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 any 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 Franklintown Historic District

other names B-1316

2. Location

street & number 5100-5201 N. Franklintown Rd.; 1707-1809 N. Forest Park Ave.; 5100 Hamilton Ave.; 5110 Fredwall Ave. ☐ not for publication

city or town Baltimore ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Independent city code 510 zip code 21235

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 9-25-01

State or 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 this property is:
- ☐ 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Franklintown Historic District (B-1316)
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
- ☒ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
21	5	buildings
3		sites
		structures
		objects
24	5	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)

Domestic: single dwelling
Domestic: hotel
Industry/Processing/Extraction: manufacturing facility
Landscape: plaza
Transportation: road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling
Domestic: hotel
Landscape: plaza
Transportation: road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Wood, stone, asphalt
roof Asphalt
other

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

Description Summary:

Franklintown, located on the western edge of Baltimore City, is a very early and interesting example of rural village planning and suburban/resort development that can best be understood within a variety of historic contexts–including rural suburban development and early town planning, resort communities, the tradition of grist milling, and the Picturesque Movement. While only certain aspects of Franklintown's planning can be fully understood at this time, the village is an early and unmatched example of the development of a rural village within the limits of Baltimore City.

Franklintown is the result of a plan developed by William H. Freeman (1790-1863), a local politician and entrepreneur, in 1832. Freeman's innovative plan evolved gradually over the course of several decades and the plan owes its success to his untiring promotion of the village. The central feature of Freeman's concept, which is discussed in detail below (see "The History of Franklintown") is its unique use of an oval plan with radiating lots around a central wooded park. Surrounding areas of equal importance include a historic commercial area and grist mill buildings set between the Franklin Turnpike and Dead Run. The unique combination and juxtaposition of elements controlled (at least to a great extent) by Freeman–the picturesque old stone mill, the innovative radiating oval plan, and the associated hotel and commercial area–is a strikingly early example of planning with few known precedents in this country. Whether Freeman's primary concept was a new type of rural enclave and experiment, or whether it was a rather bold attempt to create an early form of resort community (see "Resort Communities" below), it is a sophisticated concept. Freeman's plan itself is notable not only for its very early date but also for its use of a central oval rather than circle or crescent, both of which were more broadly used in the United States and Great Britain.

Franklintown substantially retains its original rural character despite its location within predominantly urban Baltimore City. Roads are curvilinear in nature and the area is heavily wooded in places, adding to its rural, scenic appeal. The picturesque Dead Run stream bed runs through portions of the proposed district, and the Franklin Turnpike (now Franklintown Road) leads to Franklintown from downtown Baltimore City and provides a bucolic transition from the urban area to the village. The proposed Franklintown National Register Historic District is located within Baltimore City and the boundaries closely follow those for a local district established in 1999 by the Baltimore City Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation (CHAP). There are 24 contributing resources and 5 noncontributing resources within the National Register District boundaries.

General Description:

The Franklintown Historic District consists of three main components: the Franklintown Mill and its related buildings, Freeman's Oval, and the original Franklintown commercial area. (See the 1858 plan of Franklintown.) Each is distinct, yet the three components combine to form a unique historic district.

The mill and related buildings are constructed primarily of field stone. The construction date of the mill cannot be specifically documented, but appears to be sometime during the first half of the nineteenth century, but may be even earlier (see "Grist Mills" below). The two-story mill was renovated into a private home in the 1950s and the wheel is no longer present, yet it retains architectural characteristics that are common in grist mills in the Baltimore City and Baltimore County region. Set close to Franklintown Road, the mill is located on the banks of Dead Run, which provided its power source, and the building's position along the stream banks is a critical part of the integrity of this area of the proposed district. Located across Franklintown Road from the mill is a large, field-stone, mill warehouse. Originally used for various purposes (see "History of Franklintown" below), the warehouse shares an architectural character with the mill building. Other field-stone and frame residences are located along Franklintown Road. All have rectangular footprints and are two stories with side-gable roof forms. While some of these residences have additions, their overall integrity is not compromised. The wooded surroundings of the Gwynns Falls Park also add to the integrity of the site, which retains it original setting and feeling.

The mill and surroundings buildings continue to convey their original uses, and according to staff at CHAP, few grist mills with high degrees of integrity remain in Baltimore City. Unlike textile mills, for example, which require many workers, grist mills required few employees, depending heavily on the skilled miller himself. Therefore, there were not numerous associated workers' dwellings such as those found in the historic village of Woodberry, a former textile mill town in Baltimore City.

At the core of the plan of Franklintown is Freeman's Oval, part of the innovative plan developed by William H. Freeman in 1832 (see "Early Town Plans" below). Freeman's Oval and its associated buildings are the most notably situated complex within the proposed district. Upon entering Freeman's Oval via Rose Lane, the slight curve of the drive follows the oval and encircles a mature oak grove that served as a park at the center of the planned residential area. Although Freeman's plan and early maps indicate that the drive around the oval park used to be complete, only about half of the gravel roadway remains.

Located on a rise above Forest Park Drive, the oldest houses (1711 and 1719 North Forest Park Drive) on the oval are the most prominent buildings when viewed from below. Both residences are of the I-house form and display steeply pitched, central cross gables. Although this is a common vernacular house form in much of Maryland, its presence is quite noticeable in this small collection of buildings. In addition to these two large

houses, other smaller houses are located around the oval. Dating from ca. 1830-1950, the houses represent various periods of building and display varying degrees of integrity. Most are modest vernacular dwellings with few decorative features. The earliest houses lend credence to the theory that Freeman designed Franklintown to be a middle-class community, rather than homes for the wealthy. Most of the homes have been altered at least slightly since their construction. Asbestos shingles are the most common addition, and detract only slightly from the overall integrity of the buildings.

A small cottage located at 1707 North Forest Park Avenue on the eastern edge of Freeman's Oval is a single-story dwelling with a simple rectangular footprint and gable roof. It dates from ca. 1855. Two other residences are located on the edge of the oval on the crest of a hill overlooking the mill buildings. These residences date from the early twentieth century and display elements of the bungalow form popular in Baltimore during that era. These bungalows fall within the period of significance established for the Franklintown Historic District (see "Significance" section below) and exhibit a simple style of architecture that is compatible with the earliest vernacular houses present in the district. Other contributing residences within the historic district boundaries are located outside of Freeman's Oval on portions of North Forest Park Avenue, Fredwall Avenue, and William Street (see "List of Contributing/Noncontributing Features"). These residences were constructed within the period of significance and are located on areas within Freeman's plan or in bordering areas that are visually connected to the collection of mill buildings. Like the bungalows, they contribute to the architectural and historic cohesiveness present in the Franklintown Historic District.

