NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bagby Furniture Company Building

other names/site number Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory No. B-1011

2. Location

street & number 509 South Exeter Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Baltimore ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 9-18-98

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
☐ entered in the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.		
☐ determined eligible for the National Register ☐ See continuation sheet.		
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.		
☐ removed from the National Register.		
☐ other, (explain:)		

Bagby Furniture Company Building
Name of Property

Baltimore City, Maryland
County and State

B-1011

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [X] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	2	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing site
COMMERCE/TRADE: distribution facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: industrial/warehouse building

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
roof N/A
other N/A

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☒ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1902-1947

Significant Dates

1902, 1907

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

William Hugh Bagby

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibilography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository:

Bagby Furniture Company Building
Name of Property

Baltim Maryland
County a. State

B-1011

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References Baltimore East, MD quad
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	362000	4349390
2			
3			
4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird

organization Betty Bird & Associates date April 1998

street & number 2607 24th Street, NW, Suite 3 telephone 202-588-9033 202-588-9059 (fax)

city or town Washington, District of Columbia state N/A zip code 20008

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Skylar Development LLC

street & number 519 N. Charles Street telephone 410-332-1352

city or town Baltimore state Maryland zip code 21201

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nomina properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to o a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for review instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any a of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Bagby Furniture Company Building is a 4 story, U-shaped, brick factory building comprised of three sections constructed between 1902 and 1907. Its site occupies the northeast corner of the intersection of Fleet and Exeter Streets in the Little Italy neighborhood of Baltimore. The Bagby Building has a shallow gable roof. Brick architectural detailing includes piers, segmental and jack arches above openings, a corbelled watertable, and a corbelled cornice. The building was modernized with new windows and 1st floor office space in 1950. A non-contributing concrete block addition was added to the northeastern portion of the building in 1962. Two small structures that housed the dry kiln and lumber storage are located along the eastern edge of the property. Because of numerous alterations, these two minor structures no longer retain sufficient integrity to contribute to the significance of the resource. Despite changes, however, the Bagby Furniture Company Building retains its early 20th century architectural character and possesses sufficient integrity to convey its historic associations.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Bagby Furniture Company Building, constructed from 1902 to 1907, occupies a site encompassing almost one third of a city block. The brick building, situated at the corner of Exeter and Fleet Streets in the Little Italy neighborhood of Baltimore, has a rectangular footprint with a 190 ft. frontage facing west onto Exeter and a 112 ft. frontage facing south onto Fleet. The north facade faces a taller 6 story brick building and its parking lot across a narrow alley. Low-scale late 20th century structures housing the Koldkiss Corporation are built up to the eastern property line of the Bagby Company site and abut the concrete block addition and secondary buildings on the eastern portion of the site. In 1962, a 2 story concrete block addition was constructed against the northeast portion of the Bagby Furniture Company Building. A 1 story hollow clay tile structure that housed the dry kiln adjoins the south wall of the concrete block addition. A 1 story dilapidated structure sheathed in corrugated metal, formerly used for lumber storage, is connected to the south wall of the dry kiln structure. A narrow loading area opens off Fleet Street and extends to the south wall of the 1962 concrete block addition between the Bagby Furniture Company Building and its outbuildings.

The Bagby Furniture Company Building, which was constructed in three stages from 1902 to 1907, has the appearance of a single, large building. The four-story brick structure has 9 bays along Exeter Street (west) and 7 bays along Fleet Street (south). The construction stages of the Bagby Building can be distinguished on the exterior by fire walls that divide the building into its three component sections. The three components form a U-shaped mass with the center of the U on the center of the east side of the building. The interior of the U is occupied by a 1-1/2 story boiler house, creating the Bagby Furniture Company Building's rectangular footprint. The Bagby Company denoted the three components of the building as "Building A," "Building B," and "Building C." On the south, Building A (1902) at the corner of Fleet and Exeter is 4 bays (west) by 7 bays (south) wide. On the north, Building C (1907) extends 3 bays south from the alley. Building B (1902) is at the center of the structure. Shallower than Building A and Building C, Building B provides the center notch resulting in the U shaped, 4-story mass that accommodates the 1-1/2 story boiler house.

