

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #68-25 Building Date: 1880's

Building Name: Harriet Ralston House

Location: 4206 Decatur Street, Hyattsville, Maryland

Private/Residential/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description:

The Harriet Ralston House is a three-story front-gabled frame retreat cottage which stands on one of the original streets platted for the Town of Hyattsville. It is distinguished by its fine late Victorian trim and its prominent three story veranda. The house is three stories high, two bays by two bays, with principal entrance and three-story veranda on the main south gable front. Entrance is in the eastmost bay of this south gable end, through a four-panel door with two-pane transom. Filling the entire south gable front is a three-story veranda supported by chamfered posts with molded capitals and bases, and jigsaw brackets on the first story. Bounding the first and second stories of the veranda is a railing of flat jigsaw balusters. The same chamfered posts are still visible at third level in the gable end, but the balustrade has been removed and the space has been enclosed with wide vertical boards. Above this the gable end is decorated with ramiform paneling. The house is sheathed with German siding, painted yellow. The overhanging eaves have crown molding, and turned pendants, and applied diamond-shape moldings. There are two brick chimneys in the east plane of the roof near the ridge. Two hip-roof dormers pierce each plane of the gable roof. A brick walk leads south from the veranda through gardens in the south yard.

Significance:

The Harriet Ralston House is a fine and unique example of a late Victorian suburban retreat cottage; it is distinguished by its excellent Queen Anne style trim, and its prominent three-story veranda. It was built in the 1880's on one of the original lots platted in the Town of Hyattsville. In 1882, Harriet Ralston, purchased several lots in Hyatt's Addition to Hyattsville. It is probable that this handsome front-gabled retreat cottage was constructed soon after her purchase. Within a few years, "Wing Rest", a second fine Queen Anne style house was built on the adjoining lot, and it became the home of Mrs. Ralston's son, Jackson H. Ralston. Harriet Ralston died in Washington, D.C. in 1920, leaving all of her real estate to her son; Jackson Ralston sold his mother's house in 1921. Since 1976 the third-story of the veranda has been enclosed to create an artist's studio, but much of the Victorian detail (e.g., the chamfered posts and ramiform panelling) has been preserved. The Harriet Ralston House is an outstanding example of a high Victorian suburban retreat cottage. Together with Wing Rest to the west, it is a landmark in the town of Hyattsville.

Acreage: 21,611 square feet

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Harriet Ralston House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4206 Decatur Street not for publicationcity, town Hyattsville 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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 David Driskell

street & number 4206 Decatur Street telephone no.:

city, town Hyattsville state and zip code MD 20781

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber 4701

street & number Main Street folio 106

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. P.G. #68-25

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 Harriest Ralston House is a three-story front-gabled frame retreat cottage which stands on one of the original streets platted for the Town of Hyattsville. It is distinguished by its fine late Victorian trim and its prominent three story veranda.

The house is three stories high, two bays by two bays, with principal entrance and three-story veranda on the main south gable front. Entrance is in the eastmost bay of this south gable end, through a four-panel door with two-pane transom. The door is framed by full-length green shutters. Filling the entire south gable front is a three-story veranda supported by chamfered posts with molded capitals and bases, and jigsaw brackets on the first story. Bounding the first and second stories of the veranda is a railing of flat jigsaw balusters. There are three openings onto the second story of the veranda; a central door with a single-pane transom is flanked by two 2/2 windows. The same chamfered posts are still visible at third level in the gable end, but the balustrade has been removed and the space has been enclosed with wide vertical boards. Centered at third level is a 28-pane single sash window flanked by two 6/6 windows, and surmounted by a narrow two-pane transom. Above this the gable end is decorated with ramiform paneling. The veranda, at first story level, rests on a high brick foundation with lattice infill and storage space underneath.

The house is sheathed with German siding, painted yellow. Windows are 2/2 double hung sash with molded board surrounds painted white, and dark green louvered shutters. At intermediate level in the east facade is a circular "porthole" window which lights the stair; it has a wide board surround painted white. The overhanging eaves have crown molding, and turned pendants, and applied diamond-shape moldings. The gable roof is covered with standing seam metal; there are two brick chimneys in the east plane of the roof near the ridge.

Two hip-roof dormers pierce each plane of the gable roof. Each encloses a 2/2 double hung sash window with molded surround. The dormers have wide overhanging eaves, and are sided with yellow asbestos shingle.

Interior of the house consists of a stairhall on the east side, a parlor on the west, and a kitchen space in the rear (north). The main south door leads into the stairhall, which leads back into the kitchen. The two-run staircase rises along the east wall, then turns 90° and rises to the second story; it has a heavy molded newel and turned balusters. Door and window surrounds feature multi-band molding with bullseye corner blocks.

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STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM

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Description (continued)

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A brick walk leads south from the veranda through gardens in the south yard; rose and herb gardens fill the remainder of the lot, which slopes gently southward and is bordered on the south and east by a white picket fence. There are several large old magnolias and hollies in the yard to the west; also in the west yard is an open slatted shed. North of the house is a modern one-and-one-half-story garage building; it has a shallow-pitched gable roof, and is sided with brown rectangular shingle. The loft space of the garage has been converted in an artist's studio.

8. Significance

Period	Area of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1880's **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or
Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Harriet Ralston House is a fine and unique example of a late Victorian suburban retreat cottage; it is distinguished by its excellent Queen Anne style trim, and its prominent three-story veranda. It was built in the 1880's on one of the original lots platted in the Town of Hyattsville.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Christopher C. Hyatt had purchased property north of Bladensburg, at the intersection of the old Washington-Baltimore Turnpike and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. He built his brick mansion (no longer standing) on the west side of the railroad, and opened a store directly across the tracks. In 1859, Hyatt was appointed postmaster of the new crossroads community which thenceforth was to bear his name.¹

In 1873, Hyatt had a section of his property surveyed and platted into building lots roughly 60 by 280 feet. This roughly 20-acre area was known as Hyatts Addition to Hyattsville. By 1878, the town was developing into a desirable place of residence for commuters to the Capital City. An 1878 account describes the new town as follows: "Hyattsville, on the Washington Branch of the Baltimore Ohio Railroad, is a beautiful village, tasteful houses in the modern style of architecture, ornamented with gardens and lawns, is largely indebted, for its prosperity, to Christopher C. Hyatt, ...it has gradually increased in beauty and prosperity until it stands as one of the foremost villages between Baltimore and Washington."²

In 1882, Harriet Ralston, widow of Judge James H. Ralston, purchased Lot #26 of Hyatts Addition to Hyattsville, and a few months later purchased Lots #27 and #28 which adjoined it to the east.³ At the same time, the parts of lots #27 and 28 which she had purchased were resurveyed and platted into three new building lots, now numbered Lots #1 to 3.⁴ It is probable that the subject house, the handsome front-gabled retreat cottage on Lot #3, was constructed soon after Mrs. Ralston's purchase. Within a few years, "Wing Rest", a second fine Queen Anne style house was built on Lot #26, and it became the home of Mrs. Ralston's son, Jackson H. Ralston, one of early Hyattsville's most prominent civic leaders.

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STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM
Statement of Significance (continued)

Survey No. P.G. #68-25

Section 8 Page 2

It is uncertain how long Mrs. Ralston lived in her handsome cottage. By 1900, she had moved into her son's house, Wing Rest, on the adjoining property to the west; Mrs. Ralston's cottage was at that time occupied by William J. Smith, an insurance agent from Georgia, and his family.⁵

Harriet Ralston died in Washington, D.C. in 1920, leaving all of her real estate to her son, and bequests to the Hyattsville Public Schools and to Pinkney Memorial Church.⁶ Jackson Ralston sold his mother's house in 1921. The new owner defaulted on her mortgage, and the Equity Court decreed that the property should be sold. The property was advertised as "Valuable Improved Premises at the corner of Wine and Wingrest Avenues in Hyattsville, Maryland, including a frame house of 9 rooms..." It was repurchased in 1923 by Jackson Ralston, who immediately sold it again.⁷

From 1938 to 1962 it was the home of the Howard Rice family, and since 1976 has been the home of the Driskell family.⁸ Since that time the third-story of the veranda has been enclosed to create an artist's studio, but much of the Victorian detail (e.g., the chamfered posts and ramiform panelling) has been preserved. The Harriet Ralston House is an outstanding example of a high Victorian suburban retreat cottage. Together with Wing Rest to the west, it is a landmark in the town of Hyattsville.

Notes

1 Prince George's County Deeds JBB #1:280; JBB #2:481; JBB #4:113, 337; CSM #3:476;477.

2 G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Prince George's County, 1878, "Historical Sketch"; Prince George's County Plat HB #8:176.

3 Prince George's County Deeds WAJ #3:702; JWB #1:120.

4 Prince George's County Plat, JWB #1:107.

5 Census for Prince George's County, Hyattsville, 1900.

6 Prince George's County Will GPH #2:97.

7 Prince George's County Equity #5882.

8 Prince George's County Deeds #173:385; #194:57; #502:275; #4701:106; Equity #5882.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. P.G. #68-25

Cf. Notes, Item 8

Cf. Chain of Title

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 21,611 square feet

Tax Map 50, lots 3 9500

Quadrangle name Washington East, Section E

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C

Zone	Easting			Northing					

D

Zone	Easting			Northing					

E

Zone	Easting			Northing					

F

Zone	Easting			Northing					

G

Zone	Easting			Northing					

H

Zone	Easting			Northing					

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan G. Pearl, Research/Architectural Historian

organization Historic Preservation Commission date September 1987

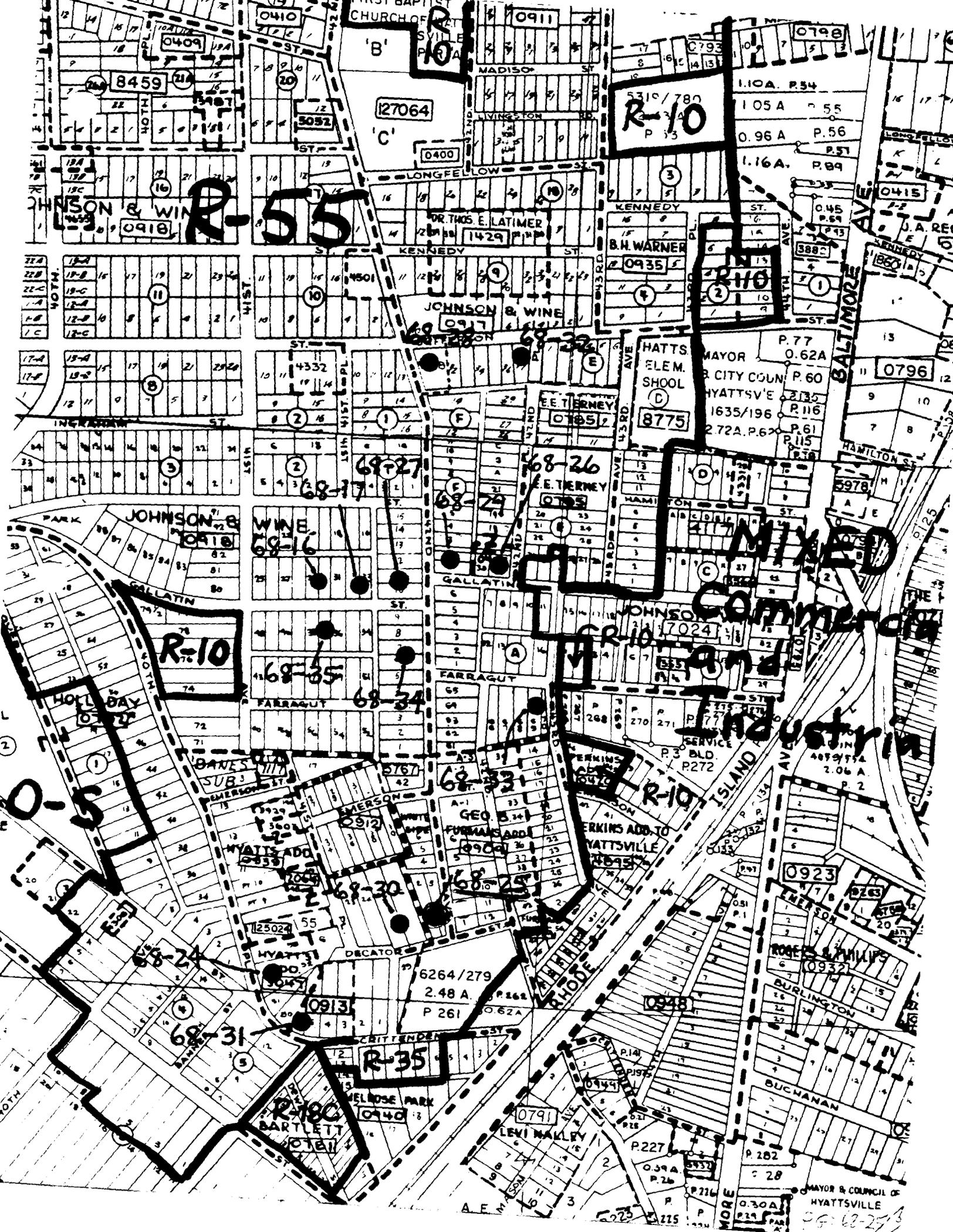
street & number #4010, CAB telephone 952-3521

city or town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



R-55

R-10

R-10

R-10

R-10

R-35

R-70

Mixed Commercial

MAYOR & COUNCIL OF HYATTSVILLE



P.G. #68-25

Harriet Ralston House
Prince George's County, Maryland
Susan G. Pearl
January 1987
South elevation
Neg: Md. Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-25

Harriet Ralston House
Prince George's County , Maryland
Susan G. Pearl
January 1987
Northeast 3/4 elevation
Neg: MD Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-25

Harriet Ralston House
Prince George's County, Maryland
Susan G. Pearl
January 1987
Southwest 3/4 elevation
Neg: MD Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-25

Harriet Ralston House
Prince George's County, Maryland
Susan G. Pearl
January 1987
Southeast 3/4 elevation
Neg: MD Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD



P.G. #68-25

Harriet Ralston House
Prince George's County , Maryland
Susan G. Pearl
January 1987
West elevation
Neg: MD Historical Trust
Annapolis, MD