

PG:68-22

Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) Building
6501 Lafayette Avenue
Prince George's County
Riverdale, Maryland 20742

Capsule Summary

Description

The ERCO building is a massive Streamline Moderne style factory constructed of concrete, brick and steel. It consists of two original 1938-39 sections (office block and assembly plant) augmented on the north and east sides by a series of World War II era additions, resulting in a total enclosed area of roughly 135,000 square feet of space. Now derelict, the building is in an advanced state of deterioration due to roof collapse, extensive water damage and rot. Prince George's County officials have declared the structure unsafe and prohibit entry. The ERCO building is located in a traditionally mixed-use neighborhood of Riverdale, Maryland once characterized by single family homes to the south and business and industrial concerns to the north. The past two decades have brought many changes to the area. Old manufacturing and commercial buildings have been raised to accommodate new office parks, technology centers and the College Park Metro station. During World War II the ERCO campus consisted of 230 acres, twelve secondary structures and an airfield. The property is now reduced to 13.71 acres and only the main factory and two ancillary buildings remain.

The Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maryland Historical Trust made this determination in 2002, finding that the property achieves significance under both National Register Criteria A: Events and C: Design/Construction. The ERCO building is important for association with the development and production of the Ercoupe, a revolutionary light, fixed-wing aircraft; and also for its role in the design and manufacture of military aircraft components during World War II (1941-1945) and the Korean conflict (1950-1953). With respect to Criterion C, the ERCO building meets National Register eligibility requirements as a rare industrial example of Art Deco style architecture in Prince George's County. The stylish and state-of-the-art manufacturing facility was designed in-house, by a team of engineers led by ERCO's founder, Henry A. Berliner, and chief design engineer, Fred E. Weick. Aviation pioneer Henry A. Berliner founded the Engineering and Research Corporation in 1932. Better known by its acronym, ERCO, the company started operations with little fanfare in Washington, D.C. as a specialty manufacturer of aviation parts and machine tools. When Frederick E. Weick joined the ERCO team as chief designer in 1936 the company changed direction and embarked on an ambitious effort to mass-produce a safe, easy-to-fly, affordable personal aircraft. The result was the Ercoupe which, more than sixty years after the first models were produced, continues to be regarded by historians and flying enthusiasts as one of the most innovative aircraft designs in the history of personal aviation. The story of ERCO, Henry A. Berliner and Frederick E. Weick is that of a company founded by aviation pioneers whose visionary genius made lasting contributions to aeronautical engineering and the history of flight.

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes
no

Property Name: Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) Inventory Number: PG:68-22
 Address: 6501 Lafayette Avenue Historic district: yes no
 City: Riverdale Zip Code: 20737 County: Prince Georges
 USGS Quadrangle(s): Washington East
 Property Owner: State of Maryland Tax Account ID Number: 193507159
 Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 0000 Tax Map Number: 042
 Project: Purple Line Transit Study Agency: Maryland Transit Administration
 Agency Prepared By: John Milner Associates, Inc.
 Preparer's Name: Sarah Traum and Courtney Clark Date Prepared: 1/18/2012

Documentation is presented in: MHT, State Historic Sites Inventory Form: ERCO (M.King), 1986; Determination of Eligibility Notification: ERCO (NRHP), 1986; MHT, Determination of Eligibility Form: Engineering and Research Corporation Building (T.Tully), 2002

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended
 Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
 Name of the District/Property: _____
 Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: yes no Listed: yes no
 Site visit by MHT Staff yes no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*
 The Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) complex is located in Riverdale, MD and is currently vacant. It was once part of a large property that included an airfield. Modern office buildings have been built around this building and on the former airfield. A large parking area is located southwest of the main office building. The ERCO complex is surrounded by chain link fence. The primary building in the complex includes an office portion with an assembly plant at the rear of the offices. Two smaller buildings are located east of the main building.
 The office portion of the ERCO building has elements of the Art Deco style. It stands two stories tall with a smooth, concrete block exterior. On the main, or south, façade, long, horizontal bands of glass block are located on each floor and on either side of the projecting entrance block. A semi-circular, glass entry vestibule is centered on the main façade. A stepped parapet hides the flat roof of the office portion of the building. The main decorative elements on this building are rectangular, inset panels linking the windows of the first and second floors. The glass block bands are currently painted over.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW	
Eligibility recommended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eligibility not recommended <input type="checkbox"/>
Criteria: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D	Considerations: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G
MHT Comments: <i>We concur with the revised NR boundary for this property.</i>	
<i>Jim DeLorenzo</i> ✓ Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services	<u>4/2/12</u> Date
<i>[Signature]</i> Reviewer, National Register Program	<u>4/2/12</u> Date

Adjoining the rear, or north, elevation of the offices is the former ERCO assembly plant. This portion of the building is built of brick and has ten bays of a saw tooth roof with clerestory windows.

The other two buildings in the complex are located east of the main building. Both are one story tall. The smallest building is of brick construction, with a gable roof. A large ventilator rises through the roof of this building. The other building is of concrete block construction, with a flat roof. The windows of this building have been boarded over.

The ERCO building was built in 1939. Henry Berliner founded ERCO, an aeronautics company, in 1932 in the District of Columbia. The company moved to Prince George's County in 1938, with the current ERCO building built in 1939. ERCO's most famous product was the Ercoupe, a light, two-seat airplane. This plane was designed as a safe and affordable plane for beginning flyers. Some of its notable features included anti-spinning and anti-stall mechanisms. Production of the Ercoupe began in 1940, but was soon halted as the company converted its facilities for wartime production, including gun turrets, propellers, and antenna assemblies. Production of the Ercoupe resumed after the war, but was stopped again in 1951 as the factory began production for Korean War materiel. ERCO was sold in 1954 and the building has been used for various manufacturing and distribution activities since (King 1986; Tully 2002).

A Determination of Eligibility for the ERCO building was made by the Keeper of the National Register on May 28, 1986 that the ERCO Main Plant and Airfield "fails to meet the National Register criteria consideration for properties less than fifty years old - exceptional historic significance has not been demonstrated for the facility's role in the history of general aviation or for production of war materials in World War II and the Korean War" (National Register of Historic Places 1986).

The ERCO building was reevaluated by the Maryland Historical Trust in 2002, after it had passed fifty years of age. This evaluation found that the property was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A "for its association with the Ercoupe light airplane and the production of war materials during World War II" and under Criterion C "as a rare industrial example of Art Deco in Prince George's County" (Tully 2002).

Character-defining features of the ERCO building include the Art Deco architectural elements of the office portion of the building: smooth exterior, bands of glass block windows, semi-circular vestibule, stepped parapet. The saw tooth-roof and simple design of the assembly plant portion of the ERCO building are also character-defining elements.

Based on its reassessment for integrity, since its last survey and evaluation ten years ago, it is recommended that the ERCO building remain eligible for listing in the Maryland and/or the National Register of Historic Places both for its historical and architectural significance and integrity. However, it is recommended that the boundary of this eligible resource be reduced to the current tax parcel that includes the ERCO building and excludes the noncontributing modern development. The property boundary suggested and determined in 2002 included the former runways associated with the building which are no longer extant. These locations have since been redeveloped as a modern office park.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW																							
Eligibility recommended _____							Eligibility not recommended _____																
Criteria:	___	A	___	B	___	C	___	D	Considerations:	___	A	___	B	___	C	___	D	___	E	___	F	___	G
MHT Comments:																							
_____												_____											
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services												Date											
_____												_____											
Reviewer, National Register Program												Date											

References cited:

King, Marina

1986 Maryland Historical Trust, State Historic Sites Inventory Form: Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO). Prepared April 1986. On file at Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

National Register of Historic Places

1986 E.O. 11593, Determination of Eligibility Notification, ERCO Main Plant and Airfield. May 28, 1986. On file at Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

Tully, Tania Georgiou

2002 Maryland Historical Trust, Determination of Eligibility Form: Engineering and Research Corporation Building. Prepared May 22, 2002. On file at Maryland Historical Trust Library, Crownsville, Maryland.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended _____ Eligibility not recommended _____

Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G

MHT Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Date

Reviewer, National Register Program

Date

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) (PG:68-22)

6501 Lafayette Avenue

Riverdale, Prince Georges County, MD

Prince Georges County Parcels



Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) (PG:68-22)
6501 Lafayette Avenue

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) (PG:68-22)

6501 Lafayette Avenue

Riverdale, Prince Georges County, MD

USGS Washington East Quad, 1982



Photo Log for

PG:68-22, Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO)

Image File Name	Description of the view
PG;68-22_2011-06-09_01	View of plant toward northwest.
PG;68-22_2011-06-09_02	View of east end additions toward north.
PG;68-22_2011-06-09_03	View of east elevation toward west-northwest.
PG;68-22_2011-06-09_04	View of northeast section toward north.

Ink and Paper Combination used to create the prints:

HP Vivera ink on HP Premium Plus Paper

Brand, Make, and Dye type of the CD-R GOLD:

Falcon Pro CD-R, CD-R Falcon 24K Gold Archival



PG: 6B-22

Engineering Research Corporation (ERCOR); 6501 Lafayette Ave.
Prince Georges County, MD

S. TRAUM

JUNE 2011

MD SHPD

View of plant toward Northwest.

1/4

PG: 6B-22_2011-06-09_01



PG: 68-22
Engineering Research Corporation (ERCOC); 4501 Lafayette
Prince Georges County, MD
Ave.

S. Traum

JUNE 2011

MD SHPD

VIEW of east end addition toward North.

2/4

PG: 68-22, 2011-06-09-02



Pg: 68-22

Engineering Research Corporation (ERC), 6501 Lafayette Ave.
Prince Georges County, MD

S. Traub

JUNE 2011

MD STPO

VIEW of east elevation toward west-northwest.

3/4

Pg: 68-22 - 2011-06-09 - 03



PG 68-22
Engineering Research Corporation (ERC) 16901 Lafayette Ave,
Prince Georges County, MD

S. TRAMM

JUNE 2011
MD SHPD

VIEW OF NORTHEAST SECTION TOWARD NORTH.

4/4
PG 68-22 - 2011-06-09 - 04

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 68-22

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Engineering and Research Corporation Building
other ERCO

2. Location

street and number 6501 Lafayette Avenue ___ not for publication
city, town Riverdale ___ vicinity
county Prince George's

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name State of Maryland, University of Maryland
street and number 2101 Main Administration Building telephone (301) 405-0241
city, town College Park state MD zip code 20742

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County liber 16401 folio 255
city, town Upper Marlboro tax map 42 tax lot 5 tax ID number 19 3507159

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: Prince George's County Department of Planning; College Park Aviation Museum

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<u>3</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
				Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
				<u>5</u>	

7. Description

Inventory No. PG: 68-22

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY

The ERCO building is a massive Streamline Moderne style factory constructed of concrete, brick and steel. It consists of two original 1938-39 sections (office block and assembly plant) augmented on the north and east sides by a series of World War II era additions, resulting in a total enclosed area of roughly 135,000 square feet of space. Now derelict, the building is in an advanced state of deterioration due to roof collapse, extensive water damage and rot. Prince George's County officials have declared the structure unsafe and prohibit entry.

COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION

The ERCO building is located in a traditionally mixed-use neighborhood of Riverdale, Maryland once characterized by single family homes to the south and business and industrial concerns to the north. The past two decades have brought many changes to the area. Old manufacturing and commercial buildings have been raised to accommodate new office parks, technology centers and the College Park Metro station. During World War II the ERCO campus consisted of 230 acres, twelve secondary structures and an airfield. The property is now reduced to 13.71 acres and only the main factory and two ancillary buildings remain.

Despite the factory section's poor condition, when viewed from the front the ERCO building retains much of its former elegance. The façade of the two-story, flat-roofed front office block is principally designed in a later subtype of the Art Deco style known as Streamline Moderne.¹ This section consists of a projecting 60-foot long, 3-bay central block and 120-foot long flanking wings. Faux stone coping, a stepped parapet, and low-relief, vertical corner accents embellish the otherwise plain cornice. Cast concrete panels designed to imitate ashlar stone are applied over brick cavity wall construction. The façade's center is punctuated by a semi-circular, aluminum-and-glass entry vestibule. The vestibule's overhanging glass roof is broken in several areas. The center section's first-floor, fixed-sash, rectangular, aluminum windows remain intact while the second-story openings are boarded over. The wing's continuous bays of glass block windows remain in place, but encapsulated by a form of cement-based board.

In contrast to the stylish front office block, the large manufacturing area is plain and utilitarian in form. Projecting from the back (north) side of the office section, the ten-bay, brick mass occupies about 115,000 square feet and is rectangular in plan. The factory's innovative saw-tooth roof is punctuated with clerestory windows. Fenestration consists of bays of 4 ft. x 5 ft., 20-light, industrial-type steel windows fitted with a 6-light center-pivot sash. Door openings are a mix of metal pedestrian doors and wide industrial equipment openings. A round, exterior chimney stack is found on the west side of the building, adjacent to the former boiler room. Several additions project from the east side. These were added in the 1940s and 50s to accommodate military production needs.

Vandalism and water damage have taken a severe toll on the building's interior. As previously stated, interior access is restricted due to health and safety concerns. Part of the assembly plant section's roof has collapsed and wide-spread leaking has led to extensive mold growth. As a result, obtaining a current floor plan or photographs of this part of the building is not possible. Original floor plans were not located. The floor plan shown in Figure 1 depicts the division of space in 1948. The plan shown in Figure 2 is undated, but is believed to have been prepared about 2002.

¹ Architectural debate whether Streamline Moderne is a later, simplified expression of Art Deco or an entirely separate style.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG 68-22

Name: Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO)
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

Due to access restrictions, the best visual source of information on internal arrangements is a video taken at a June 5, 1993 reunion of former ERCO employees. The video, on file in the ERCO collection at the College Park Aviation Museum, records the reminiscences of both ERCO and ACF alumni as they walk through the building's manufacturing section. In that video an un-named ERCO employee remarked that the plant's interior was completely changed, saying "it doesn't look like it did when we were here." The film clearly shows areas of wall removal, the installation of a suspended acoustic-block ceiling, and spaces finished with materials that appear to date to the 80s when the factory was converted into office space.

In contrast to the factory section, the front office area has undergone little design alteration. Although significantly damaged by water and vandalism, the original 1938 Art Moderne design concept is clear. While the exterior freely combines both typical Art Deco and Art Moderne conceits, the interior is fully developed Art Moderne in approach. The design is an elegant and restrained juxtaposition of smooth, long horizontal lines and attenuated, curved forms. The mahogany veneered reception desk and book cases display rounded corners. Dark mahogany veneer is also used as wainscot and on the stair wall. Other notable Streamline Moderne features include the polished chrome, curving banister; metal panels displaying stylized sunburst panels; and steel doorway and window frames. Regrettably, the condition is such that very little, if any, of this material appears salvageable.

Only two of twelve original secondary structures survive. These are identified Figure 3. Both post-date the main building. The larger structure, identified as Building 2, housed offices and a cafeteria. The original function of the small structure is unknown. They appear to date to either the late 1940s or early 1950s as part factory's war-time expansion.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG 68-22

Name: Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO)
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 4

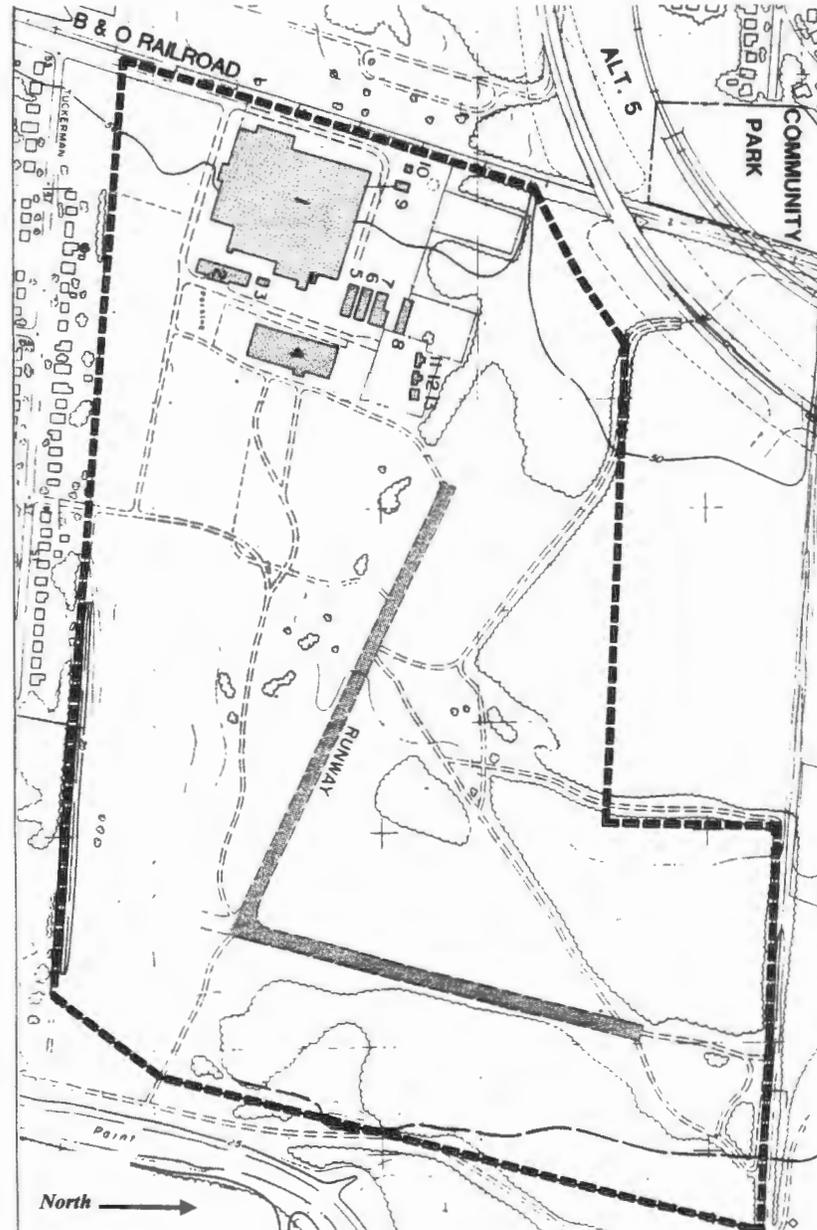


Figure 3: Site plan reproduced from a 1985 John Milner Associates, Inc. report. The ERCO building, identified by the number "1," and buildings "2" and "3" are all that remain of the former thirteen building complex and airfield. Building 2 is constructed of brick and appears to date to the late 1940s or early 1950s. Building 3 is a mid-20th century masonry block structure.

8. Significance

Inventory No. 68-22

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Henry A. Berliner and Fred E. Weick

Construction dates 1938

Evaluation for

National Register
(determined eligible 2002)

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SUMMARY

The Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maryland Historical Trust made this determination in 2002, finding that the property achieves significance under both National Register Criteria A: Events and C: Design/Construction.² The ERCO building is important for its association with the development and production of the Ercoupe, a revolutionary light, fixed-wing aircraft; and also for its role in the design and manufacture of military aircraft components during World War II (1941-1945) and the Korean conflict (1950-1953). With respect to Criterion C, the ERCO building meets National Register eligibility requirements as a rare industrial example of Art Deco style architecture in Prince George's County. The stylish and state-of-the-art manufacturing facility was designed in-house, by a team of engineers led by ERCO's founder, Henry A. Berliner, and chief design engineer, Fred E. Weick.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Aviation pioneer Henry A. Berliner founded the Engineering and Research Corporation in 1932. Better known by its acronym, ERCO, the company started operations with little fanfare in Washington, D.C. as a specialty manufacturer of aviation parts and machine tools. When Frederick E. Weick joined the ERCO team as chief designer in 1936 the company changed direction and embarked on an ambitious effort to mass-produce a safe, easy-to-fly, affordable personal aircraft. The result was the Ercoupe which, more than sixty years after the first models were produced, continues to be regarded by historians and flying enthusiasts as one of the most innovative aircraft designs in the history of personal aviation.³ The story of ERCO, Henry A. Berliner and Frederick E. Weick is that of a company founded by aviation pioneers whose visionary genius made lasting contributions to aeronautical engineering and the history of flight.

ERCO's importance extends beyond the creation of the much-celebrated Ercoupe and includes significance as a military supplier during both World War II and the Korean conflict. During those times material restrictions, especially on metal, forced ERCO to halt production on the airplane. The company retooled to supply the war effort. During World War II the factory ran three shifts and was in operation 24 hours a day. Nearly 4,000 persons worked at ERCO during World War II, making it Prince George's County's largest employer at the time. A new nearby housing development, known as Calvert Homes, was constructed in order to accommodate the large influx of persons who moved to the area to work at ERCO.⁴ During the war years ERCO manufactured a wide range of

² Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form: *Engineering and Research Corporation Building*, PG: 68-22, 2002. Maryland Historical Trust Site Files, Crownsville, Maryland.

³ Edmund Preston, Barry Lanman and John R. Breihan. *Maryland Aloft: A Celebration of Aviators, Airfields and Aerospace* (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 2003), 71.

⁴ Bob Dunn, interview by College Park Aviation Museum, Video Recording of ERCO Employee Reunion. June 5, 1993.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name
Continuation Sheet

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products, including gun turrets, rocket launchers and flight simulators. Airplane production resumed after war related supply restrictions lifted, but within a few years operations halted due to hostilities in Korea.

The Korean War ended in 1953 and although ERCO's wartime government contracts terminated, Ercoupe production did not resume at ERCO's Riverdale factory. Rights to the airplane were sold to a series of other manufactures and in 1954, ACF Industries, Inc. acquired the ERCO plant and remaining assets. Nearly fifty years of advanced aviation and military product design and manufacturing came to an end in the 1980s, when the last owner Singer-Link leased the former ERCO building to the U.S. General Services Administration for office use. The ERCO building is now vacant, derelict and soon to be demolished, but the company's legacy remains strong, both with historians and the flying public.

The Founder

By the time he founded ERCO in 1932, Henry A. Berliner (1895-1970) was already a ground-breaking aeronautical designer as well as a renowned test pilot. Born in Washington, D.C., Henry was the sixth son of German immigrant, Emile Berliner (1851-1929), who himself was an extraordinarily talented engineer and accomplished inventor.⁵ In 1919 the younger Berliner joined his then-ailing father's on-going effort to create a workable helicopter prototype.

Henry Berliner first made aviation history on June 16, 1922 when he piloted the world's first successful controlled helicopter flight. This seminal flight, demonstrated in front of officials of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics, took place in College Park, Maryland at the same airport where the Wright Brothers had trained the nation's first military pilots. The Berliner Helicopter employed an 18-foot-long Nieuport 23 biplane fuselage, and had two 13-foot diameter counter-rotating lifting rotors, driven by a 220-hp BR-2 Bentley engine. Although in its best performance the machine only rose to 15 ft. and travelled a mere 200 yards it was enough to earn the Berliners and their aircraft a place in the history of flight.⁶

Their next design, the Berliner Helicopter No. 5, greatly improved on the history-making 1922 craft and displayed the best performance of any American helicopter until Ukrainian-American Igor Sikorsky unveiled his VS-300 fifteen years later. The Berliner Helicopter No. 5 is now owned by the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and is on display at the College Park Aviation Museum. Despite their advances, the Berliners were never able to produce a truly workable helicopter. An ailing Emile Berliner retired and Henry moved on to monoplane design.⁷

In 1927, frustrated with his inability create a truly practical helicopter, Henry turned his attention to fixed-wing design. 1927 was also the year of Charles Lindbergh's famous transatlantic flight and Berliner was keen to capitalize on the public's interest in flight. He first established the Berliner Aircraft Company (later Berliner Aviation) with the aim of producing a personal aircraft to compete with the then-popular Waco, Pitcairn, Laird and Travelair models. This short-lived effort lasted only two years, after which Berliner joined with Temple Nash Joyce to form the Berliner-Joyce Aircraft Corporation. The focus at Berliner-Joyce was commercial, rather than personal aviation, and the specific goal was to develop and manufacture commercial passenger aircraft. The stock market crash of 1929 and the economic aftermath preempted the effort. In 1932 Berliner left the company, by then known as B/J Aircraft Corporation, and founded ERCO later that year.

ERCO's initial focus was the manufacture of specialty tools and airplane components. Henry Berliner's aeronautical design expertise naturally extended itself to this micro-level crafting. His interest, however, remained with new aircraft design and manufacturing.

⁵ In addition to his work on the helicopter, the largely self-educated Emile Berliner was responsible for the development of the microphone, the flat recording disc (i.e. records) and the gramophone. The later is best known by its trade name, "Victrola."

⁶ Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum website, "Available at <http://www.nasm.si.edu/collections/artifact.cfm?id=A19240006000>.

⁷ College Park Aviation Museum website available at http://www.collegeparkaviationmuseum.com/About_Us/History/Berliners.htm.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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and in 1936 the company formally turned to that task. Henry Berliner was a gifted engineer, but chose not to lead the design effort himself. For that task he hired Frederick E. Weick (1899-1993) as ERCO's chief design engineer. As events show, the collaboration of Henry A. Berliner and Fred E. Weick was a fellowship of true genius.

The Design Engineer

Fred E. Weick was born in Chicago. Like Henry Berliner, Weick was the son of a German émigré. Upon completing his education Weick moved to Washington, D.C. in 1924 to work at the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics. The junior aeronautical engineering quickly distinguished himself, and during his short tenure at the Bureau Weick carried out groundbreaking work on aircraft propeller design and fabrication. Within a year Weick joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), the forerunner to the National Aeronautical and Space Agency (NASA) where once again his exceptional talent was soon recognized. NASA historian Elizabeth Suckow provides the following about Fred Weick's contributions to the field of aeronautics.

Fred E. Weick (1899-1993) joined NACA at Langley Aeronautical Laboratory in 1925, where he was responsible for heading the development of the NACA cowling [engine cover]. The cowling dramatically reduced drag on aircraft engines, a technological advance that was to have great application during World War II. The development of the cowling led to Weick winning the Collier Trophy for NACA in 1929.⁸ He also helped design the world's first wind tunnel for full-scale propeller research and wrote a textbook on propeller design that is considered a classic in that field. In the early 1930s, he built an experimental airplane for civilian use that included the invention of the tricycle landing gear, now a standard for almost all aircraft, including the Space Shuttle.⁹

The significance of Weick's official government work is represented in the numerous awards, publications and patents that resulted from his efforts, but in terms of his collaboration with Henry Berliner and their mission to develop a new type of personal aircraft, it is the W-1, which he designed in his personal time, that is most relevant to the ERCO story. Fred Weick shared Berliner's ambition of creating "everyman's plane." According to his daughter, Betsey Weick, Fred Weick wanted to build "the Model T Ford of the sky." This is an apt metaphor because personal airplanes of the time were not unlike pre-assembly line automobiles in that they were expensive and potentially dangerous when operated by unskilled persons; characteristics that limited the market to a very small segment of the public. Berliner and Weick aimed to produce a safe and affordable craft, and in doing so democratize the airplane in much the same manner as Henry Ford did the automobile.

The Factory

Once Weick joined ERCO the search started for a suitable location at which to construct a new purpose-built factory. In March 1937 Berliner acquired the first 50 acres of what would eventually become a more than 230-acre tract of land in Riverdale, Maryland. The Riverdale site possessed numerous advantages, including proximity to the College Park Airport (for the testing of planes) and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (for the receipt of raw materials).

According to Robert Dunn, a former ERCO Engineering Department foreman who started working for ERCO in 1935, Berliner and Weick personally designed the ERCO factory.¹⁰ Reportedly, the ERCO facility was inspired by Albert Kahn's innovative design for the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company plant at Middle River, Maryland. The two structures do display notable similarities both in

⁸ The Collier Trophy was awarded by the National Aeronautic Association for the "greatest achievement in aeronautics or astronautics in America."

⁹ Information viewed on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Website, NASA History Division
http://poc.smartlogic.com/demo_data/NASA3/history.nasa.gov/naca/bio.html.

¹⁰ Bob Dunn, interview by College Park Aviation Museum, Video Recording of ERCO Employee Reunion. June 5, 1993. Video recording in the ERCO collection of the College Park Aviation Museum, College Park, Maryland.

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terms of style and construction methods. Construction started in 1938 and was completed by the next year. ERCO employees were also involved in the building's design phase as well as certain construction aspects. For example, ERCO propeller shop workers crafted and installed built-in furniture and paneling in the company's office area. These elements were crafted using the type of mahogany also used for making propellers.

Regrettably no original architectural plans appear to survive, but former employees remember it as a remarkably modern facility, designed to promote efficiency and mitigate many of the hardships typically associated with factory work. Robert Dunn recalled the state-of-the art facility as well lit and ventilated, and even featuring a rudimentary form of air-conditioning. Although the plant utilized electric power, natural light helped to illuminate the factory. An innovative, glazed, zigzag-shaped clerestory roof with north-facing windows allowed indirect light to filter in while limiting the amount of glare and production of radiant heat.

Another notable building feature is the factory section's large uninterrupted assembly line floor. Flat, metal trusses of a type typically seen in bridge construction, supported the roof without need of intermediate vertical support posts. This innovative type of roofing system, a variation of that pioneered only a few years earlier by Albert Khan, maximized the useable area of the factory's 115,000 square feet of enclosed space.¹¹

In comparison, ERCO's front office block was executed in a manner as fashionable as the factory section was functional. The façade's design was carried out in a subtype of the Art Deco style known as Streamline Moderne. The low, horizontal emphasis; light-colored planar surface; long linear array of glass block windows; restrained geometric ornamentation and curvilinear accents exhibited by the ERCO building are among the style's hallmarks.

The elaborate Art Deco style, appropriate to the exuberant Roaring Twenties, appeared in a host of downtown buildings, including skyscrapers, gas stations, apartment buildings and hotels. It was gradually superseded in popularity by the Streamline Moderne. Both less lavish and expensive to construct than Art Deco, but still sleek and contemporary feeling, Streamline Modern better fit both the mood and economic realities of the Great Depression. Architects perceived the Streamline Moderne as forward-thinking and evocative of the machine age and, therefore, highly appropriate for industrial design.¹²

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne inspired buildings, although not common, are found both in Prince George's County and throughout Maryland, but most are residential or commercial structures. For example, the nearby National Historic Landmark, Greenbelt Historic District contains numerous fine examples of the Art Deco style and other Moderne designs. Industrial architecture is, however, completely absent from this planned "Garden City" community. The David Taylor Model Basin in Montgomery County represents the only industrial Art Deco style building in Maryland individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Construction on the ERCO building started in 1938 and was complete by 1939. Aircraft testing, however, was underway before construction on the factory started. Tests flights on a prototype aircraft --the Ercoupe Model 310—took place at the College Park Airport in the fall of 1937.

The Employees

When ERCO started operations as a parts and tool manufacturer it drew on a team of approximately 85 employees. The transition to airplane production necessitated an expanded workforce, including the hiring of test pilots. Bob Sanders, who had worked with Weick on the W-1 and later went on to found Sanders Aviation, was first employed at ERCO as a test pilot, but later directed sales. Ted

¹¹ Grant Hildebrand. *The Architecture of Albert Kahn* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), 5.

¹² "Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 250.

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Waggy was also another early test pilot. They were joined by Doug Thompson, Joe Clements and Everett Hart. Henry Berliner served as chairman of the board, while Lester Wells held the title of president. Fred Weick came to the company as chief engineer and later became vice president. Bob Dunn came to work at ERCO in 1938 as foreman of engineering. Bill Lucas served as his deputy. Emily Sanders and Dottie Waggy, the wife of Bob Sanders and Ted Waggy respectively, were employed at the company as secretaries. Due to the loss of company records the names of most ERCO employees remain unknown.

According to oral history, ERCO's hourly wage employees were well compensated. Factory workers earned between \$0.35 and \$0.55 an hour at a time when the federal minimum wage was \$.25. The company served as an important area employer and provided well paying jobs at the end of the Great Depression when the unemployment rate remained at over 14%.

With the onset of World War II ERCO more than doubled in terms of the size of the building, but exponentially in terms of number of persons employed. At the height of the War the factory operated 24 hours a day and employed more than 4,000 persons. Betty Weick recalls many members of the expansion workforce moved to the area from West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia. War-time employees included men too old, or otherwise unsuited, for military service. Women—Rosie the Riveters-- also made up a large component of the labor force.¹³

The hiring of women for factory jobs caused a culture shock. According to former secretary Dottie Waggy Warren, women previously did not even go onto the factory floor and employing women as factory workers had never been considered. It is not known if this situation was a due to custom or official corporate policy, but it was abandoned when the first women workers reported to work on the factory floor the day after Thanksgiving, 1940. War forced diversity in the ERCO's workforce, but despite the new employees different backgrounds, they excelled. The company received an "E" award for excellence in fulfilling its wartime contracts.

The Ercoupe

ERCO produced a wide range of civilian and military products during its thirteen years of operation, but its most celebrated creation remains the Ercoupe airplane, which was a refinement of Fred Weick's earlier W-1 prototype. Weick had observed that the vast majority of airplane accidents resulted from spinning, stalling and ground looping when the plane was taxiing. His answers to these common problems were incorporated into the Ercoupe. The easy-to-fly, low-wing, twin-finned, two-seat, aluminum monoplane combined a series of unique features that made it so safe and simple to fly that it earned the moniker "the plane that flies itself." The first production models, marketed as the Ercoupe 415 C, were assembled in October 1939, but sales to the public were held back until the plane received its Civil Aeronautics Authority Certification in January of 1940. The first 415 C built is now in the collection of the Smithsonian National Air and Space museum.¹⁴

ERCO, and its later successors, subsequently produced other Ercoupe models, but all possessed the defining characteristics of tricycle landing gear with castering nose wheel and a coordinated control system. The former provided balance and eliminated ground-loops caused by crosswinds, and nose-overs caused by hard braking. It made takeoffs and landing easy for the most inexperienced pilots and its importance is reflected in the fact that the tricycle landing gear configuration remains a standard for almost all aircraft, including the NASA Space Shuttle. The coordinated control system also simplified operation by combing the control of the ailerons, rudder and nose. As a result, the plane was flown entirely by a control wheel, much like an automobile.

¹³ Betsey Weick, interview by author, College Park, MD, May 15, 2012.

¹⁴ ERCO Ercoupe 415 C, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, <http://www.nasm.si.edu/collections/artifact.cfm?id=A19790677000.html>.

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General characteristics of the Ercoupe 415 C are ¹⁵:

Capacity: Pilot + 1 passenger
Length: 20 ft 9 in
Wingspan: 30 ft 0 in
Height: 5 ft 11 in
Wing area: 142.6 ft²
Empty weight: 749 lb
Useful load: 511 lb
Max takeoff weight: 1,260 lb
Powerplant: 1 × flat-4 engine, 75 hp at 2,300 rpm

Performance features include:

Never exceed speed: 125 knots
Maximum speed: 96 knots
Cruise speed: 83 knots
Stall speed: 42 knots
Range: 261 NM
Service ceiling: 13,000 ft
Rate of climb: 550 ft/min
Wing loading: 8.83 lb/ft²
Power/mass: 0.13 hp/lb

The craft's revolutionary design earned praise from industry critics and consumers alike. The Civil Aeronautics Authority certified the Ercoupe as "incapable of spinning." A September Popular Mechanics article on the Ercoupe was titled "Light Safety Plane Controlled Like Auto." In October 1940 *Life Magazine* declared the new plane "nearly fool proof" and in a feature story in the Saturday Evening Post later that year the author said "Let's look at it not as another airplane, but as a new means of personal transportation.

The Ercoupe's initial sale price of between \$2,500 and \$2,665 was in the low to mid-range for personal aircraft. Enthusiastic endorsements from the press and an appealing price tag resulted in brisk sales despite the dismal economy. Berliner and Weick's goal of making it possible for the average person to fly their own airplane seemed within reach.

It was supply, not demand, that brought the ERCO assembly line to a halt in January 1941. With war looming, the National Defense Advisory Commission instituted restrictions on the use of raw materials, especially metals. ERCO manufactured only 112 aircraft before halting production due to a lack of raw material, leaving unfilled orders for approximately 900 planes.¹⁶

¹⁵ Thomas Horne, *The Ercoupe*, The AOPA Pilot, March 1980, 46.

¹⁶ Fred E. Weick and James R. Hansen, *From the Ground Up*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, 51.

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ERCO During War Time

During World War II ERCO became one of the thousands of U.S. companies that transitioned to military production. ERCO did not make aircraft, but rather sub-assemblies for other companies' planes. ERCO products included antenna units, fuel tanks, munitions equipment, propellers, and a variety of tools. It is estimated that an amazing 98% of aluminum alloy aircraft in World War II were cut on ERCO-designed machines. In total, ERCO had 15 war-time contracts with a total value of more than 20 million dollars. ERCO's most important contracts, however, were for US Navy gun turrets designed for mounting on Boeing aircraft. ERCO produced two main models of gun turrets and numerous other experimental prototypes. The 250SH series was round and could be mounted interchangeably as a nose, tail or upper turret. That model moved backward or forward on a horizontal axis. It was the first turret to feature two .50-caliber machine guns and could carry 1300 rounds of belted ammunition.¹⁷

The ERCO 250TH model was the most successful "waist turret" design used by the US military. The turret was armed with two, .50 caliber M2 machine guns and supplied with 400 rounds of ammunition. They were teardrop shaped and mounted on the sides of the aircraft and pivoted on an axis that allowed the gunner to aim up or down. The 250TH was used exclusively on the Consolidated Aircraft PB4Y-2 bomber aircraft, known as the "Flying Pirate" or "Privateer."¹⁸

The Flying Pirate was based on the B-17 "Flying Fortress" airframe and was employed for long distance reconnaissance, search and recovery, submarine hunting, and patrol bombing. Consolidated delivered 740, PB4Y-2s to the US Navy and Marines: this aircraft, mounted with ERCO turrets, played an important role in the battle for the Pacific.¹⁹

Table 1: ERCO Gun Turret Production During World War II

Model	Number of Units
250SH-1	266
250SH-2A	700
250SH-3	1045
250TH-1, -2	850
250TH-1A, -2A	780
Total	3641

During World War II Henry Berliner and Fred Weick took leaves of absence from ERCO. At the request of his friend, Major General Carl Spaatz, commander of the United States Air Forces in Europe, Berliner accepted the position of Chief of War Plans for the 8th Air Force. Although Berliner's was technically a "desk job" on at least one occasion he intentionally put himself in harm's way. In 1943 he assumed the highly dangerous job of waist gunner on the leading B-17 Flying Fortress during a raid on Wilhelmshaven,

¹⁷ Hansen, 42-47.

¹⁸ Hansen, 52.

¹⁹ Norman Polmar, *Historic Naval Aircraft: from the pages of Naval History Magazine*, Photographic Histories Series, (Dulles: Brassey's Inc., 2004), 77-79.

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Germany. In response to news of her husband's voluntary participation in the dangerous raid, a calm Mrs. Berliner laconically responded, "It sounds like him."²⁰ Perhaps Henry used the mission as an opportunity to research the competition as the B-17 gun turret he fired on that mission was manufactured by ERCO's chief competitor, Bendix.

Although he came through that event unharmed, he later received injuries that resulted in the amputation of his arm and nearly died from the complications. His recovery was long and protracted. Berliner left military services with the rank of Colonel. After the war he returned to ERCO to oversee the company's peace time transition and resume manufacture of the Ercoupe.

ERCO and the Ercoupe Change Hands

Ercoupe production resumed as soon war time restrictions lifted. An aggressive post-war sales campaign led by Bob Sanders included marketing through department stores such as Macy's and Marshall Fields. These efforts resulted in a surge of orders that totaled over 6,000. As before the war, all signs pointed towards success. At its peak ERCO ran three shifts and manufactured 34 planes a day, but was still unable to keep up with the demand. More than 4000 Model 415 C Ercoupes were produced in 1946; an impressive volume ranking second only to that of the Piper Cub. That number represented a 12% share of all personal aircraft manufactured in the U.S. that year.²¹

Unfortunately, a quickly saturated consumer market, combined with the economic downturn of 1946-47 quashed demand. Strangely, Ercoupe sales also suffered from criticism by some aviation enthusiasts who disparaged the craft for being "too easy to fly." Due to a combination of factors sales dropped precipitously. Over 4,000 Ercoupes were manufactured in 1946. In 1947 the number plummeted to 77. Despite a series of refinements, including a different engine platform, sales failed to rebound. Both Henry Berliner and Fred Weick left the company in 1947.

Bob Sander's, by then head of Sanders Aviation, acquired production rights and continued to manufacture Ercoupes at the Riverdale plant until 1952. The last of the 5,140 Ercoupes built at Riverdale was completed in January of that year.²² Sanders then sold Ercoupe production rights to Forney Manufacturing Company, who subsequently sold them to Alon Aviation. Both firms marketed their version of the plane as the "Aircoupe." The last 50 planes were manufactured by Mooney Airplane Company under the name "Cadet." Between 1939 and 1970 a total of 5,591 Ercoupes or other-named variants were manufactured.²³

As tensions grew on the Korean peninsula War, ERCO again turned to defense work. During that period ERCO manufactured some of the first aircraft-type-specific flight simulators, including models for the F9F Panther and the F89D Sabre jet fighter. "Compared to today, they were extremely primitive," said Howard Bensen, an engineer on the project. "I invented the lightening simulator, which was flashing lights around the translucent canopy. Rough air circulation was a cam-driven shaft under the ejection seat which would jump the seat up and down. That was the extent of the visual motion."²⁴

Among the extensive list of military hardware designed and manufactured by ERCO during the late 1940s and 50s were the following items:

- F9F-2 and F9F-5 Operational Flight Trainers
- F-86D Simulator

²⁰ Berliner's Exploit Fails to Jar Wife, Washington Post January 31, 1943.

²¹ Don Mack, Aviation Consumer "Fred Weick's Ercoupe: January 2003.

²² Preston et al., 71.

²³ Chuck Hansen, "ERCO: Engineering and Research Corporation," *American Aviation Historical Society*, (Spring 1985), 42-47.

²⁴ Lester A. Reingold, "Oldies & Oddities: Body by ERCO," *Air & Space Magazine* (2001). 1.

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- Twin Engine Instrument Trainer
- P2V-5 Operational Flight Trainer
- Carrier Landing Trainer
- Airways Demonstrator
- Cruise Control Trainer
- Aircraft Instrument Stacking Trainer
- Aero 11A-2, ERCO 250SH and ERCO 250TH Gun Turrets
- Mark 9 Rocket Launcher
- Aero 14A Combination Bomb Rack and Rocket Launcher
- Mark 12 External Auxiliary Fuel Tank

In 1954 the ERCO factory and other business assets, which were by then distinct from the Ercoupe manufacturing rights, were sold to ACF (American Car Foundry) Industries for \$3,000,000.²⁵ The newly acquired company became the ERCO Division of ACF Industries, Inc. Three years later the ERCO Division merged with ACF's Nuclear Energy Products Division, again prompting a name change, this time to Nuclear Products, ERCO Division. In 1965 GPE (General Precision Equipment) purchased the ERCO Division and used the former ERCO factory to manufacture flight simulators. A few years later the company, then known as GPE-Link, merged with the Singer Company, a leading airplane simulator manufacturer. The new company, named Singer-Link, owned the factory until the early 1980s when the factory area was converted by the General Services Administration into offices.

After leaving ERCO, Henry Berliner largely retired from the aviation industry in order to pursue other interests. He later formed Tecfab, Inc., a Beltsville, Maryland based firm that specialized in new types of architectural concrete. Henry A. Berliner died at his home in Washington, D.C. in 1970 at the age of 74.

Fred Weick left ERCO shortly after Henry Berliner's departure. In 1948 he joined the faculty of Texas A&M where he worked on the design and development of agricultural aircraft, including the Ag-1 and Ag-3 "crop dusters." In 1957 Weick joined Piper Aircraft as director and chief development engineer. While there he co-designed the Piper Cherokee. Fred Weick remained at Piper until he retired at age 70.

²⁵ Henry A. Berliner vs. District of Columbia, United States Court of Appeal, District of Columbia Circuit, 258 F. 2d 651 (1957).

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Figure 4: This undated promotional photograph shows two Ercoupes in front of the ERCO factory. (Source: Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.)



Figure 5: An undated photograph of the Ercoupe 415 C next to the Riverdale, Maryland plant. This image provides a partial view of the factory's innovative roof design. (Source: Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.)

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Figure 6: The ERCO plant as it appeared in 1945. (Source: College Park Aviation Museum.)



Figure 7: The above photograph shows the west side of the ERCO factory as it appeared in 1945. The houses shown at front of photograph are the Calvert Homes, which were built for ERCO's war-time workers. (Source: College Park Aviation Museum.)

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Figure 8: On July 30, 2005 the U.S. Postal Service released a stamp with an image of the Ercoupe 415 as part of its *American Advances in Aviation* series.

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Figure 10: On June 16, 1922 Henry Berliner made the first controlled helicopter flight. The event took place at the College Park Airport in Maryland. The original caption of this 1922 photograph reads "*Commander Hunsaker, U.S.N., Emile Berliner, the noted inventor, and his son Henry A. Berliner. The Berliners have been working on the helicopter for the past twenty years.*" (Source: Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.)

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Figure 2: Fred E. Weick in 1936 (Source: NASA Langley Research Center.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 13.71 acres
Acreage of historical setting 230
Quadrangle name Washington East Quadrangle scale: shown on map

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary is the 13.71-acre parcel associated with the ERCO building as recorded in Prince George's County Tax Records Map 42, Grid D2, Subdivision 750, Lot 1, Plat Number 196053.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Sherrri Marsh Johns		
organization	Retrospect, LLC	date	November 2012
street & number	303 Fairfield Drive	telephone	443 994 1591
city or town	Severn	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

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Major Bibliographical References:

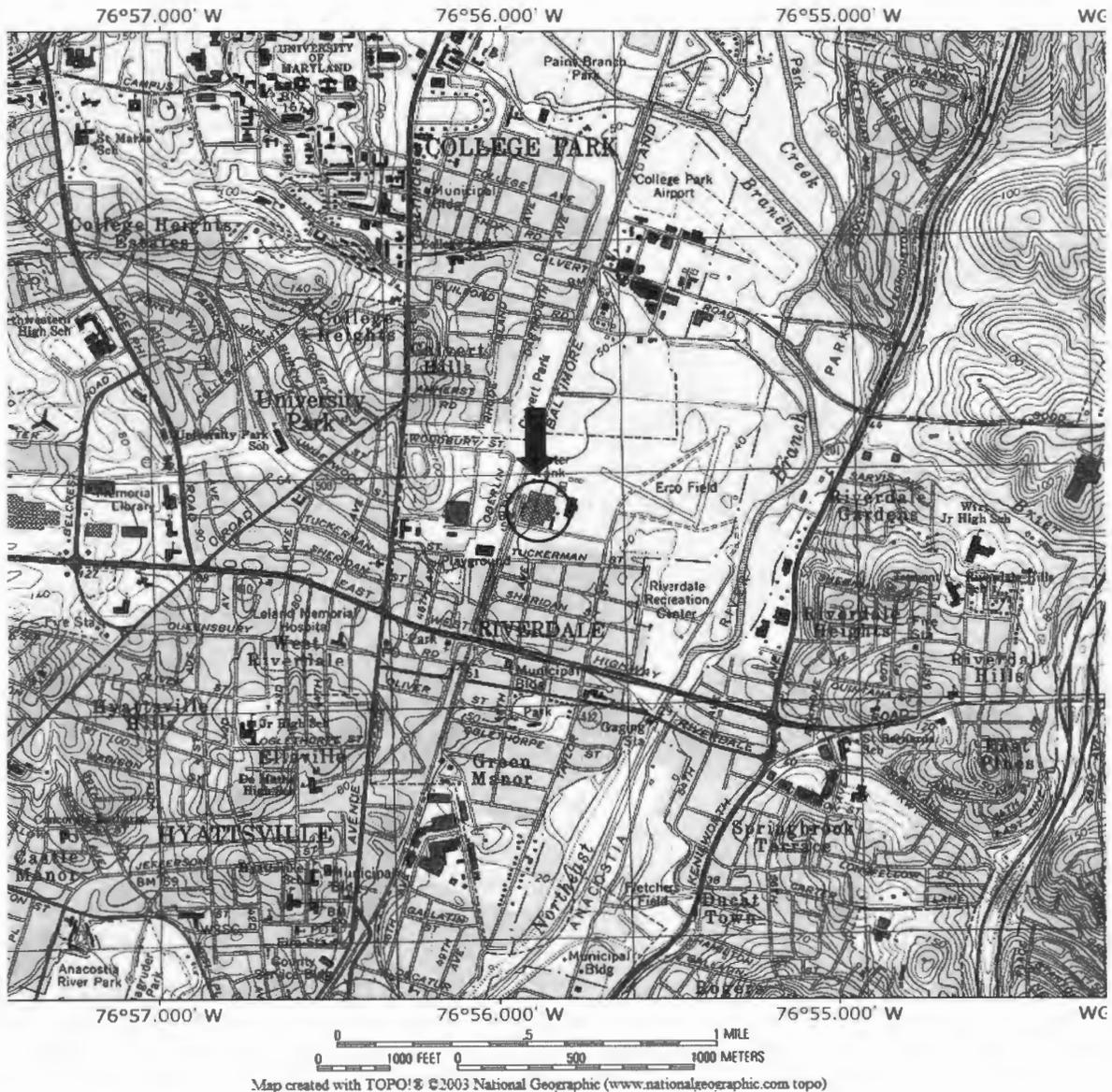
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USGS Washington East Quad Map (photo revised 1987) excerpt showing location of ERCO Building at 9501 Lafayette Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland. The airfield and most of the ancillary structures formerly associated with the property have been destroyed.



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY
Prince George's Co., MD
Sherri M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_01_001

NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Camera facing North

1 of 20

P PG



DG 68-22
ERCO FACTORY
Prince Georges Co., MD
Sheri. M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_08_007

Nov 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fronex True B&W>, 05/14/12

ENTRANCE, CAMERA facing North

2 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_06_005

~~AAA~~ NOV 2009

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Camera facing NE

3 of 20



PG 68-22

ERLO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931436, PG68-22-2809-11-12_02_002

~~MARCH 2011~~ 11/2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

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CAMERA facing NE

4 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

PRINCE GEORGES CO., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931436, PG68-22_2009-11-12_07_006

MARCH 2011 NOV 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fronex True B&W>, 05/14/12

CAMERA facing NE

5 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

MARCH 2011 NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

2931438, PG68-22-2009-11-12-3-020

Camera facing NW

6 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince George's Co., MD

Sherril M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_04_003

MARCH 2011 · NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fomex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Camera facing NW

Original factory section seen at
left side of photograph

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PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_05_004

~~MARCH 2011~~ NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Camera facing west looking at
WWII era additions. Four center
gables are 1938 Factory Roof

8 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherril M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_09_008

MARCH 2011

NOV. 2009.

Digital Copy at MD. SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

View from East side of Bldg facing
north showing WWII additions
And location of ancillary structures

9 of 20

← CHART SALES
OFFICE

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF
DETROIT
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
MAY 14 1964
P. O. BOX 110
DETROIT, MICHIGAN
48201

AMOUNT
\$ 100.00
DATE
MAY 14 1964

AS

MRS. S. W. C.



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherr, M. Johns

2931436, PG68-22_2009-11-12_10_009

MARCH 2009 NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Front office

10 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co, MD

Sherril M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_16_017

MARCH 2011 NOV. 2009

Digital copy at SHPO

FRONT OFFICE section

11 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_11_010

MARCH 2011 NOV 2009

Digital Copy at MDSHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05-14/12

Front office

12 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

Prince George's Co, MD

Sherri M. Johns, NOV. 2009

2931438, PG68-22-2009-11-12-13_012

MARCH 2011

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Front office Detail

13 of 20



PG 68-22

GRUO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherrill M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_14_013

MARCH 2011 NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

Front office detail

14 of 20



PG 68-22

ERIC Factory

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns, NOV 2009

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_15_014

March 2011

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

STAR Detail

15 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince Georges Co., MD

Sherri M. Johns, November 2009

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_16_015

MARCH 2011

Digital copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

metal and Mahogany Banister Detail

16 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

Prince George's Co., MD

Sherril M. Johns, NOV. 2009

2931436, PG68-22_2009-11-12_17_016

MARCH 2011

Digital copy at MD SHPO

Cabinet + metalwork Detail

(ILFORD), (Fomex True B&W), 05/14/12

17 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

Prince George's Co, MD

Sherr. M. Johns, NOV 2009

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_12_011

MARCH 2010

Digital Copy at MD SHPO

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

View of Stair facing into Factory

18 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO FACTORY

PRINCE GEORGE'S CO., MD

Sherri M. Johns

2931438, PG68-22_2009-11-12_19_018

MARCH 2011 NOV. 2009

Digital Copy at SHPO

ENTRY vestibule

<ILFORD>, <Fromex True B&W>, 05/14/12

19 of 20



PG 68-22

ERCO Factory

PRINCE GEORGE'S CO, MD

Sherril M. Johns, Nov 2009

MARCH 2011

Digital Copy at SHPO

ENTRY Vestibule

200 + 20

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes ___
no ___

Property Name: Engineering and Research Corporation Building Inventory Number: PG: 68-22

Address: 6501 Lafayette Avenue City: Riverdale Zip Code: 20737

County: Prince Georges USGS Topographic Map: Washington East

Owner: RIVERTECH LLC Is the property being evaluated a district? ___ yes

Tax Parcel Number: G80L2,3 Tax Map Number: 42 Tax Account ID Number: 17192734432

Project: U of M College Park Purchase Agency: UMCP

Site visit by MHT staff: ~~X~~ no yes Name: Tania Georgiou Tully Date: 1/25/02

Is the property is located within a historic district? ___ yes no

If the property is within a district District Inventory Number: _____
NR-listed district ___ yes Eligible district ___ yes Name of District: _____
Preparer's Recommendation: Contributing resource ___ yes ___ no Non-contributing but eligible in another context ___ yes

If the property is not within a district (or the property is a district) Preparer's Recommendation: Eligible yes ___ no

Criteria: A B C D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___ None

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: 106 File, Vertical File, MIHP form

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: *(Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)*

The Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) Building, constructed in 1939 is a two-story, streamlined Art Deco building built of brick and concrete. The building consists of a formal façade (south) with offices fronting an assembly plant. The Art Deco features include the horizontal bands of glass block, the metal and glass circular entrance, the smooth walls, the stepped parapet, and geometric decorations. The front portion has a stepped parapet hiding a flat roof, while the assembly portion consists of a ten-bay saw-tooth roof with clerestory windows. In the early 1940s a new bay was added to the assembly plant due to wartime contracts.

The ERCO facility is eligible for listing under Criterion A, for its association with the Ercoupe light airplane and the production of war materials during World War II (WWII). It is also significant under Criterion C as a rare industrial example of Art Deco in Prince George's County. While the property may not have met criteria consideration G in 1986, it no longer needs to meet the exceptional significance requirement and is significant nationally.

ERCO was formed in 1932 by Henry Berliner. Frederick E. Weick, developer of the Ercoupe, joined ERCO in 1936 after leaving the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA, the forerunner of NASA). ERCO's first offices were in Washington, DC, but moved to this location in 1938 after outgrowing the DC location. The existing plant sitting on 11.55 acres is all that remains of what were over 230 acres, a runway and many outbuildings.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended ___
Criteria: A ___ B C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___ None

MHT Comments

Tania Georgiou Tully Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date: 5/22/02
B. Weick Reviewer, NR Program Date: 6/10/02

NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Engineering and Research Corporation Bui

Page 2

PG: 68-22

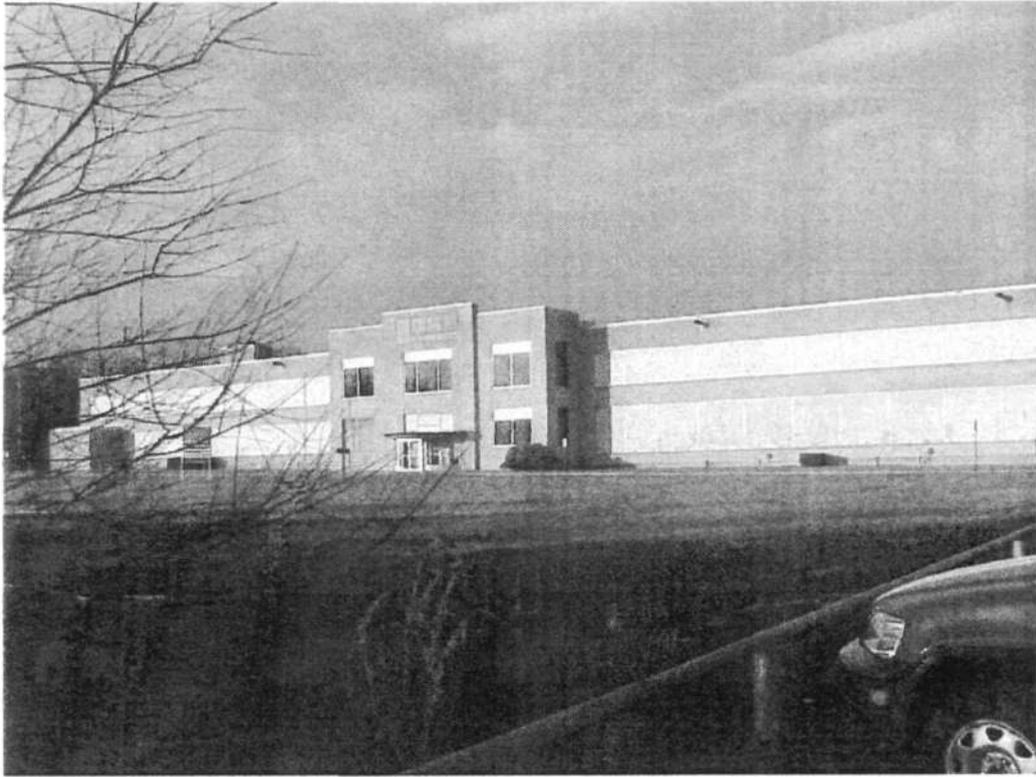
The Ercoupe is a side-by-side two-seat, single-engine aircraft with all primary structures constructed entirely of metal. It was designed specifically with the intention of making flying easier, safer and more affordable for beginning and low-time pilots. The Ercoupe airplane is particularly significant for its innovative combination of features, especially its anti-spinning and anti-stalling features. While most of its individual features were not new, the aircraft's pioneering combination of design elements including a tricycle landing gear with steerable, castering nose wheel, the first production use of two-control operation utilizing limited elevator deflection to prevent spins, all-metal streamlined construction, and excellent visibility out of the cockpit resulted in the most commercially successful and widely-known aircraft of the 1930s "flivver" aircraft movement. The "flivver" movement grew out of the federal Bureau of Air Commerce's call to design an "everyman's safe, low-cost airplane." Other, far less successful "flivver" designs included the Stearman-Hammond, Waterman Aerobile, and Stout Sky Car. Production of the Ercoupe began in 1940, with 112 planes made by March 1941 and 900 on order. Production stopped for WWII, and re-started in 1945, with peak production being reached in 1946 when almost 4,000 aircraft were constructed. In 1946, Fred Weick was awarded the Fawcett Aviation Award for the "greatest contribution to the scientific advancement of private flying." In 1951, the Korean War brought about more wartime contracts causing the Ercoupe to go out of production permanently. Over 5,000 Ercoupes had been built at the Riverdale facility.

There were as many as 4,000 employees working at ERCO during WWII, though by 1945 the government contracts had ended and layoffs began. Products produced by ERCO for the government included ERCO Navy Turrets. The ERCO 250SH-1 was the first turret to carry two .50 caliber guns specified for an American Naval airplane. The ERCO X150TH was the first streamlined aerodynamically clean, power-driven, waist blister turret to be installed on an American aircraft. Propellers were also manufactured at ERCO. Ninety-eight percent of the aluminum alloy propeller blades used on Allied aircraft in WWII were cut on ERCO machines. The plant also produced machine tools and antenna assemblies.

In 1954 ACF purchased ERCO for its nuclear products division and later flight simulation division. At this time the rights to the Ercoupe were transferred to the Forney Manufacturing Company in Colorado. The Link Division of General Precision assumed ACF contracts and the ERCO plant in 1965, moving out of the building.

Prepared by: Tania Georgiou Tully

Date Prepared: 05/22/2002







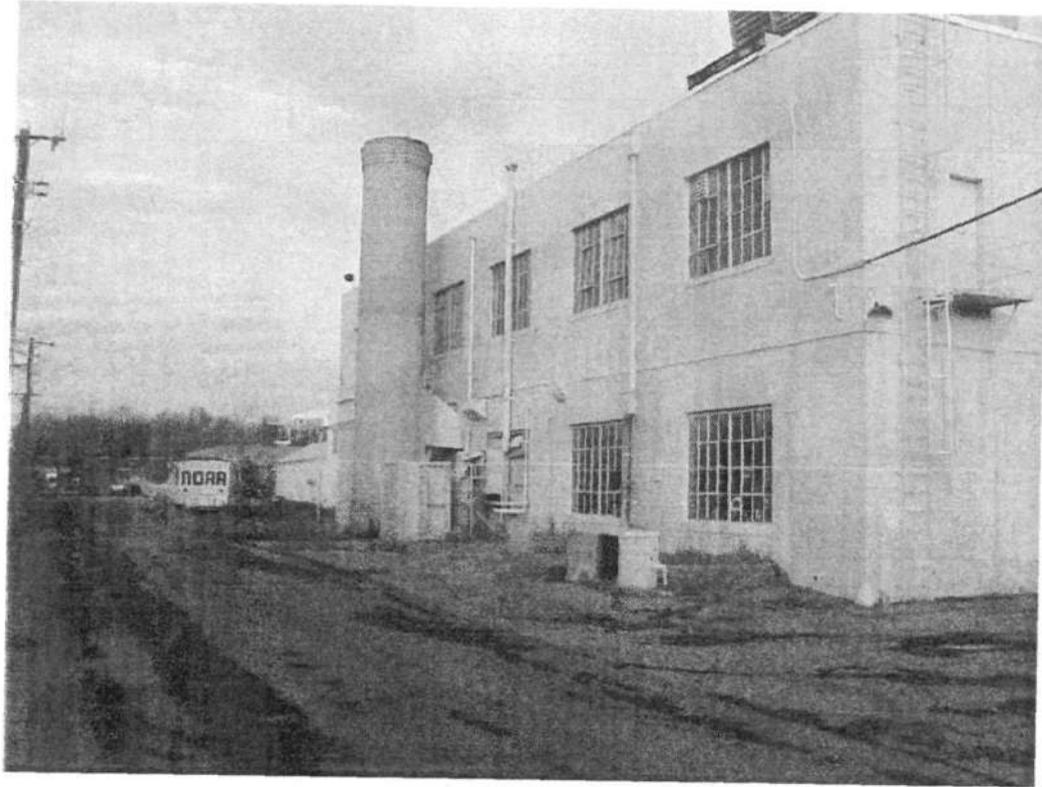


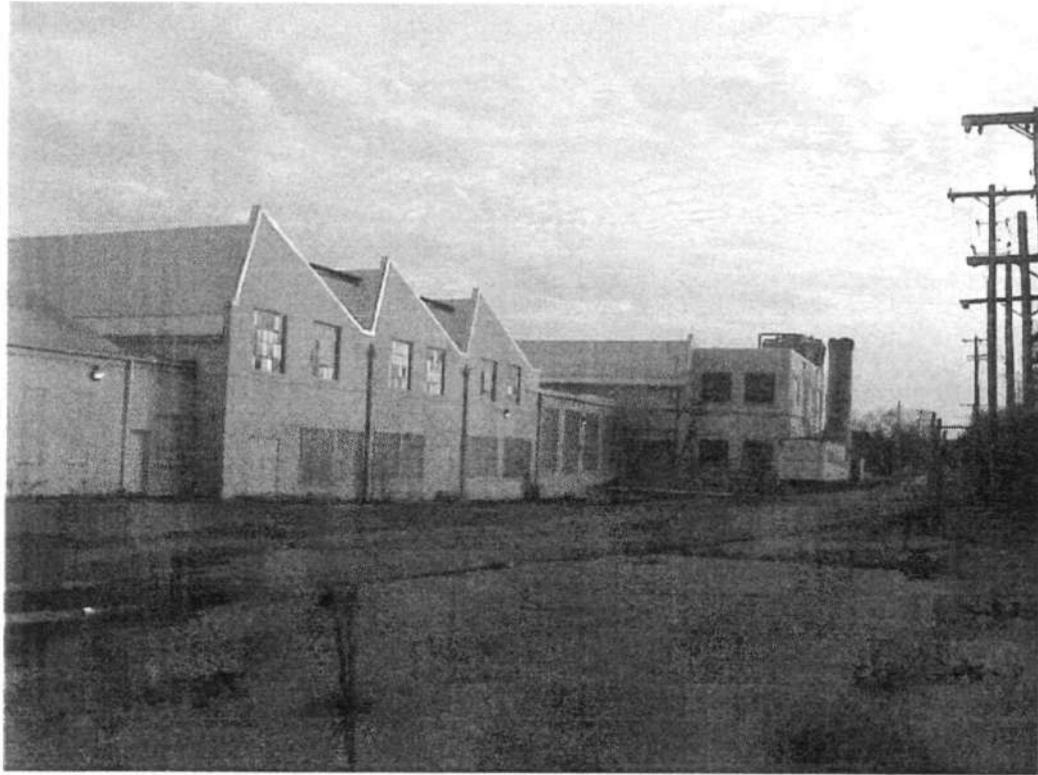
PG: 68-22

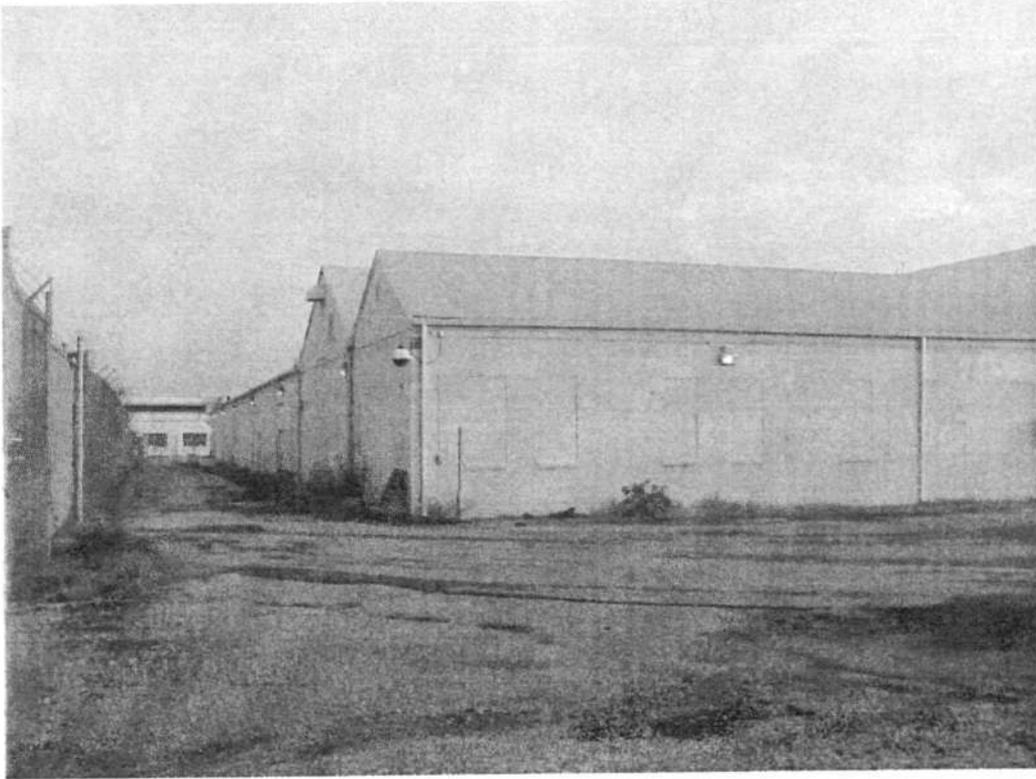












MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

NR Eligible: yes ___
no X

Property Name: Engineering Research Corp. Main Plant & Airfield Inventory Number: PG:68-22

Address: 6501 Lafayette Avenue City: Riverdale Zip Code: 20737

County: Prince Georges USGS Topographic Map: Washington East

Owner: Rivertech, LLC

Tax Parcel Number: G80L2,3 Tax Map Number: 42 Tax Account ID Number: 17192734432

Project: E.O. 11593 Federal Determination Agency: DOT/FHWA

Site visit by MHT staff: X no ___ yes ___ Name: _____ Date: _____

Eligibility recommended ___ Eligibility not recommended X

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___ None

Is the property located within a historic district? X no ___ yes ___ Name of District: _____

Is district listed? ___ no ___ yes ___ Determined eligible? ___ no ___ yes ___ District Inventory Number: _____

Documentation on the property/district is presented in:
Maryland Inventory Form PG:68-22; Reviewer's Comments sheet

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: *(Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)*

The ERCO Main Plant and Airfield in Riverdale, Maryland, fails to meet the National Register criteria consideration for properties less than fifty years old--exceptional historic significance has not been demonstrated for the facility's role in the history of general aviation or for production of war materials in World War II and the Korean War.

The evidence suggests that the Ercoupe light airplane, which was manufactured at the site, was one of a number of privately-designed, forward-looking aircraft of the 1930s and 1940s which pointed the way to today's light, private planes. The Ercoupe has not been shown to have had a major impact on general aviation sufficient to qualify for exceptional historic significance. The one innovative feature of the aircraft, its control system, was not adopted by general aviation. The other claimed innovative features, its all metal construction and its tricycle-type nose gear, were employed by earlier aircraft and aircraft contemporary with the Ercoupe.

Finally, there has been no evidence to demonstrate that this plant's production of military aviation parts in the 1940s and 1950s would qualify for exceptional significance when the plant is evaluated in the context of the unprecedented, nationwide, wartime military industrial effort.

Prepared by: Marina King Date Prepared: 04/17/1986

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended ___ Eligibility not recommended X

Criteria ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___ None

MHT Comments:

Emil Elinsky (DOT/FHWA)

April 17, 1986

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Date

Jerry L. Rogers (Atg Keepe

May 28, 1986

Reviewer, NR Program

Date

Rodney Little

PG:68-22

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

Region 3 Maryland Division

The Rotunda Suite 220 711 West 40th Street Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2187

June 12, 1986

RECEIVED

JUN 13 1986

Name of project: ...

Location: ... Prince George's County

Request submitted by: ...

Date received: ... Additional information received: ...

Calvert Road Prince George's County, MD MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Mr. Hal Kassoff, Historic Preservation Officer, State Highway Administrator, State Highway Administration, 707 North Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Mr. Kassoff:

Enclosed is a determination by the Keeper of the Register that the Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) Historic Site is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely yours,

Emil Elinsky Division Administrator

[Handwritten signature of Fred J. Hempel]

By: Fred J. Hempel Assistant Division Administrator

Enclosures

E.O. 11593

PG: 68-22

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY NOTIFICATION
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

Name of property: ERCO Main Plant and Airfield *Engineering Research Corporation*
Location: Prince Georges County **State:** MD
Request submitted by: DOT/FHWA Emil Elinsky
Date received: 4/17/86 **Additional information received:** 4/14/86, 4/25/86

Opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer:

Eligible Not Eligible No Response

Comments:

The Secretary of the Interior has determined that this property is:

Eligible Applicable criteria: Not Eligible

Comments:

Please see attached sheet for reviewer's comments.

Documentation insufficient
(Please see accompanying sheet explaining additional materials required)

John A. [Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

Date: 5/28/86

ERCO Main Plant and Airfield
Reviewer's Comments

The ERCO Main Plant and Airfield in Riverdale, Maryland, fails to meet the National Register criteria consideration for properties less than fifty years old -- exceptional historic significance has not been demonstrated for the facility's role in the history of general aviation or for production of war materials in World War II and the Korean War.

The evidence suggests that the Ercoupe light airplane, which was manufactured at the site, was one of a number of privately-designed, forward-looking aircraft of the 1930s and 1940s which pointed the way to today's light, private planes. The Ercoupe has not been shown to have had a major impact on general aviation sufficient to qualify for exceptional historic significance. The one innovative feature of the aircraft, its control system, was not adopted by general aviation. The other claimed innovative features, its all metal construction and its tricycle-type nose gear, were employed by earlier aircraft and aircraft contemporary with the Ercoupe.

Finally, there has been no evidence to demonstrate that this plant's production of military aviation parts in the 1940s and 1950s would qualify for exceptional significance when the plant is evaluated in the context of the unprecedented, nationwide, wartime military industrial effort.

*from National Register office
NPS 28 May 86*

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #68-22 Building Date: 1939
Building Name: Engineering Research Corporation Building
Location: 6501 Lafayette Avenue, Riverdale

Public/Commercial/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) building is rectangular in plan, 2 stories in height, constructed of brick and concrete. The south (main) facade, is one bay in depth and gives a formal entrance to what is otherwise an assembly plant. The main facade is very long, marked by two horizontal bands of glass bricks. The projecting center block is three-by-one bays, marked by large tri-partite windows. Entrance is through double entrance doors set in a projecting semi-circular vestibule sheltered by a cement semi-circular overhang with a decorative glass rim. The main facade has a stepped parapet. The smoothly finished concrete block of the exterior is laid in common bond, in bands of wide and narrow blocks. The long front block connects to the rear plant, constructed of brick and having a saw-tooth roofline with clerestory windows on the north surface. There are a number of one story corrugated metal and cement block service buildings to the east of the main building. An "L" shaped runway runs due east and then north of the building. The interior contains offices in the front section. The larger north section was an assembly plant consisting of ten single story factory bays of steel frame, concrete and brick construction measuring 30-35 feet wide, 280-350 feet long and 20 feet high.

Significance

The Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) building is significant for its Art Deco features and for the development of the Ercoupe airplane. Art Deco features include the smooth cement block wall covering, horizontal bands of glass bricks which cross the south facade, a metal and glass semi-circular entrance vestibule and the geometric decoration on the stepped parapet. There are few buildings of Art Deco style in the County, and this is a fine example. ERCO acquired over 230 acres in Riverdale, part of the Calvert family estate. The grounds eventually contained a runway, and outbuildings that included corrugated metal quonset huts. The plant building was designed by staff engineers, who may have been influenced by Albert Kahn's design for the Glenn L. Martin aircraft plant (1937) in Middle River, Maryland. ERCO is noted for the Ercoupe airplane, designed by engineer Fred E. Weick with revolutionary anti-spinning and stalling features. The Ercoupe was produced only in 1940; the corporation then converted to wartime production. Production ended again in 1951 due to Korean War contracts, and never resumed. In 1954 ERCO sold out to ACF Industries, Inc. of New Jersey. McAlpine, a Calvert family mansion, was just west of the ERCO plant, across the B&O Railroad tracks. This site was selected for a 500 unit temporary dwelling for war workers. The complex was never completed and demolished in the early 50's. McAlpine was also destroyed at that time, through vandalism and neglect.

Acreage: 129.15 acres

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Magi No.

