to Gaithersburg.

The date of Belt's arrival in Gaithersburg is unknown, as is the location of his first place of business. However, we know that his store was in operation by April of 1879 through the Montgomery County Sentinel which reported on April 18, 1879, that "thieves at Gaithersburg" had robbed the John Belt Store. Belt's first land purchase at Gaithersburg was recorded in April of 1879 also. This property was purchased from William Hutton and is believed to be shown on the 1894 map on East Diamond Avenue, one lot from the bank.

In 1884 and 1886, Belt purchased more land on East Diamond from Hutton. The homes of Belt and of his mother-in-law, Mary Anderson, were built on two of these lots; however, none of these lands were within the town limits of Gaithersburg and, therefore, Belt was not a legal resident and could not vote, hold office, or influence town affairs. Thus, on February 20, 1888, a motion was recorded in the town minutes "to appoint a committee to take into consideration the extension of the Corporation limits as prayed for by Mr. John A. Belt and others." The annexation was made and Belt gained a voice in civic affairs.

Assured then that he would have some control over roads, etc., Belt proceeded to purchase a number of properties on the southwest side of Diamond and Summit Avenues from J. S. Poole in the early part of 1889. The Fall of 1889 found Belt constructing a new store on one of his newly acquired properties, the site of the present building. The Sentinel of September 6, 1889, notes his progress under the heading "Gaithersburg Improvements."

"Mr. John A. Belt, a leading merchant of Gaithersburg, has commenced the erection at that place of a large store-house. The building will be 36 x 52 feet and two stories high. The store-room will have a dimension of 25 x 52 feet, with a ware-room adjoining 11 x 52 feet. The second story will be used as a public hall, and the building, when completed, will be one of the largest in the county. Mr. George Meem has the contract for the carpenter's work and Mr. J. T. Martin for the painting. The estimated cost of the building is about \$3,000."

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

This store and its public hall, known as Norman Hall, immediately became the pivotal structure of Gaithersburg's social, cultural, and governmental activities. With his business established and comfortably situated in its new quarters, Belt began to assume a more prominent role in civic, fraternal, and town affairs.

Previously, in 1885, Belt had been appointed Postmaster. With his appointment, the two offices serving the area, Ayres, located in the railroad depot, and Gaithersburg, in Ward's store on Frederick Avenue, were consolidated and moved to Belt's old store near the depot. Belt held the office from 1885 to 1890, then again from 1893 to 1897. Thus, it can be presumed that the new building's first public function was as the Post Office.

Shortly after, it assumed another public function: town hall and polling place. In May, 1890, Belt exercised his recently received right and ran for town commissioner. He tied with a prominent doctor in town, and a run-off election was held, of which Belt was the winner. As usual, the poll was held in Norman Hall which served as the town hall and polling place until the fire in 1903. He was reelected in 1892 for the second time, receiving a second highest number of ballots cast. Much mention of J. A. Belt's presence is made in the commission minutes and he was involved in many different aspects of the town's affairs. He enjoyed a perfect attendance record at all town meetings and served as president pro tem on several occasions. His most prominent work was with tax, financial, and roadway matters.

Norman Hall rapidly became the social and cultural center of Gaithersburg. Belt himself was a member of the Waverly Literary Society which met in Norman Hall beginning in January of 1890. The Waverly Club Library was famous for the number and depth of its holdings beginning in 1890 with 327 volumes and increasing by 1894 to 1,000 volumes.

The Hall was unique in Gaithersburg in that it had a stage. As such, it was the preferred location of theater, lectures, recitals, musical presentations and high school graduations. For example, on January 17th the noted humorist Prof. Hawks lectured at Norman Hall. (*Sentinel*, 1/12/94) and on February 22nd, the Knights of Pythias gave a dramatic entertainment, "Ten Nights in a Bar-Room." (*Sentinel*, 2/16/94). Also, in 1894, Miss Minnie Smith's pupils gave

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

a musical recital in Norman Hall. (Sentinel, 5/15/94). In June, the ladies of the Ascension Church gave a Strawberry Festival at Norman Hall (Sentinel, 6/1/94) and the next week the Hon. John B. Gordon delivered his famous lecture, "The Last Days of the Confederacy," at Norman Hall (Sentinel 6/8/94). When the Jefferson Literary Society was founded in 1898, it also used the facilities at Norman Hall for its public events.

Among the many programs presented at Norman Hall through the years, the "Grand Concert" of September 29, 1890, stands out. The program features "the grandest musical entertainment ever given in this vicinity," but is remarkable to the modern reader in that the announcement noted that the "Local train leaving Washington at 7 p.m. will arrive in time for the concert and at close of the concert a special train will start for Washington and way stations" (Sentinel, 9/26/90).

Belt played host in 1890 to the newly formed "Democrats of Gaithersburg District Club." The group organized with 30 members to be called the McKaig Democratic Tariff Reform Club of Gaithersburg of which Belt was elected treasurer. Later in October, McKaig spoke to the club and others at Norman Hall (Sentinel, 9/10/90; Sentinel, 10/17/90).

But, Belt's finest moment as host was to the Fraternal Order which seems to have epitomized all of the merchant's civic, fraternal, and cultural activities .... Pentalpho Lodge No. 194 of the Masons. The Masonic order had been formed in Norman Hall on July 7, 1893, with John Belt accepting the office of Junior Warden. Belt was an avid supporter of the Lodge, serving in many capacities and as Worshipful Master in 1897. In 1896, to fulfill a lost election wager, Belt gave a banquet in "the Town Hall" (Norman Hall) consisting of seven courses with toasts to sixty guests. Among the diners were delegations of prominent Masons from Washington and Rockville. Belt was presented with a gold cigar for his gesture (Sentinel, 12/4/96).

It was this loyalty, accompanied by a generous spirit, that moved Belt when the Masonic Lodge was hit by lightning in May 1898 and much of the paraphernalia and lodge property destroyed. Belt family tradition has it that John A. Belt donated the sum of \$1,500 towards the building of a new free-standing Masonic Hall which would accommodate Lodge functions and serve as a public assembly place. Unfortunately, Lodge records to substantiate this claim have been lost, but the Sentinel reports on December 15, 1899, that "A large hall building 50 x 100 feet is being erected at Gaithersburg by

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

John A. Belt." This item was followed on December 29, 1899, by an account of the laying of the cornerstone of the new Masonic Hall at Gaithersburg. This seems proof that the family tradition in this case was accurate.