One of the most prominent buildings on Freeman's Oval is a large barn located to the south of 1719 North Forest Park Avenue. It is a board and batten structure with a deep stone foundation and a new copper roof and cupola. Although the exact original use of the barn has yet to be determined, excavation has yielded several possibilities, including a shelter for animals, ice house, or abattoir.[1] Research indicates that a butcher named Horn had a slaughterhouse on Freeman's Oval during the Civil War and it possible that the barn was part of his operation.[2] The barn is currently undergoing a renovation to retrofit it for use as office space.

The oak grove located in the middle of Freeman's Oval was designed to be a wooded park for residents of the houses planned to encircle the oval. The oak grove displays a naturalistic collection of mature trees that continue to convey the picturesque qualities of life in Franklintown that William Freeman hoped to achieve through his design for the village.

The historic commercial area of Franklintown is located west of the mill area near the base of Freeman's Oval at the intersection of Franklintown Road and North Forest Park Avenue. The small collection of commercial

[1]Ongoing investigations of the barn are being conducted by its owner, William Eberhart, Jr., in conjunction with professional archaeologi

[2]Untitled article in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, November 13, 1940.

establishments include original buildings (some of which appear on William Freeman's plan) which retain high degrees of integrity and buildings which are noncontributing elements of the district, either because of recent construction dates or because they have been substantially altered and no longer convey their original uses. The most prominent building in the commercial area is the Franklintown Inn (formerly the Franklin Hotel). The large building conveys its importance within the confines of Franklintown through its large scale and massing. Three stories in height and finished in stucco, the building is simply executed. The entrance area of the facade has been altered and an addition extends to the rear of the building.

Similarly, the Mill Race Tavern still conveys its historic use as a tavern and meeting place in Franklintown. Its front-gable entrance with a side-gable ell extension is a typical form found in many historic commercial buildings in older suburban areas.

The small number of commercial buildings conveys Freeman's idea that Franklintown remain a small village that still relied on larger towns and on Baltimore for much of its needs. While providing basic amenities for visitors and residents, Freeman did not seem to plan Franklintown with the intention that it be a self-sustaining suburb or city.

List of Contributing/Noncontributing Resources

Contributing Resources

5100 N. Franklintown Road
5102 N. Franklintown Road
5104 N. Franklintown Road
5106 N. Franklintown Road
5108 N. Franklintown Road
5112-18 N. Franklintown Road (Mill Warehouse)
5115 N. Franklintown Road
5117 N. Franklintown Road (The Franklintown Mill)
5122-30 N. Franklintown Road
5200 N. Franklintown Road (The Franklin Hotel)
5201 N. Franklintown Road (Millrace Tavern)
1707 N. Forest Park Avenue
1711 N. Forest Park Avenue
1719 N. Forest Park Avenue (Barn)
1721 N. Forest Park Avenue (formerly 1719)
1800 N. Forest Park Avenue
1801 N. Forest Park Avenue
1804 N. Forest Park Avenue
1809 N. Forest Park Avenue
5110 Fredwall Avenue
5100 Hamilton Avenue
Washington Park
Dead Run
Franklintown Road

Noncontributing Resources

1715 Hill Street
1717 N. Forest Park Avenue
1805 N. Forest Park Avenue
5106 Fredwall Avenue
5104 Hamilton Avenue

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 pattern of our history.

☐ B Property 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.

Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Community Planning

Period of Significance

1826-1934

Significant Dates

1826
1832
1934

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

William H. Freeman, planner

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on files (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:

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Franklintown Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion C as an example of an early nineteentb century planned resort community or suburb. The 1832 date appears to be a key factor in its significance, as few resorts or suburbs have been documented at this early date in this country's planning history, and William Freeman's design of an oval park with radiating, wedge-shaped lots cannot be shown to be influenced by or derived from any similar known plans.

Freeman's plan demonstrates an unusually high degree of skill and entrepreneurial spirit. Although not a landscape designer or planner by trade, Franklintown capitalizes on a combination of elements that made it a desirable place to live and visit in the early years of its inception and establishment. Its location outside of the industrial areas of Baltimore, its proximity to the Franklin Turnpike (which provided for easy and scenic transportation to and from Baltimore and was built by Freeman), and its use of elements of the Picturesque Movement all contribute to the high artistic value of Freeman's plan.

The majority of the modest vernacular buildings which comprise Franklintown as a district convey the intent of Freeman's plan and the era of Franklintown's establishment as a rural village. The key residential buildings are excellent examples of the I-house form and display steeply pitched cross gables found in vernacular rural buildings throughout much of Maryland. The pivotal commercial buildings such as the Franklintown Inn continue to display Freeman's intent of providing amenities to the residents of Franklintown. The collection of mill buildings is also impressive for the high degree of integrity they display. They continue to articulate their original purpose and appear to be a rare group of buildings within the present-day boundaries of Baltimore City.

Franklintown retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association primarily because it retains its rural, picturesque character and central planning focus. The degree of integrity of materials and workmanship is also high. Few intrusions into the original district are present and new buildings or additions are generally compatible with the historic buildings. The period of significance for Franklintown begins in 1826 when Freeman began laying the groundwork for Franklintown by building the Franklin House and extends to 1934 when the Franklin Mill stopped grinding.

The boundaries of the Franklintown Historic District were evaluated based on several factors: The first and most important of these was Freeman's plan. The boundaries of the district are based on William Freeman's original plan for Franklintown but do not include peripheral areas that were built at later dates or suffer from a loss of integrity. Areas outside of Freeman's plan were also evaluated for inclusion, but were found to have many visual intrusions due to noncontributing buildings or to contain substantial construction and architectural styles from later periods. After the initial building of Franklintown in the 1850s, scattered housing gradually appeared in surrounding areas. Most notably, turn-of-the century bungalows and World War II-era minimal traditional style housing was constructed

to the west of Freeman's Oval. The historic district boundaries follow Freeman's plan as closely as possible.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Franklintown (alternately known as Franklin, Franklin Towne, Franklinville, and Mr. William H. Freeman's Village) is the result of an 1832 design by William H. Freeman (1790-1863), a local politician and financier who was involved in various business enterprises in the area surrounding Franklintown, and essentially set the stage for the community to function as a fashionable resort and/or early rural community. Freeman's involvement in the nearby Central Racecourse, the Franklin Turnpike, the Franklintown Mill, and the residential area of Freeman's Oval was critical to the area's success. Despite its ambitious plan, several financial setbacks affected the building and growth of Franklintown. The 1834 Maryland State Bank panic, which closed the bank that was to provide financing for the village had the most impact. Freeman was closely associated with Reverdy Johnson, a prominent manager of the bank. During the panic, riots broke out in Baltimore because depositors suspected that the bank's directors had stolen funds and Johnson's house was ransacked. Fearful of a similar fate, Freeman had waiting horses saddled in woods near his estate, Arlington, located several miles west of Franklintown, in case a quick escape was necessary. In the early 1850s, Freeman unsuccessfully attempted to get the Baltimore County seat (at the time Franklintown was located within the county limits) moved to a location along Edmondson Avenue, about two miles from Franklintown in an endeavor to bring visitors and commerce to Franklintown.[3] Despite these setbacks, Freeman tirelessly promoted Franklintown until his death in 1863. The present-day village of Franklintown retains a remarkable degree of integrity, closely following Freeman's plan, although several aspects of the plan were never constructed.

