

Site: M:26/24/1

Johnson-Clarke House

Built: ca. 1913

600 Falls Road

Private

Three generations of one extended family, descended from Ann Willson, a free black woman of the mid-19th century, built a succession of vernacular structures in this small residential community. The 2-1/2 story frame and stucco Johnson-Clarke house replaced the original house on this site about 1913. The house has been owned by the Samuel Clarke family for 40 years, during which time historian Nina Clarke has written several books on Montgomery County black history and culture.

Maryland Historical Trust

State Historic Sites Inventory Form

 DOE yes no
 NR yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

 historic The Johnson / Clarke House

and/or common

2. Location

 street & number 600 Falls Road not for publication

 city, town Rockville vicinity of congressional district 8

 state Maryland county Montgomery (RV Planning Area 4)

3. Classification

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

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

 name Mr. and Mrs. Samuel E. Clarke

 street & number 600 Falls Road telephone no.: 762-2914

 city, town Rockville state and zip code Maryland 20850

5. Location of Legal Description

 courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery Co. Land Records liber 1009

 street & number Montgomery Co. Courthouse folio 241

 city, town Rockville state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

 title None
 federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Survey No. M:26/24/1

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

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

The subject house faces north on Falls Road sited on a large lot shielded from traffic by a tall privet hedge. The house is surrounded by tall old cedar trees, with azaleas and shrubs softening the foundation line. The generous lawn is bordered with shrubs, dogwoods, lilacs and perennial flower beds, all shaded by mature trees. A large vegetable garden extends to the rear. Access is by a lane from Falls Road on the east property line to a driveway, parking apron, and a frame one-car front gable garage located to the rear southeast of the house. A well is at the southeast corner of the house, now covered by a modern frame and cinderblock gazebo.

This side gable frame and stucco 2-1/2 story house has a small one room deep rectangular front section with a rear wing, forming an L-shaped plan. The side and rear wing gabled roof is covered with composition shingles and the structure sits on a brick foundation parged with cement. There is one central brick chimney located on the front section.

Often built by large landholders for tenant farmers or farm hands, this type of house is plain and simply constructed. The original one acre improved lot, presumably with house, was purchased in 1845 by a free black woman who occupied the site with her family. No records or photographs from this period are known and the present structure, now stuccoed with parged foundation, plain window and door surrounds, 2/2 windows front and 6/6 rear, offers no visible evidence of a pre-1845 building. In scale, plan, and trim, the house is consistent with a tenant house dating from the latter half of the 19th century.

The three-bay north (front) facade has a one story front porch, now partially enclosed. There are three evenly spaced windows on the second story, 2/2 with louvered wood shutters as are most windows. The first story has a modern addition containing a three part picture window (large central light flanked by 1/1 double hung sash windows) created by enclosing the east bay of the front porch. A modern exterior door is in the center and a window in the west bay. The remaining open porch has a raised cement floor accessed by 2 cement steps, and two wrought iron trellis porch supporting the full-width low-hipped roof.

The two-bay east facade consists of the gable end of the front section and the rear wing. The front section has a small unshuttered four light rectangular window in the gable, and one window first and second story. The wing also has one window first and second story and a three light cellar window in the foundation.

continued on attachment 7.1

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The Johnson / Clarke House
Attachment 7.1

The south (rear) facade has an irregular massing created by two lean to additions to the west side of the end gabled wing, a one story enclosed porch, and the front house section. The front house section has one 2/2 window on the second story. The gable-end wing has one 6/6 window on the second story. Its first story enclosed porch has one 6/6 window on the enclosed stuccoed west half, and three bays of modern jalousie windows on the east. The east side of the porch has one modern jalousie exterior door and one bay of jalousie windows. There is a first story lean-to addition on the wing's west side with one 2/2 window.

The west facade consists of the one-bay front section gabled end, and the rear wing with additions. The front section has a small unshuttered 4 light window in the gable and 2/2 shuttered windows on each story. The rear wing has a second story shed-roofed lean-to addition with one 6/6 window extending onto the first floor porch roof. The first story addition has a 2/2 window and is fronted by a canopy consisting of a shed roof supported by three wrought iron porch supports over a cement pad.