Perhaps it was Belt's generosity and civic spirit, coupled with misfortune, that led to his decline as a Gaithersburg merchant. Belt's descendants have related his practice of giving credit to those in need and of writing off the debts of victims of ill luck. His own resources were strained in 1903 with the destruction of his business by fire.

The Sentinel reported that "The large mercantile establishment of Mr. John A. Belt on Diamond Avenue, this county, was destroyed by fire on Monday last" (9/18/03). The owner was in Westminster when the fire began in a stock of brooms in the ware-room. The flames soon spread to some stocks of oil and fammables, then to a large stock of ammunition. The employees of the store were driven out by the exploding ammunition and had to leave the building without saving any property, goods, or business records. The loss was estimated at twelve thousand dollars, only partially covered by insurance.

No record exists of the extent of the damage to the actual building. Available information suggests that the basic exterior structure of the "1903" building is similar to that of the 1889 structure and that a portion of the present building is the original fabric of 1889.

It has been observed by an architectural consultant that the entire west wall of the building is constructed of one brick as one fabric with no broken courses, excepting window openings. The brick on the east, or ware-room side, is inferior quality brick, unlike that used on the east and front, and of different courses.

It should also be noted that the exterior measurements of the 1889 building, 36 x 52, (as noted in the newspaper item mentioned above) are substantially the same as those shown in the measured drawings done in 1983 (40 x 56). Belt's measurements in his sale ad of 1914 (51 x 72) are dissimilar, but are probably erroneous

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

since the present building is the same one sold. The assumption is that major rebuilding occurred on the ware-room east wall where the fire was most intense and on the front, where a pressed-brick facade is present.

Most importantly, no building permit was issued to rebuild the store as was usual practice. In the case of a May, 1903, fire which destroyed the fertilizer warehouse of the Gaithersburg Milling and Manufacturing Company, and the house of C. F. Hogan, both owners applied for and were granted permits to rebuild, "On site of one recently destroyed by fire." This suggests that the destruction of Belt's 1889 building was less than total.

In October of 1902, the Commissioners of Gaithersburg decided to "pike" (grade and pave with crushed rock) Diamond Avenue from the Post Office (at the hotel) east as funds would permit. "In front of Belt's store pike to be 20 feet wide, the balance to be 18 feet." On June 6, 1904, the minutes record the request of Mr. John A. Belt to remove about 8 inches of the roadbed in front of his store. On June 14, the Corporation moved to "move all roadbed on Mr. Belt's property in front of his store. The secretary was instructed to notify Mr. Belt to remove all old bricks from the street in front of his store."

These bricks are later found to be the property of the Gaithersburg Milling and Manufacturing Company and the same ordered to remove them from in front of Belt's store or they would be arrested and fined for obstructing streets. However, it appears that Belt's store was in its same location and he was concerned with access to his business in the spring of 1904.

Unfortunately, Belt never recovered financially from the loss of his stock and damage to his property. In 1904, a deed of trust to Wm. Talbott was applied to all of Belt's properties. The Sentinel of June 17, 1904, said, "Mr. J. A. Belt, the oldest established merchant in Gaithersburg, this county, voluntarily executed a deed of trust to Atty. Wm. H. Talbott on Wed., for the benefit of his creditors. It is stated that available assets amount to \$20,000, while the liabilities will reach only \$8,000. Last September, Mr. Belt sustained a heavy loss in the destruction of his establishment by fire."

After this time, Belt's properties were never free of encumbrances, and finally, the store was sold in 1914. Belt was not operating a store on the premises at the time of the sale.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

Marshall Walker managed his business at the location until 1914 when the building was offered for sale at auction on March 21, 1914. The structure was described as a "handsome pressed brick-front store property, located on the corner of Diamond and Summit Avenues, Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, Maryland. This building is 51 x 72 feet, two stories, and built of the finest material throughout, heated by a hot air furnace (Sentinel, March 20, 1914).

The building was sold to George F. Linthicum for the sum of \$8,100, stock not included, an extremely high price for the times (Sentinel, 4/6/1914).

Linthicum operated the store for a time, then it was sold to J. Forrest Walker and Clay Plummer. Plummer left the company and Forrest was joined by his cousin, Marshal, Belt's former manager. The Walker store continued until the early 1950's. After 1921, the Post Office lost its quarters and was installed in the main area of the Belt Building to remain as the hub of a small town without door-to-door mail delivery until a new office was built in 1950.

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Montgomery County, MD

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Being a description of a parcel of land located in Gaithersburg, Maryland, more particularly described as the J. A. Belt property, 227 East Diamond Avenue, bounded as follows:

1. Beginning at a point on the south side of East Diamond Avenue, said point being the common corner of the J. A. Belt property and the Anthony Bonnano property, as recorded in Liber 2838 at Folio 165;
2. thence running with the south line of the East Diamond Avenue, N 86 degrees 45' 00", 35.53 feet, to a point;
3. thence N 12 degrees 07' 00" E, 3.25 feet, to a point;
4. thence S 77 degrees 53' 00" E, 41.10 feet to a point on the west side of South Summit Avenue;
5. thence with the west line of South Summit Avenue, S 12 degrees 07' 00" W, 101.11 feet to a point, said point being the intersection of the west line of South Summit Avenue and the north line of a 15' public alley;
6. thence with the north line of the 15' public alley, N 86 degrees 51' 00" W, 52.35 feet to a point, said point being the common corner of the J. A. Belt/Anthony Bonnano properties and the north line of the 15' public alley;
7. thence with the common line of the Bonnano property and the J. A. Belt property, N 03 degrees 43' 00" W, 9236 feet to the point of beginning.

The described property contains 5769 square feet or 0.13244 acre.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The present property boundaries are proposed in this nomination. More extensive original property was long ago sold-off and commercially developed. The nominated property, 0.13244 acre, comprises the single city lot upon which the resource stands.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

M-21-135

Montgomery County Land Records  
Gaithersburg, Heart of Montgomery County by Centennial Committee, 1978  
Gaithersburg, Maryland, Its Advantages by Lee M. Lipscomb

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.13244 acre  
Quadrangle name Gaithersburg, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	8	3	1	0	3	6	0	4	3	3	4	6	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No. 10.