The Bagby Furniture Company Building features a brick watertable at the basement level and has a shallow gable roof with gables situated on the north and south facades. The watertable on Building A is corbelled. Piers demarcating bays extend up from the watertable to the corbelled brick cornice. Windows within graduated openings under segmental arches are placed within the recessed wall plane between the piers. Basement windows in Building A are surmounted by jack arches. Bays vary in width, housing one to three openings. A large ca. 1970s painted ribbon sign incorporates "Bagby Furniture" within a rainbow band extending around the south and west facades of the building between the 3rd and 4th floor level. A smaller, older black and white sign is visible on the east wall of Building C between the 3rd and 4th floors. A recent, back-lit plastic sign projects over the pedestrian entry at the center of the west facade.

A 1-1/2 story brick boiler house and a narrow corridor leading to Building B occupy the center of the U on the east side of the Bagby Building. The floor level of the boiler house is approximately 5 ft. below grade. The boiler house is topped with a hipped roof of corrugated tin supported by metal trusses. The corridor leading into Building B was formed by roofing over the space between the boiler house and Building A and constructing a ramp between the two sections. A large stack set against the south wall of Building C rises from the boiler house.

Loading entrances to the building predominate over pedestrian entry. A single door at the north end of Building A on Exeter Street (west) provides the only pedestrian entrance from the street. This entrance has a frame, pseudo-Gibbs surround that dates to the latter half of the 20th century. A second pedestrian entrance described in the paragraph above is located on the east facade of Building B, south of the boiler house. (A similar entrance to the east facade of Building C can be found within the 1962 concrete block addition.) There is a garage entrance at the north end of the west facade in Building C, a loading bay on the north facade of Building C, a loading bay at the center of the south facade of Building A, and a loading bay in the east facade of Building A. The loading bay on the south facade of Building A opens into a freight elevator. An additional loading bay on the east facade of Building B and a narrow pedestrian entry on its west facade have been infilled with brick. There is an opening with a recent overhead garage door at grade level on the east wall of the boiler house.

Most of the windows on the west and south street facades have been removed and window openings infilled with recent aluminum windows. Openings on the upper floors have been lowered by plastic inserts above stock one-over-one aluminum windows. Glass block has been used to infill 1st floor windows. Many 12-over-12 wood windows remain on the north and east secondary facades; smaller windows on the 4th floor have 8-over-8 sash. Most of the window openings on the secondary facades are sealed with metal fire shutters.

The interior of the Bagby Furniture Company Building consists of open plan space adapted to house furniture retailing and office space. Brick fire walls separate the three component sections of the building. Openings with self-closing metal fire doors connect these three sections. The visible structural system includes wood piers supporting wood floor beams and roof joists. Exterior door frames for the two pedestrian entrances at the rear (east) sides of Buildings A and C exhibit the only decorative trim in the building. Each has an entablature with bead mold in the door frame between the door and the transom. Two stairs and two freight elevators provide vertical circulation. The freight elevators are located against the center of the south walls of Building A and Building C. One stair, which is recent in structure and finish, is located against the north wall of Building A. A

second utilitarian wood service stair is located against the west wall of Building C. Fire egress is provided by a fire-escape located on the east facade of Building A.

Other than the exposed structural system, which dates to the building's construction in the early 20th century, most of the finishes and partitions date to the second half of the 20th century. Recent finishes are concentrated in Building A and Building B. A vestibule area and office space were installed in the southwest portion of the 1st floor of Building A in 1950. The 2nd and 3rd floors of Building A and Building B have recent finishes and dropped ceilings in areas that were furniture show rooms. Many columns in showroom floors have been encased within other materials. The interior of the boiler house is bisected by a brick wall running north-south. The boiler and incinerator were situated in the eastern half of the structure, which consists of an open 1-1/2 story space. The western half of the boiler house is divided into two stories with the floor level of the lower story below grade and the floor level of the upper story at the level of Building B.