Well:

Although the water has been tested and found potable, the old well at the southeast corner of the house is used by the present owner for the garden only. Hand-dug and brick lined, it is now enclosed on three sides by a pierced cinder block half wall and covered by a hipped roof on four posts in a gazebo fashion. The hinged floor over the ground level well opening is constructed of heavy planks and secured for safety.

8. Significance

Survey No. M:26/24/1

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates ca. 1913 **Builder/Architect** _____ **local history** _____

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Significance

Three generations of one extended family, descended from a free black woman of the mid-19th century, built a succession of vernacular structures in this small community. The Johnson-Clarke house replaced the original house on this spot. For the last forty years it has been the home of the Samuel E. Clarke family. Nina Clarke is a noted historian whose books have chronicled Montgomery County black history and culture.

History and Support

In 1845, Jesse Leech (sic) sold one acre of land on the east side of Falls Road to Ann Willson, "A free coloured woman", for \$25.00. 1/ The price reflects the existence of the house originally located on this site. Ann Willson was listed as age 40 in the 1850 Census, one of 1,311 free blacks in Montgomery County at that time. At some unknown date she married a Mr. Davis and acquired the several Davis step-children whose names appeared in her Will and land transactions. 2/

Additional acreage was purchased by the family, parts of "Exchange and New Exchange" and "Sweepstakes" which abutted the east side of the small settlement of blacks. The 1865 Martinet & Bond Map shows five structures at this site, identified as "col'd". In the Tax Assessment records for 1866, Ann (Willson) Davis and her step-daughter Elizabeth Davis owned houses valued at \$150 each. The same year niece Eliza Ann Davis married William H. Johnson. 3/ Ann Davis deeded a quarter-acre lot to the couple in 1871.

Ann Davis wrote her Will under the name of Ann Willson before her death in 1879. She made bequests of quilts and personal property to her step-children and grandchildren. She devised her "house and lot near Rockville...it being the same purchased by me of Jesse Leach..." to her step-son William Davis. The Hopkins Atlas of 1879 identifies one of the Davis houses (B. Davis), but two other houses are not identified.

continued on attachment 8.1

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The Johnson / Clarke House

Attachment 8.1

By the turn of the century, several acres of property had been purchased by Eliza and William Johnson. 4/ "Mr. Billy" Johnson is remembered as a powerful presence in the community. He was employed as a handyman at the Farmers Bank in Rockville, and was the landlord of several of the houses. 5/ Fourteen acres of the "Sweepstakes" land were acquired by the white carpenter/undertaker William R. Pumphrey in 1911 from one member of the Johnson family; this transfer may have been partly in exchange for the construction of the subject house, erected ca. 1913 on the site of the pre-1845 Ann Willson house. 6/

Although this area on the outskirts of Rockville was still one of large farms and rural character, the land on two sides of the tiny community had been platted into large lots for the unsuccessful "Rockville Heights" subdivision in 1890. Across Falls Road lay the historic Beall estate, "Rose Hill". One of the earliest occupants of the new Johnson House was the tenant farmer family of Melvin Jackson, who rented the subject house from 1918 to 1924. Ethel Jackson Shelton remembers the house, and the settlement from those days. 7/ Like most vernacular houses of the period (both black and white), it lacked indoor plumbing, electricity and running water. Its three-bay front facade was adorned by a full width porch, but otherwise it was a modest, utilitarian shelter.

Eliza Johnson died in 1917 and was buried in Haiti Cemetery. By her will, "Mr. Billy" received life interest in the house, which was then to pass to her four daughters; Bessie (Mrs. Vernon Hill), Eulie Carroll, Cora (Mrs. Joseph Meadows) and Lilian Finley. 8/ Bessie Hill already occupied the house located directly behind the Johnson-Clarke house and made a home for her father there, until his death in 1924.