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen C. Bowers/James Sengstack/Judith Christensen, et al.

organization Historic Preservation Advisory Committee date January 4, 1983

street & number Planning Department, City Hall  
31 South Summit Avenue telephone (301) 948-3220

city or town Gaithersburg state Maryland 20877

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *J. Mittle* date 6-29-84

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
date

Keeper of the National Register  
Attest: date  
Chief of Registration

GAITHERSBURG HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET

ADDRESS 227 E. DIAMOND AVE.  
County: Montgomery  
Gaithersburg

MHT # M-21-135

SURVEY # 073  
LOT -, BLOCK -

LIBER -, FOLIO -

OWNER: E. Diamond Ave. Partnership  
ADDRESS: same  
CITY: same

PRESENT USE: commercial  
ORIGINAL USE: commercial  
BUILDER: J.A. Belt

STYLE: early 20thC. commercial DATE BUILT: 1903 PHYS. COND: excellent

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:

FOUNDATION: brick  
WALL STRUCTURE: Balloon  
WALL COVERING: brick

ROOF CONSTRUCTION:

ROOF STRUCTURE: Wood Truss  
ROOF COVERING: poss. copper sheet  
ROOF STYLE: parapet  
EAVES: -  
CHIMNEYS: center, right edge

STORIES: 2+

BAYS: 4 x 6

APPROX DIMENSION: -

WINDOWS:

TYPE: d.h.s.  
LIGHTS: 1/1  
BAY WINDOWS: -  
SIDE BY SIDES: -  
GABLE TYPES: -

ENTRANCES:

LOCATION: 3rd  
DESCRIPTION: double

THREAT: none

SURROUNDINGS: commercial-SEE NATIONAL  
~~REGISTER FORM~~ REGISTER FORM

M: 21-135

HISTORIC  
DESIGNATION  
APPLICATION  
FORM  
City of Gaithersburg, Maryland

EXHIBIT  
HD-4  
#1  
9/26/83  
HDC

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Historic Designation  
Application No. - HD 4  
Filed March 25, 1983  
Sign Posted September 9, 1983  
Ad Published September 7, 1983  
P.C. Referral Date September 14, 1983  
HDC Public Hearing September 26, 1983  
HDC Decision/Date Approved 11/21/83  
Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

APPLICATION IS HEREBY MADE BY:

Gaithersburg Historic Preservation Advisory Committee

FOR DESIGNATION OF THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED BELOW AS A:

XXX HISTORIC SITE                      HISTORIC RESOURCE                      HISTORIC DISTRICT

1 NAME OF PROPERTY  
Historic Belt Building (M:21-135)  
And/Or Common

2 LOCATION  
Address  
227 East Diamond avenue, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877

PLEASE FURNISH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPERTY(IES)  
PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION:

DISTRICT	SUBDIVISION	NAME CODE	LOT/BLOCK	ACRES/FEET	SUBDIVISION TRACT NAME
9	01		Parcel 15/16*	1591'/7514'	Summit Hall
9					
9					
9					

Continue on separate sheet.

\*Building located on Parcel 16

M:21-135

3 CLASSIFICATION  
(Circle one in each column)

OWNERSHIP		STATUS	PRESENT USE		
Public	Occupied		Agriculture	Military	Commercial
<u>Private</u>	<u>Unoccupied</u>		Educational	Park	Government
Both	Work in progress		Entertainment	Industrial	Transportation
Public Acquisition in Process	Assessible Yes: Restricted		Residence	Museum	Scientific
Being Considered	Yes: Unrestricted No		Other: <u>None</u>		

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY  
 Name: Bruce Hendricks Telephone No. 301/869-3680  
11844 Beekman pl.  
 Street & Number  
Potomac Md. 20854  
 City, Town State Zip

5 LOCATION OR LEGAL DESCRIPTION  
 Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc. Liber #: 5546  
Montgomery County Court House Folio #: 670  
 Street & Number  
Rockville Md. 20850  
 City, Town State Zip

6 IS PROPERTY CURRENTLY ON NATIONAL OR STATE REGISTER? If so, complete.  
 Title  
 Date Federal State County Local  
 Depository for Survey Records  
 City, Town State Zip

7 DESCRIPTION  
 Physical Condition (circle one)  
 Excellent Fair Ruins Unaltered Original Site  
Good Deteriorated Altered Moved

Describe the present and original (if known) exterior physical appearance.

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The Belt Building is a two story brick structure combining both Classical Revival and late Victorian features.

While the sides and rear are relatively plain in appearance, the front facade provides a dramatic mixture of design characteristics that are unique to this area.

The first story is divided into four bays with floor to ceiling display type windows in each. The use of decorative leaded glass above each window adds a distinctive Victorian effect. Three projecting brick columns with 10 recessed courses spaced five rows apart create an illusion of Classical Quoins, a characteristic which contributes much to the overall massiveness of the building.

The second story continues the four bay division with two double and two single width windows. Above each window are radiating arches with projecting keystones of brick. The three projecting columns are continued from the first story, however, at this level the columns change dramatically from the massive design of the first story to a lighter, recessed design. Capping each column at the roof line is a recessed square.

One of the more dramatic features of the front facade is the three part entablature with a cornice of dental molding under a sculptured parapet.

Brick patterns consist of common bonding on the sides and rear with a running bond on the front. There is also a brick water table surrounding the building.

As to the original exterior appearance of this building we can determine from early photographs that it has changed very little from construction in 1903.

8

SIGNIFICANCE

M:21-135

Areas of Significance - check and justify below

Period

Prehistoric	Archeology-prehistoric	Community Planning	Landscape	Religion
1400-1499	Archeology-historic	Conservation	Architecture	Science
1500-1599	Agriculture	Economics	Law	Sculpture
1600-1699	Architecture	Education	Literature	Social/Humanitarian
1700-1799	Art	Engineering	Military	Theater
1800-1899	Commerce	Exploration/ Settlement	Music	Transportation
1900-	Communications	Industry	Philosophy	Other (specify)
			Politics/ Government	

Specific Dates  
Construction- 1903

Builder/Architect  
Unknown

Statement of Significance

The Belt Building is being recommended for historic designation based on its unique architecture and the significant contributions of the original owner, John A. Belt, to Gaithersburg's commerce and civic growth.

Architecturally, the present structure which was constructed in 1903 remains almost totally in its original state. Typical of this period of architectural change and experimentation, the Belt building combines a variety of unique design characteristics.

Victorian features most notable are the front window with a segmental arch and the use of leaded decorative glass throughout.

