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 Freetown Rosenwald School

other names AA-2369

## 2. Location

street & number 7825 Freetown Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Glen Burnie ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Anne Arundel code 003 zip code 21060

## 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 7-30-07

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

## 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 | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

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

Rosenwald Schools of Anne Arundel County, Maryland (1921-1932)

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/civic

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Rosenwald School Plan

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Metal
roof Asphalt
other

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

## Description Summary:

The Freetown Rosenwald School is located in a low-density residential community in northern Anne Arundel County, Maryland. It is a simple, one-story, gable-roofed, rectangular frame building. Although the fenestration has been altered, the location of the characteristic original banks of windows can be inferred readily, and their framing survives behind the current aluminum siding. This school, like all Rosenwald Schools, was built according to a plan provided or approved by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The Freetown Rosenwald School, like the majority of Rosenwald Schools in Anne Arundel County, represents an adaptation of the Rosenwald Fund "Two Room Shop – B" plan.

## General Description:

Built in 1924-25, the Freetown Rosenwald School is located in northern Anne Arundel County in the non-incorporated, predominantly African-American community of the same name. The area, formerly typified by small farms, is now largely residential. The school building stands on the south side of Freetown Road, facing east.

The Freetown School, in typical Rosenwald School fashion, is a relatively plain building. It is a one-story rectangular frame building with exterior walls sheathed with aluminum siding. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and displays minimal overhang. Cornice treatment consists of a plain verge board. The building rests on a masonry foundation..

A historic photograph depicts large banks of five 9/9 sash windows flanking the entrance. Although these windows have been replaced with smaller 1/1 sash – two to the left of the entrance, and three to the right – the framing for the original window openings survives beneath the present aluminum siding, and the original window configuration may be inferred from the spacing and location of the current sash.

The rear (west) wall originally contained two banks of five identical windows flanking a central doorway. Three smaller 1/1 windows are spaced across the area notht of the door; a single window appears to the south of the door, with the remainder of the wall area occupied by a small shed addition housing toilet facilities.

The interior of the building has been adapted for its present use as a community center. The south end of the building is partitioned to accommodate a modest kitchen and bathroom; the rest of the space remains open, a single large room used for meetings and functions. A small closet was created in the northwest corner. The interior is uniformly sheated in plywood paneling, with

an acoustical-tile dropped ceiling and vinyl tile covering the wood floor. Original wall finishes and window framing survive behind the present paneling.

Despite these alterations, the Freetown Rosenwald School meets the integrity requirements specified in the Multiple Property Documentation Form for *Rosenwald Schools of Anne Arundel County, Maryland (1921-1932)*: the building retains form and massing sufficient to reflect its derivation from one of the Rosenwald program's standard plans; fenestration has been altered, but the original window openings may be inferred from the present configuration; and the building's historical association with the Rosenwald program is supported by documentary evidence.

## 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)
N/A
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.

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

### Area of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Ethnic Heritage—Black

### Period of Significance

1924-1955

### Significant Dates

1924

### Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Variation on Rosenwald Fund "Two Room Shop - B" Plan

## 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:

Note: This individual nomination supports a Multiple Property Nomination titled *Rosenwald Schools in Anne Arundel County, Maryland (1921-1932).* Please refer to that document for a detailed exploration of the history and significance of the Julius Rosenwald Fund School Building program and information on African-American education in Anne Arundel County prior to desegregation.

Built in 1924-25, the Freetown Rosenwald School achieves significance for its association with the school construction program of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, considered the most important advance in African-American education in the southern states prior to desegregation. A private foundation named for the Chicago entrepreneur who directed the booming growth of Sears, Roebuck & Company in the early 20th century, the Fund provided financial and technical assistance for the construction of schools to serve African American communities. Between 1917 and 1932 the Julius Rosenwald Fund assisted in the construction of 5,357 schools for African Americans in the rural South. Plans provided or approved by the Julius Rosenwald Fund were cost-efficient and easy to construct, yet remarkably emphasized health and safety concerns and embodied the latest ideas in educational building design. A total of 292 Rosenwald Schools were built in Maryland, 23 of which were erected in Anne Arundel County. Freetown is one of ten Rosenwald Schools surviving in Anne Arundel County.