Several of the Johnson children and grandchildren had scattered to other states or different Rockville neighborhoods. Willson Ulyssus Johnson was living in Lincoln Park when he made his Will in 1924. The inventory of his personal estate reflects the relative prosperity and status of this family, including as it did such items as an automobile, furniture, two stoves, a refrigerator, and a gramophone (valued at \$25). 9/

Lilian Finley (Hairston) purchased the shares of the estate from her sisters, taking title to the house and its nearly one acre of land in 1928. She modernized the house to include necessary plumbing, electricity, and central heating. In 1946 she sold the property to its present owners, Samuel and Nina Clarke. 10/ Mr. Clarke is an employee of the Department of Defense. Nina Honemond Clarke is the daughter-in-law of pioneer black educator Noah Clarke, and taught for many years in segregated and integrated schools in Montgomery County. Since her retirement, Mrs. Clarke has devoted 10 years to researching and writing books and articles on black culture, including histories of both the black churches and black public schools of Montgomery County. 11/

continued on attachment 8.2

The Clarkes have altered and enlarged the house, incorporating half the front porch to extend the living room, and enclosing the back porch. This house is in keeping with the 150 year history of this stable black community strengthened by kinship ties and shared cultural memories.

Footnotes:

1. Montgomery County Land Records, JGH 2/151, made 1845, recorded 1853. Jesse Leach was a merchant, newspaper publisher, and Deacon in the Baptist Church of Rockville.
2. Ann Willson may have been the widow of George Willson who was listed with her in the 1850 Census, and in 1853 was listed as owner of an improved lot valued at \$80. The name Davis is assumed through the step-children, who were ex-slaves according to the 1867-68 Census of ex-slaves and former owners. If her husband were a slave at the time of their marriage, the union would not have been recognized in legal or civil records. This may account for her continued use of the Willson name. See copy of her Will, attachment 8.3.
3. The Davis-Johnson genealogy has been pieced together from available marriage and burial records, Land and Will records, and interviews with descendants of the families.
4. The original "Ann Willson" house passed from William Davis to his son John T. Davis, and was purchased by Eliza Johnson in 1901. The Nugent House at 602 Falls Road was constructed on land deeded by Eliza to the Nugents in 1909.
5. Interviews with Sharyn Duffin and Ethel Shelton (February, 1986).
6. The 1917 Deets & Maddox Real Estate Atlas shows W. R. Pumphrey land received from Annie Johnson in 1911. The Tax Assessment office documents the appearance of a new house here in 1913.
7. Mr. Jackson worked at "Rose Hill" and moved to a tenant house on that farm after the death of "Mr. Billy" and the division of the estate.
8. Eliza Ann Johnson Will at HCA 19/246 dated 1915, probated 1917.
9. Willson Ulyssus Johnson Will at PEW 2/102 (1924). He also owned the house and lots at Block 2, lots 1 and 2 of Lincoln Park.
10. Land Records, op. cit., 1009/241 (1946) and interview with Nina Clarke.
11. Montgomery County Story, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1980); and History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County Maryland, 1872-1961, with Lillian Brown. (1978) and History of the Nineteenth Century Black Churches of Maryland and Washington, D.C. (1983).

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Montgomery County Land and Will Records. Montgomery County Historical Society collection of census, marriage, and cemetery records. Maps and Plats, 1865, 1879, 1917, 1949; Interviews with Mrs. Shelton, Ms. Duffin and Mrs. Clarke.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .70 acre

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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| A | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
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| B | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

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| G | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
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| H | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|

Verbal boundary description and justification

Located on the east side of Falls Road.

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

| | | | |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|

| | | | |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| name/title | Anne Cissel | Judy Christensen, Arch. Description |
| organization | Peerless Rockville | date February 1986 |
| street & number | P.O. Box 4262 | telephone 762-0096 |
| city or town | Rockville | state Maryland 20850 |

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
 Shaw House
 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 269-2438