John A. Belt, the original owner of the structure, was a very enterprising, progressive merchant who operated what was reported in 1891 to be the largest mercantile house in Montgomery County. Mr. Belt's activities as a merchant in Gaithersburg were noted as early as 1879 and extended into the early 1900's. In addition to his success in business, several historic sources indicate that he was a public spirited individual who became a significant force in the development of the town. Reportedly, he was instrumental in proposing the boundary change of 1888 which nearly doubled the area of the town; and from 1890 to 1894 he served on the Board of Commissioners.

(Reference Gaithersburg Zoning Ordinance Article XII, Section 24-225 (1) a and c, and (2) a, e, and f.)

9 SURROUNDING LAND USES

North \_\_\_\_\_  
East \_\_\_\_\_  
South \_\_\_\_\_ Commercial - "Olde Towne"  
West \_\_\_\_\_

10 INFORMATION SOURCES

Montgomery County Land Records  
Gaithersburg, Heart of Montgomery County by Centennial Committee  
Montgomery County Sentinel  
Gaithersburg, Maryland, It's Advantages by Lee M. Lipscomb  
American Architecture-A Field Guide by Carole Rifkind

11 ATTACHMENTS

Exterior Black and White Views  
Two (2) Location Maps - scale 1" = 200'

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
 21 STATE CIRCLE  
 SHAW HOUSE  
 ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET  
 Individual Structure Survey Form

SURVEY NUMBER:	M: 21 - 135
NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER:	
UTM REFERENCES:	Zone/Easting/Northing
U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP:	
PRESENT FORMAL NAME:	
ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME:	
PRESENT USE:	empty
ORIGINAL USE:	
ARCHITECT/ENGINEER:	
BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:	
PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE:	
Excellent ( )	Good ( )
Fair ( )	Poor: ( )
THEME:	
STYLE:	
DATE BUILT:	1903

COUNTY:		
TOWN:		
LOCATION:		
COMMON NAME:	B.4 Bldg	
FUNCTIONAL TYPE:		
OWNER:		
ADDRESS:	22 - Diamond Ave.	
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:		
Yes ( )	No ( )	Restricted ( )
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:		
Local ( )	State ( )	National ( )

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Structural System

1. Foundation: Stone ( ) Brick (X) Concrete ( ) Concrete Block ( )
2. Wall Structure
  - A. Wood Frame: Post and Beam ( ) Balloon ( )
  - B. Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick (X) Stone ( ) Concrete ( ) Concrete Block ( )
  - C. Iron ( ) D. Steel ( ) E. Other:
3. Wall Covering: Clapboard ( ) Board and Batten ( ) Wood Shingle ( ) Shiplap ( ) Novelty ( ) Stucco ( ) Sheet Metal ( ) Aluminum ( ) Asphalt Shingle ( ) Brick Veneer ( ) Stone Veneer ( ) Bonding Pattern: *brick - common* Other:
4. Roof Structure *front*
  - A. Truss: Wood ( ) Iron ( ) Steel ( ) Concrete ( )
  - B. Other:
5. Roof Covering: Slate ( ) Wood Shingle ( ) Asphalt Shingle ( ) Sheet Metal ( ) Built Up ( ) Rolled ( ) Tile ( ) Other:
6. Engineering Structure: *let*
7. Other: *1st floor*

Appendages: Porches ( ) Towers ( ) Cupolas ( ) Dormers ( ) Chimneys (2) Sheds ( ) Ells ( ) Wings ( ) Other:

Roof Style: Gable ( ) Hip ( ) Shed ( ) Flat ( ) Mansard ( ) Gambrel ( ) Jerkinhead ( ) Saw Tooth ( ) With Monitor ( ) With Bellcast ( ) With Parapet (X) With False Front ( ) Other:

Number of Stories: 2  
 Number of Bays: 4  
 Approximate Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_

Entrance Location: front side

THREAT TO STRUCTURE:
No Threat ( ) Zoning ( ) Roads ( )
Development ( ) Deterioration ( )
Alteration ( ) Other:

LOCAL ATTITUDES:
Positive ( ) Negative ( )
Mixed ( ) Other:

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

M:21-135

Water table around bldg (C)(P)  
front - 6 leaded glass panes above front entrance w recessed arch at top  
across and panels

left - 5 panel door  
[ ] - above window & door  
arches with center keystone above all windows

brick - additions  
arches - flat, no keystone, made with header brick (2 rows) partially

right - top row - 6 windows - long 1/1  
2nd row - 6 square windows

RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

arch - flat with center keystone; one row of header brick beneath windows

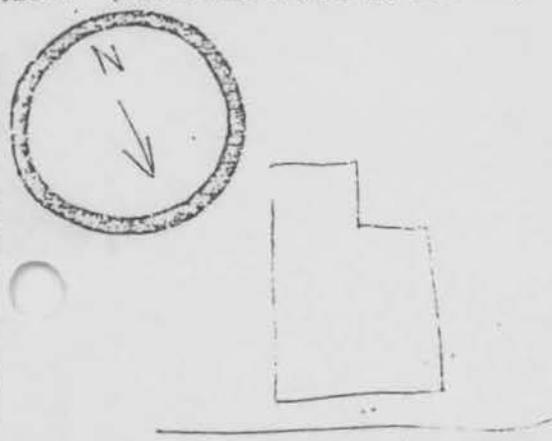
brick veneer columns - 1st floor; 2nd floor - recessed panel in column

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

top - parapet - metal  
brick  
round level - circle kind in header brick

REFERENCES:

MAP: (Indicate North In Circle)



SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

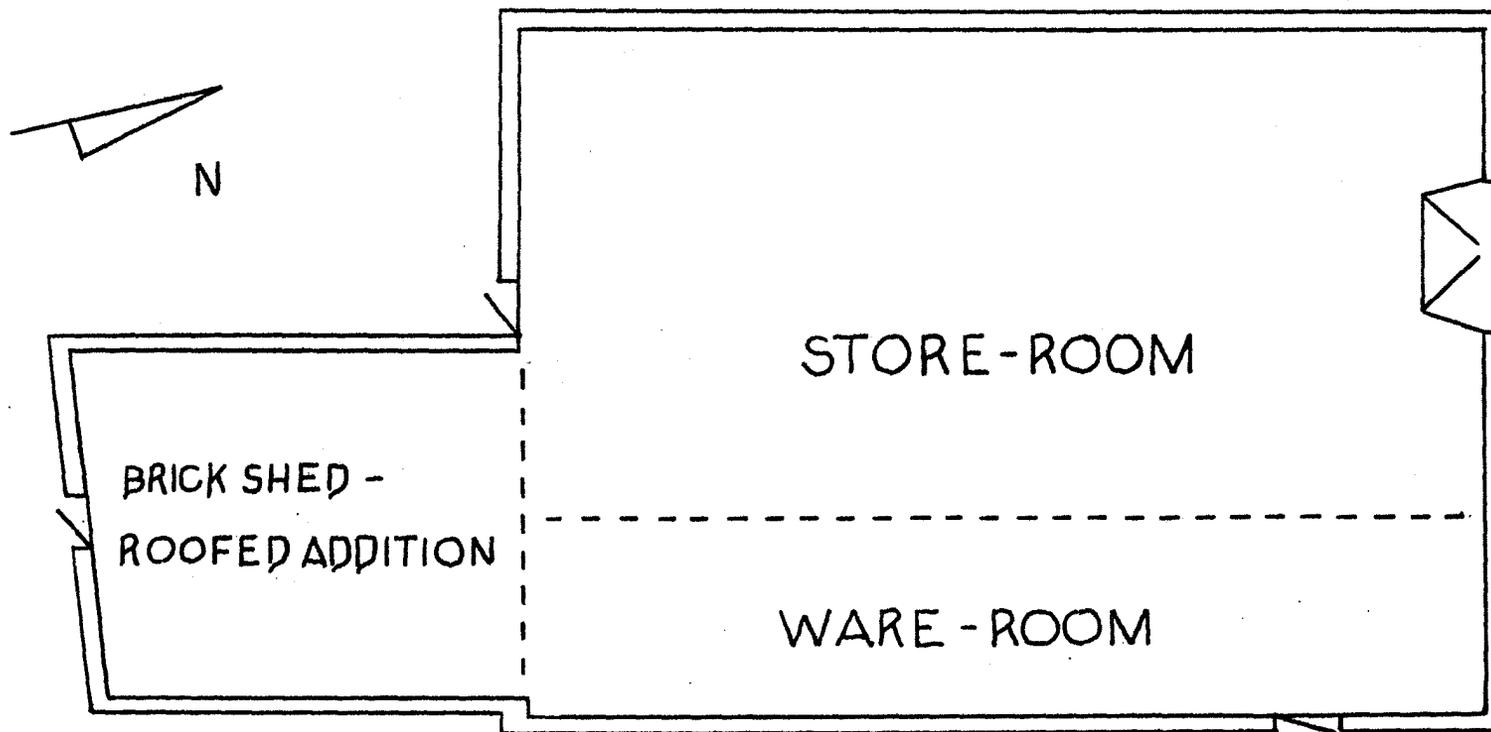
- Open Lane ( ) Woodland ( ) Scattered Buildings ( )
- Moderately Built Up ( ) Densely Built Up ( )
- Residential ( ) Commercial ( )
- Agricultural ( ) Industrial ( )
- Roadside Strip Development ( )
- Other:

RECORDED BY:

ORGANIZATION:

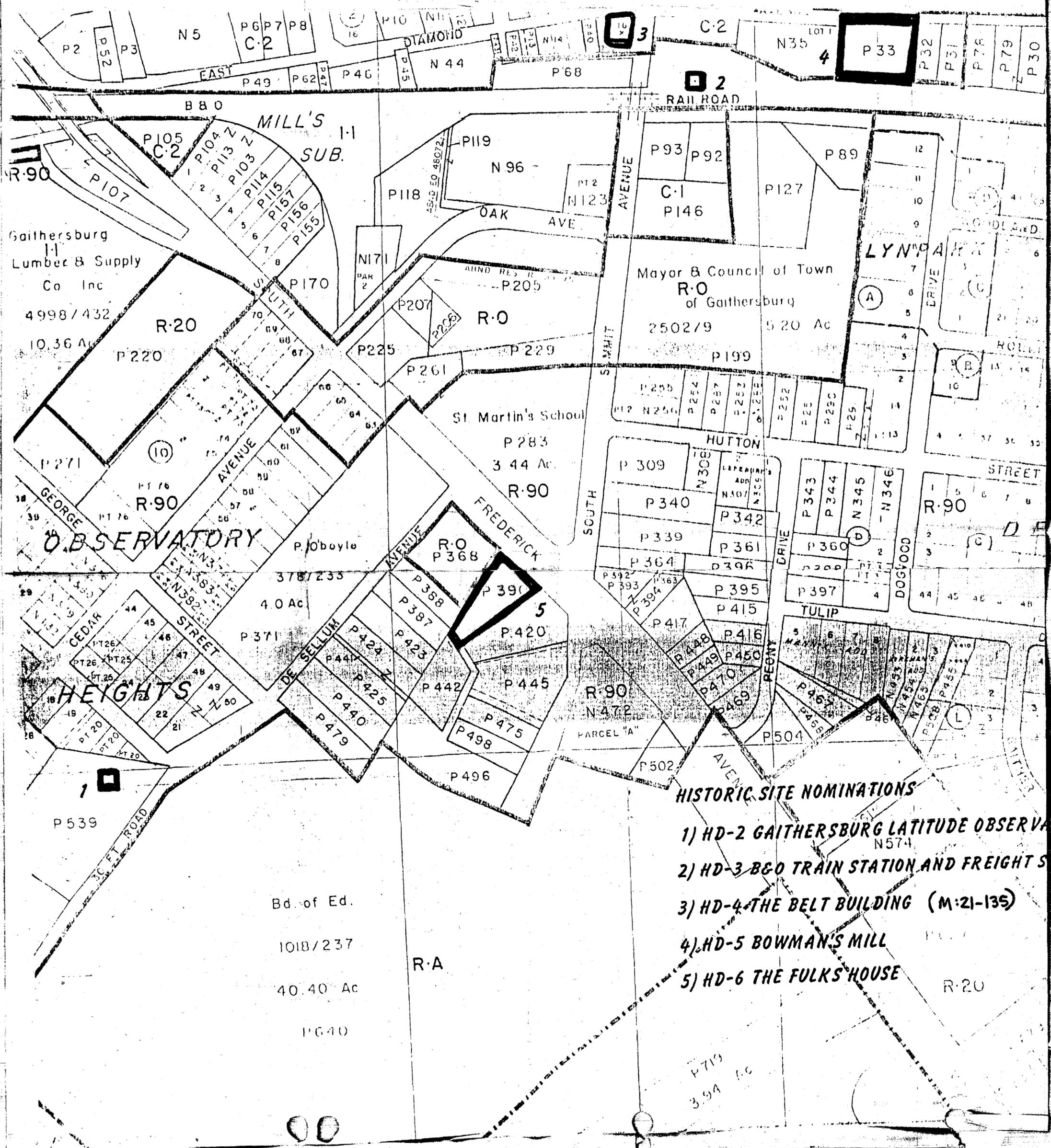
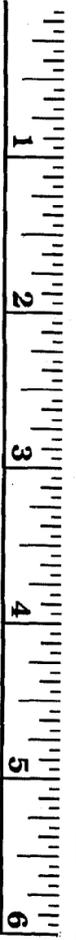
DATE RECORDED:

# THE J A BELT BUILDING



3/32" = 1'

M:21-135



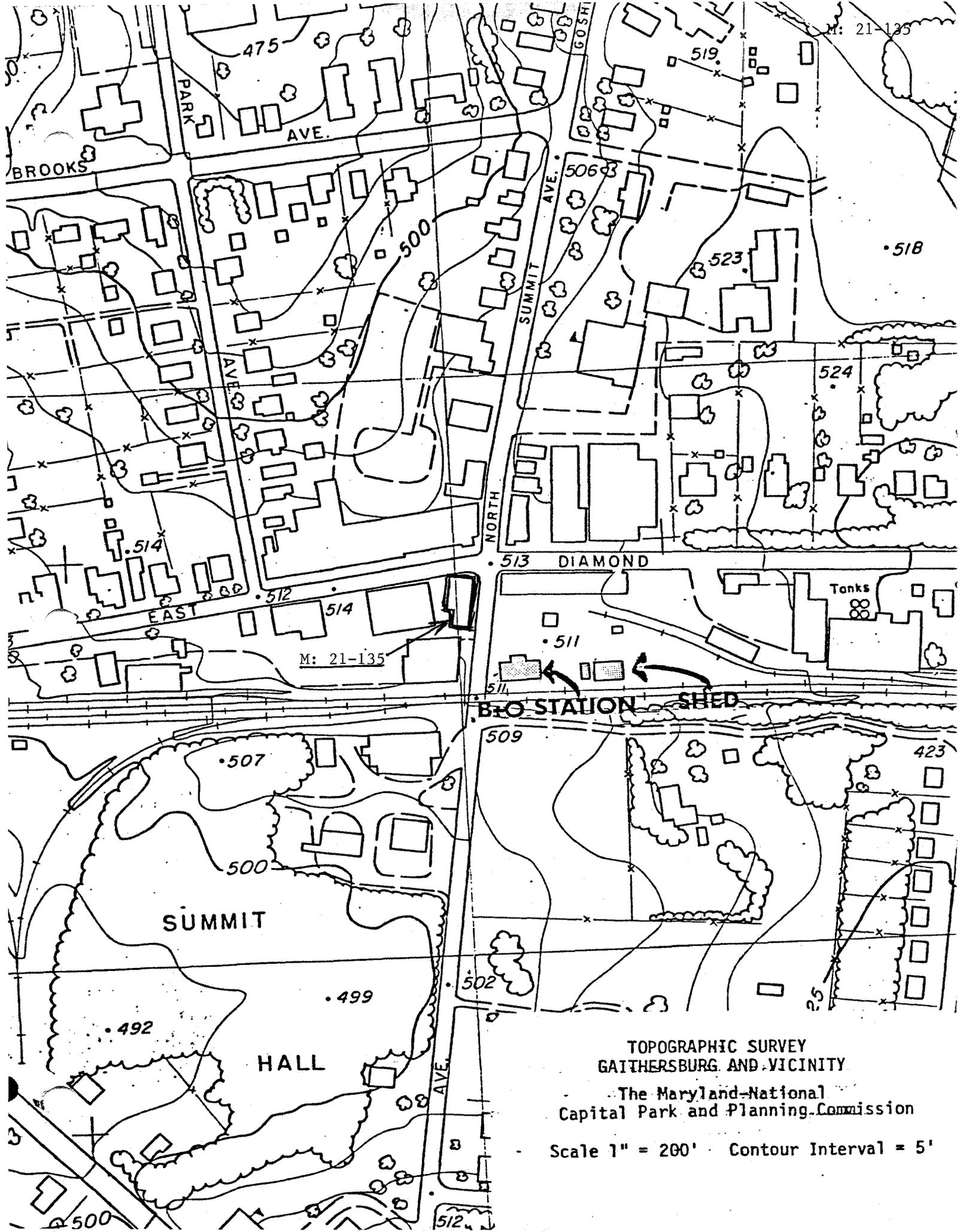
- HISTORIC SITE NOMINATIONS**
- 1) HD-2 GAITHERSBURG LATITUDE OBSERVATORY
  - 2) HD-3 B&O TRAIN STATION AND FREIGHT STATION
  - 3) HD-4 THE BELT BUILDING (M:21-135)
  - 4) HD-5 BOWMAN'S MILL
  - 5) HD-6 THE FULKS HOUSE

Bd. of Ed.  
1018/237  
40.40 Ac  
PG40

R-A

R-20

P719  
3.94 Ac



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475

519

PARK  
AVE.

AVE.

GOSHAWK  
AVE.

506

• 518

523

524

NORTH  
SUMMIT  
AVE.

• 513 DIAMOND

EAST  
AVE.

• 512

514

Tanks

M: 21-135

• 511

BIO STATION SHED

509

• 507

423

500

SUMMIT

• 499

• 502

• 492

HALL

AVE.

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY  
GAITHERSBURG AND VICINITY

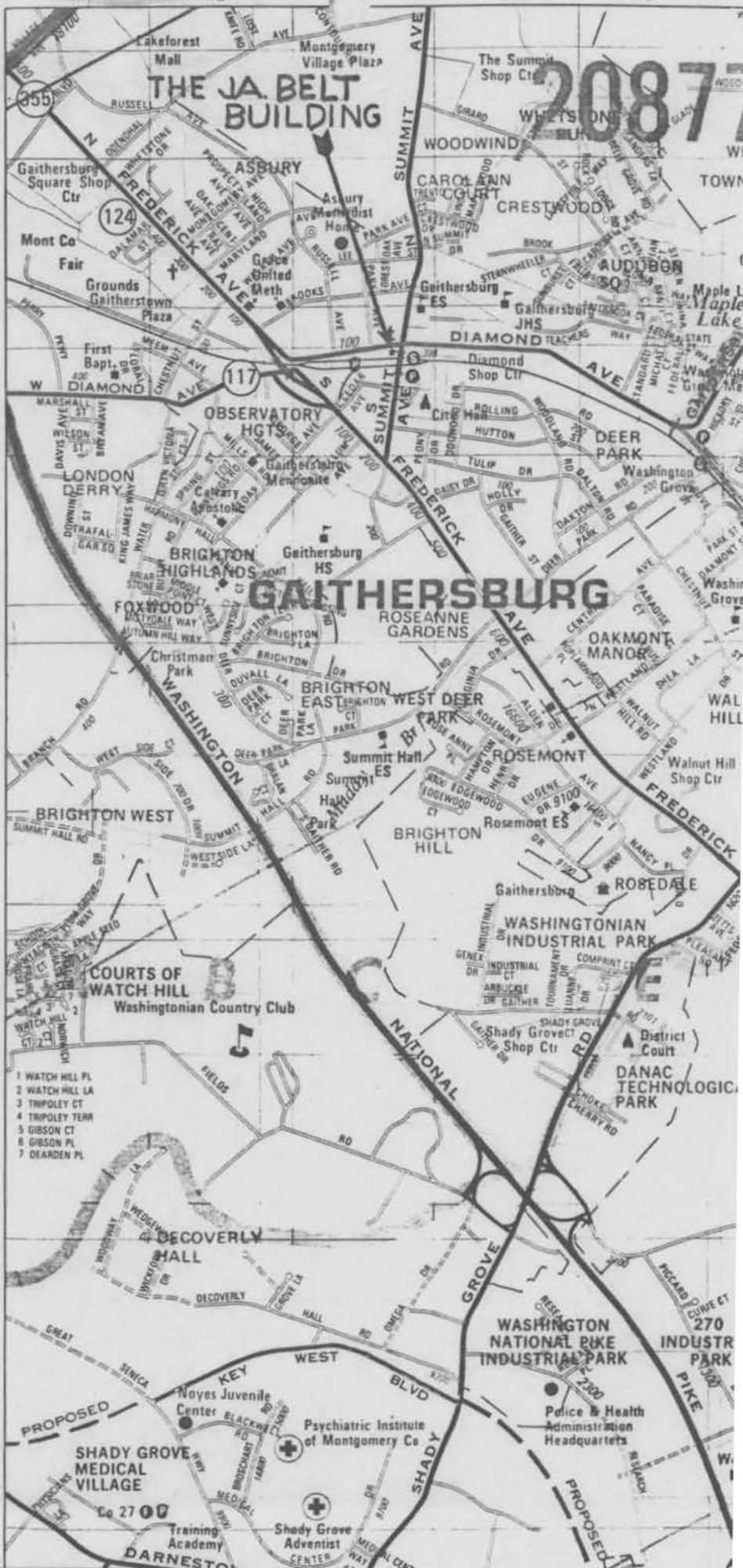
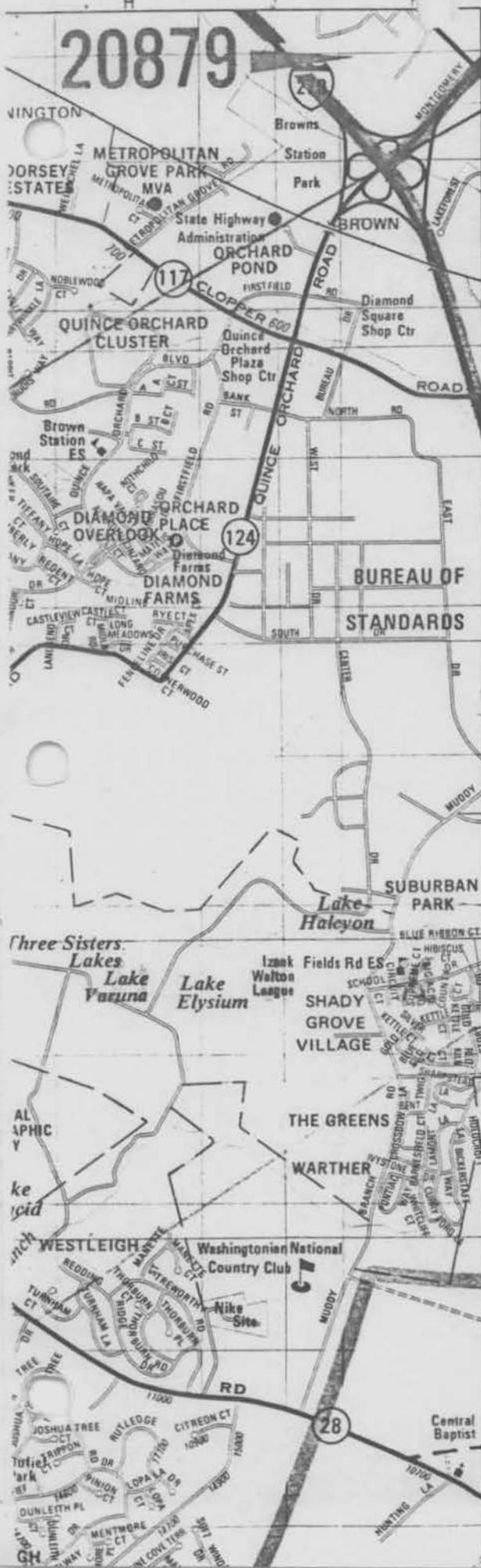
The Maryland-National  
Capital Park and Planning Commission

Scale 1" = 200' Contour Interval = 5'

