United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

B-110

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received
date entered

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: Perkins Square Gazebo, Perkins Spring Square

and/or common: Perkins Square Gazebo

2. Location

street & number: Northwest corner of George Street and Myrtle Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town: Baltimore n/a vicinity of congressional district: Seventh

state: Maryland code: 24 county: independent city code: 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status n/a	Present Use	
___ district	X public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	X park
X structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore
c/o Department of Recreation and Parks

street & number: 2600 Madison Avenue

city, town: Baltimore ___ vicinity of state: Maryland 21217

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Baltimore City Courthouse

street & number: 100 North Calvert Street, Room 610

city, town: Baltimore state: Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title: Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined elegible? ___ yes X no

date: May 1983 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records: Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town: Annapolis state: Maryland 21401

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
X fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

The Perkins Square Gazebo is an eight-sided, cast iron, open structure of eclectic Victorian design constructed in 1871 and located in a triangular shaped park in West Baltimore. This park was originally surrounded by rowhousing, but now is located in the midst of a complex of high-rise housing projects. The structure features grouped columns on square bases, obtuse pointed archways surmounted by spandrels with foliated designs, an ogee shaped roof, peaked cupola, and weather vane finial. The structure now encloses a simple drinking fountain instead of the original fresh water spring. In the process of being re-painted, the gazebo is in fair condition, except for some notable deterioration at the base.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Perkins Square Gazebo stands as the surviving structure of a nineteenth century community which was razed for a high-rise, low-income housing project. It still retains its park-like setting despite the present surroundings, but the park at the intersection of George Street and Myrtle Avenue (adjacent to Harbor City Boulevard) has been modernized with low fieldstone walls, new park benches and stone checkers tables. It is no longer surrounded by flower beds, large urns and a well-maintained park landscape.

The gazebo stands in the corner of the triangular park near the above mentioned street intersection. It is surrounded by a concrete pad with a brick floor immediately around the base. The supporting columns partially rest on a granite curb which forms the inner base of the gazebo. These columns are enclosed by cast iron square bases with beveled corners and an ornamented incised design on each surface. Each column is actually made up of four thin columns grouped together ending in a simple bell capital. The columns support wide obtuse pointed archways with spandrels featuring foliated designs centering on a multi-pointed star. A simple metal cornice surmounts the archways. The ogee shaped roof is made of sheet metal on the exterior and wood strips form the interior ceiling. Ribs of the support structure are visible on the exterior and interior, ending in an octagon on the latter. The roof is capped by a square cupola that features squat columns, simple arches, a peaked lantern and weather vane finial. The floor of the gazebo is exposed aggregate concrete. A simple drinking fountain is centered within the cast iron enclosure. The gazebo is painted aqua blue at the base and columns. The spandrels are light yellow, and the exterior roof is maroon. The structure is in relatively original condition. Early photographs reveal cresting and pointed finials at the perimeter of the roof. Also the floor of the gazebo stepped down to the spring water. These are the only elements missing from the existing structure.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	X community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics government	X other (specify) recreation
		___ invention		

Specific dates erected 1871 Builder Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicable Criteria: A, C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Perkins Square Gazebo is a unique architectural structure in Baltimore City, because of its function as a shelter for a spring, its eclectic design, and its cast iron construction. This structure and the gazebo in Union Square are the only remaining spring enclosures in Baltimore and are, therefore, historically significant as reminders of a time when many fresh water springs were a vital part of Baltimore's water system and recreational ammenities. While the Union Square gazebo is classically designed, the Perkins Square structure represents the high degree of ornamentation that was popular in the Victorian era. The eclectic blend of architectural elements produced a fanciful pavillion that functions to delight and attract people to the former spring and public park. The cast iron character of the gazebo is also significant as a representative of this type of construction, because Baltimore was a leader in both its production and use in the mid to late nineteenth century.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

J. Thomas Scharf states in his History of Baltimore City and County, "In the early years of its history Baltimore abounded in many natural springs of pure and excellent water, which for a long period were the only source of supply, and which contributed largely to the health, convenience and beauty of the town."[1] As early as 1810, the city of Baltimore purchased the land at the head of these fresh water springs and opened the springs to the public. The grounds were landscaped and maintained, keepers were appointed to the springs and housed on the site, and enclosures were built over the springs. The springs provided Baltimore with not only an abundant supply of fresh water, but allowed for the creation of pleasant public grounds that may be considered the City's first public parks. The earliest of these springs were: City Spring at Calvert and Saratoga Streets, Eastern Fountain at Eden and Pratt Streets, Western Fountain at Charles and Camden Streets, and the Centre Fountain at the Centre Market. Other springs, however, were not acquired by the City until a later date. Writing in 188 Scharf states, "the site of Perkins' Spring on George and Myrtle Streets, was for many years only a waste lot, but in the last few years it has been transformed into a beautiful park, small in extent, but one of the most elegant and attractive in the city."[2]