1982

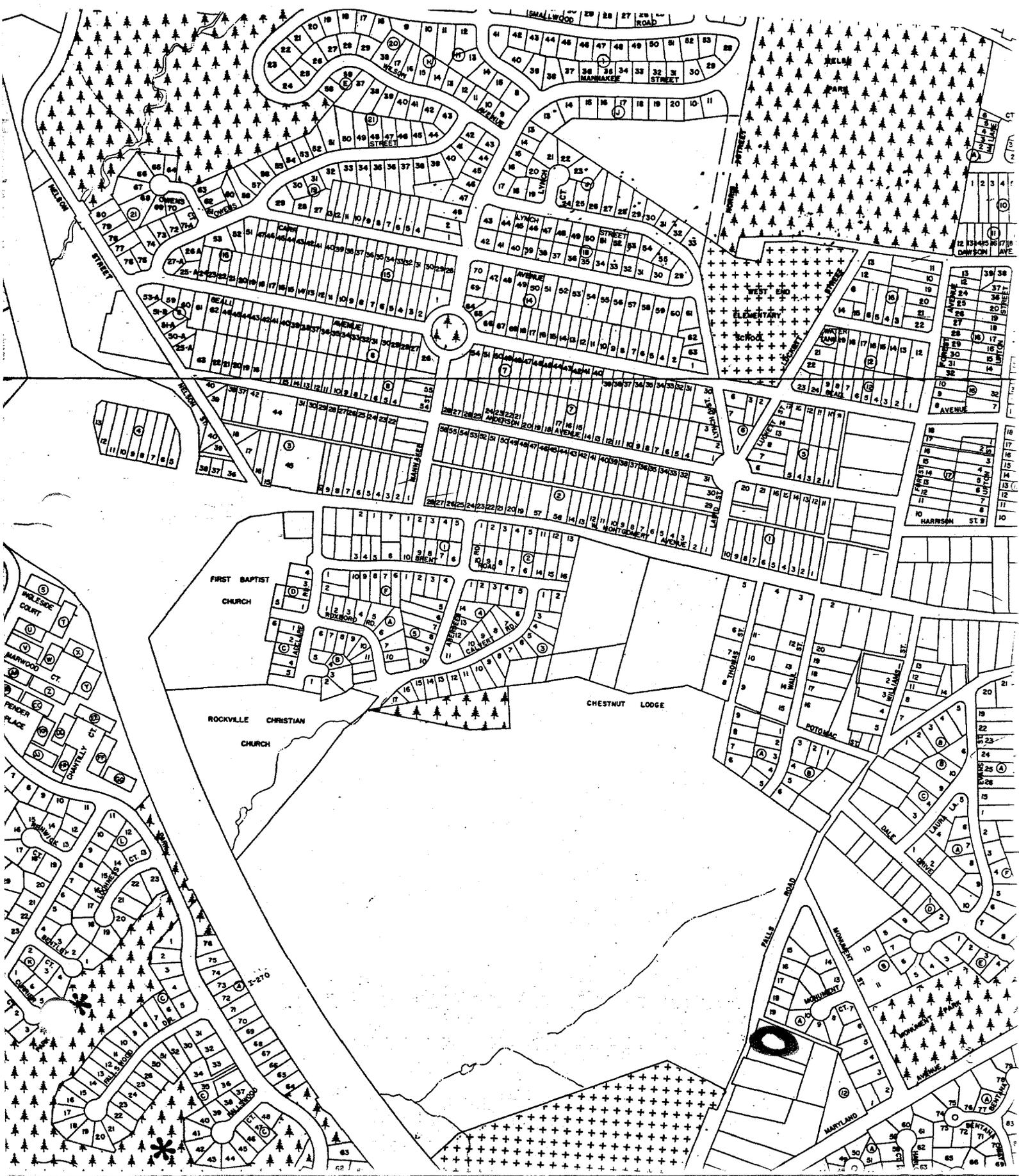
City of Rockville scale: 1" = 600'

M:26/24/1

4

Johnson/Clarke House

600 Falls Road





RICHARD H. ANDREWS
424-8282
1608 FARRAGUT AVE.
ROCKVILLE, MD 20851

06861707

M: 26/24/1
Great Falls Rd.
Black Community
Johnson - Clarke House
600 Falls Rd. - Rockvt
5-86



RICHARD H. ANDREWS
424-6282
1608 FARRAGUT AVE.
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06861709

M: 26/24/1
Great Falls Rd.
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