500

512

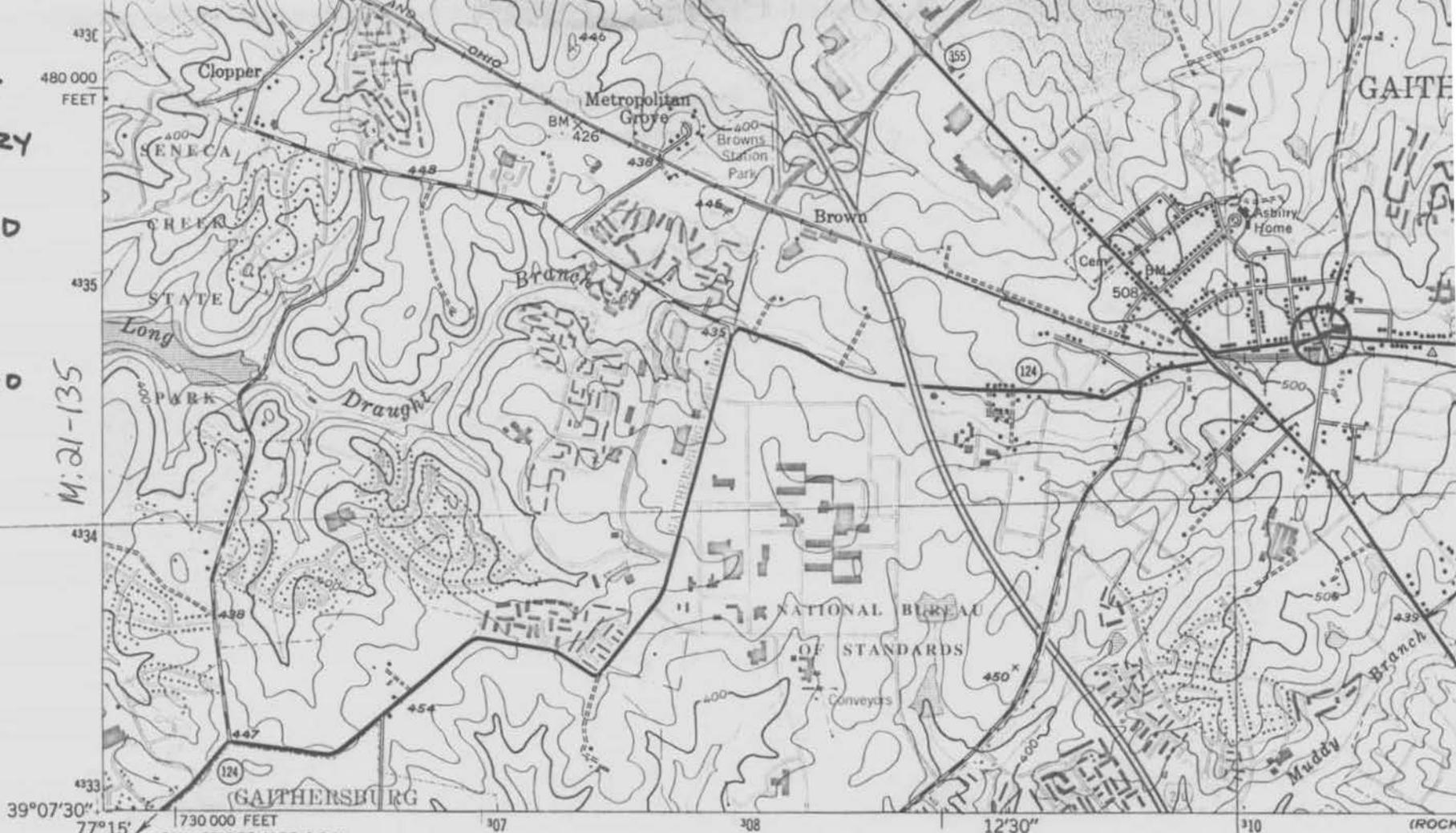
20879



BELT, J.A.,  
BUILDING  
MONTGOMERY  
COUNTY,  
MARYLAND

18-310360-  
4334640

M. 21-135



(SENECA)  
5562 III SE

730 000 FEET  
QUINCE ORCHARD 0.5 MI.  
Mapped by U. S. Forest Service  
Edited and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USC&GS, WSSD, and USGS

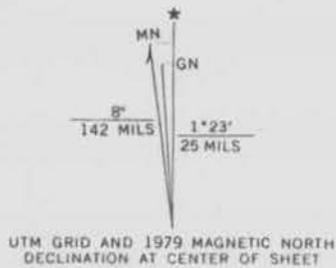
Topography from aerial photographs by KEK plotter 1944  
Aerial photographs taken 1943. Field check 1945

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 8 meters south and  
25 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

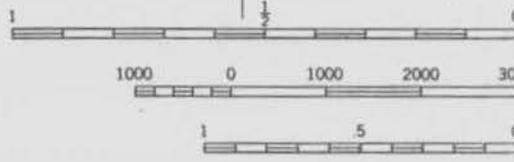
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map

Area covered by dashed light-purple pattern is subject to control  
inundation



UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

ROCKVILLE 3.5 MI.  
WASHINGTON, D. C. (WHITE HOUSE) 20 MI.



CONTOUR INTERVAL  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

M:21-135

SPENCER-BAYNE, N. Y.  
EXHIBIT  
HD-4  
#4  
9/26/83  
HDC



M:21-135





1. The J. A. Belt Building
2. 227 East Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland
3. James Sengstack
4. 05 December 1983
5. Gaithersburg City Hall
6. Northwestern elevation, photographer facing southeast
7. 2/2

M: 21-135



1. The J. A. Belt Building
2. 227 East Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland
3. James Sengstack
4. 05 December 1983
5. Gaithersburg City Hall
6. Northern elevation, photographer facing south
7. 2/2

*M: 21-135*



1. The J. A. Belt Building
2. 227 East Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland
3. Trudy Walton
4. 09 January 1984
5. Gaithersburg City Hall
6. Leaded Glass Window
7. 1/2

*M, 21-135*



1. The J. A. Belt Building
2. 227 East Diamond Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland
3. Trudy Walton
4. 09 January 1984
5. Gaithersburg City Hall
6. Interior of Belt Building
7. 2/2

*M: 21-135*



BELT BUILDING

Montgomery County, Maryland

Photo: Trudy Walton

Neg loc: City Hall, Gaithersburg, MD

27 February 1984

northeast elevation of building

1/2

M: 21-135



BELT BUILDING

Montgomery County, Maryland

Photo: Unknown, courtesy of Montgomery  
County Historical Society

Neg loc: City Hall, Gaithersburg, MD  
c.1910

northeast elevation of building

2/2

M: 21-135



BELT BUILDING

Montgomery County, Maryland

Photo: Unknown, courtesy of Montgomery  
County Historical Society

Neg loc: City Hall, Gaithersburg, MD

Unknown

northeast elevation of building

2/2

M: 21-135