Evaluating the significance of Franklintown requires evaluating several historic contexts to determine the importance of the various components that combine to make the current community. Themes explored to assist in the evaluation of Franklintown include suburban planning, resort communities, early planning efforts, the Picturesque Movement, turnpikes, and grist mills.

Suburbanization in America

Early suburbs in America were not the well tended respites from city life that they are today. The earliest suburbs were zones outside of the city limits that often contained undesirable but necessary features of urban life: dumps, noxious manufacturing establishments, and homes for the poorest residents. Prior to the transportation revolutions of railroads and horse-drawn streetcars of the mid-nineteenth century, suburban areas

[3]Neal A. Brooks and Eric G. Rockel, *A History of Baltimore County*, Friends of the Towson Library, Towson, Maryland, 1979. In 1854, selected as the new Baltimore County Seat.

housed those that were on the physical and social outskirts of society.[4] It was not until the 1820s that this vision of suburbia first began to change–redefining suburbia to mean a collection of separate communities, often with independent governments, that housed many city-employed workers who commuted to the main metropolis, perhaps not on a daily basis. Early suburbs were not appendages or outgrowths from the city, but instead were freestanding, thinly settled, semirural communities.[5]

While each city and each suburb was unique, it is possible to draw some correlations, and to place Franklintown into the greater American suburban context. Although some questions exist as to William Freeman's intention for Franklintown at the time Freeman planned Franklintown in 1832, few grand suburban designs existed. Instead, planning was often a collective activity resulting not from a conscious design of experts, but rather from a "vaguely stated core of shared values."[6] Creators of the first suburbs In America were small entrepreneurs, local politicians, or workers wishing to escape the ills of cities. Residential property was promoted, and often through a trial-and-error process, the first suburbs were created, breaking new ground in American planning and influencing future suburban planning and growth.[7]

Although not consciously planned at the time of their designs, early suburbs are the result of an evolving sense of community self-consciousness. Suburbs strove to be distinct places, not only from large cities and country towns, but also from neighboring suburban communities. Although residential development was often the most important goal of new suburbanites and suburban promoters, a general promotion of the peripheral economy–including agriculture and industry–was also seen as a complementary part of a viable suburb.[8]

It is during this early era of American suburbanization during the first half of the eighteenth century that Freeman planned Franklintown. His plan has been dated to 1832. As in other American suburbs, land was part of speculative dealings for residential development. However, because of a bank failure in Baltimore in 1834, Franklintown was not built out until the early 1850s. By this time, suburbs in other parts of American and in other areas around Baltimore had developed more fully. Between 1840 and 1860, suburbs grew rapidly. Distinct villages proliferated and were often separated by empty land, rather than the general outward sprawl

[4] J. John Palen. *Suburbia.* McGraw-Hill, Inc. New York, 1995, p. 22.

[5] *Two Centuries of American Planning*. Ed. Daniel Shaffer. "The Early Nineteenth-Century Suburb: Creating a Suburban Ethos in Som Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1820-1860," by Henry C. Binford. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1988, p. 41.

[6] Ibid., p. 42.

[7] Norbert Schoenauer. *6,000 Years of Housing.* New York: WW. Norton, 2000. Suburban development in England appears to be rough events in the United States, but American examples appear to be more relevant to Franklintown's history and are explored more fully here. plans from England were investigated for a prototype for Freeman's Oval, but none was located.

[8] Shaffer, p. 46.

and infill from a city center that would characterize later periods and was due in large part to changes in transportation, particularly the streetcar, which was singlehandedly responsible for suburban development outside of many urban centers. It is important to note that Franklintown is not a streetcar suburb.[9]

Suburbs often had a political history that was distinct from their larger city centers. Economic and social development on the local level often brought suburban leaders to a high level of recognition and responsibility previously unknown in large cities. This strong sense of a distinct suburban identity often led these leaders to promote and/or defend their enclaves with fervor.

During the period from 1840-1860, suburbs saw an increase in prosperity and a refinement of objectives. Changes in transportation mixed with heavy commuting forced suburbanites to address questions of land use and compatible growth. Both industrial and commercial pursuits began to weigh heavily into the success of suburbs. Many pioneers of American suburban life were prosperous merchants and professionals who brought prestige and financial success to their villages. They also sought to bring amenities and public institutions and services usually reserved for large cities out to the suburbs. In time, paved streets, fire departments, and school buildings appeared, and in newer suburbs, these improvements were often made in advance of their actual need in order to make the villages more appealing as a place of residence for potential owners.

> *This will not only add to the value of property in and about our villages, but will tend to the healthy increase of population among us, by giving us constant accessions of citizens from a class of people who will not only add to our respectability, but give is accessions of wealth, and thus diminish our public burdens.*[10]

As suburbs grew and became viable, self-supporting entities with discrete economies, many residents were able to secure employment within the suburb rather than commuting into the city center. However, commuting was still a reality for many residents, and in general, the number of commuters actually increased over time.[11] By the time the Civil War broke out, suburbs were often suited to fit the needs of those who commuted into cities, with local business supporting middle-class domesticity. That is, businesses were geared toward the leisure hours of the male provider and to support services such as markets and shops patronized by housewives.

Resort Communities

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[9]Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[10]Ibid., p. 51.

[11]Ibid., p. 53.

Due in large part to its proximity to the Central Racecourse, which was built on land donated by William Freeman, it may be surmised that Franklintown was conceived not only as a residential village, but also as a resort town for those wishing to escape the city and attend the races. While not a resort community in the vein of seaside or ski towns, Franklintown was a 5-mile, picturesque drive from Baltimore on the Franklin Turnpike (alternately referred to as the Franklin Road). Freeman's plan included the Franklin Hotel (which he built), which was the "favorite summer resort of Baltimore society," according to an article in the *Baltimore County Union* in February, 1895. The hotel was built in 1826, prior to Freeman's larger plan for Franklintown. According to the same article, "It was Mr. Freeman's intention to make Franklintown a fashionable summer resort. Wide avenues were surveyed, and a tract of land marked out for a park, market, and racecourse." Because the lots were rather small, with houses placed reasonably close to each other, it does not appear as if Freeman intended Franklintown to be a collection of large country estates (which were proliferating in roughly the same era as aresult of the writing of landscape architect A.J. Downing), but rather moderately sized houses sited so as to take advantage of the many picturesque aspects of the area–including the mill and its associated buildings, Dead Run, and the scenic wooded areas surrounding the Franklin Turnpike. The Franklintown Inn provided refined social opportunities and "became a gathering place for all the fine ladies and gentlemen to meet for a ball after attending the races..."[12] The inn was also a meeting place where Freeman and his associates (who included Reverdy Johnson, Ross Winans, and possibly other notable national figures) discussed the political climate of the times. Combined with the proximity to Baltimore, the recreational pursuits available at the Central Racecourse, and the social opportunities available at the Franklin Hotel, the village of Franklintown offered conveniences of city dwelling combined with refined country life.