The 1962 concrete block addition is an ell-shaped, 2-story structure attached to the east wall of Building C. The exterior of the east wall of Building C functions as the west interior wall of this addition. The Bagby Furniture Company Building retains its historic integrity despite this non-contributing addition. Because the east wall of the Bagby Furniture Company Building survives and because the 1962 addition is lower than the main building and situated on the interior of the city block, the effect of the addition on the main building is minimized. Two one story structures that housed the former dry kiln and lumber shed extend south from the 1962 addition along the eastern edge of the property. While kiln and lumber storage structures have been present at this location since the early 20th century, it is not known whether these particular structures, which incorporate a significant amount of mid-20th century fabric, are replacements for earlier structures. A loading dock against the west wall of the former dry kiln has been enclosed with corrugated metal to provide a passage connecting the concrete block addition with the kiln and the lumber shed. This enclosed passage was constructed after the date of the 1951 Sanborn Map.

Both the former dry kiln and lumber shed have been so heavily altered over time that they no longer retain their integrity. Their setting, feeling, and association vanished when the adjacent lumber yards were abandoned and the railroad tracks removed. The former lumber shed structure, which rests on deteriorated concrete piers, has corrugated metal walls that have been damaged by trucks and are peeling away from the facade. It is likely that these walls date to the 1950s and were installed when the loading dock against the former dry kiln was enclosed with similar corrugated metal walls. While the former lumber shed retains integrity of location and massing, it has lost integrity of setting, materials, feeling, and association and no longer contributes to the significance of the Bagby Furniture Company Building.

The former three-compartment dry kiln has been encased within recent construction and its west wall has been effectively removed. The taller Koldkiss building abutting the kiln to the east obscures the east exterior wall; the south wall is hidden within the former lumber shed and the north wall is now within the 1962 addition. The dry kiln has three compartments that now open to the enclosed passage that connects the 1962 addition with the former lumber shed. These compartments are separated by masonry walls. Sliding doors on all three compartments, which formed the west wall of the former dry kiln, are gone. The remaining walls of the former dry kiln are hollow clay tile, brick, and concrete. The flat roof is concrete. The concrete is deteriorating and spalled.

Reinforcing bars are visible on the interior of the ceiling. The upper center portion of the side (east-west) walls of the compartments have been patched with brick. No visible evidence of the character-defining mechanical system of this building, including provisions for ventilation, remains. (The three existing stacks, which appear to be recent, would have been insufficient to vent operable kilns. *The Air Seasoning and Kiln Drying of Wood* shows ranks of chimney stacks venting compartment kilns similar to this building.) The exterior of the former dry kiln is no longer visible; the structure retains only integrity of location and no longer contributes to the significance of the Bagby Furniture Company Building.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bagby Furniture Company Building, constructed between 1902-1907, represents a locally significant component of Baltimore's furniture industry. The Bagby Furniture Company, which operated from 1879 to 1990, embodied adaptive strategies that enabled a 19th century furniture manufacturing concern to evolve and continue in the furniture business through the 20th century. The Bagby Building meets National Register Criterion A because of its association with the evolution of Baltimore's furniture industry. It also meets National Register Criterion B because of its association with William Hugh Bagby, a major figure in the wholesale furniture business. The period of significance of the Bagby Furniture Company Building is 1902 to 1947, the year William Hugh Bagby was named "Man of the Decade" by the National Wholesale Furniture Association. The four story Bagby Furniture Company Building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic association despite a 1962 concrete block addition and the loss of integrity of remaining minor structures on the site.

HISTORY

Charles T. Bagby and A.D. Rivers founded the firm of Bagby & Rivers in 1879. Bagby & Rivers were manufacturers and wholesalers who shipped their merchandise to southern and mid-Atlantic states. Around 1896 Charles T. Bagby and his associates bought out A.D. Rivers and in 1897 the concern was incorporated as the Bagby Furniture Company.[1] The company was originally located at 624-632 West Pratt Street. From 1897 until 1902 it was situated at the corner of Biddle and Chester Streets, moving to its present location in 1902. Showrooms were located at 108 South Eutaw. The Bagby Furniture Company's 1902-1907 plant on Exeter Street, which had 73,000 sq. ft. of floor space, was designed specifically for furniture manufacture. When Charles T. Bagby decided to sell the company in 1931, William Hugh Bagby, a distant cousin, purchased it and consolidated it with his own plant in Baltimore.[2] The company remained in operation until 1990.