The transformation of Perkins Spring from wasteland to parkland took a long time. The site of the Parkins Square Gazebo was originally part of the Chatsworth estate owned by George Walker, one of the Commissioners of Baltimore.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

It was later owned by John Flemming Perkins, a doctor from the University of Maryland. The name, Perkins Square, is derived from the Perkins family who owned the land prior to its acquisition by the City. As early as 1852, the Baltimore City Council considered purchasing the grounds as a "public resort" for the citizens of Baltimore.[3] The residents near the spring also petitioned the City to make improvements to it and purchase the grounds in 1859, but still nothing was done.[4] In the 1860s, there was strong developmental pressure on the area as the City continued to expand. In order to prevent this scenic resource from being lost to development, the City acted on September 21, 1868, when a City Council Resolution passed to appropriate $500 to repair and enclose Perkins Spring.[5] In the ensuing years, appropriations were made for planting, sodding the ground, paving sidewalks, purchasing urns, erecting the gazebo, fencing the lot, and building a greenhouse. Although these improvements began in 1868, the land was not leased by the City until 1872, and was not purchased from the Perkins family until October 31, 1881.

The gazebo was undoubtedly, the centerpiece for the square. Although City records do not indicate who designed this structure, a City Commissioners report from January 1, 1871 states, "The house ordered to be erected over Perkins Spring will be completed within the next months."[6] The Perkins Square Gazebo is unique in Baltimore for its Victorian-era eclectic design. Drawings of early spring structures reveal that they were classically styled. The same is true for the extant gazebo in Union Square, which was built prior to the one at Perkins Square. Although the Perkins Square Gazebo has been described as Moorish in style, it is in reality a blend of different architectural elements and should be considered an eclectic composition. Other eclectic pavilion-type buildings were built in this time period in City parks, especially Druid Hill Park, however, this was the first eclectic structure erected over a Baltimore Spring and is one of the largest Victorian-era park-like structures in Baltimore. The use of a rather fanciful design reflects the Victorian-era values towards public open spaces. The design was used to attract and delight users of the spring, while a classical style would have provided a more institutional rather than a recreational atmosphere. Perkins Square was a public place to enjoy a relief from the urban landscape with cool spring water, flowers, and open lawns. These ideals of recreation and enjoyment are expressed in the exuberance of the gazebo's design.

The use of cast iron construction for the gazebo is representative of the popularity of this material in the mid to late nineteenth century. The Baltimore firm of Bartlett and Robbins (later known as Bartlett and Hayward among other names) was one of the nation's leaders in cast iron production. The Baltimore Sun Iron Building was one of the first cast iron buildings in the country and

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

led the way for hundreds of cast iron facades that were erected in downtown Baltimore in the nineteenth century. Only a handful of these buildings have survived. It is possible that Bartlett and Robbins produced the cast iron for the Perkins Square gazebo, since an 1879 request to the City Council for improvements and repairs to the square lists a small expenditure for that company,[7] however, there are no markings on the structure to confirm the manufacturers of this unique structure.

For many years residents of West Baltimore enjoyed the spring and gazebo in Perkins Square. Three commissioners were appointed to oversee the park, and the square became a garden spot in West Baltimore in the nineteenth century. In 1881, Scharf stated that the square "is noted for the beauty of its flowers and gardening. Luxuriant beds of coleus and petunias in the most varied colors attract the eye of the visitor, the designs being anchors, stars, shields, etc., of the most elaborate kind. Rockeries, covered with creeping vines and topped with vases of bright flowers, form a beautiful novelty."[8] Ladles were available for people visiting the spring and desiring to drink the cool fresh water.

Eventually the spring became polluted as the area became increasingly urbanized. A drinking fountain was placed in the center of the gazebo. By the 1910s, the greenhouse was removed. As the population of the neighborhood shifted from middle class white to middle class black, the square remained a garden spot, but with growing needs for active recreational space, the movement of the black middle class to suburban areas and the lack of maintenance for the park, Perkins Square became a "seedy oasis."[9]

In 1963, the surrounding neighborhood was razed for a housing project that was built around the square. In the mid-1960s, the gazebo underwent repairs and was re-painted, and the square was modernized to its present appearance. Today the gazebo is the only nineteenth century structure in the area and a reminder of the original spring and pleasant garden spot that Perkins Square once was.