Intended to be the main draw for those visiting Franklintown, the racecourse, like the hotel, did a prosperous business. Located on land donated by Freeman near the intersection of present-day Ingleside Avenue and Johnnycake Road, the Central Racecourse opened amid much fanfare in October 1831.[13] Early racecourses were generally considered to be genteel places, and descriptions of the Central Racecourse indicate that it was operated under the highest standards. Country gentleman of the day often owned racing horses, and brought them to race at local tracks. The Central Racecourse was described as:

> *situated about four miles from Baltimore; and the Franklin turnpike, which leads to it, is one of the most pleasant and romantic roads out of the city. The village of Franklin, erected among the hills, with its mill, hotel, and cottages ornées, within a mile of the Course is alone worth a much longer ride to visit.*

[12]Unknown source quoted in the Baltimore City Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation staff report for local district desi Franklintown.

[13]*American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, Volume 3, Number 3, November 1831, p. 136.

The Race Course is supported by the Maryland Jockey Club, a very large association of gentlemen, composed chiefly of inhabitants of Baltimore. . . By the rules of the association, gaming of every kind is excluded from the Course; nor are professed gamesters permitted to become members: in fact, every care is taken to exclude wholly all those usual accompaniments of racing which alone make it objectionable to the most fastidious.[14]

The Central Racecourse continued to serve as a focal point of the social calendar until the 1860s, when it was abandoned for a track in Timonium.[15]

Early Town Plans

No papers relating to William Freeman are known to exist. Therefore, it is impossible to state with certainty what his influences were for his plan of Franklintown. However, determining what other innovations were occurring in the realm of planning contemporary with Freeman's time–with or without his knowledge–can place Freeman's Oval in perspective. In addition to evaluating Franklintown in the context of early suburbs and resorts, it is necessary to evaluate it as part of a general planning trends in America during the same era.

One of the earliest documented circular plans in America is that of Circleville, Ohio. Designed in 1810 by Daniel Driesbach, Circleville was planned around centuries-old, Native American earthworks which retained a circular center. The central, circular portion of Circleville was designed to contain open space, similar to the center of Freeman's Oval, but was soon occupied by a courthouse. Larger in scale than Franklintown, Circleville occupied over 200 acres and was inhabited by 40 families within its first year of existence. Over the course of time, Circleville was redeveloped into a grid pattern and nothing of the original circular plan remains.[16]

After Circleville, other circular plans, referred to as pinwheels and cobwebs, were laid out. While it is possible that Circleville influenced these later plans, it seems more likely that the founders of the later towns were looking to create something more unique than the ubiquitous grid. Octagons, double octagons, and hexagons, also appeared, although none were particularly lasting or influential.

It is important to note that no other radial plans with a central oval were located. Circles and general radial patterns are featured, and almost always the focal point is the site of an important civic or public building, such

[14]Uncited copy from the files of the Franklintown Community Association.

[15]Timeline created by the Baltimore City Commission for Architectural and Historic Preservation.

[16]*The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States.* John W. Reps. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 484-490.

as a church or town hall. Freeman's use of his central oval as an oak-studded park appears to be unique. While certain village buildings were necessary for the day-to-day comfort of the residents (whether seasonal or permanent), Freeman's plan does not include civic buildings, so it seems likely that he did not intend Franklintown to be a self-supporting town, but rather one with amenities to make life pleasant, while relying on larger neighboring villages or Baltimore for most purchases.

Another unique aspect of Freeman's plan is its size. Approximately 30 lots surround the oval. When compared with other contemporary radial and circular plans, Franklintown is quite small. Its size would support the theory that Freeman intended Franklintown to be a small resort community, rather than an independent suburb.

The Picturesque Movement

The aesthetics of the mid-nineteenth century Picturesque Movement combined natural beauty with man's ability to manipulate the environment to create ideal "natural" settings.[17] It seems likely that Freeman chose the location of the Oval for its overlook down onto the mill, its associated buildings, and scenic Dead Run. Other elements that emphasized the Picturesque qualities of the area included a small lake and a covered bridge (no longer extant). Such a vista would have been a respite from the typical industrial scenes of the urban areas of Baltimore City. Communal outdoor areas were also typical features in Picturesque plans. In some cities, large parks or public cemeteries served this purpose, and it seems likely that Washington Park at the center of Freeman's Oval was designed along a similar, albeit small-scale vein. To accommodate the premises of Picturesque designs, streets and paths were usually curvilinear, and residential areas avoided grid patterns found in cities. Although the extent of Freeman's knowledge of the Picturesque Movement are unknown, it seems likely that he had some exposure to the design tenets, as the influence of the movement is evident in Franklintown. The Franklin Turnpike is a key element of Freeman's Picturesque plan, allowing for a bucolic transition from Baltimore City's urban environment to the pastoral setting of Franklintown.

The vernacular building types located in Franklintown add to the Picturesque appeal of the area. Buildings with steeply pitched gable roofs situated near wooded areas are hallmarks of the movement. An early account of Franklintown refers to cottages *ornées*, and a 1923 Baltimore *Sun* article states that three of these cottages originally located in Franklintown were moved "a long time ago" to nearby Hillsdale.[18]

Franklin Turnpike

[17] All of the principles discussed in this section are derived from *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Archi* John Dixon Hunt (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1992).

[18] "Franklintown: A Suburb of the City's Past." Baltimore *Sun*. September 9, 1923.

During the Colonial era in Maryland, most settlers lived by water, which provided an efficient means of transportation. After the Revolutionary War, the population began moving westward, and often away from waterways. The need for good roads which would accommodate farm wagons became apparent. Baltimore and other cities needed these roads to promote trade and growth, and people living in outlying areas needed access to major cities. Rarely did governments respond to this need, so private companies were incorporated under state charters to construct roads or improve existing roads. In return for their services, the companies were permitted to charge tolls to pay maintenance costs and dividends to stockholders.[19]

The major turnpikes in Baltimore were constructed in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. This period coincided with the rise of Baltimore as the third largest city in the nation and one of the most commercially important urban areas. Turnpikes allowed farmers from the north and west to bring wagons of produce and livestock to the city. However, by the 1830s, the rise of canals and steam engines as means of transporting both goods and passengers began to threaten Baltimore's turnpike system. Turnpikes were used less and less as means of traveling long distances and became primarily local in nature. Farmers of surrounding counties used the roads to get their products to the larger markets in the city, and city residents used the turnpikes to escape the industrial areas of Baltimore for rural landscapes in the outlying areas.