The history of furniture manufacturing in Baltimore during the 19th and early 20th century provides the historic context for the Bagby Furniture Company and its association with Baltimore's history. Furniture manufacturing was an important component of Baltimore's 19th and early 20th century industrial and mercantile economy. Furniture manufacture developed out of Baltimore's strong 18th and early 19th century craft tradition in cabinet-making enhanced by the advantages Baltimore's harbor and railroads offered for supply and distribution. While not as well known or well studied as Baltimore's canning or clothing industries, furniture manufacture constituted an important element of Baltimore's diverse industrial base.

The transition from the craft of cabinet making to the industry of furniture manufacture was fueled by the advent of steam powered machinery in the 1840s and the concurrent rise of retail furniture stores. Both developments spurred the growth of furniture wholesalers.[3] By the late 19th century, the quantity of southern lumber coming through the port made Baltimore a major center for furniture manufacturing.[4] While sugar refining, tanning, and

[1]Isidore Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore*, p. 206 and "W. Hugh Bagby Now Heads Old Furniture Concern."
[2]Interview with Wm. Hugh Bagby, Jr., January 17, 1997 and "W. Hugh Bagby Now Heads Old Furniture Concern."
[3]Gregory Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland 1740-1940*, p. 206.
[4]Dennis Zembala, ed., *Baltimore: Industrial Gateway*, p. 32.

shoe manufacture declined after the Civil War, furniture manufacturing and transshipment of lumber prospered.[5] During the 19th century Baltimore's Horstmeier Lumber Company spearheaded the distribution of southern pine throughout the United States. This cheap, durable wood transformed the housing industry and made Baltimore, with its numerous sawmills, woodworking plants, and lumber yards, a national center for lumber trade.[6]

The 1882 *City of Baltimore: A Descriptive Review of the Manufacturing and Mercantile Industries* considered furniture-making one of Baltimore's 19 principal industries.[7] The 1870 census listed 64 furniture operations employing 815 workers producing $1,145,740. By 1880 there were 71 manufacturers employing over 1000 workers producing goods worth $1,791,134. This total rose to 95 concerns manufacturing products worth $2,250,000 in 1884.[8]

During the period from 1840 to 1890, furniture manufacturers became increasingly specialized in the goods they produced and the markets they addressed. As furniture became room-specific and function-specific, firms concentrated on particular types of furniture or furniture for distinct markets, like offices or hotels. The proliferation of cheaper, mass-produced goods led many older firms to separate themselves from their means of production. High end operations, like the Potthast Company, emphasized hand craft and workmanship to distinguish themselves from their competitors.[9] By 1890, consolidation and specialization within the industry had taken its toll on the number of establishments that survived in Baltimore. While there were 60 furniture manufacturers listed in the 1887-88 city directory, there were only 33 listed in 1900.[10]

The Bagby Furniture Company insured its survival during this decline by careful attention to the business of furniture manufacture and distribution. While other furniture tradesmen conceived of themselves as an extension of an earlier craft ideal, the Bagby Company carved out a niche based on value, selection, and efficiency. The Bagby Furniture Company manufactured high quality "low and medium priced furniture." "No better goods of this class are made in this territory."[11] The company, which was noted for its "innovative use of steam machinery,"[12] sold

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[5]Robert Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980*, p. 314.

[6]Zembala, ed., *Baltimore: Industrial Gateway*, p. 31.

[7]Gregory Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland 1740-1940*, pp. 205 and 215. The other 19 industries included boots and shoes, bread and crackers, carpentry, cigars, men's clothing, women's clothing, confectionery, fertilizers, flour and grist mill products, canned and preserved produce, iron and steel, iron casting, machinery, marble and stonework, meat packing, printing and publishing, saddlery and harness-making, shirts, sugar refining, and tobacco and snuff.