DOE yes no

found not eligible by NPS
28 May 86

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 6501 Lafayette Avenue not for publicationcity, town Riverdale, vicinity of congressional district 5

state Maryland county Prince George's

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name ACF Industries, Inc.

street & number 750 3rd Avenue telephone no.:

city, town New York state and zip code N.Y. 10017

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 2274

street & number Main Street folio 558

city, town Upper Marlboro, state MD.

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title n/a

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Engineering Research Corporation (ERCO) building, built in 1939, is a large industrial building, rectangular in plan, approximately 2 stories in height, constructed of brick and concrete. The south (main) facade, one bay in depth, is differentiated by its construction materials and Art Deco style from the rear of the building. The south facade gives a formal entrance to what is otherwise an assembly plant. The ERCO building is located on a 129.15 acre site buffered from the surrounding residential suburbs by a railroad track to the west and its own large lot.

The south (main) facade is very long, marked by two horizontal bands of glass bricks. The facade is unfenestrated except in the central projecting entrance block. The center block is three-by-one bays, marked by large tri-partite windows. Entrance is through the center bay, which projects slightly in a two-story front ispiece. The double entrance doors are set in a projecting semi-circular glass bay or vestibule sheltered by a cement semi-circular overhang. The overhang is further extended by an attached decorative glass rim.

The main facade has a stepped parapet hiding a flat roof. The highest section surmounts the projecting center block, where the parapet is embellished by vertical grooves at the corners of the facade sections. A metal band runs along the top of the parapet, providing visual closure and added horizontal emphasis.

The smoothly finished grey concrete block of the exterior is laid in common bond, in alternating bands of wide and narrow blocks. The bands of glass brick on the facade are now covered with a metallic paint or covering.

The long horizontal front block connects to the rear plant, constructed of brick and having a saw-tooth roofline. The saw-tooth roof has asphalt shingles on the south slope and clerestory windows on the north surface.

There are a number of one story corrugated metal and cement block service buildings to the east of the main building. A large asphalt parking lot is to the south and east of the building. An "L" shaped runway runs due east and then north of the building.

The interior of the ERCO building contains offices in the south (front) section. The larger north (rear) section was an assembly plant for the Ercoupe airplane. It consists of ten single story factory bays of

#7. Continued

steel frame, concrete and brick construction. Each bay measures 30-35 feet wide, 280-350 feet long and approximately 20 feet high capped with a shed roof and north facing elevelstory window. The original roofing has been replaced with metal sheeting which may obscure the original fenestration.¹

¹ Interior description from Richard Meyer, Engineering and Research Corporation (ERCO) Main Plant and Airfield, Town of Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland, documentation for a determination of eligibility, prepared for Wilson T. Ballard Co. and Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation, 1985.

#8. Continued

Another war-related casualty was McAlpine, a Calvert family mansion located just west of the ERCO plant, across the B&O Railroad tracks. This site was selected for a 500 unit temporary dwelling complex for war workers at the ERCO plant. The complex was never completed and was demolished in the early 1950's. The McAlpine Mansion was also destroyed at that time, through vandalism and neglect.

Notes

- 1 Documentation for a Determination of Eligibility, Engineering, and Research Corporation (ERCO) Main Plant and Airfield, Town of Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland, Richard Meyer, John Milner and Associates, Inc., 309 N. Matlock Street, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 19380, 1985.
- 2 Land Records of Prince George's County, 531:155.
- 3 Meyer, op. cit., page 6.
- 4 Ibid. page 7.
- 5 Ibid. page 10.

Chain of Title

Engineering Research Corporation Building
P.G. #68-22

2274:558
28 Oct 1958
Deed

State of Maryland and University of Maryland to ACF Industries, Inc. Grantors convey 23.56 acres to ACF, Inc. AFC, Inc. transfers 26.03 acres to State for use of University of Maryland and pays to grantors \$27,000.00. State conveys part of Lot #3 of Charles B. Calvert estate. Part of parcel conveyed to University of Maryland, 1311934, 409:1. Begins at northwest corner of Parcel 1 of land conveyed to ACF Inc. 11161954, 1794:312.

1794:312
16 Nov 1954
Deed

Engineering and Research Corporation to ACF Industries, Inc. For \$10.00 grantors convey

Parcel 1: Lot 2 in Charles B. Calvert estate, 144.805 acres.

Parcel 2: a part of Lot 3 of Charles B. Calvert estate - 87.503 acres.

Parcel 3: Lots 24, 25 and 26 in Block 1, Riverdale Park Subdivision - plat recorded JWB 5:688.

Parcel 4: Lot 28, 29 and 30 in Block 1 of Riverdale Park.

Parcel 5: Lot 27 in Block 1 of Riverdale Park.

531:155
27 May 1934
Indenture

Henry A. Berliner (lessor) to Engineering and Research Corporation (lessee) for rent to be paid, lessor has let MacAlpine, east of the B&O Railroad, part of Lot 2 of Estate of Charles B. Calvert, allotted to his son Charles B. Calvert. Contains 144.805 acres. Also, a part of Lot 3 of Charles B. Calvert Estate - 87.503 acres, and Lot 24, 25 and 26 in Block 1 in Riverdale Park. Lease effective from date that lessee begins construction of improvements and terminates 20 years from November 1, 1938 at an annual rental of \$3,000.00. Lessee agrees to erect building at its own cost in accordance with plans signed hereto.

- 2 -

470:299
23 Mar 1937
Deed

Richard C. M. Calvert and Zoe D. Calvert, George H. Calvert, Jr. and Cornelia R. Calvert, C. Baltimore Calvert and Mary MacAtee Calvert, C.B. Calvert Carey, W. Gibson Carey and Eleanor Towne Carey to Henry A. Berliner. For \$28,961 grantors convey that parcel known as MacAlpine, east of the B&O Railroad, a part of Lot 2 of the division of the Estate of Charles B. Calvert. Contains 144.805 acres.

R-R

A.C.F. INDUSTRIES
2274-558

E.D. 21
E.D. 19

R-55

CALVIN CAFRITZ, ETAL
5036/988
48.00A.
P. 81

P/O P. 81

I-2

A.C.F. INDUSTRIES, INC.
1794-312
154.23A.
P. 2

PG: 68-22

I-1

RIVERDALE
POST OFFICE

6968

PARCEL "A"
6.787A

OF ARMY
2446
63A
83

DALE PARK

0744

0551

SOMERSET

SHERIDAN

RIVERDALE PARK

RAVENSWOOD

HIGHWAY

East West

050

R-55

410

W P MAGRUDER'S RESUB OF R. PARK

0553

RIVERDALE
PARK
2565

1996
1995

0544

1313

2730

2305

0-S

1701

1315

0543

1996

0557

0553

0744

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0380

0379

0378

0377

0376

0375

0374

0373

0372

0371

0370

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0365

0364

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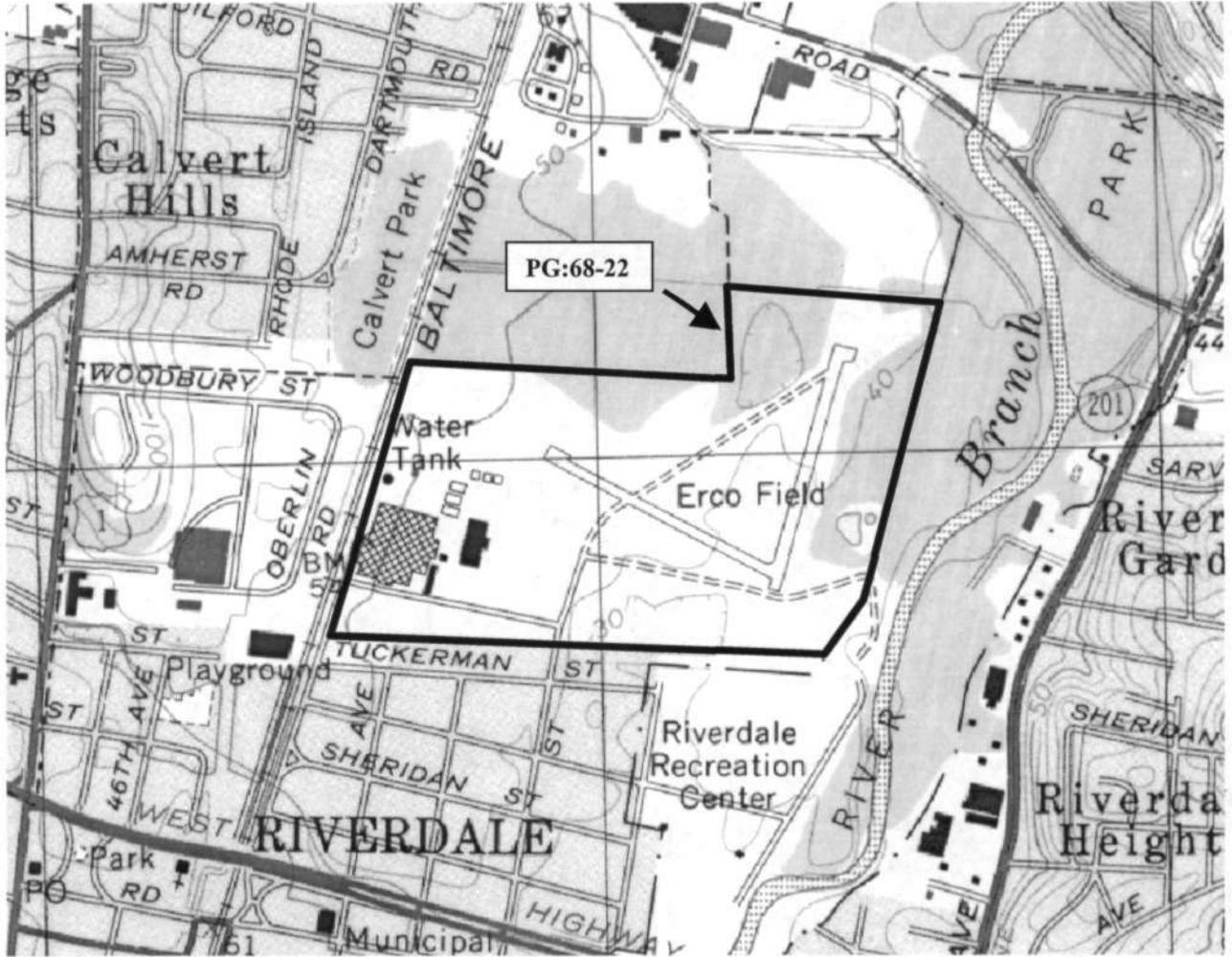
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PG:68-22
ERCO Main Plant and Airfield
(Engineering Research Corporation)
6501, 6701, & 7001 Lafayette Avenue, Riverdale
Washington East quadrangle





P.G. #68-22

Engineering Research Corporation
Building

Prince George's County, MD

Marina King

February 1986

South elevation

Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-22

Engineering Research Corporation
Building
Prince George's County, MD
Marina King
February 1986
South elevation, entrance detail
Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-22

Engineering Research Corporation
Building

Prince George's County, MD

Marina King

February 1986

East elevation

Neg: Md. Hist. Trust, Annapolis, MD