Increasing pressure from citizens who found the conditions of the turnpikes substandard and pressed for the elimination of tollgates eventually forced the end of the turnpike system. Between 1910 and 1915, most of the turnpikes were taken over by the State Roads Commission. The last turnpike in the Baltimore area continued to function until 1918.[20]

The Franklin Turnpike Road Company was incorporated in 1827. Its act of incorporation described the need for the road:

> *[T]he inhabitants of Baltimore County, who reside upon Gwynn's falls, Dead run and the country adjacent thereto . . . suffer great inconvenience from the want of a good and direct road leading to the city of Baltimore; that the said inhabitants are extensively engaged in agriculture and manufactures, the former of which require an occasional, the latter an almost daily intercourse with the city; but that, owing to the rough and uneven country in which they are located, and the wretched and almost impassable condition of the roads over which they are obliged to travel, they are deprived of the many benefits which a ready intercourse with the city would afford them, and are denied the usual advantages of a market for their productions and fabrics, but at great trouble, expense and delay. . . .*[21]

[19]William Hollifield. *Difficulties Made Easy: History of the Turnpikes of Baltimore City and County*, Cockeysville, Maryland: Baltimo Historical Society, 1978, p. 1.

[20]Ibid.

[21]From the act of incorporation of the Franklin Turnpike Road Company, quoted in *Difficulties Made Easy*, p. 25.

The new turnpike was planned to run from Franklin Street in the city, through the valley of the Gwynns Falls and Dead Run, past the newly cut Windsor Mill Road, to Liberty Road. The company's organizer's were William Freeman, Beale Randall, Philip E. Thomas, William Gwynn, Robert Dorsey, James Swan, and James William McCullough. The capital stock was to be $50,000 in shares of $20 each.

The turnpike was completed in mid-1831, and was described by John H. B. Latrobe in his 1932 book *Picture of Baltimore*.

> *This road . . . opens a communication with the district of country between the Frederick and Reisterstown roads. At the distance of four miles from Baltimore, it passes through the village of Franklin and is the main access to the Central Race Course. The scenery along it is romantic and picturesque, and well repays the drive which the stranger may take to visit it. The Franklin Road is Macadamised, and is, of course, decidedly the best turnpike out of Baltimore.*[22]

The tollgate on the Franklin Turnpike was originally located in the area that is now Gwynns Falls Park in what was then Baltimore County. By 1880, unfavorable descriptions of the Franklin Turnpike began to surface, and residents circulated a petition asking the legislature to reduce the tolls. The city was expanded in 1888, and the turnpike was located within both the city and county jurisdictions. In July 1905, the county prohibited toll collection at the Franklin Turnpike due to its poor condition. The tollgate was then moved to the northwest of Morris Road in the city limits so tolls could continue to be collected. Bridges along the turnpike were deemed to be unsafe and in 1908, Baltimore City conducted an inquest into the condition of the road. Findings indicate that the company failed to maintain the road of the width and with the material required by its charter and that in many places the road was impassable for ordinary vehicles. The court ordered the forfeiture of the company's right to collect tolls within the city until the road was properly repaired. Because the turnpike had not been profitable for several years prior to the court action, there were no funds with which to make improvements. After six months passed with no repairs being made, the court forfeited the company's charter and the road became the property of the City of Baltimore.[23]

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[22]John H. B. Latrobe, *Picture of Baltimore*, Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jr., 1832, pp.. 214-215. Latrobe's mention of the surface of the t macadamized is particularly interesting. Construction methods of all other turnpike companies in the Baltimore area are unknown. Compa specified only the width of the roads and that they were to be made of stone or another durable material. Roads built using the method dev British engineer John Loudon Macadam in the early nineteenth century were constructed on an arched roadbed. Stones measuring approxi inches in diameter were laid to a depth of eight inches, followed by a two-inch layer of stones measuring one inch in diameter. Workmen stones down with rammers, and wheel traffic was expected to further grind particles of stone that would then sift to fill in spaces between t This would create a binder that would render the roadbed waterproof.

[23]Hollifield, p. 26.

Grist Mills

In areas that are now parts of both Baltimore City and Baltimore County, mills that ground wheat, corn, and other grains were ubiquitous.[24] These mills were essential to the agricultural economy that provided a livelihood for those living in areas outside of the industrial city centers. At first the mills provided a service to farmers, with the farmers paying the miller with a percent of ground grain. Later, as the millers became more enterprising, the mill became the farmers' closest contact with the city, and they were able to sell their grain crop to the miller for fair market price rather than hauling it to Baltimore themselves. Grist mills were therefore an indicator of a highly developed rural community with a sophisticated economy.[25]

During the Colonial era, Maryland's economy was based on tobacco, so mills were not a part of village life. Although corn was eaten by settlers, it was consumed as hominy that was ground with crude imitations of the mortar and pestle, and home industry provided for other needs. Livestock was generally allowed to forage freely, so feed grains were nonexistent.

As settlers moved away from their established villages along waterways, and agriculture became more diversified, water-powered mills began to appear. Mills are excellent indicators of mixed agriculture within a community large enough to support their owners. Crops were likely to have been so large that individual farms were not capable of pulverizing the grain with hand-powered mills and pestles, even with the use of slave labor. Millers were generally paid one-eighth of the value of the ground grain as a commission.[26]

Millwrights were responsible for the construction of the mills, and for choosing optimal sites for the buildings. They knew how to locate natural ravines where dams could be built to feed water to a mill as far as a mile away. They laid out millraces, or canals, at a constant elevation, following the contours of hillsides to bring the water to the mill at a point downstream where there would be a drop of at least eight feet, or a "fall." The water then had to fall on the water wheel and then drain downstream as efficiently as possible to avoid forming a puddle under the wheel that would slow its rotation and diminish its power.

Other than the millwright, the miller had one of the most advanced technical backgrounds of any citizen in the colonies. He needed to be familiar with controlling wheels, shafts, gear trains, and adjusting the massive millstones that ground the grain. At least two large millstones (which had to be imported into Maryland until 1813 when a local supply of appropriate stone was located) with holes in the center were necessary to grind

[24]As many as 50 mills once ground grain within the present limits of Baltimore City.

[25]John W. McGrain. *Grist Mills in Baltimore County, Maryland.* Towson, Maryland: Baltimore County Public Library, 1980, p. 1.

[26]Ibid., pp. 1-2.

grain. The stones were laid flat on top of each other, with the bottom stone (known as the "nether" or "bedder") fastened to the floor. The upper stone (or "runner") was supported and balanced on a wooden axle that passes through the center of the nether. Both stones were scored with ridges on the grinding faces. The miller made fine adjustments to the space between the wheels using a wooden lever; the process of adjusting the wheels is called tentering. This was a difficult task, as the wheels had to be close enough to grind the small bits of grain, but the wheels could not touch, lest the grain be adulterated with dust from the rock of the wheels.[27]

The miller would open the headgate, the water wheel would begin turning, and the runner would begin to turn. The miller would pour the grain into the center of the top millstone through a hopper. The grain would fall between the two stones, and centrifugal force carried across the millstones from the center to the edge, and by that time it has become flour or meal. Grain that was milled in the earliest grist mills retained all of its nutritional value. However, later mills used sifting methods to remove husks and bran, which yielded a whiter flour. Byproducts of this process were fed to chickens and hogs.

Water wheels which powered the mill were classified into three categories: undershot, overshot, and breast wheels, with the terms reflecting the point on its periphery at which the water entered the wheel. Undershot wheels were equipped with paddles and the water passing underneath the wheel drove it by the force of its own flow. These wheels were used in areas where there was not much fall. Mills within Baltimore City and Baltimore County did not use these wheels, as there are numerous sites in upland areas that provided adequate fall. Overshot and breast wheels were equipped with buckets that filled with water. The weight of the water on one side caused the wheel to turn and generate power. Water entered the overshot wheels at the highest point of the wheel's periphery, and entered the breast wheels somewhat below the highest point.

Grist mills played an important role in rural communities. Most mill-centered villages contained several stores, and an inn or tavern. Warehouses and other tradesmen's shops were also common. In many instances, even the smallest mills spawned the growth of the rural economy in an area. Homes, churches, blacksmith shops, and schools were often found in these small villages.[28]

The date of construction of the Franklin Mill is ambiguous. Local tradition indicates that an earlier mill was constructed on the site in 1761, and that the present mill was constructed by Freeman in the 1830s as part of his plan of Franklintown. Deed research indicates that Freeman acquired the property in 1832 and retained ownership until 1859. Regardless of exact construction date, the mill was present during the early years of Franklintown and was integral to the village. As a picturesque element, the mill was vital, and it also provided an important service to the rural area and allowed for yearlong economic activity in Franklintown. At various

[27]Ibid., p. 4.

[28]Brooks and Rockel, p. 187.

times in its history the mill has been labeled the oldest intact mill in the United States and the oldest mill in actual operation. While superlatives such as these are highly unlikely and impossible to prove, the Franklintown Grist Mill did operate until 1934.[29] By 1950, it had been renovated for use as a residence.

The large stone warehouse building across from the mill served as a combination dwelling, grocery store, tavern, hotel, and banquet hall. Although the date 1862 is painted on a wall of the building, an evaluation by a preservation architect indicated that construction methods point to a construction date as early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[30]

The History of Franklintown

Franklintown is primarily the result of William Freeman's innovative design and his tireless efforts promoting the community. The initial design of Franklintown appears to date to 1832, when various written accounts discuss Freeman's plan for the village, although the original plan has not yet been located. A copy of Freeman's design with the notation "Plan of the Town of Franklin as laid out by William H. Freeman, Esq." appears in the Baltimore County records in 1858. Dating the early buildings located around Freeman's Oval has proven difficult. The earliest maps of the area do not depict individual residences, but the Franklin House, the mill, and three buildings (likely two residences at 1711 and 1719 North Forest Park Avenue and the barn) are present on the 1850 J.C. Sidney map of the City and County of Baltimore.

A 1923 newspaper article provides an eloquent description of the Freeman plan:

> *A study of the old plat reveals a most remarkable design, perhaps unique in suburb-planning.*
>
> *The heart of Franklin Town was a great oval* [with a] *tropical oak grove on a hill. On the hillside toward Franklin Road, hung like medallions, four paved circular places. Diagonally down the hillside, and through the places, ran broad avenues while the approach along the Franklin Road from the city presented to the visitors great winglike parks, enfolding the oval grove.*
>
> *The grove itself was 500 feet long by 300 feet wide and at its very center was planted a white marble stone with the letter C cut in it. Close at its edges all around ran a narrow street, farther down the hillside circled a broader avenue and between these lay a band of cottage lots, completely circling the towering oak grove.*

[29] "173-Year-Old Mill Has Wheels Stilled," Baltimore *Sun*, October 19, 1934.

[30] Woodlawn History Committee. *Woodlawn, Franklintown, and Hebbville*. Published by the Woodlawn Recreation and Parks Council,

Along the Franklin Road for half a mile or more the town extended, the cottage lots climbing the gentler slopes of the hill and stretching away across levels by the run. . . . [A]t the extreme south [of the town is] the grist mill. A little north of the grist mill was the hotel, fronting on the Franklin macadamised turnpike, here about 100 feet wide and running back 150 feet to the winged parks.[31]

The 1858 plan shows Freeman's Oval surrounded by approximately 30 wedge-shaped parcels of land. The oak grove in the center of the oval is called Washington Park and was intended to be public open space. The four small circles mentioned are reminiscent of roundabouts and never appeared on maps. No evidence of their construction remains today. During the Civil War era, Washington Park became known as Horn's Park after a butcher whose slaughterhouse was located on Freeman's Oval. A 1940 Baltimore *Sun* article indicates that the park "had gone to seed" and that Union troops camped in the oak grove during the Civil War.[32] Local tradition states that the troops chose the park as a camp to avert Confederate activity along the Franklin Turnpike and to inhibit the activities of Confederate sympathizers, including William Freeman (who lived on an estate located just west of Franklintown) and his longtime business associate Ross Winans.

[31]"Franklintown: A Suburb of the City's Past." Baltimore *Sun*, September 9, 1923.

[32]Untitled article in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, November 13, 1940.

Major Bibliographical References:

Archives and Files

Files of the Baltimore City Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

Files of the Baltimore City Commission for Architectural and Historic Preservation, Baltimore, Maryland.

Files of the Baltimore County Historical Society, Cockeysville, Maryland.

Files of the Baltimore County Planning and Zoning Office, Towson, Maryland.

Files of the Franklintown Community Association, Baltimore, Maryland.

Vertical files for "Franklintown." Maryland Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

Maps

Note: An extensive survey of over 50 maps was made at the George Peabody Library in Baltimore. Maps providing detailed information relating to Franklintown are individually listed below.

1850 *Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys*, J.C. Sidney.

1853 *Map of the City and Suburbs of Baltimore*, Isaac Simmons.

1855-56 *Baltimore City Directory Map*, R.J. Matchett, Publisher.

1857 *City of Baltimore*, J.H. Colton.

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1887 *Baltimore and Its Neighborhoods*, Lewis Neil.

1892 *Geological Map of Baltimore and Vicinity*. U.S. Geological Survey.

1910 *Baltimore City Directory Map*, R.L. Polk & Company, Publisher.

1926 *A Map of the City of Baltimore*, A. Hoen.

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Woodlawn History Committee. *Woodlawn, Franklintown, and Hebbville*. Published by the Woodlawn Recreation and Parks Council, 1977.

Franklintown Historic District (B-1316)
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 15.5 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	352440	4352080	3	18	352430	4351500
2	18	352850	4351680	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 Judith H. Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, Architectural Historians

Organization Robinson & Associates, Inc. date January 31, 2001

street & number 1909 Q Street, NW, third floor telephone (202) 234-2333

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20009

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

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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 the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

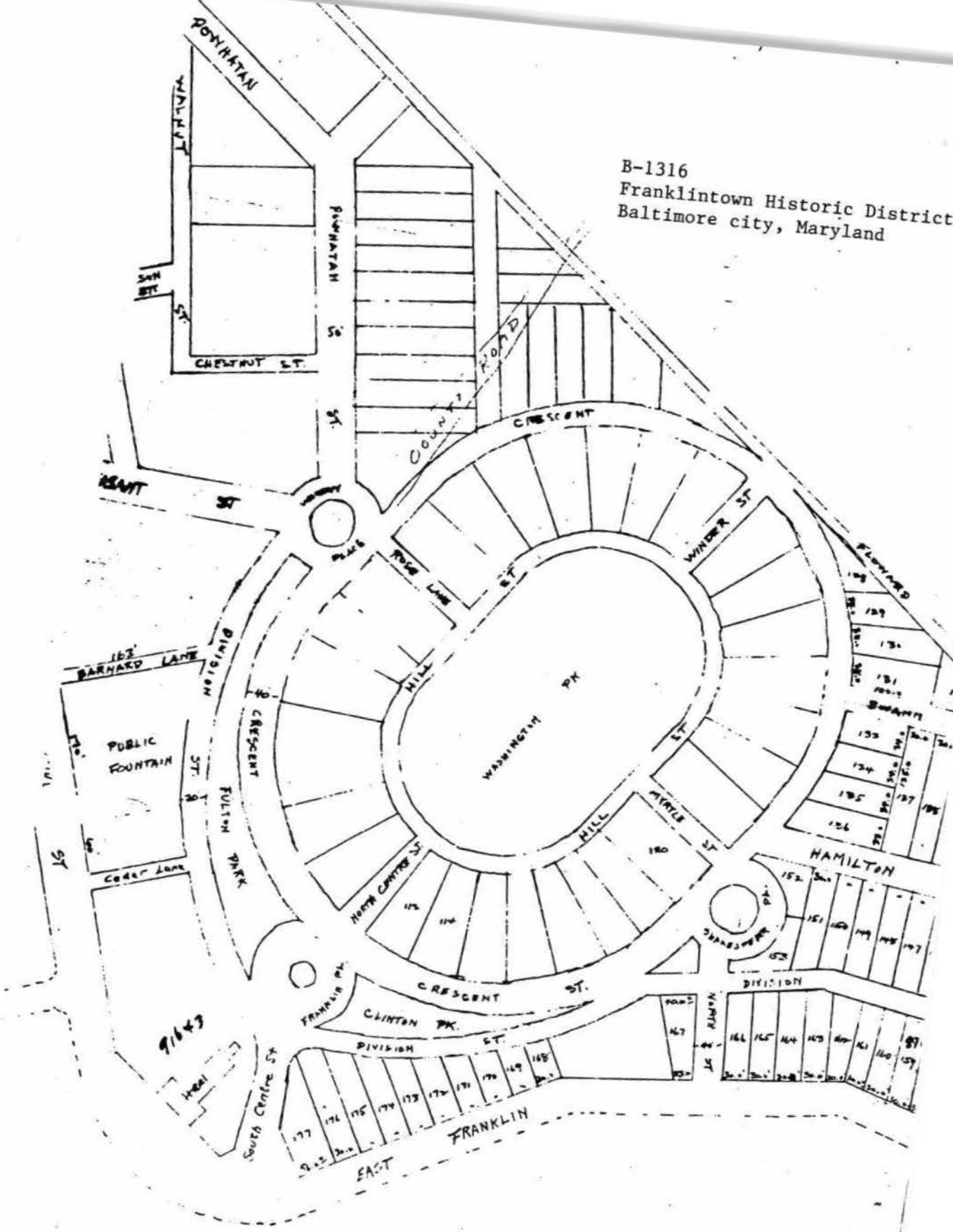
Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the intersection of North Forest Park Avenue and Path Lane, travel southwest along North Forest Park Avenue (including properties on the northwest side of North Forest Park Avenue) to the intersection with the Baltimore City legal boundary and travel south to the intersection with Dead Run. Follow the southern shoreline of Dead Run in an easterly direction until opposite William Street. Travel north on William Street. At the intersection of William and Division Streets, travel northwest, following parcel lines to Path Lane and continue traveling northwesterly to the intersection of Path Lane and North Forest Park Avenue.

Boundary Justification:

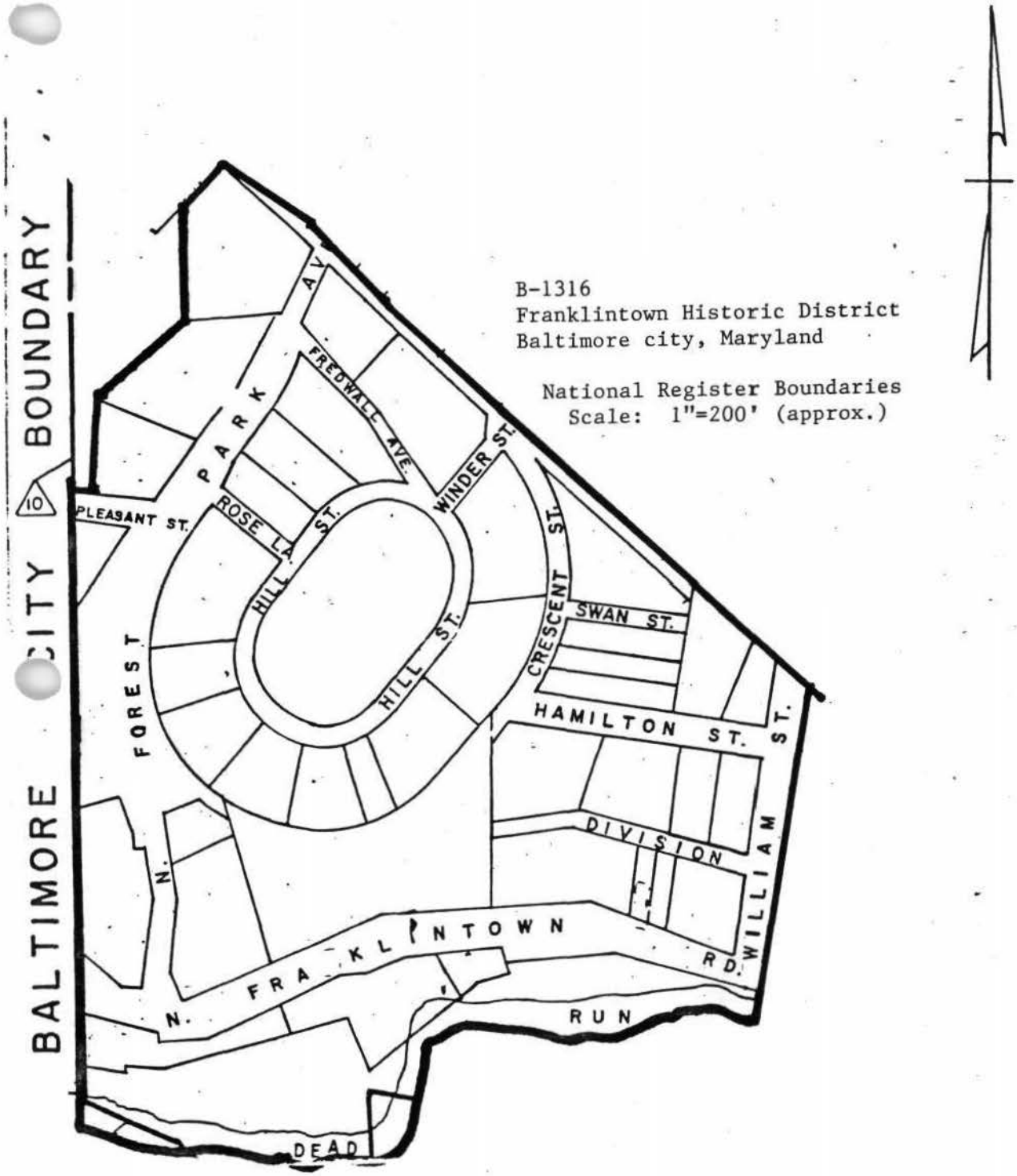
The boundaries of the Franklintown Historic District were evaluated and determined based on several factors: The first and most important of these was Freeman's plan. The boundaries of the district are based on William Freeman's original plan for Franklintown but do not include peripheral areas that were built at later dates or suffer from a loss of integrity. Areas outside of Freeman's plan were also evaluated for inclusion, but were found to have many visual intrusions due to noncontributing buildings or to contain substantial construction and architectural styles from later periods. After the initial building of Franklintown in the 1850s, scattered housing gradually appeared in surrounding areas. Most notably, turn-of-the century bungalows and World War II-era minimal traditional style housing was constructed to the west of Freeman's Oval. The historic district boundaries follow the boundaries of Freeman's plan as closely as possible while factoring in the integrity of resources within the planned areas.

B-1316
Franklintown Historic District
Baltimore city, Maryland



1858 Copy of William H. Freeman's 1832 Plan of Franklintown.
Records of the Baltimore County Planning Office.

FRANKLINTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT



B-1316
Franklintown Historic District
Baltimore city, Maryland

National Register Boundaries
Scale: 1"=200' (approx.)

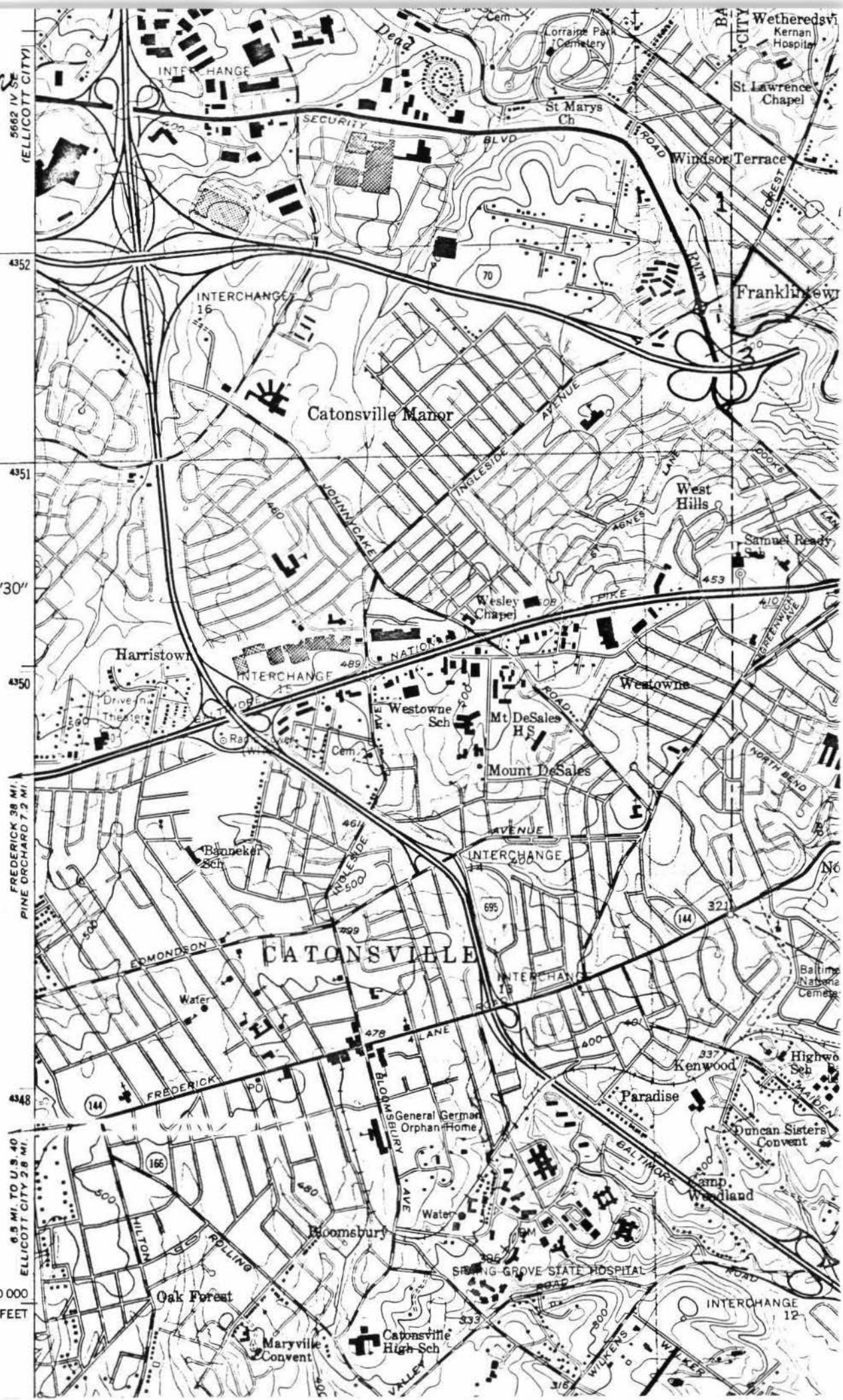
B-1316
FRANKLINTOWN
HISTORIC
DISTRICT
BALTIMORE
CITY, MD.

1: 18-352440-
4352080

2: 18-352850-
4351680

3: 18-352430-
4351500

Balto. W.



B-1316
Franklintown Historic District
USGS Baltimore West Quadrangle Map
1953, revised 1966 and 1974.