Listing the Perkins Square Gazebo in the National Register of Historic Places will recognize the importance of this unusual structure and could provide a source of funding for its renovation. The bases of many of its columns are deteriorating and there are some substantial cracks in the structure. Despite these problems, the gazebo is an important historical and cultural resource for the low income, black community that surrounds it, and it is the only reminder of the exuberance present in nineteenth century park design in this inner city neighborhood.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Footnotes)

[1] History of Baltimore City and County, J. Thomas Scharf, Philadelphia, 1881: p. 213.

[2] Ibid., p. 214.

[3] Baltimore City Council Proceedings 1st Branch, May 24, 1852, p. 617.

[4] Baltimore City Archives, RG 16 S 1, 1859-281.

[5] Baltimore City Council Ordinances and Resolutions, 1868 R. 409.

[6] Baltimore City Commissioners Report, 1870, p. 253.

[7] Baltimore City Archives, RG 16 S 1, 1879-705.

[8] History of Baltimore City and County, J. Thomas Scharf, Philadelphia: 1881, p. 281.

[9] "A Breadth of Air. Perkins Spring Square," Evening Sun, May 17, 1952.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

"Baltimore Then and Now," Baltimore American, April 18, 1954.

Baltimore City Archives, RG S 1, 1859-281, 1868-551, 1872-961 & 1325, 1875-989, 1871-1102, 1879-705.

Baltimore City Council Ordinances and Resolutions, 1868 R. 409, 1869 R. 163, 1870 R. 43, 1873 R. 392 & O. 14, 1874 R. 288, 1875 O. 20, 1887 R. 71, 1888 R. 166, 1896 O. 14.

Baltimore City Council Proceedings 1st Branch, May 24, 1852, p. 253.

Baltimore City Commissioners Report, 1870 p. 253 & p. 269, 1868 p. 375.

Baltimore City Land Records, FAP 912-389, October 31, 1881.

"I Remember the Heyday of Perkins Square," Baltimore Sun, February 14, 1854.

"A Breadth of Air, Perkins Spring Square," Evening Sun, May 17, 1952.

"Artisans to Redecorate Historic Park Gazebo," Evening Sun, March 2, 1965.

Scharf, J. Thomas, History of Baltimore City and County, Philadelphia: 1881.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Beginning at the NW corner of George Street and Myrtle Avenue, thence binding westernly on George Street 225', thence northernly 105', thence westernly 106' 4", thence northernly 171' 2" to intersect Myrtle Avenue, thence binding southeasternly on Myrtle Avenue 500' to the place of the beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The above boundaries take in Perkins Spring Square. The gazebo is located in the southeast corner of this park. This is the lot of ground that was purchased by the City in 1881 and turned into a park. The surrounding area is taken up by c. 1960 public housing and related community facilites. Thus, the nominated property represents the immediate historic setting of the resource.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.89 acres

Quadrangle name Baltimore West, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	359 510	4359 610
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

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

state	n/a	code	county		code
state		code	county		code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Fred Shoken, Research Analyst		
organization	Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation	date	April 29, 1983
street & number	100 Holliday Street	telephone	301-396-4866
city or town	Baltimore	state	Maryland 21202

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [signature] 6-24-83

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

VISIONS

CHANGED FOR 1965 C.SH-9419 TO 9422
PER D.P. C SH 9514
PER LETTER C SH 82-493

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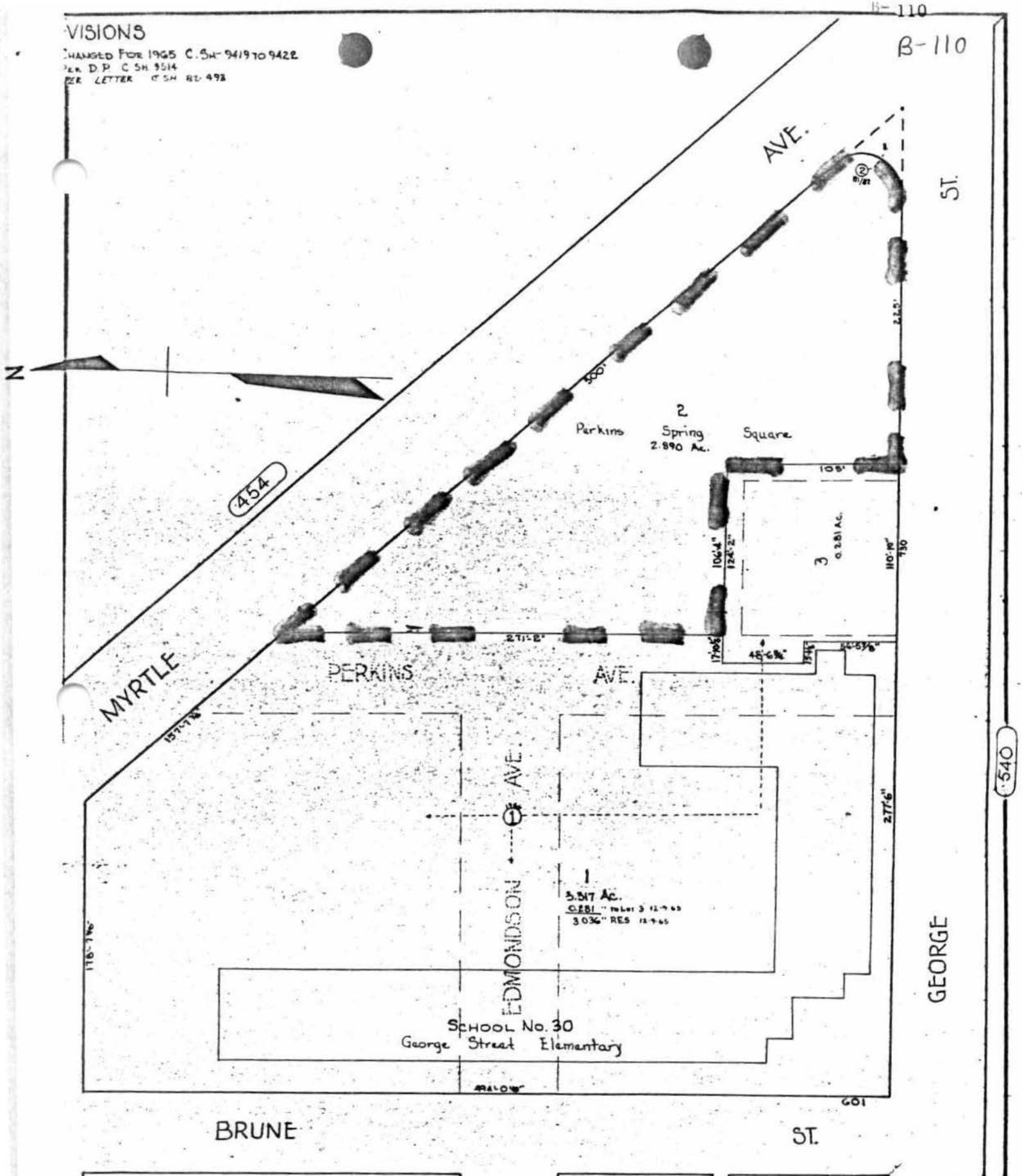

CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
BUREAU OF SURVEYS
PROPERTY LOCATION DIVISION

WARD 17 SECTION 5
BLOCK 470

SCALE 1"=50' DATE APRIL, 1965

DRN. DAL. BUSSE
CHKD. DAL. BUSSE

~~FOR OLD CONDITIONS SEE SHEETS 2 TO 4~~
~~SHEETS IN SET 4~~
~~SHEET NO. 1~~

Perkins Square, looking up Myrtle avenue, with George street in the left foreground. Note the size of trees and greenhouse in left background.

Photo showing original appearance of gazebo and square. Note the cresting and pointed finials on the roof perimeter. From Baltimore American April 18, 1954.

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PERKINS SQUARE GAZEBO

BALTIMORE CITY, MARYLAND

18-359500-4350640

Druid Lake
Douglass High School
Coppin State Teachers College
Eastlawn Park
St Peters Cemetery
Lutheran Hospital
Harlem Park
Western Cemetery
GWYNNS FALLS PARK
Mt Olivet Cemetery
Carroll
Wilhelm Park
Our Lady of Victory Ch
Golf Course
CARROLL PARK
Gwynns
Falls
Morrell Park
Mount Winans
Westport
MIDDLE BR
Perkins Square Gazebo
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Baltimore West Quadrangle
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