[8]*Half-Century's Progress of the City of Baltimore*, p. 39. By comparison, the value of women's clothing produced in Baltimore in 1884 was $2,000,000.

[9]Gregory Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland*, p. 207.

[10]Gregory Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland*, p. 213. In addition to the growth of larger firms, Weidman attributes this decline to increased competition from other parts of the country as well as a stylistic trend toward eclecticism in interior design. This decline continued through the early 20th century. The 1930 city directory lists only 26 furniture manufacturers.

[11]Isidore Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore*, p. 206.

[12]Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory Form for the Bagby Company, p. 8.1.

their goods through catalogues and salesmen concentrating on eastern seaboard and southern states.[13] Among their other clients, the company sold to general stores in small towns.[14]

The Bagby & Rivers entry in *Illustrated Baltimore: The Monumental City*, published in 1890, demonstrates how the company presented itself. The descriptions set forth by other furniture manufacturers featured in this volume boasted sumptuous fabrics and hardwoods and incorporated phrases like "rarest design and materials," "tasteful design and artistic workmanship," "rare elegance and tasteful composition," "all hand-made," "made to order," and "elaborately carved."[15] The Bagby & Rivers Company's market-driven self-description provides a vivid contrast:

> This concern is one of the largest establishments of the kind in the city, and its productions are in steady and increasing demand in the trade all over the United States, owing to the uniformly high standard at which the same are maintained. They are manufacturers of popular furniture of almost every description, besides mattresses and chairs, and turn out a superior class of work, the productions being, in their respective grades, unsurpassed for general excellence by any on the market. This enterprising and flourishing firm was established about eight years ago, and from its inception the venture has proved a most unequivocal success. The premises occupied as factory, etc., comprise four buildings, fronting 150 feet on Pratt Street, and extending 180 feet through to King Street, [Bagby's location prior to Fleet and Exeter] and are supplied with ample steam power and completely equipped with the latest improved machinery, etc. while employment is furnished to about one hundred hands. A very large and complete assortment is constantly carried in stock to meet the requirements of the trade. Messrs. Charles T. Bagby and Arthur D. Rivers . . . are men of energy and enterprise, thoroughly conversant with the wants of the trade.[16]

In 1895, Bagby & Rivers were listed in bold under Furniture Manufacturers in Polk's City Directory. Their listing noted "furniture, chair, and mattress manufacturers." The Bagby Company's 1906 catalogue featured oak furniture dominated by bedroom suites. They also sold iron beds, chairs, tables, office furniture, couches, and parlor suites. By 1910, the Bagby Furniture Company listed its specialties as "chamber suits, hall racks, wardrobes, chairs, dining room and kitchen furniture, etc."[17] Their 1923 catalogue illustrates how the Bagby Furniture Company pursued a value-driven commercial market:

> Our forty-three years experience as makers of furniture has given us the unquestionable reputation of making and selling VALUES in furniture that can't be beat. . . . Each piece is built with the idea that it must bear out in quality the reputation that Bagby Furniture Company enjoys. . . . these pieces will tone up any store's line of low-priced oak goods. . . The low price makes the sale easy -- and the quality makes the customer satisfied.[18]

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[13]"W. Hugh Bagby Now Heads Old Furniture Concern" and Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore*, p. 206.
[14]*Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1988.
[15]*Illustrated Baltimore*, pp. 117, 130, 162,
[16]*Illustrated Baltimore*, p. 146.
[17]Isidore Blum, *The Jews of Baltimore*, p. 206.
[18]1923 Bagby Furniture Company Catalogue.