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### The Julius Rosenwald Fund

The Freetown Rosenwald School is significant as an example of a Rosenwald School. As such, it is associated with one of the most pivotal advances in Black education prior to school desegregation. The importance of the Julius Rosenwald Fund's school building program to African-American education cannot be overstated. The construction of more than 5,000 elementary schools in rural areas of 17 Southern states enabled tens of thousands of African American children previously educationally disenfranchised or underserved to acquire a basic education in a state-of-the-art facility.

Freetown, like all Rosenwald Schools, was built with both financial and technical assistance provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. This private foundation was created by and named for the Chicago entrepreneur and philanthropist who directed the booming growth of Sears, Roebuck & Company in the early 20th century. While Rosenwald generously supported a wide variety of charities, he showed particular concern for African American causes.

Biographers state that Julius Rosenwald's interest in African-American causes in general and education in particular derived from his admiration and subsequent affiliation with Black educator and Tuskegee Institute founder, Booker T. Washington. The two men first met in 1911 and in 1912 Rosenwald became a trustee and financial supporter of the Tuskegee institute. In 1917 Rosenwald inaugurated his personal campaign to improve the quality and increase the availability of educational opportunities for African-Americans in the rural South. The Julius Rosenwald Fund was created in that year.

Between 1917 and 1932 the Julius Rosenwald Fund's school building program assisted in the construction of 5,357 schools for African American students in 17 Southern states. The Freetown School is one of 10 Rosenwald Schools surviving in Anne Arundel County.

**History of the Freetown Community**

Freetown is an African American community established in the mid-19th century by free blacks. The area was one of the largest populated sections of free blacks in Anne Arundel County outside of Annapolis during the 19th century.

According to local tradition, the community of Freetown began upon a parcel of land that remained unclaimed in the 1840s, bordered by Spencer's Wharf on the north, Pasadena on the south, Solley Road and Batts Branch on the east, and the Pumphrey tract on the west. The unclaimed property was cleared, homes were built, and the land was farmed; the resulting community was called "Freetown".

An important landowner in the Freetown community was James Spencer. Identified in land records as a "free black", Spencer purchased his first tract of land, 56 acres near Marley Creek, in 1845. He acquired 35.5 acres -- part of a tract known as Nelson's Chance -- from Charles R. Stewart on November 20, 1851, and this property was later referred to as Spencer's "home farm." He continued to purchase land in the Freetown and Glen Burnie areas, and elsewhere in Anne Arundel county, throughout his lifetime. At his death in 1885, he owned some 1800 acres. During the Civil War, James Spencer served in the Union Army, U. S. Colored Troops, achieving the rank of Captain.

James Spencer's "home farm" became the anchor of the Freetown community. Other free black men including William Howard and William Turner purchased property adjoining Spencer's. A self-sufficient farming community emerged.

Former slaves and their descendants erected the first community building in 1878. The building, Hall Chapel, was built in 1887 and was named in honor of William H. Hall, a black landowner. Mr. Hall donated the land to the community for that purpose. In 1898, a second church was built replacing Hall

Chapel. It was called Hall Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, and was erected on the same site as the present church structure. In 1968, the church became Hall United Methodist Church.

Prior to 1914, the children of Freetown did not receive formal education. Mrs. Cora Spencer Caiger Carter (mother of Mrs. Mable Cook) and Mrs. Jane Dorsey Matthew, community activists, petitioned Samuel Garner, Anne Arundel County Superintendent, to permit the establishment of a school in Freetown. The Good Templar's Lodge, a local African American fraternal organization, offered to provide space in their headquarters for a rent of one dollar per month. Grades one through eight were accommodated in a single room in the lodge building. Mrs. Mable Cook, at the age of 4, was one of the first students to attend the school. She received a certificate of completion.

**The Freetown Rosenwald School**

By the early 1920s, plans were undertaken to replace the school housed in the Good Templar's Lodge with a permanent, purpose-built facility, with the assistance of the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

The school building was constructed in 1924-25 at a total cost of $3600. The local African American community contributed $400 toward the construction cost, with $700 provided by the Rosenwald Fund and the remaining $2500 from the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. Originally comprising two equal-sized rooms, the plan was a variation on the Rosenwald Fund's "Two Room Shop – B" plan, which was developed by Anne Arundel County School Superintendent George Fox in consultation with Rosenwald Fund administrator S. L. Smith. The "Fox Plan," as it was locally known, was used in eighteen of the 23 Rosenwald Schools constructed in Anne Arundel County. It eliminated the laboratory and shop uses shown in the Rosenwald plan and combined their space to create a second classroom.

The school remained in educational use until the mid-1950s, when a new elementary school was constructed a short distance to the west. The building was taken over by the Freetown Improvement Association for use as a community center.

**History of the Freetown Improvement Association**

It was through the vision of a few dedicated early community leaders that the Freetown Improvement Association was formed. Petitions were filed to get electricity installed and a muddy road was widened and improved. This group formed the nucleus of the Association.

On June 10, 1954, a meeting was held to officially organize "The Freetown Christian Association". The mission was then and still is "to identify the needs of the community and to implement them."

The old Freetown Rosenwald School was renovated to serve as a center for community activities. This project was formulated and implemented under the leadership of Mr. W. Charles Johnson and funded

through a community block grant. Mr. John McLarin and Mr. William Walker supervised the building project.

**Summary**

The Freetown Rosenwald School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the theme of African American education prior to desegregation. The school's construction also represented an important event in the development of this cohesive African American community. For more than 80 years the Freetown Rosenwald School has played an important educational and civic role in the life of the community, and continues to serve as a stabilizing force and as a symbol of community identity.

## Major Bibliographical References:

Anne Arundel County Board of Education, Minutes of the Building Commission, Maryland State Archives.

Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives: 1917-1948. Box 339. Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Brown, Philip., A Century of Separate But Equal: Education in Anne Arundel County, Vantage Press, New York (1988).

Embree, Edwin R., Investment in People, The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949

Tony J. Spencer, "Captain James Spencer, Pioneer and Founder of a Free Community Called Freetown." www.enrapture51.com/publications.htm, accessed January 9, 2007

*Discovering Our School Community, 1951-53.* Unpublished research conducted by elementary school students and compiled by the Anne Arundel Retired Teachers Association. On file at Anne Arundel County Public Library, West Street, Annapolis, Maryland.

http://freetowncommunity.com/meet.html; http://www.aacps.org/aacps/FREETES/history.html, accessed January 9, 2007

James W. Clark, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties AA-2369772, "Freetown," 1976, on file at Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, Maryland.

AA-2369

Freetown Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Anne Arundel County, Maryland
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.314 acres Curtis Bay, MD quad

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

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18 | 363682 | 4333382 | 3 | | | |
| 2 | | | | 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 Ms. Lillie Caldwell
Organization Freetown Improvement Association date January 2007
street & number 7825 Freetown Road telephone 410-437-4908
city or town Glen Burnie state Maryland zip code 21060

