

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Benson Building

AND/OR COMMON IPC Building

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 4 East Franklin Street (501-515 N. Charles St.)

CITY, TOWN Baltimore VICINITY OF Seventh

STATE Maryland CODE 24 COUNTY Baltimore City CODE 510

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME ~~Investment Properties Company~~ c/o Martin P. Azola, General Manager

STREET & NUMBER ~~300 Cathedral Street~~ 1408 W. Joppa Road

CITY, TOWN ~~Baltimore~~ Towson VICINITY OF Maryland STATE ~~21201~~ 21204

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Records Office

STREET & NUMBER Room 601, Baltimore City Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Baltimore STATE Maryland 21202

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey (Mount Vernon Expansion)

DATE 1975  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation

CITY, TOWN Baltimore STATE Maryland 21202

# 7 DESCRIPTION

B-2026

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This four-story, early 20th century building is located between East Hamilton and East Franklin Streets on North Charles Street, adjacent to the Mount Vernon National Register Historic District in Baltimore City. Both major facades (the west and south) are similarly surfaced with Indiana limestone. The Charles Street facade is seven bays wide, while the Franklin Street facade is three bays. The building features store windows on the first floor, large upper story windows, and a stone cornice. It has a steel frame and limestone construction.

The first floor bays are separated by piers capped with capitals, each ornamented with a geometric pendant. The contemporary recessed storefronts have bronzed aluminum infill panels above and below the glass panes. (Originally, the storefronts projected onto the sidewalk.) The four storefronts north of the Charles Street entrance each have a central panel of glass flanked by two glass doors. The other first floor window bays, two flanking the entrance and two on Franklin Street, consist of a large central light with flanking narrower windows.

There is a recessed entrance on each major facade. The entrance on Charles Street has two glass doors with a transom centered between two infill panels. The recessed entrance on Franklin Street is located in the easternmost bay and also has a pair of glass doors and a transom. Four steps lead up to the doorway on the left, while on the right there is a staircase which winds around a central wood planter and leads to the basement. The wall is surfaced in dark brown brick with white letters reading "IPC Building" and displaying the IPC logo. The piers between the bays are spanned by a flat frieze and a band course.

The North Charles Street facade conforms to the slope on the street by descending in two steps, each two bays wide, towards Hamilton Street. The change in level is apparent on all floors, but the line of the cornice and crowns of the bay arches is unbroken. The extra height is made up by lengthening the windows on the fourth floor. The breaks in the frieze and band course at the first floor are ornamented with limestone brackets decorated with stylized dentils, acanthus leaf, and sunburst.

The windows on the upper floors are grouped in vertical, slightly recessed bays, each capped by a segmental arch with large keystone. A flat band in low relief defines each bay. The windows are composed of three large panes, a central light flanked by two narrow panes and topped by three corresponding transoms. The fourth floor windows conform to the arch at the top of the bays. The windows are separated by horizontal sections of wall, each divided into three panels. The central, wider panel is decorated with an incised diamond.

The narrow frieze below the cornice rests directly upon the keystones of the bay arches. The cornice is rather severe, with dentils, modillions and moldings, but is not ornamented in any other way.

The north facade, on Hamilton Street, is surfaced in buff brick trimmed in the same stone as the front. The windows of the three upper floors are arranged in three groups of three windows. The fenestration on the first and basement floors is very irregular due to the slope of the ground and the inclusion of several doors and half-height windows. Each of the upper windows is one-over-one, double hung sash with fixed transom.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

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Benson Building  
Baltimore City

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

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PAGE 1

(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The building's main entrance on East Franklin Street opens up to a foyer decorated with a geometrically designed mural on a mirrored surface. A single elevator leads to upper level offices. Primary entrance on North Charles Street leads to a reception area for the office on the first floor corner, presently occupied by the John Hancock Insurance Company. Two separate entrance doors on North Charles Street next to store windows lead to a stairway and offices on the second floor. Office interiors feature acoustical tile ceilings with lights recessed into ceiling panels, wall to wall carpeting or quarry tile floors, and wall partitions with solid core doors.

The three stores on the first floor, North Charles Street facade, include an optical store, an airline agency, and a brass bed store. Each store is approximately twenty by sixty feet in area.

# SIGNIFICANCE

B-2026

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PRE-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Baldwin & Pennington

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benson Building is an excellent example of early 20th century commercial architecture in Baltimore and is important as a design of a well-known local architectural firm, the home of quality Baltimore businesses, the site of an earlier historic clubhouse, and a part of the Mount Vernon streetscape in downtown Baltimore. The building is stylistically tied to both classical architecture and the commercial style which flourished generally between 1890 and 1915. It features modern elements of its era, such as large windows and geometric ornamentation; however, its size, non-skeletal appearance, and classical elements relate to earlier architectural styles. The building was designed by the famous architectural team of E. Francis Baldwin and Josias Pennington. Baldwin and Pennington designed many important Baltimore structures, including the Marburg house in Mount Vernon Place, the Maryland Club, Old City College at Howard and Centre Streets, and Mount Royal Station.

Located just outside of the Mount Vernon National Register Historic District, the Benson Building is surrounded by historic structures, including the First Unitarian Church across Charles Street, the Basilica of the Assumption, and adjacent Franklin Street Federal-style row-houses and Hamilton Street carriage houses. It is visible from Mount Vernon Place and is an important visual landmark on Charles Street, a major corridor in downtown Baltimore.

The building, erected by Thomas O'Neill, the owner of a department store and a vice president of the National Howard Bank, was constructed by Edward Walters and Company for a cost of approximately \$75,000.00. Its name derives from C. J. Benson and Company, a local interior decorating and furniture establishment and one of its first tenants. The book Baltimore: The Gateway to the South stated in 1898: "The firm handles only the choicest productions in the various lines, and imports its own paper and paper-hanging from England, Germany and France. The firm does the highest grade work in wall paper hanging and decorating". Other early tenants of the building included the Walker and Gordon Milk laboratory, Hamilton Florists, and the Cassard Reese Company, a wholesale wine and liquor firm.

The old Athenaeum Club stood on this site from 1830 to 1910. Originally the home of William Howard, it was used by the Union Club in the Civil War era, and from 1877 it housed the Athenaeum Club, which included Enoch Pratt among its members. The building, a large Greek Revival structure with four large fluted monolithic columns and Beaver Dam marble construction, was razed for the construction of the Benson Building.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

Today the Benson Building is owned by Investment Properties Corporation. In 1976 the building was renovated by J.R. Azola and Associates. Peterson-Brickbauer were the architects. The renovations included re-roofing the building and cleaning the exterior; most of the original architectural elements and ornamentation were retained. The storefronts and entranceways, which originally encroached on the sidewalk, were set back to reveal the building columns that were formerly hidden. The interior of the building was supplied with new plumbing, heating, and electrical systems, modernizing the building for today's office needs and existing City code. The Benson Building is an excellent example of one of the many adaptive reuse projects taking place in Baltimore at the present.

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

B-2026

Baltimore Daily Record. July 14, 1910 and August 13, 1910.

Mercantile Advancement Co. Baltimore: The Gateway to the South. Press of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1898.

News American. March 13, 1955.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1993 acres, Lot size 62' x 140'

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	3,6,0	7,0,0	4,3	5,0	5,8,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on the northeast corner of the intersection of Charles and Franklin Streets, following Charles Street 140' to Hamilton Street, then 62' east along Hamilton, then 140' south to Franklin, then 62' to the point of beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fred Shoken, Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION

Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation

DATE

1978

STREET & NUMBER

100 N. Holliday Street

TELEPHONE

396-4866

CITY OR TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Maryland 21202

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*J. Little*

1-8-80

TITLE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

# HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE



CITY  
LANDMARKS

- 3 BELVEDERE HOTEL
- 11 FURNESS HOUSE
- 15 MERCANTILE SAFE  
DEPOSIT & TRUST  
BUILDING
- 16 OLD CATHEDRAL  
SCHOOL
- 17 PEABODY INSTITUTE
- 21 THOMAS-JENCKS-  
GLADDING HOUSE
- 22 WAR MEMORIAL
- 23 WASHINGTON MON-  
UMENT AND MOUNT  
VERNON PLACE
- 24 ZION LUTHERAN  
CHURCH AND PARISH  
HOUSE



CITY  
LANDMARKS  
&  
NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
PLACES

- 100 BATTLE MONUMENT
- 103 DAVIDGE HALL
- 106 EMERSON (BALTIMORE  
ARTS) TOWER
- 110 MOTHER SETON HOUSE
- 111 OLD POST OFFICE  
BUILDING
- 115 ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
- 116 ST. PAUL'S RECTORY
- 117 ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
CHURCH
- 118 US CUSTOMS HOUSE
- 119 WESTMINSTER CHURCH  
AND CEMETERY
- 120 BALTIMORE CITY HALL



NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS

- 201 FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
- 204 BASILICA OF THE  
ASSUMPTION
- 205 PEALE MUSEUM
- 208 ST. MARY'S SEMINARY  
CHAPEL



NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
PLACES

- 304 FIRST PRES. CHURCH
- 305 FRANKLIN ST. CHURCH  
AND MANSE
- 306 HOWARD ST. TUNNEL
- 309 MT. VERNON PLACE CHURCH  
AND ASBURY HOUSE
- 310 ORCHARD ST. CHURCH
- 311 PASCAULT ROW
- 313 ST. ALPHONSUS CHURCH,  
RECTORY, CONVENT & HALL
- 317 BALTIMORE EQUITABLE  
SOCIETY

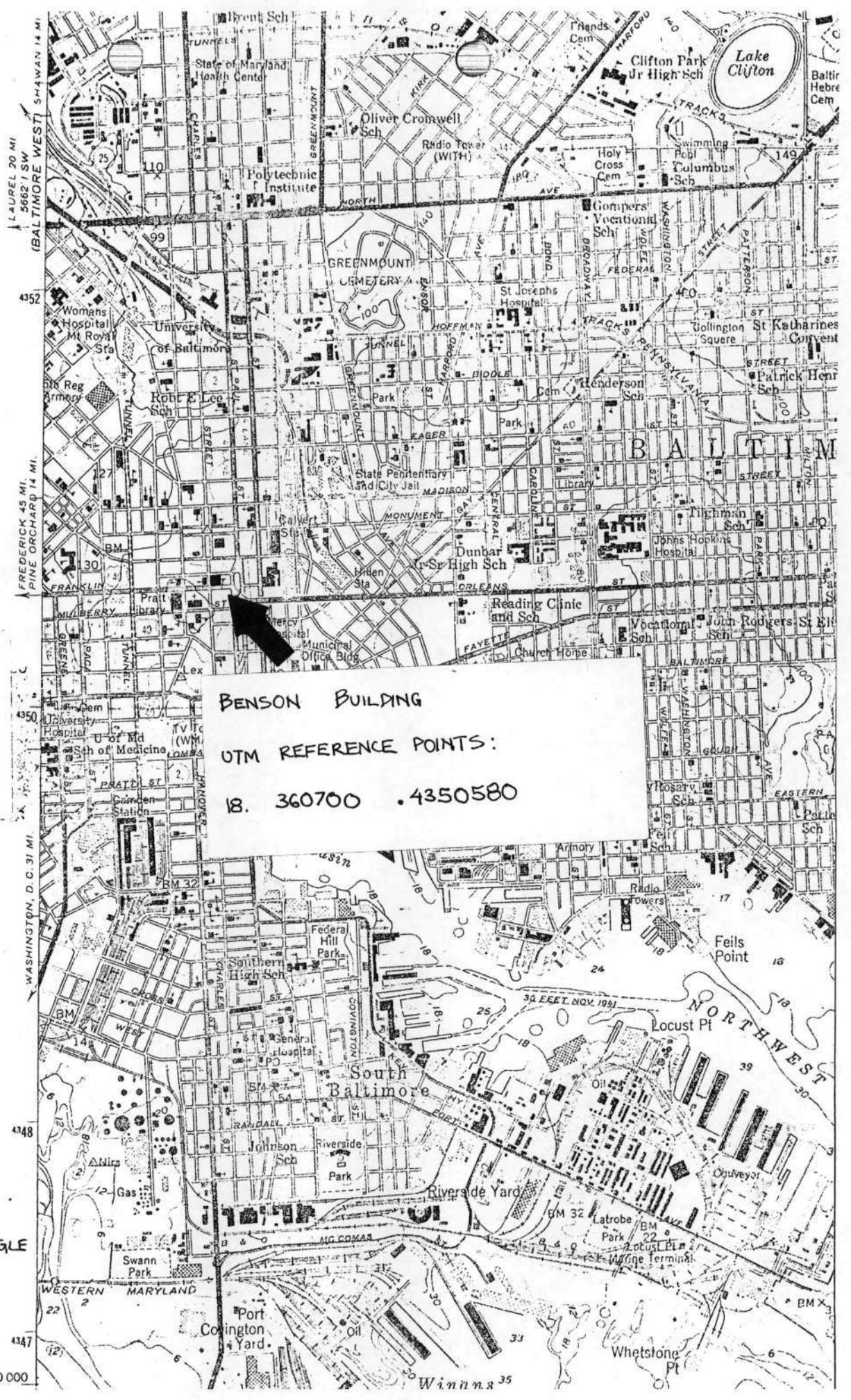


NATIONAL  
HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS

- 404 IRA REMSEN HOUSE
- 405 HENRY AUGUST ROWLAND  
HOUSE
- 406 WILLIAM H. WELCH HOUSE



Bald City



BENSON BUILDING

UTM REFERENCE POINTS:

18. 360700 .4350580

N

BALTIMORE EAST QUADRANGLE

520000