Both the 1906 and the 1923 catalogue emphasize that the Bagby Company shipped all of their goods from Baltimore, "not from some far distant point."[19]

Charles T. Bagby (1860-1943) was born in King and Queen County, Virginia and came to Baltimore at the age of 16, graduating from the night school at Eaton & Burnett Business College.[20] After he began to suffer from ulcers and other stress-related health problems, he retained ownership of the company but withdrew from active participation to become an attorney. Charles T. Bagby graduated from the University of Virginia law school and by 1902 joined the practice of his younger brother Alfred Bagby, Jr. (1866-1948) in the law firm of Bagby and Bagby.[21] Although Charles T. Bagby's son, Charles T. Bagby, Jr., nominally served as vice president and manager of the Bagby Furniture Company through the early 1930s, the company was run by general manager C. Marion Dodson.[22]

Location played a major role in the success of the company, giving the company an advantage over its competitors. By moving to Fells Point in 1902, the Bagby Furniture Company survived the Baltimore Fire of 1904, which destroyed 70 blocks in the downtown area. The Bagby Furniture Company's new plant in Fells Point was ideally suited for efficiency of supply and distribution. In 1896, prior to construction of the present building, the 11 blocks bounded by Jones Falls on the east, the harbor on the south, Central Avenue on the west, and Eastern Avenue on the north consisted almost entirely of lumber yards surrounding the Pennsylvania Railroad engine house and freight yard.[23] The Bagby Furniture Company constructed their new building in the midst of this lumber distribution center.

Because of the shallow depth of the Inner Harbor, Fells Point served as Baltimore's deep draft port for larger vessels. Until World War II, lumber schooners brought their wares into the Lancaster Street wharf, two blocks south of the Bagby Furniture Company's plant. The Pennsylvania Railroad freight yard was across Fleet Street from the new Bagby Furniture Company Building and lumber piers were two blocks south. (Henry James & Co., the predecessor of the Horstmeier Lumber Company, was located two blocks south of the building.) Furniture could be shipped out from deep water piers in Fells Point, where Lykes and Southern Pacific operated intracoastal freight shipment from 1930 until World War II.[24]

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[19]1923 Bagby Furniture Company Catalogue, pp. 28-29.

[20]Obituary, *Evening Sun*, April 6, 1943.

[21]Obituary for Charles T. Bagby and Alfred Bagby, Jr., *Evening Sun*, July 7, 1948 and 1902 City Directory. Alfred Bagby, Jr. was a professor of testamentary law at the University of Maryland Law School and author of a text on Maryland law of Executors and Administrators. Another brother, George Poindexter Bagby, was president of the Western Maryland Railroad (*Evening Sun*, June 9, 1932).

[22]Obituary for Charles T. Bagby, Jr. *Sun*, April 2, 1947. Family obituaries indicate that one son, Dr. English Bagby, was a doctor teaching at the University of North Carolina. Charles T. Bagby, Jr. became an auditor for the U.S. Tariff Commission and later chief accounting officer for Baltimore's Public Improvement Commission. (*Evening Sun*, June 9, 1932.) Interview with Wm. Hugh Bagby, Jr., January 17, 1997.

[23]Bromley Atlas of Baltimore, 1896.

[24]Robert C. Keith, *Baltimore Harbor*, pp. 119-121.

In 1918 William Hugh Bagby (1896-1988), a distant cousin of Charles T. Bagby, moved to Baltimore from Virginia after graduating from the University of Richmond.[25] Working as a commission salesman for the Bagby Furniture Company from 1918 to 1925, he became so successful that his income soon exceeded that of Marion Dodson, the general manager. Dodson responded by reducing Bagby's territory and commissions. Exasperated by the situation, William Hugh Bagby left the company in 1925 and started another concern, Wm. Hugh Bagby and Company, with his brother R. Harwood Bagby. When Charles T. Bagby decided to sell the Bagby Furniture Company in 1931, William Hugh Bagby purchased it and consolidated it with his own operation. He retained Dodson as a traveling salesman. R. Harwood Bagby became vice president and general sales manager, a position he held until 1965, when he became president and chief executive.[26]