## 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.

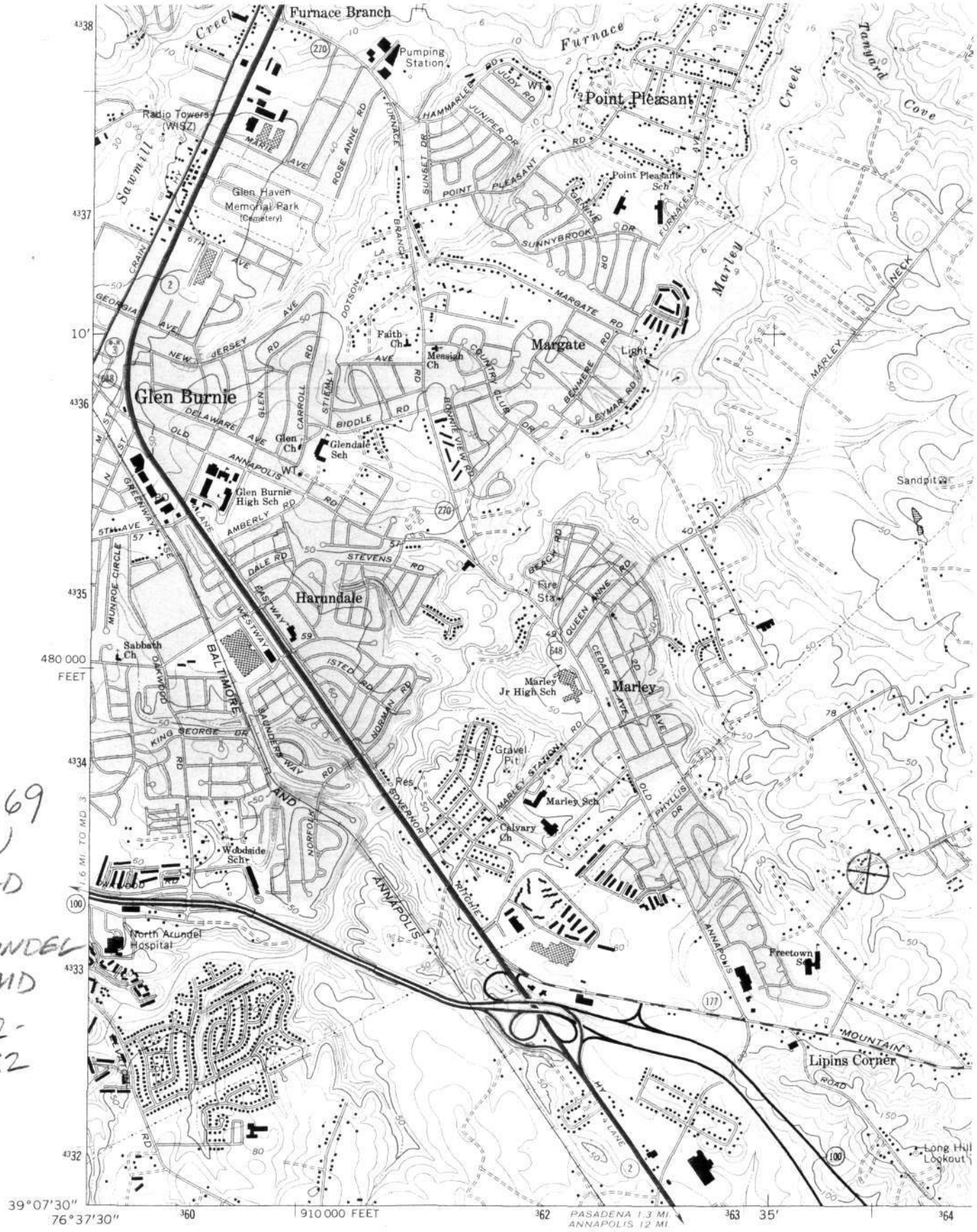
## Geographical Data

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The 1.314 acre parcel legally identified on Anne Arundel County Tax Map 16, parcel 471 and fully described in Anne Arundel County land records liber 1359 folio 289.

**Boundary Justification:**

The nominated property represents the single lot historically associated with the Freetown Rosenwald School.




AA-2369
FREETOWN
ROSENWALD
SCHOOL
ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY, MD
8-363682-
4333382

(ODENTON)
5662 II SW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1969

Supersedes Army Map Service map dated 1957

MN GN

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