Under William Hugh Bagby, the Bagby Furniture Company survived the depression by cutting back on its local manufacturing and gradually making the transition from furniture manufacture to wholesale furniture distribution. William Hugh Bagby insured the survival of the company by capitalizing on the advantages of Baltimore's transportation network rather than competing against cheaper labor costs in the growing North Carolina manufacturing centers. By 1930 there were only 26 furniture manufacturers listed in the Baltimore City Directory, continuing the gradual decline Gregory Weidman traced in the late 19th century. The Bagby Company stopped making bedroom furniture and set up manufacturers in the south, where labor costs were cheaper. They continued to make dining room furniture and boudoir or "cricket" chairs by assembling parts manufactured elsewhere. In effect, the Bagby Company became a noted early proponent of the technology of pre-fabrication.[27] The Bagby Company shipped furniture by rail throughout the east coast. It served as a distributor for other companies like Thomasville (code no. 21C in Bagby catalogues) and for retail furniture stores. By the 1940s they discontinued manufacturing to concentrate on wholesale distribution, including high end lines for interior designers.[28] At that time they were one of the largest furniture distributors in the country and the largest customer of Simmons Bedding.[29] The company moved into retailing in the mid-1980s.[30] Like many other furniture retailers, they were unable to compete with furniture sold directly from the same manufacturers that they carried, particularly since customers could avoid state sales tax on out-of-state purchases.[31] Faced with this difficult environment, the Bagby Furniture Company closed the business in 1990.

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[25] "Services set for William Bagby of furniture firm," *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 1988.

[26] Interview with Wm. Hugh Bagby, Jr., January 17, 1997; "W. Hugh Bagby Now Heads Old Furniture Concern;" Obituary for R. Harwood Bagby, *Sun*, July 1, 1979; "W.H. Bagby Heads Nat'l Furniture Group," *Evening Sun*, August 11, 1945.

[27] Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory Form, p. 8.1.

[28] *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1988.

[29] Interviews with Wm. Hugh Bagby, Jr., December 1996 and January 17, 1997. The Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form for the Bagby Furniture Company states that "In their heyday, they were one of the nation's largest furniture dealers."

[30] *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1988.

[31] *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1988. While Maryland residents were supposed to pay a tax when the furniture was shipped into the state, there was no enforcement mechanism. Transient roadside operators also undercut legitimate furniture retailers by avoiding state taxes and licensing fees.

Both William Hugh Bagby and R. Harwood Bagby were active in community and industry affairs. William Hugh Bagby was chairman of the Baltimore Bedding and Furniture Association in the early 1930s.[32] He was chairman of the Industry Advisory Committee for furniture wholesaling for the federal Office of Price Administration. In 1945, he became president of the National Wholesale Furniture Association, a group he had previously served as vice president.[33] The organization named him "Man of the Decade" in 1947.[34] He served on the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners and was director of a local savings and loan and founder of the Maryland Home Furnishings Association. A trustee of the University of Richmond, he also supported the Seamen's YMCA close to the factory.[35] R. Harwood Bagby served as president of the National Wholesale Furniture Association in 1960 and in 1961 and was also named its "Man of the Year."[36]

[32] "Bedding and Furniture Body Moves to Help Employment." The Association spearheaded a goodwill campaign to urge Baltimore merchants to buy local products to keep Baltimoreans employed during the Depression.

[33] "W.H. Bagby Heads Nat'l Furniture Group," *Evening Sun*, August 11, 1945.

[34] "Services set for William Bagby of furniture firm," *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 1988.

[35] "60 years with furniture firm adds up to large sign for Bagby." The newspaper article was prompted by a sign employees had posted on the 2nd floor of a neighboring building. Wm. Hugh Bagby, then a vigorous 82, climbed a ladder to be photographed with the sign; "Services set for William Bagby of furniture firm," and obituary notice, *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 1988.

[36] Obituary for R. Harwood Bagby.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Ward 3, Section 6, Block 1441, Lot 7/8

Boundary Justification

The verbal boundary description corresponds with the legal description of the Baltimore City block and lot on which the Bagby Furniture Company Building is located.

B-1011

BAGBY
FURNITURE
CO. BLDG.
BALTIMORE
CITY, MD
18-362000-
4349390

(RELAY)
5662 II NW

Mapped by the Army Map Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and City of Baltimore

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods. Aerial photographs taken 1943. Field checked 1944
Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1953

Hydrography compiled from USC&GS Chart 545 (1951)

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

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled by Geological Survey from

MN
GN
8½°
151 MILS
0°59'
18 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET