

This documentation for Lustine Motors, also called the Lustine-Nicholson Motor Company or the Lustine Showroom and Service Center, is, in part, a salvage operation. We initiated our fieldwork in 2005 when we realized that Lustine Motors was threatened with demolition in order to make way for the Arts District Hyattsville mixed use development undertaken by EYA Associates of Bethesda. Our efforts to document the Lustine complex were entirely successful, but the broader effort to preserve the complex was only partially realized. In late 2005 and early 2006, EYA Associates demolished the Lustine Service Center, the industrial building that held the parts department, the service center, and body shop of the dealership. However, EYA preserved the Lustine Showroom and they have lovingly restored and adapted it as a community and recreation center, called The Lustine Center, for their Arts District Hyattsville development. In our scholarly judgment, the entire complex of Lustine Motors--showroom and service center--held tremendous historical and cultural significance for Hyattsville, for Prince George's County, and within a state and national context. What we offer, therefore, is documentation and a significance statement for the entire complex. At least through this National Register level documentation, the description and history of the 1950 Lustine Motors plant at 5710 Baltimore Avenue will be preserved.

The Lustine Showroom and Service Center is a mid-twentieth century Modern Movement / vernacular industrial hybrid structure in an L-shaped form, distinguished by a show room with a one and one-half story façade in the form of a curved glass curtain wall. The six-decade history of the Lustine automobile dealership represents national economic and social trends in twentieth century America and is also representative of its

location, a strip of US Route 1 in Hyattsville, Maryland that catered to automobile-related sales and service from the 1910s through roughly 2000. The Lustine dealership was a best-selling Chevrolet and Oldsmobile franchise from the late 1930s through the early 1980s. The unaltered but vacant Lustine plant in 2005 remained the most potent reminder of downtown Hyattsville's automobile-induced historic development.

The design of the Lustine dealership was based on merchandising studies and intended to capture the attention of motorists. Although this design appears to follow the guidelines provided by General Motors to its dealers in an illustrated manual published in 1948, the Lustine showroom is unique: its massing, with curved windows forming two covered bays under a flat but sweeping canopy, had no precise equivalent in the United States. A little-known but talented local designer and a business client receptive to modernity but with no evident design literacy combined in this structure the modernist and expressionist fascination for glass and transparency with the "Streamline Moderne" aesthetic that influenced American commercial design from the early 1930s through the late 1940s. During the decade following World War II there was no new building of comparable visual impact and glamour, elegance, and monumentality in all of Prince George's County.

The following National Register of Historic Places form was prepared for inventory documentation purposes only; the property has not been nominated to the National Register.

"SEE FRR PrGe26 LUSTINE MOTORS FOR ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lustine Motors
other names _____

2. Location

street & number 5710 Baltimore Avenue not for publication
city or town Hyattsville vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Prince Georges code _____ zip code 20781

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby, certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - Determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____
Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

1

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Auto Dealership
And Service Center

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social: clubhouse
Cultural/Recreational: Sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete block & brick
walls Glass, Metal, Concrete block, brick,
Corrugated Metal, concrete aggregate
roof Tarpaper, tar, gravel
other Window sills: concrete

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Narrative Description

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

Summary

The Lustine Showroom and Service Center is a mid-twentieth century Modern Movement/ vernacular industrial hybrid structure that forms an L-shape. It is located on a strip of Route 1 in Hyattsville that catered to automobile-related sales and service from the 1910s through roughly 2000. It is a multi-purpose building focusing on the sales and servicing of automobiles, principally Chevrolets. The canopied one and a half story head section of the building, set back eighteen feet from Route 1, contained a Chevrolet automobile showroom and sales operation. The showroom was distinguished by a curved one and a half story curtain wall of glass with thin metal mullions set on a plinth of red brick covered with grayish green-blue concrete aggregate panels and topped by a curved flat canopy roof surmounted by a large horizontal sign consisted of monumental letters spelling LUSTINE. The function of the showroom was to advertise the merchandise and sales activity to potential customers on the street. A parts department was also located in the head section of the building, to the south of the curved glass facade; it was accessed through a separate door labeled "PARTS DEPT." The south façade of the Parts Department was a primarily blind wall constructed of yellow brick; part of the brick was painted with a colorful mural advertising "Discount Truck Center". Offices separated the showroom from the service section to the rear. On the north side of the showroom, the canopy extended to form a porte cochere through which customers drove their cars to get to the service departments.

The long L of the complex, perpendicular to Route 1 and extending all the way to the back of property, contained the service departments. This part of the complex was an industrial building in concrete block with some brick infill and long ribbon factory-style windows on both the long north and south facades, capped by a flat roof. On the north façade, the ribbon windows were surmounted by corrugated metal siding along the length of the original service building. This space was devoted to automobile repair and housed mechanics' bays on either side of an internal driveway for moving cars. The bays were furnished with hydraulic lifts for hoisting the automobiles to be worked on. A second section of the building, extending the long side of the L, built between 1952 and 1956, was primarily constructed of concrete block and originally contained a body shop. This building was pierced by several garage bay doors on the north side but otherwise was a blind wall. On the south side, however, the body shop was pierced by a long ribbon window.

Introduction

The site is located on historic US Route 1 in the northern part of Hyattsville, two miles north of the boundary between the Prince George's County line and the District of Columbia. It is 4 miles south of the Capital

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Beltway (I-495) and due south of University Park and College Park, west of Riverdale Park, and east of Chillum. It is 6.65 miles from the White House (*Image 1*).¹

The site appears to be relatively flat, but it is located on a slight incline, which rises from south to north. Moving west, away from Route 1, the elevation of the ground increases, but more noticeably, the elevation decreases moving south along Route 1, going away from the building. The building itself is located on a relatively flat surface, level with the parking lot to the south of the building. About 200 feet from the building at the edge of the parking lot is an embankment about four feet high that slopes down to a lower level parking lot.

To the north the site is bordered by a vacant glass front store building, a former Plymouth Car Dealership that faces Route 1, and further west by parking lots, and by a house, which run along Madison Street.² The eastern boundary is the portion of Route 1 known as Baltimore Avenue. Kennedy Street runs along a portion of the southern boundary, but does not meet US 1. The western boundary is the property line that abuts private single-family residences and apartments located on 43rd Avenue.

Across the street from the Lustine Showroom and Service Center is the abandoned Lustine Used Car lot. It is mostly asphalt with some temporary buildings (mobile trailers). The Bell Atlantic Telephone Company Building is the prominent visual marker for the southern boundary. To the west are the grounds of DeMatha Catholic High School and a small clustering of garden apartment buildings.

The immediate surroundings of the Lustine Showroom and Service Center are quite sparse. On the north side of the building, just beyond the porte-cochère there is an open space primarily paved with asphalt. The paved area goes from the building's northern façade to the property line. The property line extends to the west and angles to the south creating an outdoor space that becomes narrower as it extends to the west. Next to the northern façade there is a concrete pad that extends approximately 20 feet from the building's edge and approximately 150 feet towards the west, running parallel to the northern façade of the service wing. About where the porte-cochère ends there is an approximately six and a half foot high cinder block wall that extends for 55 feet to the west, following the southern angle of the property line. A three-foot high chain link fence tops the wall. The wall is part of the former Plymouth Dealership.

West of the wall there is a chain link fence that is about seven feet high topped with barbed wire, which is set back a few feet from in line with the wall. To the north of the fence there is an empty parking lot that abuts Madison Street. This fence continues westward for about 100 feet. West of the fence that runs east-west, there is a fence that runs north-south, perpendicular to the north façade of the building, which extends south about 15 feet into the property. There are some trees and extensive plant growth behind and on this fence. The fence that juts into the Lustine Property is the southeast corner of a residential lot occupied by a single-family house that

¹ Measurements taken in Google Earth © 2005, © TeleAtlas, Image © Sanborn.

² The word 'PLYMOUTH' is formed with green concrete that is set against a background of sand colored concrete, located on the sidewalk in front of the glass front building.

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appears to be used for residential purposes. In line with this fence on the Lustine property is another chain link fence about seven feet high topped with barbed wire with a gate that forms two double doors (There are two gates, one is hinged on the southern end, the other on the northern end). This length of fence separates another open area paved with asphalt that creates what was probably a back storage lot, [because of the fence]. The lot beyond the fence extends to Madison Street. This lot extends for about 150 feet west to the border of the Lustine and DeMatha High School properties. There is a cinder block retaining wall about four and a half feet high that runs along this property line. The building extends for about another 30 feet beyond this retaining wall.³

Along Route 1 the site is bordered by telephone and electrical poles located on the western edge and spaced at varying intervals of 85, 90, 100, or 115 feet. On the southern side of the Lustine Showroom and Service Center, there is a large parking lot that extends south from the southern façade for about 185 feet along Route 1, and extends from the edge of the sidewalk along Route 1 to the back of the lot in an east-west direction, [measuring] approximately 415 feet deep. For the most part though, the parking lot is very open, but there are a few elements protruding from the landscape. There are a few medium-sized maple trees in planting beds in this area; three of them are located next to the south façade of the building, alongside the service wing spaced about 90 feet apart. The other four trees are placed on a grid in the parking lot, spaced about 100 feet apart. Along the western property line there is a thin buffer of trees and other foliage that sits behind a seven-foot high fence. The fence is made of chain link, but the middle section is about ten feet of wooden picket. The trees are mature and about 30-40 feet tall. There are four white poles, each with two to three floodlights mounted at the top for illuminating the parking lot. (They are located on a grid like the trees.) The first row of poles is located about 60 feet from Route 1, and the second row is located about 135 feet from the first row. Along Route 1 there are wooden planters about two and a half feet high that contain evergreen bushes. These planters only extend about 100 feet from the building along Route 1. To the south, beyond the parking lot next to the building, there is another parking lot located on a lower level, about five feet below the elevation of the other lot. This lower lot measures approximately 190 feet north to south, and 400 feet east to west. A strip of 30 feet from the edge of Route 1 is newly paved with asphalt, and the other portion is old deteriorated asphalt and gravel.

The principal façade of the Lustine Showroom and Service Center is the east façade and faces the Lustine Used Cars & Service Station, which is located across Baltimore Avenue; on the eastern side of Baltimore Avenue, separated by Longfellow Street, is a 24 Hour Coin Laundry that used to be a Safeway grocery store. South of the Coin Laundry is another Lustine owned building, which currently appears to be vacant.

³ Ground distances measured using Google Earth © 2005, © TeleAtlas, Image © Sanborn. Vertical measurements are approximations made by author Riniker.

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The canopied head building, which houses the showroom and offices, and the service wing were built in 1950. The Body Shop, which is a visual extension of the service wing, was built between 1952 and 1956.⁴

Detailed Description

The structure under consideration adopts an 'L' shape plan with the base of the 'L' sitting parallel to Route 1, and the long stem of the 'L' extending west away from Route 1, perpendicular to it. The canopied one and a half story head building that contains the showroom and offices is the base of the L and the service wing is the long stem (*Image 2*).

From north to south along Route 1, the head building encompasses a porte-cochère, the Show Room, the Parts Department, and at the southern end, a narrow yellow brick faced garage. The back part of the head building behind the Show Room, on the northern side, is a two level office block. The southern section of the office block is a two-story section that is the service manager's office and observation areas for the service wing.

The service wing is a long and narrow rectangular volume about one and a half stories high. It is about five feet shorter than the head building. The service wing contains the Service Center and the former Body Shop. The Body Shop, which sits at the western end of the service wing, was added sometime around 1952-56 and is about one to two feet lower than the Service Center.

Principal East Façade

Fenestration: 1st, 2nd, etc. stories, cellar openings

The fenestration is the most striking feature of the principal façade along Route 1. It is primarily composed of a one and a half story curtain wall of glass that sits under a flat canopy roof. From north to south, the façade is composed of a portal about 20 feet wide; two floor to ceiling glazed sections with curved corners, one that is set back further west from the other, of which the larger one is about 60 and the one further south is about 45 feet wide; and lastly, there is a brick wall about 20 feet across, which sits outside the canopy.

The portal, which is on the northern end of the façade, is the entrance to the porte-cochère which provides access to the service wing. It is a large opening framed by a column on either side. Each column is clad in slabs of stone aggregate, and the columns are connected by a crossbeam (*Image 3*).

South of the portal is the primary block of the main façade, the glazed Show Room, which is set back about 18 feet from the edge of the road. The glazed wall extends east, perpendicular from the southern column of the

⁴ The estimation for the construction date of the Body Shop is based upon Mary C. Sies's interview with Bill Brode, September 9, 2005, who was a mechanic at Lustine starting in 1968 and worked his way up to manager of the New Car Prep department in 1975. Mr. Brode was not sure of the age of the Body Shop, but thought that it could have been built shortly after the original building. This addition was originally built as a body shop, but was not always used as one.

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portal, and then curves a little over 90 degrees to the south, running parallel to the road (*Image 4*). At the other end of the Show Room the curve is repeated (*Image 5*). The wall curves 90 degrees from south to west, running perpendicular to the column between the Show Room and Parts Department. The second glazed section to the south, the Parts Department, is set back approximately 36 feet from the roadway. The glass curtain wall runs parallel to the roadway, then curves 90 degrees from south to west (*Image 6*). Both glazed sections have double glass doors in their centers. The double doors of the Show Room are about 18 feet wide, and the doors of the Parts Department are about 14 feet wide (*Image 7*). Silver colored metal mullions divide the glass curtain wall into approximately seven-foot wide sections. A silver colored mullion runs horizontally across the whole glazed curtain wall at about a height of seven feet. The lower panes are rectangular, about 12 feet high and seven feet wide. The upper panes are nearly square, about seven by seven feet. The glass wall sits atop a six-inch high plinth.

The southern most section is a yellow brick wall that is as high as the top of the canopy roof. It has an opening approximately 12 feet wide, which contains a narrow two bay garage door and a solid door about two and a half feet wide (see *Image 6*).

Materials: foundation, siding or brick bonding, roofing.

The main façade is primarily composed of glass and metal mullions. The foundation is common red brick covered with grayish green blue concrete-aggregate panels, which are about eight inches high. This area is the plinth. The dark concrete-aggregate panels are composed of shades of black, grey, with a few white and some green-grey pebbles. The columns of the porte-cochère are built of red brick, and are covered in beige colored aggregate slabs. These lighter panels are composed of tan, beige, light, medium, and dark brown, and white colored small pebbles. The southern portion of the main façade, the garage, is yellow sand colored brick. The same type of yellow brick is found on the eastern end of the southern façade.

The south façade is composed of transparent glass, metal mullions, grey concrete block, some red brick, and corrugated metal. The northern façade is composed of the same materials as the southern façade. On both façades some of the concrete block is painted grey and other portions are painted white. The northern façade also has light-blue vinyl siding on a portion of it. A flat roof covers the whole building; it is broken into three parts: the head building, the service wing, and the addition to the service wing. The roofing is (most probably) a built-up roof, created with layers of tar paper, topped with a layer of tar, and then covered in medium grain gravel.

Decorative elements: door and window trim, cornice, and porches.

Overall the building does not have many purely decorative elements, but there are a few. The roof over the majority of the head building has a metal cornice that is about three and a half feet high. It is aluminum (?) with a silver finish and the cornice creates a distinctive chevron pattern in the way that it is constructed (see *Image 6*). Both of the front doors, a set of double doors that lead to the Show Room and another set that lead into the

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Parts Department, have a simple tan surround, made of the tan colored concrete aggregate slab. The remainder of the building is basically void of decoration.

Porte-cochère North Façade East

The eastern part of the north façade is composed of two layers. The northern-most, outer layer is the columned wall of the porte-cochère and the inner layer is the glazed exterior wall that is the southern wall of the porte-cochère (*Image 8*). The outer wall is one and a half stories high and has four openings. There are two columns at either end, each about two feet wide, that are covered in tan colored concrete-aggregate panels, just like the columns on the primary, east façade. At the base of these columns is the plinth, which is about eight inches high; it features the same plinth in a greenish colored concrete and aggregate as on the east elevation. Each of these columns sits on a concrete slab that extends about four inches to either side beyond the width of the column. Located between these columns are three white painted metal poles that are approximately six inches in diameter. Each pole sits on a concrete slab that is about one foot square and three inches high for the slab farthest to the west, graduating down to a quarter inch high for the slab farthest to the east. (About six inches below the top edge of the roof is located the undulating cornice that is made of a silver colored metal—aluminum(?) (see *Image 8*).

The inner layer is primarily composed of glazing, which in fact wraps around the corner from the east façade and continues under the porte-cochère, and adopts similar spacing for its vertical and horizontal mullions. The upper panels are seven feet square, and the lower panels are seven feet wide by twelve feet high (*Image 9*). The western third of the inner layer is a solid wall punctured by two three-bay window openings. Beginning at the easternmost end of this elevation, after the glass wall curves around from the east façade, one finds two subsequent glass panes. One is a full panel that faces north, plus another panel, which partly faces north; each of these panels measures the same as the panels on the east façade, seven feet by twelve feet. The glass curtain wall, which composes about two-thirds of the elevation, is set into two openings. The first section of the glass curtain wall is three sections wide, which totals approximately 21 feet in width (see *Image 9*). The second glass curtain wall section is the same as the first, with the exception of the glass door in the center lower panel.

The two openings (glazed portals) are created by three elements: a two-foot wide column to the east, which is located west of the glazing that curves around from the east elevation; a four-foot wide column in the middle, east of the first column; and a solid wall, which creates the western end of the frame for the glass curtain wall. The two columns and the wall are all covered in tan colored concrete aggregate panels. The tan colored panels are about two feet high and divided into approximately four-foot, two-foot, and one-foot wide panels. The panels are arranged to look like they are huge bricks stacked in a running bond. The greenish-gray plinth also wraps around with the glass wall and continues all the way to the western end of this elevation.

The door is framed by an eight inch wide surround of the tan concrete-aggregate panels, except that the aggregate covering is not divided into panels, it is continuous around the whole door. The door itself is all glass

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except for the metal edging at the bottom and the top of the door, and the metal handle. There are no stiles on either side of the door (*Image 10*).

The last portion of this façade is the solid wall with the window openings. The wall is covered in the same tan colored concrete-aggregate panels that cover the columns on this façade. The panels are divided into two foot high rows, like the rest of the panels. The panels look like large bricks laid in running bond and are a 'standard' of approximately four feet wide, with narrower widths to accommodate openings and the 'bricks' at the edges of the wall. This section of the façade has window openings on two levels. This area is a two story space that is accommodated within the one and a half story height of the building. Both openings have the same set of three windows. Each window is one pane wide by four panes high. The overall measurements of each window are about three and a half feet wide by five and a half feet high. The bottom pane operates like an awning window swinging outwards from hinges located at the top of the pane. The windows are composed of single pane glass and metal muntins and mullions⁵. The lower opening has a window air conditioner in the center window's upper most pane. The upper opening has a window air conditioner in the bottom pane of the window that is east (left) of center (*Image 11*).

Rear of Offices West Façade North

The northern portion of the west façade is composed of the western 'wall' of the porte-cochère and the back wall of the office block of the head building. The porte-cochère creates a large opening on the northern portion of this façade (*Image 12*). The office section of the façade has windows on two levels.

There are three types of windows on this façade. The first type, one pane by four panes high, is also found on other portions of the office block. The second type is a variation of the first, where the one by four panes are flanked by a narrow sidelight of four panes to each side, matching up with the four pane height of the one by four window; each of the narrow columns is about four inches wide, and the overall width of the window is approximately five feet. Like the first window type, the bottom pane operates like an awning window swinging outwards from hinges located at the top of the pane. In contrast, the bottom pane is located between the two narrow fixed panes of glass. The third type of window is very narrow. It is one pane wide and four panes high, but the overall width is only one foot. This window has no operable parts; all the panes are fixed glass.

The windows are vertically aligned and the openings are equal height. The widest windows are located on the northern side, and the narrowest ones on the southern edge; in between are the regularly occurring one by four type windows (*Image 13*).

For the most part this western elevation is very spare. The columns of the porte-cochère are covered with tan concrete-aggregate panels, with a greenish-grey plinth in the base. The walls of the office section are simple

⁵ (This footnote is written in consideration of the lay audience.-?-) Mullions are located between each of the windows, which means there are two mullions located to either side of the center window and abutting the other windows to each side of the center window.

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concrete block that is presently painted a medium grey; the muntins and window sills of the windows are painted black. The gutter that extends along the office portion is white, with a grey downspout that is located to the south of the southern column of the porte-cochère. On the upper level, the two windows to the northern end of the façade are topped with silver colored galvanized metal awnings over them. The narrowest window is not covered by an awning. The cornice of the head building turns the corner at a right angle, coming from the north façade east to the west façade north and terminating with a quarter-round that turns in towards the building just past the divide between the porte-cochère and the office section.

Service Building & Body Shop North Façade

The western portion of the north façade has five sections encompassing the Service Building and Body Shop. The first section, closest to Route 1, is a continuation of the office area of the head building and will be referred to as the *office section*. The second section marks the beginning of the service wing and is the only one to feature vinyl siding in the entire Lustine complex. Block lettering attached to the upper concrete block wall reads "SAFETY INSPECTION LANE" and further away from Route 1, "SERVICE ENTRANCE."⁶ Therefore, the second section will be referred to as the *SIL and SE*. Moving west, the third section is a ribbon of windows, exactly like those that appear on the south façade. The fourth section features two garage doors and two windows, and will be referred to as the *western end of the service area*. The fifth and last section is the *Body Shop addition*.

The North elevation of the Service Center and Body Shop features a variety of windows and doors. On the eastern end of the office section, the first type of window, a "type one" window, is the one pane by four panes wide window, which we have already seen adorning the other sides of the office block. There are two windows of this type, one on top of each other. The second type, a "type two" window, is a variation of the 'standard' one by four with a column to either side. Compared with the openings found on the west façade east, the dimensions are similar but the side columns and the center section are wider. It measures eight feet wide.

The western part of the north façade features five doors in its entirety. Located in the SIL and SE section, there are two types of standard width doors, out of five total types. The first type, a "type one" door, is a single pane of glass set in metal casing, which is located immediately west of the office section. The second type, a "type two" door, is a steel door with a square single pane window at the upper half of the door. The door's window measures 24 inches wide by 26 inches high. There are four type two doors.

In the SIL and SE section there are two groups of windows and doors composed of type two doors, and a new type of window, the third type, a "type three" window, found on the western façade, which is a square single pane that measures about three and half feet square. The "type three" windows and four "type two" doors are organized into two groups in the SIL and SE section. The groups are located on a wood framed projecting bay that is covered in bluish grey vinyl siding. There is a group located at the eastern end, and the other at the

⁶ The 'S' in the word Service is missing, so what appears as of this writing is 'ervice.'

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western end of the SIL and SE section. The first group is located immediately west of the glass door. The grouping is composed of a type two door set on either side of two (2) type three windows. Between the two groups there is a five foot section of blank wall.

The fourth type of window, a "type four" window, is a one pane wide by two panes high, which measures about four feet wide by three feet high. There are six of these windows, which are grouped in two sets of three. These windows are located above each grouping of door-window-window-door. The group of three to the eastern side is centered above the group of doors and windows, and located under the words "Safety Inspection Lane." In the center window in the bottom pane there is an air conditioning unit. The group of three windows to the western side is off center of the group of doors and windows below. There is a window air conditioning unit located in a hole in the concrete block wall to the east of the group of three windows. The words "Service Entrance" appear above the grouping of the bank of three windows and the air conditioning unit (*Image 14*).

The ribbon of windows is exactly the same style and organized in the same rhythm as the windows on the south façade (*Image 15*). The windows in the ribbon are two different widths. All are seven panes high; type one of the ribbon is three panes wide and type two of the ribbon is two panes wide. The two pane wide windows measure three feet wide and the three pane wide windows measure five feet across; all of the windows are ten feet high. The ribbon starts about six feet west of the door on the western end of the SIL and SE section. The rhythm of the windows is three of three panes wide then one of two panes wide. There are a total of 17 three pane-wide windows and five two pane-wide windows. The rhythm ends with two three pane-wide windows.

The larger of the ribbon windows, the three panes wide by seven panes high, have two sections that swing out in the same manner as an awning window (opening for ventilation). These 'awning windows' within the larger window are located one row up from the bottom and one row down from the top, measuring three panes wide by two panes high. The narrower two pane wide windows have no moving parts (*Image 16*).

There are three garage doors in total, and two types of them. Two garage doors of two different types are located in the section that is the western end of the service area. The first type of the garage doors has nine panels, with two rows of windows that are located in the top part of the bottom half of the door. The windows are divided into four panes across. This garage door is located just west of the end of the ribbon of windows. The second type of door has seven panels. The bottom two panels are solid, and the remainder of the panels is glass windows that are divided into four panes across. One of these doors is located just west of the first garage door. A type one ribbon window, three by seven windows, appears two times further west of the ribbon, west of the two garage doors.

In the body shop addition section there is another type of window that appears once on this façade and is the same as the type of windows on the south façade of the body shop. This type six⁷ window is four panes wide by six panes high, measuring about six and a half feet wide by eight feet high. Just west of this window is the

⁷ This is a type six window for the north façade.

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second of the type two garage doors. The last type of window, type seven, is a shorter version of the previously described window. It is the same width, four panes and six and half feet wide, but it is only four panes high, measuring approximately five feet high.

The western section of the northern façade features a combination of materials. The office section has concrete block and common brick that is painted a bluish grey. All mullions in the office section are painted black. The sills of the windows are bricks laid in a header course, covered in concrete and painted black like the windows.

The SIL and SE section is concrete block with some brick infill. In this section, immediately to the east of the glass door is a large red brick chimney that measures about four feet wide and tapers only a few inches inwards. The chimney is flush with the exterior wall; the brick is painted bluish grey on the lower half of the wall, white on the upper half, then left exposed above the roofline (*Image 17*). This section has wood framed projections that are covered in bluish grey vinyl siding. The "type one" door is made of glass and stainless steel; the "type two" doors are steel and painted blue with yellow door sills. The trim around the windows, doors, and the soffit of the small flat roof that covers the jut-out are painted the same color blue as the doors. The concrete block above the jut-out is painted white, and the windows are painted a light brown.

The remaining sections are in concrete block. Below the ribbon of windows, blocks are painted the same bluish grey, and there is a painted sign that reads "LUSTINE, SINCE 1923" painted in a white background, with "LUSTINE" in red letters and below "SINCE 1923" painted in light blue. The white box has a black shadow that runs along the bottom and the west side of the box. The other painted sign to the west of the first sign reads "Goodwrench QUALITY SERVICE." The lettering is white, with a black background and a white border, and red outer borders (*Image 18*). Corrugated metal extends from the roofline and overlaps the windows by about four inches; it is painted a silver-white color. The windows are composed of the same materials as the other windows, steel muntins, mullions, and glass, but the muntins and mullions are painted a light brown color on the ribbon of windows, and the window sill is painted blue.

The next section to the west has the two garage doors and two windows (*Image 19*). The wall is concrete block and is painted white from roofline to ground line from this point until the end of this façade moving to the west. The type one garage door that is situated to the eastern side of this section is a tan colored aluminum or steel door. Between the two garage doors there is a white painted cylindrical down spout. The garage door to the west, the type two, is made of wood and constructed in panels, with an overall grid on the door. This door is painted a tan color also. There is about 15 feet between the type two garage door and the window that is to the west of the garage door. About three feet to the east of the eastern edge of the first window there is an unpainted steel downspout. The second window begins about three feet from the edge of the first window. These windows are the same type as the three pane wide in the ribbon of windows and are painted the same color. The window sills are not painted, but are the color of concrete.

In the Body Shop section, the windows are constructed of the same materials as the other, but these windows are (?) unpainted or maybe painted in dark brownish-black paint, with the metal underneath rusting and creating

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streaking patterns of the muntins and window panes. The garage door that is west of this window is a type two and composed of the same materials and finished in the same way as the other type two garage door. The three windows that are located towards the top of the wall, about four and a half feet from the roof line, are composed of the same materials and finished in the same way as the first window in this Body Shop section (see *Image 19*).

The only features that could be considered decorative are the lettering "SAFETY INSPECTION LANE" and the "SERVICE ENTRANCE,"⁸ and the signs painted below the ribbon of windows. These items do also serve an express purpose but have also been executed in a manner that brings color and style to the finish of the building.

Rear of Body Shop *West Façade South*

The southern part of the west façade is devoid of fenestration. It is situated very close to the western property line. The wall is composed of concrete block. The finish of the block is unknown as this exterior wall is not accessible for viewing. Most likely it features no decorative elements.

Body Shop, Service Building, Garage, & Head Building, *South Façade*

Fenestration: 1st, 2nd, etc. stories, cellar openings

The south façade is a very long, almost unbroken mass that consists of the Service Center, and a space that may have been used by the Parts Department, since it sits parallel to it. There are three sections, each slightly lower than the preceding section, stepping down towards the west. The westernmost portion is a few feet lower than the middle section. The easternmost portion is only a few feet taller than the middle section. This façade has a total of seven different types of windows. There are three large types of windows, all of which are found on the opposite façade. Type one large⁹ is a four panes by six panes window that measures about six and a half feet wide by eight feet high. The other two types of large windows are part of the ribbon windows. Type one ribbon is two panes wide, about three feet across, and the type two ribbon is three panes wide, about five feet across; both of the ribbons type windows are seven panes high, measuring ten feet high. There are four small types of windows. "Type one" is a single pane, measuring about 44 inches high by 28 inches wide. "Type two" is two panes by two panes, measuring about 44 inches wide by 32 inches high. "Type three" is two panes by three panes, measuring about 44 inches wide by 48 inches high. "Type four" is two panes by four panes, measuring about 48 inches wide by 74 inches high. All of the panes are a bit wider than they are tall, and the panes of glass are not perfect squares; rather they are horizontally oriented rectangles. The proportions of all the glass panes are not exactly the same, as is evident in the window measurements.

⁸ The 'S' in the word Service is missing, so what appears as of this writing is 'ervice.'

⁹ This type one large on the south facade is called a type six on the opposite, north façade.

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The "type one," large-sized windows are located on the western most portion of the façade, which is part of the body shop.¹⁰ The windows are regularly spaced and are four panes wide by six panes high. These windows have a section, two panes by two panes, that swings out for ventilation. The operable part is located one row up from the bottom and in from either side one row so that it is centered horizontally. The first window at the westernmost end is smaller, measuring three panes wide by five panes high. Then there are eight of the large four by six windows, a set of double doors, then the last large four by six window. All of the windows are regularly spaced on a grid. The smaller window and the double doors are offset to the left side of where a large window would be located. The double doors are set approximately two and a half feet below grade in a well-like space. The western end of the well has a ramp down to the doors and the eastern end has three steps leading out of the well. This is the only door on the southern façade (*Image 20*).

The middle section of the southern façade is composed of an unbroken ribbon of glazing set atop three courses of standard sized concrete block, and then topped by a five foot tall section of corrugated metal. The primary element of this section is the uninterrupted ribbon of windows running from the western end to the eastern end (*Image 21*). This ribbon is broken once, a quarter of the way from the western end, by a group of windows located on two levels (*Image 22*). At the end of the ribbon there is another section of windows located on two levels at the eastern end of this middle section (*Image 23*).

The large windows in this section are about ten feet high, and are three panes wide by seven panes high. These windows have two sections that swing out in the same manner as an awning window (opening for ventilation). These 'awning windows' within the larger window are located one row up from the bottom and one row down from the top, measuring three panes wide by two panes high.

The ribbon of windows is exactly the same style and organized in the same rhythm as the windows on the north façade west (see *Images 15* and *16*). The windows in the ribbon are two different widths. All are seven panes high; type one of the ribbon is three panes wide and type two of the ribbon is two panes wide. The two pane wide windows measure three feet wide and the three pane wide windows measure five feet across; all of the windows are ten feet high. The rhythm of the windows is three of three panes wide then one of two panes wide. There are a total of 27 three pane-wide windows and nine two pane-wide windows. The rhythm starts at the western end with two three pane-wide windows, then a two pane-wide window, then the regular rhythm follows. The rhythm is interrupted at the break and pauses on a three pane-wide window. The rhythm resumes with one three pane-wide window, a two pane-wide window, and then resumes the regular rhythm. The ribbon of windows terminates at the eastern end of the facade with two three pane-wide windows.

There are three types of smaller windows; three of the types are located in the break in the ribbon of windows, and the last type is located at the end of the middle section. In the section that breaks the ribbon of large windows, the upper windows are a set of two windows that are two panes wide by three panes high. The other

¹⁰ The Body Shop was possibly added shortly after the original building, which was built in 1951 maybe 1956 or 1960, according to Mary Sies's interview with Bill Brode.

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window to the east is a single pane above a window unit air conditioner; the overall size is the same as one of the windows of the two window set. The lower level windows are arranged in the same way as the upper level; a group of two, then a single window. These windows are each two panes by two panes (see *Image 22*).

These windows are located about a quarter of the way along this section moving from west to east. Here the façade covers two levels, whereas most of the building is only one level. On the upper and lower levels, beginning at the western edge there are two windows grouped together and separated by a mullion, then a single window. The upper windows are set in the façade at the same height as the ribbon of large windows. The sills of the lower windows extend about four inches below the sill of the ribbon of large windows.

The section at the end of the ribbon of windows and the end of the middle section has one type of window. There are two groups of windows aligned one on top of the other, placed on the upper and lower levels. Both groups are identical, with two panes by four panes windows separated by a mullion on the upper level and lower level. In the upper left window the lower two have been removed and replaced with a window unit air conditioner and plywood to fill in the remaining space. Each of the four windows' middle sections of two panes by two panes swings out for ventilation (see *Image 23*).

Materials: foundation, siding or brick bonding, roofing.

The southern façade is composed of multiple materials. The gutters and downspouts on the southern façade are grey metal (possibly thin steel or aluminum). Most of the drainage system is grey colored, but there is some rust on parts of the gutters, and some of the downspouts are severely rusted the whole length from the gutter to the ground. The gutter on the easternmost section of the South façade is painted white.

The westernmost portion of the southern façade is unpainted grey concrete (or cinder) block laid in a running bond. The portion around the double doors appears to have a pale white primer coat of paint on it, or it is simply weathered white paint. The middle section is also composed of concrete block, but the space above the ribbon of windows is covered in corrugated metal. In the section at the end of the ribbon windows, where there are two levels of windows, the easternmost portion is composed of yellow American bond brick, with six rows of stretchers between each row of headers (*Image 24*).

The windows are composed of metal (steel) and glass. The panes of glass are held in with glazing putty. The metal framework of the windows was painted. There are some green areas, dark brown areas, and black areas of the window's framework. The double doors are (most probably) steel with stainless steel door knobs. The window sills are made of concrete for the most part. The window sills on the westernmost section of the southern façade appear to be concrete covered brick because there appears to be the evidence of joints in the continuous length of these sills. The headers over the windows of this section also appear to be grey painted brick. In the middle section where the two levels of window break up the ribbon of windows, the course over the windows is red brick. Most appear to be standard sized brick, but some are taller than the standard sized bricks and some are longer like roman brick.

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Decorative elements: door and window trim, cornice, and porches.

The only element on the south façade that could be considered decorative is the mural painted over the yellow brick at the eastern end of the façade. It is a picture of a red 1990s era Chevrolet, extended cab pick-up truck appearing to bust through the wall. The Chevrolet cross symbol is painted to the west of the truck on a white background (see *Image 24*). The word "DISCOUNT" is painted above the truck at the top of the wall, and the words "TRUCK CENTER" are painted below the truck. All of the lettering is done in a light blue and outlined in white.

A Note on Interiors

The interiors of the Lustine Showroom and Service Center were completely gutted when we performed our fieldwork in 2005. At this time, the building had been vacant for some time and repeatedly vandalized. Because of broken glass and other forms of disrepair, we were not permitted to access the interior for inspection. We did not turn up a floor plan or blueprints of any part of the complex in our extensive research. However, we have delineated the different functions of the components of the building in the description above and we elaborate on functions in Section 8: Significance.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce, Social History, and Transportation

Architecture

Period of Significance 1950-1972

Significant Dates 1950

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder F. Dano Jackley, architect

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University of Maryland, School
of Architecture, Planning & Preservation

Summary

Spanning more than six decades, the history of the Lustine dealership in Hyattsville is indicative of broader economic and social trends in twentieth century America. The Lustine physical plant was situated toward the northern reaches of a stretch of Route 1 through Hyattsville that concentrated automobile related retail and service establishments through most of the twentieth century. The Lustine dealerships (Oldsmobile and Chevrolet) were among the most successful in the United States during the mid-century when the Showroom and Service Center was constructed. The course of the Lustine enterprise -- its move from Southeast Washington, D.C. in 1926, its expansion and construction of an outstanding showroom and service center plant in 1950, and its gradual decline and relocation in the 1980s and 1990s -- reflects the ups and downs of General Motors, of which Lustine was a franchisee, and those of early middle-class suburbs like Hyattsville. The opening, in March 1950, of Lustine's second showroom at 5710 Baltimore Avenue coincided with Hyattsville's last major growth spurt.¹¹ At the time, Route 1 was a vital commercial and recreational hub for Prince George's County and a busy transit corridor for the entire Eastern Seaboard. Unaltered but vacant, the Lustine plant has exceptional cultural significance as the most potent reminder of downtown Hyattsville's automobile-induced historic development. Prior to the massive construction of interstate highways and other high speed roads in the 1950s, commercial and recreational strip development along historic turnpikes which had been turned into commuter roads epitomized American modernity to the same extent as skyscraper districts.

A best selling Chevrolet and Oldsmobile dealership from the late 1930s through the early 1980s, the Lustine franchise has experienced remarkable longevity. Founded by Philip Lustine in 1923, it still exists, although it has relocated to Northern Virginia and now sells a variety of brands. The Lustine Chevrolet showroom/ service

¹¹ As mentioned in *Hyattsville Our Hometown* (City of Hyattsville, 1986), 44, and George D. Denny, Jr., *Proud Past. Promising future. Cities and Towns in Prince George's County, Maryland* (Brentwood, MD: 1997), 219, "in 1941, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission implemented an area-wide street name change program which resulted in the renaming of most of the city's streets. The changes were designed to have the municipal street names conform to street names in the District [of Columbia]."

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center at 5710 Baltimore Avenue is the crowning achievement of Philip Lustine, who played a very active role in civic, political, and real estate affairs in Prince George's County and the entire Capital Region. Throughout the United States, it is one of the few remaining automobile dealership plants dating back to the decade following World War II which have not been demolished or altered beyond recognition. In D.C.'s Maryland suburbs, it is the only one to survive.

Based on merchandising studies and meant to capture the attention of motorists, the design of the Lustine showroom reflects the consumerist zeitgeist of the years following World War II, the intensely personal pleasure many Americans took in purchasing and using automobiles from 1945 to the early 1960s. Its intended character and design anticipate the "Populuxe" spirit of suburbia-based fantasy and hedonism which critic Thomas Hine has analyzed for the period 1954-1964.¹² Although its design appears to follow guidelines which General Motors provided to its dealers in the shape of a profusely illustrated manual published in 1948, the Lustine showroom is unique; our research leads us to believe that its massing - curved show windows forming two staggered bays under a flat but sweeping canopy - had no precise equivalent in the United States. During the decade following World War II, there was no new building of comparable visual impact and glamour, elegance and monumentality in all of Prince George's County, and very few of that caliber in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Lustine plant at 5710 Baltimore Avenue transcends the utilitarianism of "roadside architecture" as the memorable silhouette, monumental canopy, and gigantic windows of its showroom inspire mixed feelings of awe and admiration in front of man-made objects or natural landscapes of great scale, which are associated with the eighteenth century notion of the "sublime."

The Lustine dealership plant not only illustrates one of the world's most glorious eras in automotive design but also allows architectural and social historians to broaden their understanding of mid-twentieth century Modernism. It offers a particularly relevant case study of ways in which "high" and "vernacular," aesthetically- and commercially-driven, architecture can be brought under the same (flat) roof. We see how a little-known but talented local designer and a business client receptive to modernity but with no evident design literacy, re-interpreted and rejuvenated, on the one hand, the modernist and expressionist fascination for glass and transparency and, on the other hand, the "Streamline Moderne" aesthetic which influenced American commercial design from the early 1930s to the late 1940s.

Philip Lustine and his dealership contributed to life in Hyattsville and Prince George's County in general in more than an economic way. The Lustine Dealership represents the pinnacle of 1950s and 1960s automobile-centered culture. It anchored one of the most vibrant "automobile alleys" in the greater Washington, D. C. region.

8.1 The Lustine-Nicholson Motor Company: the history of a suburban car dealership.

¹² Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1987). In addition to the automobile related architecture, this style was used in the highway diners of the era.

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8.1-a - Philip Lustine's beginnings as Chevrolet franchisee, 1923-26.

"Lustine-Nicholson Motor Company" was the original name given to the Chevrolet dealership founded in 1923 by Philip Lustine (or Phil, as he called himself in advertisements for his company) and originally located at 301 Seventh Street, S.W. The Lustine family had lived in Washington, D.C. for a quarter of a century.¹³ Abraham, Philip's father, was born in Russian Poland in 1872. Just before 1900, he emigrated to the United States with his wife Rachel and his infant son Morris, most likely to escape religious and ethnic oppression against Jews in Central Europe. He immediately settled in the District of Columbia. Philip Lustine was born shortly thereafter, in 1898, followed by a third son, Harry.

Abraham Lustine operated two grocery stores located at Seventh Street and 301 Twelfth Street in Southwest, D.C. This neighborhood had a high concentration of new Jewish immigrants and the food retail business was frequently a stepping stone for freshly arrived members of the community.¹⁴ Later in life, Philip Lustine's father invested his earnings in real estate. He passed away in 1952, one year after his wife.¹⁵ Establishing residential roots in northwest D.C., the Lustines were representative of Washington's Jewish community - enterprising, prosperous, socially active, and yet marginalized by Gentiles until at least the end of World War II.

Apparently, Philip Lustine never went to college. In 1919, his portrait appears in a *Washington Post* advertisement, as a dapper and confident operator of two grocery stores located at 623 Seventh Street S.W. and 947 C Street, S.W., praising the merits of Corby's Mothers Bread (Plate 1).¹⁶ His move from food to automobile retail seems not to have been premeditated. The *Washington Post* provides us with two self-fashioned retellings of his automotive beginnings. In 1983, Philip Lustine reminisced about having a haircut and overhearing "another customer predict that Chevrolet was going to dominate the low-cost car market ... As soon I could get to a phone, I called General Motors, applied for and received a dealership then and there."¹⁷ Another, remembered by his relatives upon his death, was that "he got the idea while shining shoes in a Washington barbershop," as he "overheard what was obviously a prosperous group of men discussing afternoons at the race track and dinners at expensive restaurants. When he discovered that they were in the automobile business, he decided that was the business for him, too."¹⁸

¹³ We have found no explanation why the name "Nicholson" was added to that of Lustine.

¹⁴ See Hasia R. Diner and Steven J. Diner, "Washington's Jewish Community. Separate But Not Apart," in Francine Curro Cary, *Urban Odyssey. A Multicultural History of Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 136-153.

¹⁵ "A. Lustine, 80, Retired D.C. Grocer, Dies," *Washington Post* (Nov. 1, 1952), 14. Philip Lustine's first dealership was therefore within a short distance of one of his father's bakeries and one can speculate that Abraham Lustine had advanced funds for his son's venture.

¹⁶ *Washington Post* (Feb. 26, 1919), 12. These groceries were most likely owned by Philip's father.

¹⁷ "Lustine Grabbing the Chance," *Washington Post* (Oct. 21, 1983), AS 17.

¹⁸ Bart Barnes, "Philip Lustine, 87, Pioneer Auto Dealer, Dies," *Washington Post* (Dec. 18, 1985), B6.

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These two stories reflect how, in the early 1920s, the fast expanding automotive retail market offered great opportunities to enterprising young men. At the time, the economic and social role of car dealerships was already clearly established in the United States. As stated in the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*,

the restricted franchise dealership became the uniform and almost exclusive method of selling new cars. In this system, dealers may sell only the particular make of new car specified in their franchise, must accept a quota of cars specified by the manufacturer, and must pay cash on delivery. In return the dealers receive some guarantee of sales territory and may be assisted in various ways by the manufacturer - financing or aid in advertising, for example. Contracts also specify that dealers must maintain service facilities according to standards approved by the manufacturer.¹⁹

Philip Lustine was not a pioneer, since the first independent automobile dealership was established in Detroit in 1896 and the first automobile showroom opened in New York City three years later; in 1917, the National Association of Auto Dealers (NADA) was formed to "effectively represent 15,000 automotive dealers."²⁰ However, in the Capital Region, automobiles were essentially sold in downtown Washington, with very few outlets in outlying and suburban districts. Hyattsville received its first automobile dealership when Hervey Machen, Sr. opened his Hyattsville Automobile Company on the site of what had been Gray's Livery Stable, at Maryland and Guy Avenues (now Emerson Street at Route One).

In 1923, when the Lustine dealership opened, the Ford Motor Company remained America's top automobile producer, boasting more than half of annual sales, as opposed to less than 15% for General Motors. However the company, micro-managed by the rather tyrannical Henry Ford, had "no tradition of give and take with dealers." Between 1921 and 1924, it increased by more than half the number of its franchisees, therefore limiting their prospects and profits, and it was "unprepared for a market in which the Model T was no longer technologically superior."²¹

Philip Lustine certainly did not want to be associated with as notorious an anti-Semite as Henry Ford. He also sensed that the future belonged to General Motors. This conglomerate was founded in 1908 by William Capo Durant in Flint, Michigan. Durant, who had already acquired the troubled Buick Motor Car Company, bought out Oldsmobile and Cadillac, as well as lesser known companies, but "lost control of General Motors to bankers in 1910 during a cash crisis by his acquisition strategy." The following year, however, Durant was able to purchase the fledgling Chevrolet Motor Car Company and "proceeded to build it into a large, profitable

¹⁹ "Automotive industry" *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, (www.britannica.com) accessed Oct. 14, 2004.

²⁰ Robert, Genat, *The American Car Dealership* (St. Paul, MN: Motorbooks International, 1999), 17.

¹¹ See *Hyattsville Our Hometown*, 20, and Dennis Campbell, *Journey through Time* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co., 1991), 22 for pictures of this building in each of its uses.

¹² Richard S. Tedlow, "Putting America on Wheels: Ford vs. General Motors," *New and Improved. The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 162-163. Ford maintained a factory store and assembly plant at the intersection of John Marshall Place and Pennsylvania Avenue, where the Canadian Embassy presently stands.

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competitor.”²² With the backing of the du Pont family, he returned to the presidency of General Motors in 1916, bringing Chevrolet with him.

Durant was as ambitious and energetic as Henry Ford, but he was “unable to provide for the discovery and communication of the best technique of auto design, production and marketing among his divisions.”²³ After his ouster in 1920, GM’s situation was overturned by its new president, Alfred P. Sloan, Jr.:

Sloan’s idea was to throw an array of cars at strategically selected price points within specified ranges. GM’s entry in each group would appeal to the consumer looking for a lower-price car on quality and to the consumer looking for a more expensive car on price. These price points had to be sufficiently separated to prevent the company from competing primarily against itself.²⁴

As the maker of GM’s lowest priced cars, the Chevrolet division was destined to challenge and defeat Ford’s supremacy. In 1922, Sloan, a firm believer in delegating authority, placed at the firm’s helm a former Ford employee, William S. Knudsen, who rose to the challenge of regulating and boosting sales figures.²⁵ In 1923 (the year Lustine became a Chevrolet dealer), Chevrolet sales reached 465,000 nationwide, but slumped by a third the following year.

By 1925, roller coaster figures were a thing of the past, and middle-class Americans in ever larger numbers bought new automobiles at Chevrolet dealerships: for a slightly higher price than Ford’s Model T, they “got a car with distinctly more graceful lines and such features as a self-starter, a three-speed transmission, and a spare tire.” In 1927, as Ford stopped producing its Model T, Chevrolet, with its ubiquitous logo - a cross with slanted horizontal arms - “moved into first place and held it with only occasional lapses for the next 20 years.”²⁶ In 1929, nearly one million - 988,191 to be exact - new Chevrolet cars were sold.

Several factors contributed to this Jazz Age success story, and consequently, to that of the Lustine-Nicholson dealership. Merchandising innovation was of prime importance: in 1923, General Motors “introduced the annual model change” (although a full-fledged policy of planned obsolescence, based on cosmetic “styling” more than technical changes, was not systematically applied until the 1930s).²⁷ Every year, it organized in downtown Washington a large auto show, where all its divisions and local dealers were represented. In 1923, GM was the largest advertiser in U.S. magazines. Its Chevrolet division paid particular attention to “consumer

²² Born in the Swiss town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, which was also the birthplace of the great modernist architect Le Corbusier, the Buick race driver Louis Chevrolet (1878-1941) designed the expensive Chevrolet Classic Six, which reached production in 1912.

²³ Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 148-149.

²⁴ Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 169.

²⁵ Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, 22, and Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 169.

²⁶ John B. Rae, *American Automobile Manufacturers. The First Forty Years* (Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Company, 1959), 158

²⁷ Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 167.

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taste and desires, particularly through an emphasis on choices in color and trim."²⁸ The formation, in 1919, of the General Motors Acceptance Corporation (GMAC) eased financing procedures not only for individual buyers but also for dealers, who had previously secured loans and arranged installments on an individual basis.

Remembering his pre-GM years as a small businessman, Sloan "really considered the dealers as GM's partners."²⁹ Contrary to Ford or Chrysler, GM had few company-owned outlets (its D.C. factory branch closed in 1921), which would have directly competed with franchisees. Sloan, who often took a full work day to visit and confer with five to ten dealers in a given city or region, did all he could to strengthen GM's sales organization. He implemented "improved mechanisms for liaison between the corporation and its dealers and for hearing and adjudicating dealers' complaints, more elaborate provisions for financial assistance, and more generous discounts - 24 percent as compared with 17 for Ford dealers."³⁰ As a result, the GM network counted 17,000 dealers (representing a total of 125,000 employees) by the late 1930s.³¹

8.1-b - The move to Hyattsville, 1926.

Apparently Philip Lustine's automotive beginnings were fairly modest, as evidenced by his first solo advertisement in the *Washington Post*, a three-line mention of a used car for sale in November 1923.³² *Auto Dealer: The Master Merchandisers*, a book sponsored by the trade magazine *Automobile Age* in 1978, clearly explains how major changes were affecting car sales at the time Lustine moved into this business:

One of the most significant trends of the 1920s was the one toward a more exclusive relationship between the dealer and manufacturer. Ties between factory and showroom became stronger and more direct. The larger manufacturers in particular started to move away from the old distributor system. Instead, automakers began selling their cars directly to dealers. Besides cutting costs by eliminating a middle man, direct sales helped the manufacturer supervise the dealers' operation more closely.³³

In 1923, Chevrolet had a two-tier sales structure in the Capital Region, as evidenced by corporate advertisements (Plate 2) in the *Washington Post*. Lustine Motor Company was one among approximately ten "associate" dealers, whose names appeared in smaller characters than those for the four "direct" franchisees: Luttrell at 14th Street and Rhode Island Avenue; the Barry-Pate Motor Company at 1218 Connecticut Avenue; a

²⁸ Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 173.

²⁹ Arthur J. Kuhn, *GM Passes Ford, 1918-1938: Designing the General Motors Performance-Control System* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 246. The author also explains how in late 1934, "Sloan devised GM's Dealer Council to provide systematic communications between the top executives and selected dealers representatives" and how, in 1936, GM "inserted a 90-day rather than a 30-day cancellation clause in its contracts."

³⁰ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 98.

³¹ Tedlow, *New and Improved*, 174.

³² *Washington Post* (Nov. 27, 1923), 14. See also June 14, 1925, AU6.

³³ Art Spinella, Beverly Edwards, Mo Mehlsak and Larry Tuck, *America's Auto Dealer: The Master Merchandisers* (Van Nuys, CA: Freed-Crown Publishing Company, 1978), 56.

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brand new outlet at 625 H Street, N.E operated by a young Jew of Eastern European origin, Benjamin Ourisman³⁴; and Aero Auto, on Alexandria's King Street.³⁵ Associate dealers were often garage owners and they did not have a showroom. As evidenced in advertisements, their names changed frequently. In January 1926, this constellation of occasional Chevrolet dealers included the White House Garage in Hyattsville and the Mar-Dis Motor Company in Mount Rainier.³⁶

Philip Lustine's assertion that he opened his Hyattsville dealership in May 1926 by "special commission of the Chevrolet Motor Company" is corroborated by corporate advertisements.³⁷ Between February and June, 1926, Lustine and the Owens Motor Company at 6223 Georgia Avenue in Northeast, D.C. were mentioned as Chevrolet's only associate dealers (Luttrell had been replaced by the R.L. Taylor Motor Company, at Fourteenth and T streets; the other three direct dealers remained unchanged). (Plates 3-4) In July, the two-tier sales hierarchy was no longer in existence, and Lustine was one of six Chevrolet franchisees, the sole franchisee in suburban Maryland. At that time, the General Motors franchise agreement included the following conditions:

- The dealer would use an accounting system recommended by GM
- The dealer would buy and use standard GM signs
- The dealer would contribute \$5 for every new car sold to an advertising fund controlled by the manufacturer
- A new 15 percent clause gave the manufacturer the right to ship cars without an order any time the dealer had less than 15 percent of his yearly quota in stock.³⁸

Philip Lustine had apparently no personal ties with Hyattsville, but selling moderately-priced Chevrolet models - from \$ 510 for a roadster up to \$ 765 for a landau in 1926 - in the most populated, commercially active and automobile-oriented town in Prince George's County (as explained in section 8.2) seems logical. Prince George's was not as affluent as Montgomery County, where GM had franchises selling its more expensive brands. Also, moving slightly north of where Hyattsville's commercial core was located at the time made practical sense. Lustine's original dealership at 5610 Baltimore Avenue had ample parking space for the ever increasing number of used cars traded in by repeat (as opposed to first-time) buyers.

As explained in section 8.2-b, Lustine had few nearby competitors when he moved to Hyattsville in 1926. The city was close enough to the District of Columbia (2.0 miles north) to entice D.C. residents to buy a car there. It was a commercial magnet for communities which had sprung further north on either side of Route 1, such as

³⁴ "Benjamin Ourisman, Merchant, Dead at 56," *Washington Post* (Dec. 22, 1955), 26. As a businessman and a Jewish civic leader, Ourisman, who opened his franchise with only \$ 2,000 in his pockets, seems to have been a "role model" for Philip Lustine.

³⁵ Classified Advertisement, *Washington Post* (Apr. 26, 1925), A 8. Lustine was appointed as "direct factory dealer" in mid-1923. Associate dealers in the Maryland suburbs were Economy Auto Supply in Capitol Heights and the Kelchner Garage in Rockville.

³⁶ *Washington Post* (Jan. 24, 1926).

³⁷ Full page advertisement, *Hyattsville Independent* (Oct. 10, 1936), n.p. Philip Lustine repeated this assertion in another full-page advertisement, this time in the *Prince George's Post* (Oct. 6-8, 1961), B-25.

³⁸ Spinella, et al, *America's Auto Dealer*, 56.

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Riverdale, College Park, Berwyn Heights, and Hollywood. A newer development, University Park, located just north of Hyattsville, targeted more affluent residents; proximity to the University of Maryland campus and to a variety of small industries also played in Lustine's favor.³⁹

8.1-c - Through the Jazz Age, Depression, and World War II

Lustine's plant at 5600 Baltimore Avenue grew incrementally. By 1950 it had become a large complex with additions for accommodating sales, service, and parts. A 1946 photograph from the Hughes Collection preserved at the Maryland Historical Society (Plate 5) shows the Chevrolet showroom to the south of the lot, flush with the sidewalk. A simple commercial vernacular structure, the building had a brick-capped stepped parapet that peaked at the center and a flat roof, on which were mounted two large signs advertising Chevrolet. The service entrance was on the south façade. The latest addition to the complex, a two-story showroom completed around 1950, which replaced the earlier Chevrolet facade, was built of "cast stone bricks and plate glass show windows." Slightly set back and to the north, the Oldsmobile showroom, added in the 1940s, had a prominent vertical sign that extended above the roofline (Plate 6). Described as a simple art deco façade made of limestone, it had a decorative cornice of header bricks, and corner piers with capitals that recapitulated the cornice pattern. Large show windows were topped by transoms consisting of three rows of glass blocks. In later years, this building housed the parts department. The side and rear elevations of 5600 Baltimore Blvd revealed the many additions made over the years. Toward the rear elevation was the earliest service structure from 1926.⁴⁰

Although Chevrolet had three additional dealers in Prince George's County at the end of the Roaring Twenties (Boyer Motor Sales in Capitol Heights and Upper Marlboro from 1927 to 1932 and, more briefly, Coale-Sansbury Chevrolet Sales in Upper Marlboro, and the Camp Springs Garage), Philip Lustine made brisk business.⁴¹ In 1930, he was "building an addition to their present plant which, when completed, will double the size of their operation."⁴²

The Depression slowed down but did not stop Philip Lustine's professional ascent. In 1931, new passenger car sales in the Capital Region reached a peak of 22,164 (including 6,711 Chevrolet Sixes).⁴³ The following year,

³⁹ According to Deborah Weiner, Jewish History Museum, 15 Lloyd Street, Baltimore, Lustine probably made his decision to relocate to Hyattsville solely on economic grounds. She does not think that social factors were in play, for ex., that Jews would have been less ostracized in Hyattsville than they were in more affluent districts of the Capital region.

⁴⁰ Description is based on Helen P. Ross's Maryland Inventory of Historic Sites form for the Lustine-Nicholson Motor Company at 5600 Baltimore Blvd, Survey no. PG 68-41-38 (Maryland Historical Trust Archives, Crownsville, MD, Mar. 1987).

⁴¹ At the time, Chevrolet's Montgomery County sales network was loosely structured and included Wolfe Motor Co. of Silver Spring; Bethesda Motor Co.; Montgomery County Motor Co. in Rockville, and Banfield Chevrolet Co. on 6708 Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda.

⁴² "Trade notes," *Washington Post* (June 22, 1930), A 4.

⁴³ According to "New Models Await Buyer in Big Display," *Washington Post* (Nov. 15, 1936), A 1.

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they had dropped to 13,342. Many auto makers went bankrupt, enabling the well-managed General Motors Corporation to emerge as the industry's leader.⁴⁴ Lustine-Nicholson serviced existing vehicles, and sold auto parts and second-hand vehicles - by GM and other makers - which it advertised as "reconditioned by expert mechanics in our modern workshop."⁴⁵ In June 1932, to attract bidders for a nine-car auction, the dealership resorted to offering 25 cash prizes to those in attendance.⁴⁶ Around 1933, Lustine acquired land at 5601 Baltimore Boulevard (right across Route 1 from the 1926 dealership building), to display used cars.⁴⁷

By 1936, the situation looked much brighter, as 28,978 cars were sold in and around Washington. Lustine-Nicholson, which had become one of Chevrolet's top performing franchises, started representing Oldsmobile, a make sold in Washington since 1904.⁴⁸ For several years, the Hyattsville dealership enjoyed a suburban Maryland monopoly on this increasingly popular brand, whose models - especially the "Six" and the "Eight" - were more expensive, but more technically advanced than those offered by Chevrolet.⁴⁹

In 1939, Lustine had an annual business of \$2.5 million and a crew of thirty-five salesmen. In the three years preceding the U.S. entry into World War II, the dealership repeatedly ran large Oldsmobile advertisements in the *Hyattsville Independent*. Drawings, which were different from those used by GM in its corporate ads, were rendered in the slightly crude but visually striking graphic style found in many comic strips at the time. One advertisement, published on April 12, 1940 (Plate 7) showed a family (Mom, Dad and a pre-teen son) smiling at the mighty hood of their new car:

The lowest priced cars didn't seem to compare with Oldsmobile's smart, **streamline styling**. So we paid the little difference in price and got the best looking car of them all!

... "Oldsmobile has style - style all its own! From sparkling, die-cast radiator grille to smartly streamlined rear compartment - it's the last word in "looks." And you can take it from thousands of enthusiastic owners, the big Olds Sixty has everything else **necessary for modern motoring**. More length, more weight, more power and more big-car features than any low-priced cars! Drop in today - drive an Olds!

⁴⁴ Kuhn, *GM Passes Ford, 1918-1938: Designing the General Motors Performance-Control System*.

⁴⁵ Display ad, *Washington Post* (Nov. 25, 1933), 23. Chevrolet developed an OK Used Car Warranty in the 1930s.

⁴⁶ Classified ad, *Washington Post* (June 28, 1932), 12.

⁴⁷ Ross, MIHP Form, PG 68-41-38.

⁴⁸ "D.C. Firm Leads August Sales of Chevrolets," *Washington Post* (Oct. 13, 1935), R 12 mentions that for the month of August 1935, Ourisman had topped nation-wide figures by selling 177 Chevrolet models and that Lustine and two other local franchises were among the country's 100 top-selling Chevrolet dealers. In Montgomery County, Mann Motors, located at 8129 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring, sold both Chevrolet and Oldsmobile brands. Chevrolet models were also sold in Bethesda (Community Motors, 4300 Hampden Lane) and Oldsmobile cars in Chevy Chase.

⁴⁹ In 1940, Oldsmobile introduced the first fully automatic transmission.

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In the fall of 1940, Lustine's newest selling point for Oldsmobile (Plate 8) was the "Hydra-Matic Drive" which allowed drivers (women were particularly targeted) to "start, go and stop - without a clutch to press - or gear-shift to manipulate".

Aside from anchoring the local economy, Lustine and his dealerships contributed to social and cultural life in Hyattsville and its surrounds during a period of hard times. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s, the *Washington Post* recorded the activities of its bowling and basketball teams.⁵⁰ In 1932-33, the so-called "Lusnic" quintet, composed of former University of Maryland basketball stars, went from victory to victory at the regional level.⁵¹ At the height of the Depression, sponsoring sports activities or chamber music (the "Lustine-Nicholson Quartet" was featured on WOL radio in late 1932) made not only commercial sense, but also helped boost employee and consumer morale.⁵²

The emerging consumerist zeitgeist of 1939-41 was temporarily interrupted when wartime restrictions took effect. To conserve fuel, speed limits were reduced; gas and tires were rationed. In January 1942, when the Office of Production Management prohibited new car construction and banned the sales of new automobiles, except to defense plant workers and essential civilians, Lustine was employing only six salesmen and had a large unsold inventory.⁵³ In January 1943, pleasure driving was banned in Maryland, rendering the traffic decrease along Route 1 even more dramatic.⁵⁴

8.1-d - Opening the new Chevrolet plant in 1950

Once war-related restrictions had been lifted, boom followed bust for the National Auto Dealership Association's (NADA) 32,000 dealers. Americans everywhere were anxious to replace their old, decrepit cars. Women earned their driver's licenses in droves. The white flight to suburbia was a boon for Hyattsville auto dealers. As stated by Robert Genat in *The American Car Dealership*, the "car buying frenzy continued into 1950. It was accelerated by U.S. involvement in the Korean conflict; fear of another car-buying drought drove customers to the showrooms... Demands of the war created shortages of some critical raw materials, but auto sales continued to climb."⁵⁵ Year after year, Lustine proposed new and exciting offerings: in 1948, the Oldsmobile 98 adopted a novel streamlined profile; in 1949, Chevrolet introduced a Fleetline of "sleek fastback

⁵⁰ See *Washington Post* (Mar. 13, 1929), 17.

⁵¹ See, for instance, "Gettysburg Five Test for Lusnics," *Washington Post* (Jan. 8, 1933), 19, and "Berger Hero as Lusnic Five wins," *Washington Post* (Jan. 9, 1933), 10.

⁵² "Radio Dial Flashes," *Washington Post* (Dec. 16, 1932), 9.

⁵³ "Car Sales Ban Will Force Hundreds Here to Change Jobs," *Washington Post* (Jan. 2, 1942), 1.

⁵⁴ However, according to *Maryland in World War II* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1950-58), 261, "the mortality rate of dealers during the three years of rationing was less than 5 percent, while during the 15 years prior to rationing the average rate was 14 percent."

⁵⁵ Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, 11.

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bodies;⁵⁶ and in 1950, Chevrolet's new Powerglide line offered fully automatic transmissions and was well suited to driving on expressways.

Such a favorable climate pushed Lustine to expand and revamp its facilities. In 1948, a one-story lubritorium was added to the existing plant at 5600 Baltimore Blvd.⁵⁷ The sales and managerial staff also grew larger. In 1949, Curtis Dworken, a 29-year old Harvard business and law graduate who had just married Phil Lustine's only daughter, Elaine, joined the company as general manager.⁵⁸

After the war, the Lustine dealership continued to play a civic role in the community. On at least two occasions the old Lustine-Nicholson showroom was used as a polling place: in 1945, for a referendum on an "annexation bill to bring the areas of Clearwood, Castle Manor, and Queens Chapel Manor into Hyattsville,"⁵⁹ and in 1949, for a county-wide referendum on slot machines.⁶⁰ In 1949, the old showroom hosted a bazaar and bake sale organized by the Church of the Brethren in nearby University Park.⁶¹

There were numerous reasons why Philip Lustine needed a second plant. His success (as the biggest volume Chevrolet and Oldsmobile dealer in Prince George's County) called for additional space, as did the increasing range of models in both lines, and the popularity of large-sized cars, including station wagons. Differentiating between Chevrolet and Oldsmobile offerings seemed to make commercial sense. A few local competitors had already modernized their plants; some, like Fasanko Motors (Plate 9) in College Park (see section 8.2-c) already had spacious, fully glazed showrooms. Another reason to seek larger premises was that, throughout the country, the dealer-and-repair garage operation was superseding small independent repair shops:

The tendency on the part of buyers to go to the same mechanics who serviced the new car during its free-guarantee period is strong - so strong, indeed, that dealers have found that they can choose a location some distance from the city's center and still attract the original car purchasers into their original repair garages.⁶²

We can speculate that Lustine may have decided to leave the Oldsmobile operation at 5600 Baltimore Avenue and move his Chevrolet dealership to 5710 because the sales competition was fiercer for the second brand, since

⁵⁶ John. G Robinson's *Classic Chevrolet Dealerships : selling the bowtie* (St. Paul, MN: Motorbooks International, 2003) , 33.

⁵⁷ Display ad, *Washington Post* (Oct. 10, 1947), B9; "Lubritorium Planned," *Washington Post* (May 23, 1948), R16.

⁵⁸ See engagement announcement in *Washington Post* (Mar. 14, 1948), S6 and wedding announcement in "May Brides," *Washington Post* (May 14, 1948), C2.

⁵⁹ "Hyattsville Polls Listed," *Washington Post* (Apr. 12, 1945), 4.

⁶⁰ "County Decision. Slot Machine Referendum This Week," *Washington Post* (May 30, 1949), 5.

⁶¹ "Bazaar and bake sale," *Washington Post* (Dec. 3, 1949), B15.

⁶² Italo William Riccui, "Garages and Service Stations," in Talbot Hamlin, ed. *Forms and functions of twentieth-century architecture, Vol. 3* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 626-27.

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Chevy sales volumes were considerably larger. General Motors, which was highly active in studying and promoting successful dealership design, may have exerted pressure on dealers to modernize their plants.⁶³

In March 1946, the *Washington Post* announced Philip Lustine's intention to erect a supermarket and a drugstore on Baltimore Boulevard (Route 1) north of the Hyattsville Theater. Did he decide to build the showroom on this piece of land instead?⁶⁴ This northern section of Route 1 in Hyattsville remained essentially residential, with old and rather modest houses on large lots, contrasting with the dense commercial blocks to the south. The Sanborn maps of 1922 and 1940 show that the parcel at 5710 Baltimore Avenue, which measured one acre, and the two adjacent pieces of land to the south - one acre and three acres - each hosted one house well set back from Baltimore Boulevard. Owners of two of them in 1940 were Edgar Ford (# 5710) and Anna L. Rose, whose house was demolished as late as 1979.

Philip Lustine made sure that the opening of his new plant would receive the attention it deserved. On Sunday, March 19, 1950, the real estate section of the *Washington Post* (Plate 10) reproduced a photograph of the gleaming, nearly transparent, showroom, taken from Route 1, with the following caption:

This is the new streamlined, modern plant of Lustine-Nicholson just completed at a cost of over \$200,000 at 5710 Baltimore ave., Hyattsville, Jacko [sic] Jackley was the architect Cummins-Hart, builders. The building, one of the Nation's most modern showrooms and service centers, will officially make its debut next Saturday and Sunday. A feature of the formal opening will be the gift of a new 1950 Chevrolet to some lucky visitor.⁶⁵

On Thursday March 23, the *Prince George's Post* published on its front page news about the impending opening of the "new showroom of Lustine-Nicholson Chevrolet Motor Co. which has been readying its streamlined modernity for some months":

Representing one of the largest investments in the Hyattsville area, the new plant features an excitingly decorated auto show space, sun-bright daylight, the latest service department assembly line operation, and one of the largest parts departments on the eastern seaboard.⁶⁶

On the fourth page of the same issue, the *Prince George's Post* reproduced a swanky perspective of the new showroom, taken from its northern end, which appeared the next day on the cover of the weekly *Hyattsville Inquirer* (Plate 11), with the following comments:

⁶³ General Motors circulated a manual for optional dealership design: General Motors Corporation, *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties* (Detroit: General Motors Corporation, 1948).

⁶⁴ *Washington Post* (Feb. 6, 1946), 9.

⁶⁵ "Modern Showroom to Open," *Washington Post* (Mar. 19, 1950), R6.

⁶⁶ "Lustine-Nicholson To Open New Plant Saturday Morning," *Prince George's Post* (Mar. 23, 1950), 1 and 4.

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That's a super-duper opening Phil Lustine and Chris Dworken are planning for the new Lustine-Nicholson Chevrolet building

And it's a **super duper new building**, too....

Don't miss the opening of the building next Saturday and Sunday. It'll be just **like being in Hollywood, bright lights, glamour and all.**

The modern new showroom and service center is **something in which folks of the community may take real pride.** It has been made as the result of the confidence Phil Lustine had in this community when he opened his business here 23 years ago, and the confidence he has built among the folks of the area as the result of his honest, progressive and friendly policies. **Genial Phil** is among the pioneer big time businessmen of this fast growing Maryland area of metropolitan Washington.⁶⁷

The perspective drawing of the showroom appeared in two advertisements for Lustine. The first one started running, occupying approximately half a page, in the *Washington Evening Star* on March 24 (plate 12) and the *Washington Post* (plate 13) on the following day, when the "formal opening" of the showroom was to occur. Right below the catchy drawing, was a message signed "Phil Lustine, President":

Way back in 1923 we established the firm which has since that time operated as the Lustine-Nicholson Chevrolet Motor Company, Hyattsville, Md. We are proud to be counted among the pioneers who have prospered with the growth of this wonderful community. Now we are expanding ... (a few doors away) and will occupy one of America's Finest and Largest Automobile Show Places. At this time, I wish to personally thank the thousands of customers both in Maryland and Washington who have, though their confidence and favors, made possible our growth and success May I extend you a personal invitation to attend the formal opening of new Showroom ... Saturday and Sunday, March 25 and 26 ... from 9 A.M. to 9 P.M.

Below this greeting, the give-away Chevrolet Sedan was illustrated with the following comment:

Nothing to Buy - Nothing to Write - Nothing to Do but visit the New Showrooms of Lustine Nicholson.

In smaller letters, the advertisement finally stated:

Come out and see one of **America's Largest, Most Modern and Beautiful Chevrolet Showrooms and Servicenters.** SEE our **excitingly decorated Show-space**... SEE our **Daylight Lighting** ... SEE our tremendous Servicenter with its latest "assembly-line" operation ... SEE amazing scientific Testing Equipment ... SEE the **ultra-modern Paint Shop and Safety Inspection Lane** ... SEE one of the

⁶⁷ "Public Opening of Beautiful New Lustine-Nicholson Chevrolet Building Here March 25-26; Sparkling New Chevrolet to Be Given Away - Nothing to Buy," *Hyattsville Inquirer* (Mar. 24, 1950), 1.

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largest genuine Chevrolet Parts Departments ... See all this, plus the **air-conditioning** and other comforts we have provided for the convenience of our customers and employees. COME out and SEE!⁶⁸

More modest in size, the second advertisement featuring the showroom in perspective appeared through 1950 in the *Prince George's Post*; it deemed Lustine-Nicholson Chevrolet as "One of America's most modern and complete shops with **55,000 sq. feet devoted to the finest service.**"

The perspective of the showroom crowned the dealership's letterhead, indicating how much it had become emblematic of the success of the Lustine-Nicholson Company (Plate 14)

8.1-e 1950-1972: Lustine's peak years in Hyattsville

The erection and opening of his new showroom coincided with a golden age not only for Lustine, but also for Chevrolet, General Motors, and the American automotive industry in general. Throughout the 1950s, a period where brand loyalty was still very strong, Americans "craved powerful engines and the illusion of luxury in their cars."⁶⁹ Automobile styling (which, at Chevrolet, was masterminded by Harley Earl) reached its apogee, and the annual unveiling of new models, at Lustine's showrooms and elsewhere, became a highly anticipated ritual. The Corvette was introduced in 1953 and evolved through the decade into a much coveted competitive sports model. The Bel Air series of "dashing" automobiles was very popular in the second half of the 1950s; in particular, the 1957 Sport Coupe is regarded as "one of the most desirable cars in America with its hard top styling, muscular build, and a powerful V-8 that rocked the low-priced market."⁷⁰ Chevrolet's 1959 models had horizontal fins matching in extravagance those of slightly earlier Ford offerings.

Fast, reliable cars became a necessity to navigate the new interstate highways, and taking automotive vacations turned into a mass phenomenon. In 1952, Chevrolet dealers (Lustine preserving its Prince George's County monopoly) claimed that they were the "ONLY GROUP in the Metropolitan Area" to offer free "Safe-T-Way Service," a check-up inspection of brakes, steering, front lights, glass, windshield wipers, horn, rear view mirrors, exhaust systems, rear lights, and tires.⁷¹ In 1958, "another Lustine exclusive" promoted in the *Washington Post* offered "2 BRAND NEW CARS FOR THE PRICE OF 1 1/4," so that customers could

⁶⁸ Classified Advertisement, *Washington Post* (Mar 25, 1950), B2. A shorter version of the showroom description appeared in another advertisement on March 29, 1950, p.4, with the same architectural rendering.

⁶⁹ Frank Coffey and Joseph Layden, *America on Wheels. The First Hundred Years: 1896-1996* (Los Angeles, General Publishing Group, 1996), 148-149. This book was the companion piece to a PBS series. In 1950, Montgomery County had Chevy Chase Motor Co.; Loving Chevrolet in Silver Spring; Tom's Auto Service in Wheaton; Oldsmobile Mann Motors Co in Silver Spring; Suburban Cadillac-Oldsmobile Company in Bethesda; and Williams Chevrolet, 1339 East-West Highway, Silver Spring.

⁷⁰ Coffey and Layden, *America on Wheels*, 150-151, 186. This 2 seater sports car was a success in part due to Earl's design, but perhaps more so due to George Maharis and Martin Milner's roles as young bachelors driving one in the Television Show "Route 66" during the early 1960s.

⁷¹ *Washington Post* (May 21, 1952), 20.

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become "A 2-CAR FAMILY FOR A FRACTION MORE THE COST OF A LOW-PRICED CAR": the "perfect combination" was a big Chevrolet for Dad and, for Mom, a small Fiat, the snappy Italian brand which Lustine had just started representing as an exclusive dealer for suburban Maryland.⁷² (Plate 15) Relentless promotion, price-cutting, and sound reputation allowed Lustine to sell 5777 cars between January and late November, 1958.⁷³ (Plate 16) Because it sold 1233 Chevrolets in May-June 1959, including the new compact Corvair model, Lustine "won the annual Chevrolet sales competition among 23 dealers in the Washington-Baltimore zone."⁷⁴

An important part of the Lustine dealership was its parts sales and services. In 1958 and 1959, Lustine was the leader in part sales volume among the 112 dealerships in Chevrolet's Baltimore zone. (Plates 17-19) Parts Manager William G. Richardson presided over a staff of fourteen; during the 1950s and 1960s, his department controlled 100,000 feet of work and storage space in three Lustine buildings, all in close proximity on Route 1 in Hyattsville. The parts and service industry newsletter, *News from the Profit Area*, praised Richardson for his department's "methodical but simple accounting procedure, . . . one of several facets of the Lustine-Nicholson parts and service program which bring dollar returns through sound management." Other facets included an active training program for personnel, the maintenance of a large inventory of parts to meet any and all demands, monthly sales incentives (including profit-sharing) to recognize good work, and a strong advertising presence throughout the dealership. These strategies for success gave Lustine an edge over the competition. As Richardson put it, "There are 14 competing dealers in this area and we're all after the business."⁷⁵

Part of the Lustine dealership's business ethos was to make purely commercial events festive and quasi-communal. For example, in September 1957, the new showroom hosted a "FIAT of ITALY Festival Featuring a Gala Array of Italian Art, Handicraft, Pageantry and Music."⁷⁶ Phil Lustine routinely awarded trophies and cash prizes to his salesmen; many of them, as well as mechanics, were in his employ for several decades.⁷⁷ Undeniably, he was a local personality, who did not hesitate to directly engage with his existing and prospective clientele. Starting in the 1950s, his effigy--either a slightly caricatured drawing or a photograph--and his "signed" messages appeared in several advertisements. One promoted a "PHIL LUSTINE 'PEACE OF MIND' Guarantee," (Plate 20)⁷⁸ and another nicknamed him "'FEARLESS' Phil Lustine."⁷⁹ (Plate 21) In the 1960s,

⁷² *Washington Post* (Mar. 30, 1958), D12. See S. Oliver Goodman, "Area Sales of Fiats Exceed Forecasts," *Washington Post* (June 20, 1958), B9. Other dealers selling Fiat were Pohanka Oldsmobile in D.C. and Central Motors in Alexandria. A photograph preserved at the Prince George's Historical Society shows Dworzen visiting a car factory in Rome, Italy.

⁷³ *Washington Post* (Nov. 22, 1958), A5.

⁷⁴ *Washington Post* (July 18, 1959), C18. Lustine's salesmen shared \$12,500 worth of prizes awarded by the manufacturer and Philip Lustine. According to Coffey and Layden, *America on Wheels*, the "temperamental" Corvair was a major target of Ralph Nader in his ground breaking book *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile*, published in 1965.

⁷⁵ "Daily Sales Report is Leadership Barometer at Maryland Dealership," *News From the Profit Area* 2 (June 1959), 1-2.

⁷⁶ Advertisement, *Washington Post* (Sep. 27, 1958), A7.

⁷⁷ *Washington Post* (Apr. 14, 1953), 12.

⁷⁸ *Washington Post* (Dec. 4, 1954), 41. Lustine, with an inflated head compared to the rest of his body, is pictured as an auctioneer.

⁷⁹ *Washington Post* (Feb. 7, 1960), C2.

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Lustine's slender and youthful silhouette, with arms stretched, substituted for the T in Lustine.⁸⁰ Such a "personality cult" was not unique in the world of car dealers, but Phil Lustine definitely carried the art of showmanship further than most of his local competitors.⁸¹ He also made headlines for defying Maryland's "blue laws," which prohibited commercial transactions on Sundays. In August, 1955, he was arrested on a warrant sworn by a representative of the local chapter of the Retail Automotive Salesman's Union. "We've been operating this way since 1926" was his reply.⁸²

Throughout the 1960s, Lustine-Nicholson expanded aggressively. In 1963, Curtis Dworken, General Manager of the Chevrolet Division for the dealership, established Lustine Lease-A-Car which relocated in 1971 to 4500 Annapolis Road in Bladensburg.⁸³ In 1967, Lustine maintained a truck rental and leasing center at 3212 Rhode Island Avenue in nearby Mount Rainier. The 1971 *Polk's Directory* documents that in addition to the dealerships at 5600 and 5710 Baltimore Avenue, Lustine maintained used car lots at 5515-55 (Chevrolet), 5601 (Oldsmobile) and 5715. Sometime after 1971, Lustine bought out the departing dealers of Field's Buick and operated an Oldsmobile body shop and collision center there at 5323 Baltimore Avenue. At this point, we believe he expanded his business to sell Buicks along with the Chevrolets and Oldsmobiles.

In 1972, the Lustine Company sold 6,000 Chevrolet and 2,000 Oldsmobile models, boasting an annual sales volume of more than \$30 million; three quarters of the dealership's customers lived in the District of Columbia or Prince George's County.⁸⁴ Along with Ourisman and Rosenthal of Arlington, the Hyattsville franchise was one of the seven largest Chevrolet had throughout the entire country.

8.1-f - Philip Lustine's local role as real estate entrepreneur and civic leader.

By the time his new showroom opened in 1950, Philip Lustine had already demonstrated his business acumen beyond automotive retail and service, and had become a wealthy and powerful individual. (Plates 22-23) The war time embargo on private automobiles led him to seek alternative income in real estate development, a field in which his brother Harry was engaged on a full time basis until his untimely death in 1954. While Harry (who had legal training) exercised his brokerage activities in the District of Columbia and built essentially luxury homes, Philip selected Prince George's County as his field of action, starting with moderate-income housing projects.

⁸⁰ Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce, *Your Guide to Prince George's County* (Hyattsville, 1964-65 and 1967), 34 and 25, respectively.

⁸¹ In 1957, Phil Lustine served as President of the Chevrolet Dealers Association of Greater Washington; see "Dealer Group Elects," *Washington Post* (Apr. 26, 1957), D3.

⁸² "Auto Dealer Lustine is Arrested On charge of Sunday Sale Violation," *Washington Post* (Aug. 26, 1955), 3. In 1960, defiance of blue laws by five Hyattsville and College Park dealers was again challenged by two salesmen working for Standard Pontiac of College Park, but charges were dropped the following year.

⁸³ *Polk's Maryland-Washington Suburban Directory* (Washington, R.L. Polk & Co, 1971).

⁸⁴ William H. Jones, "Battling Burt Goes National. Auto Dealer a Volcano Buff," *Washington Post* (Feb. 15, 1973), H11.

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Launched in 1942, his first recorded venture was Queens Manor Gardens, a 181-unit, lower middle class garden apartment complex, completed in 1944 and located at the intersection of Queens Chapel Road (where public transportation to downtown offices was available) and 30th Street, in Mount Rainier, close to the border with the District of Columbia. This apartment group was designed in an undistinguished, stripped-down Colonial Revival style, but is historically significant, nonetheless.⁸⁵ Philip Lustine benefited from a new type of FHA loan - section 608, targeting for-profit "large-scale rental housing" in defense areas. Queens Manor was among the first multi-family housing complexes that changed the physical and sociological profile of the middle section of Prince George's County. The project was well received by the local press and residents, who fiercely opposed publicly funded "low-cost" defense housing. According to the *Prince Georgian*:

Lustine is one of the county's most outstanding business men and has for a number of years been interested in the progress and growth of this section of the county. He has always been identified with the campaigns for improvements (...) His friends here are legion, and he has the confidence of those with whom he works and does business.

The editorial ended rather lyrically:

And now, at this Thanksgiving time, the *Prince Georgian* would like to say "Welcome" to the Queen's Manor and to "Phil" Lustine. May your project prosper and may it grow.⁸⁶

In association with movie theater entrepreneur Sidney Lust (1881-1955), who was an Eastern European Jew, Philip Lustine developed a 500-unit garden apartment complex on Chillum Road, west of Queens Chapel Road, and just west of Mount Rainier, which opened in 1948. With home builder Melvyn L. Kraft, Lustine "sponsored" several houses in the Pinewood development, off University Lane (presently University Boulevard) at the western edge of Prince George's county. The model home (neo-Georgian in style, with two stories and a compact plan), located at 1002 Merrimac Street, was included in the *Washington Post*-sponsored "Homes of '48" exhibition": it had "air-conditioned heating, colored-tile bathrooms, a very modern kitchen." Purchasers were also offered a built-in television set.⁸⁷

In 1953, Philip Lustine and real estate developer Harry A. Boswell, Jr., who belonged to one of Hyattsville's most established families, unveiled their Gateway Center project in Suitland, next to the interchange between Defense Highway and a newly completed section of the Washington-Baltimore Parkway. The 40-acre development called for a shopping center including a department store, an office building, a hotel, and

⁸⁵ "Council of Mt. Rainier Orders Work on Queens Chapel Road," *Washington Post* (Dec. 21, 1944), 6.

⁸⁶ *The Prince Georgian* (Nov. 27, 1942), quoted in William George, *City of Mount Rainier. 75th Anniversary Book, 1910-1985* (Mt. Rainier, W. George, 1985), 58.

⁸⁷ "Lucia Brown, "Exhibit Home to Include Built-in Television," *Washington Post* (Aug 15, 1948), R2.

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apartment buildings.⁸⁸ With the Boswells (father and son) and Alfred H. Smith (1903-1987), a native of Riverdale who had also started his phenomenal business ascent in the mid-1920s, with a sand and gravel operation in Branchville near College Park,⁸⁹ Philip Lustine also owned an 89-acre tract in the Greenbelt-Berwyn Heights areas, which was granted industrial rezoning in 1954 and is presently occupied by the Beltway Plaza Shopping Center.⁹⁰ In 1953, Lustine was WTTG radio's "Businessman of the Week"; six years later, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the Citizens Bank of Maryland (established in Riverdale in 1928), whose president since 1945 was Smith and which counted Harry H. Boswell, Jr. as one of its directors.⁹¹ A press release preserved at the Prince George's Historical Society indicated that Philip Lustine had the Citizens Bank purchase \$50,000 worth of State of Israel bonds.

Philip Lustine was also an acknowledged "civic leader" whose good deeds (sometimes accompanied by his photograph) were featured in the columns of the *Washington Post*.⁹² Before the war, he focused on Jewish causes in the District of Columbia. As early as 1923, Philip Lustine, who belonged to the Washington Hebrew Congregation, is mentioned as a "lieutenant" contributing to a campaign to raise funds for a Jewish community center in D.C.⁹³ His wife hosted luncheons and musical benefits in their house at 1619 Allison Street, N.W.⁹⁴ He was also a member of the finance committee for Hyattsville's 1936 Jubilee celebrations.⁹⁵

After 1945, partly because his major competitors did the same (see section 8.3), Lustine became very active in Prince George's County civic, charitable, fraternal, and political organizations.⁹⁶ For instance, in 1946, he donated a bookmobile chassis to spearhead the campaign for a new county-wide public library system.⁹⁷ Ten

⁸⁸ "\$22 Million Maryland County Development Disclosed," *Washington Post* (Jan. 18, 1953), R1, and Harrison P. Hagemeyer, "Big Apartment Project Wins County's O.K.," *Washington Post* (Apr. 16, 1953), 23. On August 23, 1953, the *Post*'s "State of Real Estate Chronicle" also reported that Lustine, in association with Charles Oshinsky, had purchased from the Public Housing Administration the 176-unit Black Rock apartment complex, built in Bridgeport, CT by the Federal government in 1917-18. Lustine also co-owned Oakcrest Towers apartments in Suitland, with William F. Banks.

⁸⁹ "A.H. Smith: Pr. George's Dean of Grit," *Washington Post* (July 23, 1981), MD1. When he died at the age of 84 in 1987 (see obituary in *Washington Post* (Sep. 1, 1987), B4), Smith, who presided over Citizens Bank through the late 1970s, owned one of the "largest highway construction and maintenance concerns in the Mid-Atlantic". Smith operated a sand and gravel business, started in Branchville, north of College Park, in 1925, which was very active in road construction and employed 1,100 in 1981.

⁹⁰ "Area Is Rezoned in County," *Washington Post* (Sep. 16, 1954), 15.

⁹¹ *Washington Post* (Aug. 18, 1953), 25. *Washington Post* (July 4, 1959), D3. Born in 1898, Philip Lustine also dabbled in the insurance business: in the late 1960s, he operated a Safeco Insurance Agency (boat insurance) at 5614 Baltimore Avenue (see display ad, *Washington Post* (Apr. 22, 1967), 58).

⁹² See "Variety Party," *Washington Post* (Nov. 23, 1936), X8.

⁹³ See "Jews Announce Teams in Community Campaign," *Washington Post* (Oct. 29, 1923), 11.

⁹⁴ See "Hadassah Group Here Awarded National Honor," *Washington Post* (Dec. 15, 1935), F11, and

"Jewish Women Plan Dance and Card Party," *Washington Post* (Jan. 24, 1937), F4.

⁹⁵ "Committee that was active in arranging the jubilee program," *Hyattsville Independent* (Oct. 10, 1936), n.p. Auto dealer Jack Lepper was also on the finance committee.

⁹⁶ In the 1950s, Philip Lustine resided at 4301 Massachusetts Avenue. In semi- and full retirement, he owned a home in Rockville but spent a large amount of time in Florida.

⁹⁷ "Prince Georges Library Drive Opens Jan. 18," *Washington Post* (Jan. 8, 1946), 9.

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years later, he received the "Man of the Year" award from the Prince George's Lodge of B'nai B'rith.⁹⁸ (Plate 24) A registered Democrat, active in the District Democratic Club, Philip Lustine contributed funds to his party's candidates in various elections held in Prince George's County.⁹⁹

Philip Lustine navigated in a circle composed of some of Prince George's County's wealthiest and most influential citizens. The Prince George's County Historical Society has preserved photographs of this short man (apparently at the races) with Congresswoman Gladys Noon Spellman and Alfred H. Smith, who raised thoroughbreds at his Upper Marlboro farm (Plate 25), and of Lustine's dealership transformed into the Democratic Party's Campaign Headquarters in 1958 (Plate 26).

Most of all, Philip Lustine proved to be an outstanding fund raiser for Prince George's County. In the 1950s, he served as Chairman for the county's Community Chest Drive (a position held before the war by Dr. Byrd, the president of the University of Maryland).¹⁰⁰ During the following decade, he headed the county's March of Dimes campaigns, directing 3,500 volunteers.¹⁰¹ In 1961, the Salvation Army asked Philip Lustine and his wife to direct fundraising for a new activity center in Prince George's County; their efforts resulted in the erection of a simple but elegant modernist structure (designed by Walton and Madden) on Edmonston Road in East Hyattsville.¹⁰² In December 1985, when Philip Lustine died at age 87 at Bethesda's Suburban Hospital, his obituary in the *Washington Post* mentioned that he was "Man of the Year" for the Heart Fund in 1954 and that he belonged to the Ben Franklin Masonic Lodge, the Woodmont Country Club, and the M Club at the University of Maryland.¹⁰³

8.1-g - Last years in Hyattsville. New challenges and directions.

In the late 1960s, Philip Lustine's only son, Burton, who was born in 1934 and was a Tufts University philosophy major, became Vice-President and General Manager of the dealership ("patriarchy" and "nepotism" were indeed common among the Capital Region's best established and most successful car dealerships).¹⁰⁴ (Plate 27) Burton had inherited his father's taste for showmanship. In December 1967, this good-looking young man was pictured in the *Washington Post* among the wives of his top salesmen, as the happy sponsor of a "wild, wonderful and free shopping spree" at Saks Fifth Avenue, as well as dinners-for-two at the Sans Souci

⁹⁸ "Hyattsville Group to Honor Lustine," *Washington Post* (Apr. 26, 1956), 2. In 1959, Philip Lustine was an officer for the D.C.-Maryland Regional Board of B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League (see "Anti-Bigotry Group Elects Radio Man," *Washington Post* (Jan. 23, 1959), B 3.

⁹⁹ "Democratic Pre-Primary Fever Rises," *Washington Post* (June 2, 1952), 9. Hal Willard, "County Win Was Costly to Democrats," *Washington Post* (Nov. 15, 1958).

¹⁰⁰ "Prince Georges Officials To Discuss Chest Drive," *Washington Post* (Aug 26, 1952), 15.

¹⁰¹ "Lustine Named to Head Drive," *Washington Post* (Nov. 19, 1961), D 23.

¹⁰² "Lustines to Head Drives for Funds," *Washington Post* (Jan. 21, 1961), D5.

¹⁰³ Bart Barnes, "Philip Lustine, 87, Pioneer Auto Dealer Dies" *Washington Post* (Dec, 18, 1985), B6.

¹⁰⁴ In 1967, Dworken left as general manager and bought Hicks Chevrolet at 5929 Georgia Avenue, N.W. in the District of Columbia, which he renamed Curtis Chevrolet and is still in existence. See advertisement in *Washington Post* (Jan. 7, 1967), C 36.

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restaurant.¹⁰⁵ A boxer since college days, Philip Lustine's heir used his "Battlin' Burt" nickname extensively in advertisements, sometimes picturing himself in full boxing regalia.¹⁰⁶ (Plate 28) Burton attracted to the Lustine sales team local champions such as bowler Herbert Levin,¹⁰⁷ and hired a former Washington Redskins player as public relations coordinator, to help bring "athletic personalities from all sports to the show room."¹⁰⁸ The 1970s were a period of transition for the dealership with Burton Lustine's leadership firmly in place by 1980.

The 1970s began a period of significant difficulties for the auto dealership business nationwide and locally. The oil embargo of 1973 (and that of 1978) triggered a sharp drop in automobile sales. Inflation caused considerable "sticker shock" among buyers. Consumer groups objected to repair surcharges imposed by dealers. Lustine's reputation (like that of many local competitors) was tarnished by accusations of inflating the size of its operations in advertisements, of selling damaged cars without informing buyers of their condition, and of advertising used cars as new. Such allegations were brought to the attention of the Federal Trade Commission attorneys and of local judges, and reported in the press.¹⁰⁹

Overall, the glory days of authorized dealers and striking roadside showrooms were coming to an end. Competition came from auto makers short-circuiting the sales of accessories (such as radios), from discount merchants, from rental companies starting to sell their used cars, and from lease companies "without the overhead required by automobile manufacturers." "To keep up with the law and the increasingly sophisticated products," car dealers had to purchase expensive testing equipment, while being challenged in the service field by tune-up companies.¹¹⁰ In the 1990s, selling parts in a store also became obsolete when they were sold through the internet or shipped via courier by the manufacturer. In 1986, there were 25,100 dealerships in the US, owned by 16,850 principals, as opposed to 51,000 dealerships in 1950, when the Lustine showroom opened.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ "Wives of Lustine Chevrolet's Top Salesmen Win Wild Shopping Spree," *Washington Post* (Dec. 31, 1967), D4.

¹⁰⁶ See advertisement, *Washington Post* (Mar. 24, 1973), D34. William H. Jones, "Battling Burt Goes National. Auto Dealer a Volcano Buff," *Washington Post* (Feb. 15, 1973), H 11. See also the advertisement titled "Watch Out Competition... The Lustine Price Fighter is Doing it Again. BATTLIN' BURT'S BACK," *Washington Post* (Nov. 11, 1983), C 39. A *Washington Post* ad dated December 26, 1983, C22, shows a man sitting at a desk seen from the back wearing a boxer's robe with the inscription "Battlin' Burt's Back!" holding a \$ 1,000 bill. The same boxer character seen from the back appears in 1986 promotional campaigns.

¹⁰⁷ "Former Pro Bowler Racks Up 300 Score," *Washington Post* (July 6, 1970), D9.

¹⁰⁸ "Jerry Smith of Redskins Joins Lustine," *Washington Post* (Mar. 12, 1970), G3.

¹⁰⁹ In 1958, all Capital Region Chevrolet and Oldsmobile dealerships, including Lustine, had already been penalized for price fixing, contrary to antitrust legislation. See James Clayton, "42 Auto Firms Here Indicted," *Washington Post* (July 29, 1958), A 1, A 3, and Wendell P. Bradley, "14 Chevrolet Firms Fined \$ 32,000 Here," *Washington Post* (Dec. 9, 1958), A1. In the 1990s, several Lustine salespeople were indicted for having made cash deals with police officers and FBI agents posing as drug dealers. See Michael York, "Charges Added in Money Laundering Cases; U.S. Attorney Says 13 Rosenthal, Lustine Car Dealerships Helped Hide Drug Dealers' Profits," *Washington Post* (Mar. 12, 1993), B4.

¹¹⁰ Spinella, et al, *America's Auto Dealers*, 101.

¹¹¹ Warren Brown, "New-Car Supermarkets. Brand Loyalty Is Going the Way of Single-Site Dealerships," *Washington Post* (Oct. 6, 1986), 23.

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As stated by Chester Liebs in *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American roadside architecture*, cars had become “a highly recognizable, standardized product that could be sold ‘off the shelf’ like sticks of butter or cans of soft drinks. Auto showrooms were, by and large, superfluous. All that was needed was an open lot filled with rows of automobiles for the customer’s inspection.”¹¹² In the far suburbs of every large American city, “a new type of automobile row was germinating, where cars instead of buildings were the primary means of attracting attention” and where the “entire sales-and-service-building, showroom and all, is now set back from the highway instead of being positioned close to the curb line.”¹¹³ New showrooms started to look like bank buildings to insure their resale value for non-automotive companies.¹¹⁴ In D.C.’s Maryland suburbs, a characteristic example of a “post-modern” automotive landscape was established in the northernmost section of Silver Spring near Cherry Hill Road.

This exodus affected long-established dealerships. In 1964, Ourisman closed its 1926 Southeast D.C. dealership and inaugurated a \$ 1.5 million plant on Branch Avenue, near the Marlow Heights Shopping Center, with 80 mechanics and an administrative and selling staff of 120.¹¹⁵ Indeed, General Motors was pushing its dealers to abandon old locations in congested and often economically declining districts and to move to newer suburbs. Judging his Hyattsville facilities too cramped, Burton Lustine tried to relocate further North, at the intersection between Route 1 and the Capitol Beltway (I-495).¹¹⁶ As his plan fell through, he followed the nation-wide trend toward multi-franchise dealerships. He started a Toyota/ Dodge dealership in Woodbridge, Northern Virginia, in 1981,¹¹⁷ and purchased Gee Dee Datsun, a Nissan franchisee located on Annapolis Road in Lanham the following year.¹¹⁸ In October 1983, Lustine celebrated its 60th anniversary with great fanfare, giving away five cars (one for each of the brand it was selling) and 20 Florida vacations.¹¹⁹

Of the decline encountered by the Big Three automakers in the 1980s, GM’s was the “longest and most precipitous.” It took the company longer than Ford and Chrysler to “take responsibility” for its problems, which were due to aggressive Japanese competition (and frequent superiority in management, technology and marketing), as well as ill-considered retail price hikes in the late 1980s. Oldsmobile dramatically reduced its number of makes and models as the decade drew to a close. GM’s market share was only 34% in 1986. Its rebound started with the creation, in 1991, of the Saturn division for which there were no designated and exclusive franchisees (Lustine presently sells Saturns in Woodbridge). In 1994, “a leaner, more progressive General Motors reported an annual profit for the first time since 1989.”¹²⁰

¹¹² Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American roadside architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 92.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹¹⁴ Spinella, et al, *America's Auto Dealers*, 100.

¹¹⁵ Edward S. Cohen, “Ourisman Chevrolet Expands Into New \$ 1.5 Million Plant,” *Washington Post* (Jan. 26, 1964), B 19.

¹¹⁶ Lucy Starr Norman, “Auto Dealer Offers to Improve Ramp,” *Washington Pos* (Aug. 28, 1980), MD5.

¹¹⁷ Advertisement, *Washington Post* (Apr 25, 1981), C44.

¹¹⁸ “Lustine Adds Lanham Datsun,” *Washington Post* (Oct 22, 1982), AD 19.

¹¹⁹ Display Ad, *Washington Post* (Oct. 21, 1983), AS18.

¹²⁰ Coffey and Layden, *America on Wheels*, 274.

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Lustine-Nicholson in Hyattsville remained well known as a parts dealer until it closed c. 2001. In mid-2000, the dealership was still selling Chevrolets. Shortly thereafter, the showroom was leased to Dar Cars. In 2002, Lustine Oldsmobile was still doing business at 4109 46th Street in Hyattsville, but it closed shortly thereafter. It was vacated around 2003. In 2003, the Prince George's County Council passed a law banning small automobile dealerships from Route 1. Although the law was later successfully challenged in court, it clearly conveyed local officials' determination to bring to a close Route 1's history as an automobile alley and to redevelop the corridor in Mt. Rainier, North Brentwood, and Hyattsville as an arts district.¹²¹

In its new Northern Virginia locations, Lustine Chevrolet continued to do a robust business. In 2001, for the fourth consecutive year, it was the nation's best selling auto parts dealership with a \$87.5 million annual volume. Its contender, Brown and Brown Chevrolet, sold \$75.5 million).¹²² Lustine GM Parts Distributors has recently ventured into Internet retailing.¹²³

8.2 Hyattsville's transportation-induced growth and automobile-oriented physical and cultural landscape.

8.2-a - Development until the early 1950s.

The creation of a crossing between a major historic turnpike and railroad tracks was the strongest determining factor in the birth and rise of Hyattsville. The present path of U.S. Route 1 through the city - running southwest up to Farragut Street, as Rhode Island Avenue, and in a quasi-straight northerly direction thereafter, as Baltimore Avenue - replaces, a short distance away, a thoroughfare created to comply with a 1704 edict requiring each Maryland county to construct cart roads 20 feet wide.¹²⁴ In the 1780s, the precursor of Route 1 was used for stagecoach travel and became the first mail route sponsored by the Federal government. In the early 19th century, this was one of Maryland's first turnpikes, linking Washington to Baltimore. In 1865, the road was brought into the jurisdiction of the county and in 1906, control was passed to the State of Maryland.

In 1835, the Baltimore & Ohio railroad company opened a station a few blocks south of the site of the Lustine showroom. Ten years later, Christopher Clarke Hyatt purchased a triangular tract at the intersection of the turnpike and railroad tracks. The store he built immediately upon his purchase became a post office in 1859. Other speculators acquired land near Hyatt's tract.¹²⁵ In 1884, as the new community was becoming one of the

¹²¹ Krissa Williams, "Car Dealerships Win Fight for Route 1," *Washington Post* (Nov. 30, 2005), D1.

¹²² Cliff Banks, "Back-End Operations Continue to Prove Their Importance," *Ward's Dealer 500* (June 18, 2001), found at <http://wdb.wardauto.com/newsarticle>.

¹²³ Lustine Dodge Jeep, <http://www.lustinedodge.com/displayForm.asp?id=5&keywords=parts> (accessed June 2008).

¹²⁴ Prince Georges County. Community Renewal Program. *The Neighborhoods of Prince George's County* (Upper Marlboro: Community Renewal Program, December, 1974), 56.

¹²⁵ Information contained in this page comes from the Historic Context developed by the Historic Preservation Studio, School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, University of Maryland (December 2003); see also *Hyattsville Our Hometown*, 1-2.

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Capital Region's earliest residential suburbs, the B & O erected an attractive commuter station, designed by noted Baltimore architect Francis Baldwin and, unfortunately, demolished.¹²⁶

In 1886, the community was incorporated as the City of Hyattsville. By 1900, streetcar service connected residents to downtown Washington and the city boasted more than a thousand residents (as opposed to 334 two decades earlier).¹²⁷ Demographically, the inhabitants were overwhelmingly white and respectable members of the middle class: "lawyers, doctors, teachers, surveyors and shopkeepers." Other communities, such as Riverdale, Lakeland, and Berwyn Heights, were established further north along Baltimore Boulevard.

Road improvements, made necessary by increasing traffic and the popularity of the automobile, contributed to Hyattsville's population growth and prosperity and vice versa. Route 1 was paved in concrete around 1920 and by the end of the decade, the roadway was doubled in width to 40 feet and again resurfaced. Through traffic was intense, and the Federal Highway Act of 1925 designated U.S. Route 1 as a national north-south connector (its southbound course is presently Alternate Route 1). Traffic, and access to the Lustine dealership from D.C., increased again when the section of Rhode Island Avenue from the District line to Hyattsville opened in 1929. The reconfigured roads and a viaduct over the railroad brought major improvements for traffic and safety.¹²⁸

When Lustine moved to Hyattsville in 1926, the city had approximately 3,050 inhabitants, an increase of 450 over figures in the 1920 census.¹²⁹ In its commercial artery - a sequence comprising connected stretches of Rhode Island Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and Baltimore-Washington Boulevard, the earliest houses and rudimentary "frontier town" establishments were progressively replaced by sturdy brick storefronts. The best surviving example of Hyattsville's early twentieth century commercial vernacular is Franklin's at 5121 Baltimore Avenue, built as a Livery Stable and later used for many years as a hardware store.¹³⁰ Hyattsville's mid-1920s "Main Street" also hosted customary small town "landmarks," neo-classical banks and a medieval-looking armory (1918, designed by State architect Robert Lawrence Harris). The 700-seat Arcade Theater had just opened on Gallatin Street, right off Baltimore Avenue (it is now the site of municipal offices).¹³¹ In 1930, a telephone exchange opened at 5500 Baltimore Avenue (three stories were added in the 1970s).

The 1940 census figures indicate a significant population increase within a few miles of the Lustine dealership. Home to 6,396 people, Hyattsville was then the largest incorporated town in Prince George's County. To the south, nearby Mount Rainier had nearly 5,000 residents and immediately to the north, Riverdale had more than 2,300. With demographic growth came the advent of multi-family housing. The Garfield Apartments was a 17-

¹²⁶ Carlos P. Avery, *E. Francis Baldwin, architect: the B&O, Baltimore, and beyond* (Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2003).

¹²⁷ Denny, *Proud Past, Promising Future*, 214-215.

¹²⁸ *Hyattsville Our Hometown*, 21-22.

¹²⁹ "Current Happenings in Virginia and Maryland," *Washington Post* (July 4, 1926), M8.

¹³⁰ Susan Pearl, Maryland Inventory of Historic Places Form, PG:68-41-13 (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, June 1993). See also Historic American Buildings Survey MD-1042 (Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division).

¹³¹ *Washington Post* (Nov. 17, 1924) and (Aug. 9, 1925), F3.

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unit apartment building, designed by local architect Paul Kea in a stripped-down Colonial Revival style, opened in November 1939 on Franklin Street, opposite the National Guard Armory.

Prince George's Apartments on Hamilton Street, an elegant and progressive design by D.C. architect Joseph Abel (the owner/builder was Eugene B. Roberts) opened in 1940.

Paul Kea, associated with Ross and Walton, was also responsible for the neo-Georgian County Service Building on Rhode Island Avenue, which was partially funded by the Works Progress Administration and entailed the demolition of some very prominent houses--including the original C.C. Hyatt Mansion and the residence of J. Harris Rogers--and small commercial buildings.¹³² This area was the nucleus for the present government complex in Hyattsville.

Around 1940, downtown Hyattsville acted as a commercial and recreational magnet not only for the late nineteenth-century suburban settlements which we have already mentioned, but also for newer residential areas targeting the white middle-class (civil servants, professionals, as well as persons affiliated with the University of Maryland), such as the town of University Park, the Calvert Hills section of College Park, and the upscale subdivision of College Heights Estates. Operated by Sidney Lust, a glamorous movie theater with a colorful palette, designed by a renowned architect, John Ebersson, and "patterned after DeLuxe European theaters," opened at 5614 Baltimore Avenue in 1939.¹³³ The following year, a Bowling Center, with 24 lanes and a soda fountain, began operating at 5503 Baltimore Avenue and people "from far and wide made the trek to Hyattsville to partake in [its] recreational and social atmosphere."¹³⁴ The year 1940 saw also the opening of a Woolworth store (5300 block),¹³⁵ of a large food store at 5609 Baltimore Boulevard (subsequently a Safeway, Pier One Imports, and presently a laundromat), and a row of clothing stores.¹³⁶

During the war years, Hyattsville and its immediate surroundings experienced rapid growth. The entire county expanded from 89,000 residents in 1940 to 120,000 by mid-1943.¹³⁷ To house new government and defense workers (like those working in the nearby ERCO factory in Riverdale) quickly and efficiently, many garden apartment complexes were erected, such as Castle Manor.¹³⁸ By 1942, a pamphlet issued by M-NCPPC argued

¹³² A neo-Georgian post office was erected with Public Works Administration funds on Gallatin Street, within view of Baltimore Avenue. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. James H. Bruns, *Great American Post Offices* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1998).

¹³³ *Hyattsville Independent* (Dec. 24, 1939), 1. In March 1949, Sidney Lust opened a Drive-In Theater in Beltsville, nine miles north of downtown Hyattsville.

¹³⁴ Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Survey Form, Survey HR-2 68-41-34 (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, March 27, 1987). Oscar H. Hiser, the owner of the bowling alley, went bankrupt and the building became part of Field's Buick. It was still a dealership in 1987.

¹³⁵ State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-25 (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, n.d.).

¹³⁶ State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-28, (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, n.d.).

¹³⁷ "Prince Georges County Becomes Important Part of the Washington Suburban Map," *Washington Post* (May 9, 1943).

¹³⁸ See "Garden Group for a Washington Suburb," *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1944), 76-77, and Joseph H. Abel and Fred N. Severud, *Apartment Houses* (New York: Reinhold, 1947), 44-45; *Architectural Forum* 84 (Mar. 1946), 137-8.

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that "commercial development along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway [was] far in excess of normal community needs, indicating a dependency on transient patronage."¹³⁹

The period 1948-1953, during which Lustine built his second dealership, was one of westward growth for Hyattsville, as the city annexed developing residential areas in the vicinity of Queens Chapel Road. New buildings were erected close to the Route 1 corridor, such as DeMatha Catholic High School for boys, behind Lustine's new plant.¹⁴⁰ However, this corridor began losing its supremacy as a development magnet under forces which will be examined at the end of the upcoming section.

8.2-b Automobile-related businesses in and around downtown Hyattsville.

Hyattsville's economic ties with the automotive industry started at an early date and in a direct fashion. In 1907, the **Carter Motor Corporation** erected a factory east of the downtown, on a spur of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Based in Detroit, the Carter company was manufacturing pleasure cars for which demand, in those pre-assembly line pioneering days, exceeded supply. It estimated that production in the D.C. region would eliminate high freight rates on completed cars and open up the promising East Coast market.¹⁴¹ Carter first put an option on land near the Berwyn railroad station but went for the Hyattsville site "by reason of closer proximity to the city, the larger area of the tract of land offered, more advantageous shipping facilities, and general accessibility."¹⁴²

Measuring 300 by 60 feet, the first building of the Carter compound was completed in March 1908 and production - six cars a day - began in the fall of the same year.¹⁴³ (Plates 29-30) The large shed-like structure was not unlike the Lustine service center under consideration in this nomination. The completed factory was composed of two wings connected by an archway. Readers of the *Washington Post* were invited to visit the modern plant, in addition to Carter's office and sales room in downtown Washington.¹⁴⁴ In 1912 "twenty-nine businessmen of Washington, Hyattsville and Bladensburg" bought out Carter to form the Washington Motor Car Corporation.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Maryland -National Capital Park and Planning Commission, *Looking Forward with the Maryland -National Capital Park and Planning Commission* (Silver Spring: M-NCPPC, 1942), 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Hyattsville Our Home Town*, 178. Operated by the Priests of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Province of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity, the St. John DeMatha monastery opened in 1931; its school opened in 1946, and was expanded in 1959 and 1982.

¹⁴¹ "Build Motor Cars Here. Carter Corporation Will Establish Factory in Suburbs," *Washington Post* (Nov 7, 1906), 2.

¹⁴² "Site Secured at Hyattsville. The Carter Motor Corporation to Build at Once," *Washington Post* (June 30, 1907), 12.

¹⁴³ "Building Motor Cars. Carter Auto Factory Is Now in Operation," *Washington Post* (Nov. 29, 1908), A 3.

¹⁴⁴ "A Home-Made Automobile," *Washington Post* (Oct. 31, 1909), A58.

¹⁴⁵ "Form Motor Car Concern: Carter Corporation Backers to Make Big Washington Autos," *Washington Post* (Mar. 2, 1912), 12.

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The section of Baltimore Avenue from Madison south to Hamilton Street has recently been referred to as Auto Alley.¹⁴⁶ Hyattsville's automobile-oriented landscape developed along today's Route 1 corridor, both to the north and south of the Old Downtown and Government Complex. Although not as fully specialized as some other auto rows, these two sections (especially the northern stretch, at the end of which the new Lustine dealership was erected) complied with Chester Liebs's description of a "new type of commercial district" generated by the concentration of purposely-built dealerships and showrooms. According to Liebs, automobile rows usually originated when a dealer willing "to forsake high rents or taxes and cramped quarters in the central city, relocated along a main road, farther out of town":

Before long another dealer moved in nearby, then another. Soon speculators built small, one-story showrooms in the gaps between the larger, more impressive sales buildings. These in turn were rented by agents of smaller, lesser-known automakers. Within a few years, a whole new Main Street was born, lined by walls of buildings whose shop windows, instead of being crammed full of jewelry, clothing, hardware, or groceries, showcased a single product - automobiles. By walking, driving, or riding a trolley down the street, shoppers could survey the latest cars available, while gaining an impression of dealers and the companies they represented from the appearance of their buildings.¹⁴⁷

In D.C.'s Maryland suburbs, at least two other stretches of road saw their development shaped by the presence of automobile dealerships: the 7300 to 7700 blocks of Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda, and East-West Highway between Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. However, they do not appear to have been any larger or more culturally significant than those in Hyattsville, where Route 1 carried heavier traffic.¹⁴⁸ In the Capital Region, the only pre-war suburban auto row achieving the same type of scale and vitality seems to have been located along Arlington's Glebe Road in Northern Virginia.

Along Route 1, a pioneering automobile-related establishment was the **Hyattsville Auto Glass Company** (5516 Baltimore Avenue), which opened in 1914 in a building (greatly altered) which continues to serve the same purpose.¹⁴⁹

The **Hyattsville Automobile Company**, subsequently known as Suburban Motor Sales, sold and serviced Ford automobiles on Baltimore Avenue. (Plate 31) It was owned by Hervey G. Machen, Sr., a native Virginian who first "entered the contracting business" upon moving to Prince George's County.¹⁵⁰ The dealership was housed

¹⁴⁶ Stephanie Ryberg, "Revitalizing Hyattsville's Route 1 corridor: An Application of the Main Street Approach," *Hyattsville Route 1 Corridor Presevation / Revitalization Plan*, Historic Preservation Studio, School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (Dec. 2003), Section 8, p.5.

¹⁴⁷ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 81.

¹⁴⁸ Chevy Chase Chevrolet, 7725 Wisconsin Avenue, 1939 (updated 1955; also did business at 7701); Covington Motors, 7301 Wisconsin Avenue (presently Air Right Building), c.1948; Clifton B. White, East-West Motors, 1100 East-West Highway, Silver Spring (we believe he sold Plymouths).

¹⁴⁹ Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, HR-11, 68-41-37, (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, March 27, 1987).

¹⁵⁰ Campbell, *Journey Through Time*.

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in a large wooden hangar-style structure, which previously housed Mr. Gray's Hyattsville Boarding and Sale Stable. "Actively involved in the Democratic Party," Machen was appointed Prince George's County Sergeant of Police in 1927 when legislation was enacted "to create a small, full-time, professional county police force." The Machen family held an important role in Hyattsville in law and politics. Hervey Senior (the auto merchant) was Sergeant of the Prince George's County Police for a number of years after its founding in 1927. His sons were Hervey Jr., who practiced law and represented Prince George's County in Congress for two terms under President Lyndon Johnson, and W. Stanley, who was for many years one of the leading surveyors in the County. Hervey's daughter, J. Amanda, is a lawyer with the SEC and still lives in Hyattsville.

Operating from approximately 1926 to 1932, the **Rushe Motor Company** had a monopoly on Buick sales for Prince George's County. It was operated by Noble F. Rushe (1898-1953), whose father, J. Frank Rushe, a plumber, was Hyattsville's mayor from 1921 to 1925. Noble F. Rushe also operated a sand and gravel business at one point and was a volunteer fireman, heading the Hyattsville Fire Department after 1926.

Garage owners started becoming "associate dealers" by the end of World War I: one of them was L.M. Walden, whose barn-like **White House Garage** at 5323 Baltimore Blvd sold Chevrolets, but also models by Hudson, Studebaker, and Essex in the mid-1920s.¹⁵¹ In 1930-31, **H.C. Fleming Motor Company Sales**, originally doing business selling and servicing Dodge cars around 1920 at 52 Maryland Avenue and at 132 Maryland Avenue in 1939, moved its operations to this building. Later still, in 1940, the building housed the **Field's Buick** dealership. (Plate 32) By the late 1920s, this facility had the capacity to service 40 automobiles.¹⁵²

New dealerships opened as the Depression was ending and the Capital Region attracted new federal workers

The **Hyattsville Auto & Supply Company**, Inc. (Baltimore Avenue at Franklin--now Jefferson--Street, still active in 1961) sold Pontiacs, another GM brand in the late 1930s,¹⁵³ across from the Telephone Building.

Lepper Motor Sales (Plate 33) opened in 1935 at 4800 Rhode Island Avenue (presently the Marché store), offering Dodge and Plymouth models. In the mid-1930s, Pontiacs were sold at **Hofmann Motor Company**, located at 19 Maryland Avenue; this dealer also sold Packard models from 1938 to 1942). (Plate 34) In 1935, two employees of the Handley Motor Company of the same age as Philip Lustine, **Frank Patterson Palmer and Irvine Billhimer**, established a Ford franchise (Plate 35) at 7 Spencer (presently 4327 Gallatin Street),

¹⁵¹ Advertisement, *Washington Post* (Feb. 21, 1926), A8. In Prince George's County, there were also other garages selling Hudsons in Lanham, Capitol Heights, and Forestville.

¹⁵² Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, HR-1, 68-41-29, (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, March 27, 1987).

¹⁵³ Everett V. Staley was President and L.R. Winemiller was Vice-President of the Hyattsville Auto & Supply Company.

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separated from Route 1 by just one building. It served as a showroom until the late 1940s.¹⁵⁴ Headed by Douglas A. Fields, the **Fields Buick** dealership moved to 5503 Baltimore Avenue in 1950.¹⁵⁵ The sales team was photographed next to the building's glass block windows in the 1950s. (Plate 36) In the 1960s, Lustine's used car lot was at 5511 Baltimore Avenue. Further north on Route 1, a mini-auto row (complete with gas stations) was located within the Riverdale city limits. Plymouths could be purchased from **Sellers Sales and Service** (6228 Baltimore Boulevard) from 1935 to the 1960s; the garage of William P. Restorff (also referred to as Riverdale Garage, 6210 Baltimore Avenue) sold Fords in the early 1940s and Nash cars by the end of the decade. The Gulf Station at the intersection of Queensbury and Route 1 was particularly attractive.¹⁵⁶

Competition between dealers established in Hyattsville and Riverdale was fierce, as evidenced by advertisements and semi-promotional articles featured in local gazettes. Bilhimer and Palmer, which sold as many as 300 vehicles (Mercury, Lincoln-Zephyr) a year in the 1930s, did not hesitate to give away cars for local charities.¹⁵⁷ One of their salesmen's visits to the Ford plant in Detroit made headlines in the *Hyattsville Independent*.¹⁵⁸ Although few actually lived in Hyattsville, several dealers became pillars of the community and belonged to local fraternal organizations. In fact, no other professional group received so much (generally self-fashioned) local media attention. Frank P. Palmer was (like Lustine) a Director of the Citizens Bank; he was also a charter member of the Hyattsville Lions Club and an "active Mason and Shriner."¹⁵⁹ A bowling champion in his twenties, Irvine Billhimer presided over the Prince George's Kiwanis Club, the Lafayette Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, and the Joppa Masonic Lodge.¹⁶⁰ In 1940, he was among the "prominent figures" attending Hyattsville's yearly Easter Egg Hunt at Magruder Park.¹⁶¹ A Brentwood resident, John W. (better known as Jack) Lepper was named to the Maryland Traffic Safety Committee by Governor Herbert R. O'Connor in 1940.¹⁶² In 1942, he decided to close his business for the duration of the war and become chief air warden for Prince George's County.

¹⁵⁴ Anne Pettit, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-16, (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, March 27, 1987). Referred to as the "first auto showroom in Hyattsville" between 1935 and 1951, Hyattsville's Ford dealership carried the name Billhimer & Palmer.

¹⁵⁵ The Field's Buick team is shown in *Hyattsville, our hometown*, 62. Douglas A. Fields was on the advisory board of the Suburban Trust Company, based in Takoma Park.

¹⁵⁶ Christina A. Davis, ed., *The Riverdale Story: Mansion to Municipality* (Riverdale: Town of Riverdale, 1996), 57)

¹⁵⁷ See "Mrs Waldo Burnside Wins Kiwanis Carnical Ford," *Hyattsville Independent* (Aug. 9, 1940), 1.

¹⁵⁸ "Local Salesman Visits Ford Rouge Plant," *Hyattsville Independent* (Feb. 23, 1940), 1.

¹⁵⁹ "Frank Palmer Dies; Head of auto Firm," *Washington Post* (June 14, 1974), C9. Palmer was an Episcopalian.

¹⁶⁰ "Billhimer, Ford Dealer, Rites Held," *Washington Post* (Apr. 2, 1954), B2.

¹⁶¹ See photo in *Hyattsville Independent* (Mar. 22, 1940), 1.

¹⁶² "Named by Governor," *Hyattsville Independent* (May 3, 1940), 1. See also *Hyattsville Independent* (June 28, 1940) indicating that Lepper took charge of raising funds among local businessmen for Hyattsville's Fourth of July celebration.

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Another major competitor for Lustine, George Banning, opened a Dodge dealership in 1945 at 5800 Baltimore Avenue, and a Plymouth franchise in the fall of 1957 at 5720 Baltimore Boulevard, right next to Lustine.¹⁶³ In the early 1960s, Banning also occupied a used car lot right at 5801 Baltimore Boulevard. In the late 1950s, there were no less than fourteen competing dealers in the area stretching from Mount Rainier to College Park.¹⁶⁴

Up to the present, Hyattsville's Route 1 corridor (Rhode Island and Baltimore Avenues) and its current, more industrial-looking, Alternate Route 1 stretch (Bladensburg Road), have played host to many establishments involved with car maintenance, repair, and equipment, even insurance. These were gas stations: 4802 Rhode Island Avenue, 1930 (Texaco)¹⁶⁵, 4644 Baltimore Avenue in 1971, 4829 Baltimore Avenue in 1963 (Esso), 5328 Baltimore Boulevard in 1936 (presently Blue Bird Cab Company), 5731 Baltimore Avenue, 1958 (presently Jey's Auto Care Domestic and Foreign). There were also independent garages (some with towing services), body shops -- McDonald Auto Body Works at 5514 Baltimore Boulevard, in the 1950s, and 4801 Baltimore Avenue in 1963¹⁶⁶ -- and parts and accessories merchants -- Pep Boys at 5324 Baltimore Avenue in 1963. *Polk's City Directory* for 1963 also identifies an auto radiator repair specialist (Rhode Island Avenue at Braxton Place), a place to buy automobile seat covers at 4503 Hamilton, another to purchase mobile homes (6009 Baltimore Avenue, Riverdale), and the Nu-Look Car Wash at 5506 Baltimore Avenue. *Polk's* 1971 edition listed Malcolm Durham's garage, a Chevrolet specialist which offered race car repairs at 4750 Baltimore Avenue; a Car Matic motor and Transmission Exchange at 4821 Baltimore Avenue; the Blue Bird Driving School at 5126 Baltimore Avenue; and Palder & Hanna as tire wholesalers established at 5324 Baltimore Avenue.

Along Route 1, there were also eateries specially designed to accommodate car drivers. One of the earliest of J. W. Marriott's Hot Shoppes restaurants opened in 1940, opposite the Armory at 5315 Baltimore Boulevard and attracted diners from several miles away.¹⁶⁷ (Plate 37) Meals could be taken drive-in style or seated in the "air cooled" dining rooms. By the early 1970s, Baltimore Avenue had its Seven Eleven Convenience Store (at 6034) and McDonald's restaurant (at 6100).

8.2 - c - Demographic and economic trends leading to present conditions

Through the beginning of the twenty-first century, automotive activities remained important in Hyattsville. In 1997, they were still the major retail activity in town: there were five automobile dealers (four of them retailing

¹⁶³ "George Banning Dead; Motor Firm President," *Washington Post* (July 31, 1957), B2. "Burt" Sheehy, a former bowling champion, worked with Banning. See the advertisement for Bob Banning Plymouth's Grand Opening Sale, *Washington Post* (Nov. 15, 1957), A 6, with free prizes including a TV set.

¹⁶⁴ William G. Richardson, Parts Manger of Lustine Chevrolet, quoted in "Daily Sales Report," *News From the Profit Area*.

¹⁶⁵ Carol E. Hooper, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-4, (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, (Apr. 15, 1987). The Texaco station remained in use until the 1960s.

¹⁶⁶ Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, HR-12 68-41-36, (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, Mar. 27, 1987).

¹⁶⁷ State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-24 (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, c 1987). The original address was 138 Maryland Avenue.

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new cars, employing 383 persons with an annual payroll totalling \$11,688,000 and producing \$ 141,137,000 in sales) and two merchants of auto parts and accessories.¹⁶⁸

Space was far from limitless along Route 1, however. Somewhere between the early 1940s and 1948, Billhimer and Palmer moved to Hyattsville's western confines, at 3110 Hamilton Street near Queens Chapel Road, in order to secure larger premises. (Plate 38)¹⁶⁹ In 1961, what was then known as Palmer Ford Inc. (it sold 1600 cars and trucks a year) built a second, larger, plant and showroom in the same vicinity, at 5520 Jamestown Road (corner of Hamilton).

A cluster automobile retail establishments -- with smaller plants than Lustine's and changing hands rather frequently -- was established at the southern edge of College Park in Calvert Hills, on the eastern side of the 7100-7300 blocks of Baltimore Avenue: Follin Motors (at 7201) sold and serviced Packards; Fasanko Motors (7125, presently a laundry and bowling alley) represented Chrysler-Plymouth from 1934 to 1954, and was replaced by Standard Pontiac (still there in 1971); Nelson Motors (7215, presently a dry cleaner) sold snappy Studebakers and was replaced by Restorff (which moved out of Riverdale) in 1961. In the early 1950s, Nash models were sold at 7323 Baltimore Avenue, which became College Park Motors in the 1960s.

Used car and trailer dealers found larger and cheaper lots above the University of Maryland campus: an example for the 1960s is Acme Motors Inc at 8240 Baltimore Avenue. *Polk's City Directory* for 1971 lists the following businesses at the northern end of College Park, close to the new Capital Beltway: Autoville Ltd (9330 Baltimore Avenue), which sold widely popular Volkswagen Beetles, and Gino's Motor Co, Inc. (9666), which offered a selection of foreign cars, including Maseratis, Ferraris, Jaguars, and BMWs.

In downtown Hyattsville, it became more and more apparent that concentrating so much retail and service-oriented businesses along as heavily trafficked and dangerous (deadly accidents affecting pedestrians and drivers were not uncommon) a road as Route 1 had become a liability. Finding a parking space along Baltimore Avenue, Gallatin, and Farragut Streets could be an ordeal and meters placed by the City of Hyattsville were not popular. Temporary relief came with the opening, in 1953, of a large municipal parking lot.

While easing congestion, the completion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in 1954 hurt Hyattsville's automobile-oriented businesses, but not to the point of solving Route 1's congestion quandary. Cultural and architectural landmarks were sacrificed. Lust's movie theater, which had played a tremendous social role in the 1940s, was demolished in 1960, to "allow more space for the display of the latest automobile models."¹⁷⁰ Hot Shoppes abandoned central Hyattsville in 1962, because heavy traffic on Route 1 "made it very difficult for

¹⁶⁸ Hyattsville, Maryland, Business Data, <http://www.city-data.com/business/econ-Hyattsville-Maryland.html>

¹⁶⁹ This establishment became East-West Lincoln-Mercury in 1971.

¹⁷⁰ Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, Survey No. HR-9 68-41-41. (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, March 27, 1987).

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customers to enter from or exit onto the far lane on Baltimore Boulevard.”¹⁷¹ The restaurant re-opened under new management in 1974 but closed a few years later; it stood vacant and vandalized in the late 1980s and was demolished in 1990. The Baltimore Avenue listings in Polk’s 1971 edition were peppered with ominous “vacant lot” designations.

Hyattsville’s population only grew by 2,600 inhabitants from 1950 to 1970. Its non-automotive retail and service activities, which had also been historically concentrated on the Route 1 corridor, shifted westward.¹⁷² The public high school moved from its central location to undeveloped land on Colesville (presently Adelphi) Road in 1951. The 1959 opening of Prince George’s Plaza, an attractive and cutting-edge regional shopping center at the intersection of East-West Highway and Belcrest Road, was a major blow to the old downtown district.¹⁷³ Its ample (and free) parking, clean horizontal lines, and landscaped patios were the antithesis of the jumble of telegraph poles and buildings of diverse sizes, ages, and materials along Route 1. Despite scattered new construction, such as the new Municipal Center (Paul H. Kea, David Shaw and Associates) opened in 1961, Hyattsville’s historic core began its slow decline, as suburbanization continued its northward and eastward movement through Prince George’s County.

8-3 - Historical contexts for the design of Lustine’s Chevrolet dealership.

Philip Lustine was not an advocate of modernism. He did not live in a modern home, and the housing projects he had sponsored were safely stripped-down Georgian in style. His businesses were located in a county whose residents and officials displayed architectural tastes that could safely be described as entrenched stylistic conservatism. In the late 1930s, Art déco might be thought acceptable for a festive movie theater, like Lust’s new marvel, but in general, Prince Georgians judged even this modern style to be risqué, or even improper. Art déco was associated with adult entertainment: the most striking deco design close to “dry” Hyattsville was that of the “Fiesta Room” and cocktail lounge of the Del Rio diner and night club in Bladensburg at the Peace Cross.¹⁷⁴ The style was also associated with the controversial governmental New Deal interventionism at Greenbelt, where art deco flourishes graced the Center School/Community Center and the marquee of the movie theatre.

The first truly modern building on the nearby University of Maryland campus was its architecture school, designed in the late 1960s! In the late 1940s, President Byrd rejected Skidmore, Owing, and Merrill’s elegant proposed design for the Glenn L. Martin College of Engineering and Aeronautical Sciences, on the pretext that

¹⁷¹ State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-24 (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, n.d.).

¹⁷² Hyattsville actually lost 1,170 inhabitants between 1960 and 1970, according to the U.S. Census Bureau report 1970 Census of Population, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_md-01.pdf.

¹⁷³ *Hyattsville Our Hometown*, 65. Prince George’s Center was a project for office buildings and four 33-story apartment towers near Prince George’s Plaza for Herschel W. Blumberg [Brown, Chapman, Miller, Wright Associate Architects].

¹⁷⁴ See advertisement in *Hyattsville Independent* (Dec 1, 1939).

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Georgian red brick buildings with stately white columns were indispensable to the look of the College Park campus.

Nonetheless by the end of World War II, both the forces of economic modernization and the popularization of the Modern style were beginning to affect Hyattsville and, indeed, the entire greater Washington, D.C. region. Because of Maryland's proximity to the nation's capital, the war and its aftermath influenced many aspects of Maryland's built environment. It shaped the scope, pace, and contours of Maryland's campaigns to modernize its schools, public buildings, and infrastructure, including new roads, such as the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. The war also had a cultural impact. Media outlets both publicized and promoted modernity, as the wartime economy was transformed into "the strongest consumer economy the world had ever seen," and consumers were urged to sample and acquire all kinds of new modern lifestyles, products, and ideas.¹⁷⁵ A new generation of architects brought Modernism to established firms, just as a forward-looking breed of new suburban clients sought a contemporary brand of architectural expression for their homes and businesses. These unique postwar circumstances began to shape greater popular acceptance of the Modern Movement in Baby Boom Maryland.

In Hyattsville, modern architecture first manifested in the housing stock built in the late 1940s in West Hyattsville. Several attached houses and garden apartments sported flat roofs and a restrained décor. A good example is the previously mentioned Prince George's Apartments by Berla and Abel (1944), a rare garden complex with a non-traditional exterior. The St Jerome Catholic School, at 43rd Avenue and Hamilton Street in Hyattsville (1945-51), designed by Walton & Madden, introduced a less traditional aesthetic to the town. The nearby Cheverly Hills development (1940-42), although a defense housing subdivision that consisted of 70 single family houses in colonial and Old English period styles,¹⁷⁶ nonetheless advertised technologically modern interiors with air conditioning, copper piping, steel kitchen cabinets, electric refrigerators, gas range, insulation, fully tiled bathrooms, and built-in garages—and raised consumer expectations for state-of-the-art modern amenities.¹⁷⁷ The year 1950 was a watershed of sorts in the sponsorship of modernism by major local newspapers. In late March, for example, the *Washington Evening Star* ran an article on the first page of its Saturday Real Estate section on modern, architect-designed houses built in the region.

In Washington D.C.'s fast growing suburbs, using non-traditional, eye-catching architecture was a no-brainer for any kind of retail establishment by 1949. Leaving car dealerships aside for the moment (we shall discuss dealership design in section 8.3), a good example of the new retail aesthetic was Hahn's Shoe Store in Silver Spring (1949). The Marché Florist Shop at 4800 Rhode Island Avenue in Hyattsville, designed by architect John Robey Kennedy, has preserved to this day its large modern show windows, framed by rather conventional

¹⁷⁵ Hine, *Populuxe*, 10.

¹⁷⁶ "Only 4 Homes Remain Unsold in Lovely Cheverly Hills Unit," *Washington Post* (June 14, 1942), R2.

¹⁷⁷ "Cheverly Hills Model Home Up-to-Date," *Washington Post* (Dec. 8, 1940), R3; "New Bathrooms Being Sold by 'Package'", *Washington Post* (Sept. 14, 1941), R8.

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brick surrounds, and aluminum signs.¹⁷⁸ An earlier public commission by Hyattsville's own Paul Kea, the WSSC Building at 4107 Hamilton (1939), may also have been influential on the local design aesthetic. Constructed of light brick with Indiana limestone trim, the building was simple and streamlined, with restrained Art déco ornamentation.¹⁷⁹

For Philip Lustine, attracting public attention was a key to getting the kind of foot traffic he needed for his business to flourish. Beating the competition from other dealers meant that he had to build a big, bold, snazzy showroom—something that would inspire drivers passing by on Route 1 to slow down and stop in—and advertise it intensely. For some time, the theme of modernity underlay much of the automotive zeitgeist, as advertisements as far back as the 1920s attest. (See Plate 3) By 1950, automobile designers began to give cars "lines that were angular and dynamic, and people bought." According to Tom Hine, the 1955 Chevrolet was the paradigm of the new modern Populuxe style:

Its tailfins were quite modest, compared with what was to come later, but they were a strong contrast with the basic transportation image of previous years. It was, as people said at the time, a baby Cadillac, powerful, exciting, available in an array of lively color schemes. It was still a Chevy, and everyone knew that, but it allowed the Chevy buyer to partake fully of a moment when the act of breaking the sound barrier had taken on truly heroic qualities and rocketing into space was just around the corner. The Chevy buyer...was buying the future.¹⁸⁰

Harley Earl, GM's designer and the originator of the tailfin, understood that as the postwar economy returned to normal, styling was "practically everything."¹⁸¹ Lustine understood this instinctively and incorporated it into his ideas for the new Lustine-Nicholson showroom.

8.3-a The architect of Lustine's Chevrolet dealership

For what appears as his "dream-come-true" showroom, Philip Lustine could have turned to two modernist architects already active in Hyattsville. Based in Washington, D.C., architect Joseph Abel, the designer of the Prince George's Apartments and of a thoroughly modern shopping center project in downtown College Park, had designed many garages before the war and worked frequently for Harry Lustine.¹⁸² Paul Kea, who was very

¹⁷⁸ Carol E. Hooper, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, 68-41-3 (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, April 15, 1987). Like Lustine, the Marchés had established their Hyattsville store and nursery in the 1920s.

¹⁷⁹ Hyattsville Preservation Association, "Hyattsville Then and Now: Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission," <http://www.preservehyattsville.org/wsscthenandnow.htm> (accessed June 2008).

¹⁸⁰ Hine, *Populuxe*, 12.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁸² See *Architectural Forum* 84 (Mar. 1946), 137-138 and *Washington Post* (Aug. 20, 1950). Abel's firm did also designed the Colony 7 Motel, Route 32 at the Baltimore-Washington Parkway; remodeled the Dixie Pig Barbecue in Bladensburg for Herbert Sachs; and designed a Store Building for Ell Properties and an apartment building for Dan Pollin, both in Mount Rainier; and the Kent Village Shopping Center in Landover.

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active in the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce, was operating from downtown Hyattsville, in a streamlined "flatiron" Professional Building (1940) of his own design, and had devised a series of progressive schools for Prince George's County.¹⁸³

We do not know why Philip Lustine preferred to hire a lesser known Baltimore-based architect. Francis Dano Jackley was born in 1900 in Frankton, Indiana. He studied at the John Heron Art Institute in Indianapolis from 1919 to 1922 and at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1925-26. From 1929 to 1948, he was employed by the Chesapeake & Telephone Company. His exchange building in the small town of Armiger, Maryland was published in *Architectural Forum* in June 1946. Since the program called for living quarters for the chief operator, Jackley applied "the contemporary residential idiom" to facades of red brick, with extensive glazing trimmed in white and flat overhanging roofs. Balancing masses in a clever, elegant manner, the design was indeed up-to-date for telephone buildings. The interiors were cheerful and uncluttered. The *Forum* article also illustrated the radiant heating plan.¹⁸⁴ (Plate 39)

Jackley became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1942. It is during the short period when Jackley went into private practice -- 1948-49 -- that he designed the Lustine showroom, as well as the Bowser System Mechanical Parking Garage in Des Moines, Iowa. Thereafter, he became an Associate with Taylor and Fisher. This Baltimore firm's best known work is that city's only Art déco skyscraper, the Baltimore Trust Building, completed in 1929 (presently the Nationsbank Building). Jackley most certainly designed Taylor and Fisher's commissions from the Chesapeake & Telephone Company, such as the York Road Dial and Office Building¹⁸⁵ and the Glen Burnie Center.¹⁸⁶ He was responsible for the Cherry Hill Homes, a public housing project in Baltimore (1955). Fisher and Taylor also designed modern schools, banks, and office buildings in Baltimore City and County.¹⁸⁷ Jackley was a member of the Baltimore Charcoal Club and the President of the Baltimore Watercolor Club from 1947 to 1951, and one can assume he drew the perspective of the showroom illustrated in advertisements for Lustine.¹⁸⁸

8.3-b - The design of pre-World War II car dealerships.

¹⁸³ See "In New Offices," *Hyattsville Independent* (Apr. 26, 1940), 1. At the time the article was written, Kea was President of the Hyattsville Chamber of Commerce. See Conrad P. Harness, "Teachers Gave Ideas For Design," *Washington Post* (July 27, 1947), R1, on the Landover Hills Elementary School (1947).

¹⁸⁴ "Rural Telephone Exchange," *Architectural Forum* 84 (June 1946), 90-91.

¹⁸⁵ *Work of Maryland Architects* (1955) and *Baltimore* (Apr. 1953).

¹⁸⁶ *Baltimore News American* collection, 345-3.

¹⁸⁷ Edison-Barton-Mergenthaler Technical High School, 1953; see *Baltimore* (June 1952); Mount Royal Elementary School, Baltimore (1955); see *Baltimore News American* collection 292-1. The Gilman School Auditorium Additions received an Award of Merit (1957) from the Baltimore Association of Commerce. The Eutaw Savings Bank of Baltimore Branch was published in *Architects Report* (Summer 1959); Front Street Office Building for the Gas and Electric Company of Baltimore was published in the *Work of Maryland Architects* (1955); it is a borderline Art Deco building.

¹⁸⁸ AIA Member Directory (1952), 270. Jackley is mentioned in the 1960 but not in the 1970 edition. He was a Unitarian.

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As neither the client's taste, nor the architect's expertise provide significant clues as to where ideas for the Lustine design originated, it is important to proceed to a detailed contextual analysis. The design of automobile dealerships and their showrooms has yet to be the subject of a comprehensive study. The most articulate analysis remains that of preservationist Chester Liebs in *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, published in 1985. An album of 340 promotional postcards, assembled by collector Jay Kettle in 1988, gives evidence of the extraordinary variety of site planning and signage strategies that car dealers selected to shelter and advertise their wares over eight decades. Their showrooms came in all sizes, shapes, and facing materials.¹⁸⁹ Issued by an automotive publisher, Robert Genat's *The American car dealership* (1999) and John G. Robinson's *Classic Chevrolet dealerships : selling the bowtie* (2003) are directed to a public of car buffs thirsty for anecdotes.¹⁹⁰

Scholarly case studies, as well as documentation for the Historic American Building Survey, have focused on Pre-Depression examples of purposely built dealerships and showrooms.¹⁹¹ In particular, Robert Bruegmann provides useful insights in his monograph on Holabird and Roche, as he presents the dealerships designed by this renowned firm and some of its competitors on Chicago's South Michigan Avenue prior to World War I.¹⁹² As a general rule, dealerships were exercises in architectural merchandising; the building and showroom had to help sell cars, parts, and service.

As a rule, roadside car dealerships (those built before the advent of "automalls") included spaces for:

- the display of new cars, and sometimes the display of selected parts and accessories,
- the sale of new and used cars, as well as parts and accessories,
- administrative purposes (offices, conference rooms) for the dealer and his employees, who generally had a kitchen and lounge at their disposal,
- the service center, generally including a body shop,
- outdoor parking, essentially for the display of used cars.

Showrooms were supposed to be spacious enough to avoid overcrowding on days when many customers were looking for a new car and trying to examine displays from every angle. However, according to Genat, showroom space represented a small portion of the entire indoor plant. Service centers generally took up more than 70% of the space, and 10% of the surface was reserved for the parts department.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Jay Kettle, *The American Automobile Dealership. A Picture Postcard History*. The location of the dealership does not always appear in the postcard or caption, but apparently the book does not feature examples from the Capital Region.

¹⁹⁰ Genat reproduces beautiful photographs from the GM archives without date or identification.

¹⁹¹ Only three examples of dealerships have been recorded in the Historic American Buildings Survey.

¹⁹² Robert Bruegmann, *The Architects and the City : Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 367-387.

¹⁹³ Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, 131.

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In centrally located urban sites, the sales, service, and storage functions were generally superimposed in multi-story infill buildings, with the showroom directly accessible from the sidewalk. In less dense surroundings (like Hyattsville), dealerships were generally on a single level (or sometimes on two floors), with the display and office space acting as a "head building" concealing the more utilitarian service and storage functions behind. In both instances, high visibility from the street or road was a prerequisite: signs and design features were supposed to guide out-of-town drivers looking for an authorized dealer to service their cars for repair.¹⁹⁴ Regardless of its location, the most important and distinctive feature of any showroom were tall and wide display windows and a commensurate exhibition space right behind. The predominance of geometrical, highly legible glazing over opaque masses explains why early automobile showrooms, even the most ornate, were harbingers of architectural "modernity," if not of downright "modernism."¹⁹⁵

Very few of the dealerships erected in working or middle-class suburbs prior to World War II that we found in our research had distinctive designs. A vast majority looked nearly as utilitarian as regular garages. The 1926 Lustine Dealership at 5600 Baltimore Boulevard was no exception (Plate 5; see section 8.1 for general description).¹⁹⁶ The facade composition for the small suburban dealership was generally symmetrical; two large windows, with a sill, framing a glazed entrance. Embellishments were cosmetic as opposed to structural. Large windows were surmounted by transoms with small square panes. A parapet above the entrance to the Chevrolet building was capped with a decorative brick cornice and provided additional space for advertising. The parapet also formed a backdrop against which Lustine suspended elaborate signage advertising the makes of cars he sold.

The storefront-cornice format was historically the stock in trade of dealership buildings in Hyattsville, beginning with the Carter Motor Car Corporation (Plates 29-30).¹⁹⁷ Parapets were nearly de rigueur. In 1936, the Hofmann Motor Company (Plate 34) had a semi-circular parapet and the Lepper dealership boasted a red-tile parapet (Plate 33). The flat and plain brick and glass front of Palmer Ford (Plate 35), built in the late 1920s at 4327 Gallatin Street, featured decorative brick in the parapet, the central portion of which supported a small protruding sign. Many sales lots were marked by entrance porticos. (Plate 40)

¹⁹⁴ Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, 53

¹⁹⁵ As we define it, **Modernity** focuses on the ideological dimension of the "modern." It is a liberal bourgeois project tied to metropolitan culture. Modernity entered ordinary peoples' everyday lives "through the dissemination of modern art, the products of a consumer society, new technologies, and new modes of transportation and communication." When applied to architecture, Modernity usually refers to aesthetic and stylistic factors, but it can also manifest itself through technological and programmatic achievements. **Modernism** is a cultural construct that applies to a creative process, literary or artistic. It repudiates precedents and conventions inherited from the past and promotes new, subjective forms of cultural practice, aimed at exploring the specificity of each of the arts. With regard to architecture, modernism is an autonomous exploration of abstract space and tectonics. We can think of it as an evolving design philosophy. See also Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art and Literature*, 4 (Spr. 1965): 193-201 and Hilda Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 8-14..

¹⁹⁶ Helen P. Ross, State Historic Sites Inventory Form, Survey No. HR-10 68-41-38 (Crownsville: Maryland Historical Trust, March 28, 1987).

¹⁹⁷ Display ad, "An Investment of Merit," *Washington Post* (Mar. 1, 1908); display ad, *Hyattsville Independent* (Oct. 10, 1936)

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On the other hand, prior to 1920, automobile manufacturers in major cities nationwide had been erecting "object-lesson" salesrooms in "highly visible locations near business districts of large cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago and Detroit":

Instead of being patterned after ordinary Main Street commercial blocks, these model showrooms were crafted to resemble the most impressive office buildings, banks and railroad depots so they would instantly be perceived as civic assets. Exteriors often sported bas-reliefs, grand ornamental cornices, and entrance porticoes, while inside cars were sold in elegant surroundings in large, opulent sales salons.¹⁹⁸

By 1920, "fashionable showrooms were going up by the hundreds" in urban locations and their construction had become "a game of visual one-upmanship".¹⁹⁹ In the United States, their applied decoration, both outside and inside, was indebted to historical styles. Good examples in the District of Columbia were the Petit Trianon-inspired showroom for the Semmes Motor Company, a Dodge dealer at 613 G Street NW (Plate 41), and the Washington Cadillac Company.²⁰⁰ (Plate 42) Inside, showrooms sold fantasy and might be furnished with painted murals or carpets.²⁰¹

In Europe, where car ownership was more elitist than in North America, and where automotive forms inspired the work of avant-garde artists and architects, manufacturers' showrooms emerged as significant modernist icons. In Paris, sensational examples designed by leading architects include Robert Mallet-Stevens' de Stijl-inspired Alpha Romeo showroom (1925)²⁰² and Michel Roux-Spitz's Immeuble Ford (1930-31) on the Boulevard des Italiens. (Plate 43) The latter had two features anticipating the 1950 design for Lustine: a stunning two-and-a-half story corner showroom enclosed with faceted glass and, on the roof top, a slender metal scaffolding supporting an overscaled *Ford* sign, also in metal.²⁰³ Manufacturer André Citroën was particularly keen on building "object-lesson" showrooms, which caught the attention of U.S. architectural journals.²⁰⁴ In June 1930, *Architectural Record* devoted several pages to Citroën's stunning Garage Marbeuf, designed by Albert Laprade and Léon Bazin (1928-29), near the Champs-Élysées. (Plate 44) "The whole facade bec[ame] a gigantic show window, six stories high and proportionally wide" and automobiles were "displayed on the

¹⁹⁸ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 79.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁰⁰ Exterior view of the Semmes Motor Company, Washington, D.C., and Automobiles in window of the Washington-Cadillac Co., Washington, D.C., National Photo Company Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Collection.

²⁰¹ Spinella, *America's Auto Dealerships*, 191.

²⁰² Robert Mallet-Stevens, *Rob Mallet-Stevens Architecte* (Brussels, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1980).

²⁰³ Michel Raynaud et al., *Michel Roux-Spitz. Architecte 1888-1957* (Liège: Mardaga, 1982).

²⁰⁴ Paul Smith, "André Citroën, Industriel du XX^e siècle," in Bernard Marrey ed., *Les Bâtisseurs. Des moines cisterciens aux Capitaines d'Industrie* (Paris: Le Moniteur, 1997), 172-181.

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ground and the five cantilevered balconies.²⁰⁵ Extravagant, unnecessary dimensions helped showrooms to transcend the utilitarian.

In October 1933, *Architectural Forum* featured a Citroën “sales building” in Rotterdam by the Dutch avant-garde architect Jan Wils with the following, rather prophetic, comments:

Automobile show rooms need, more than any other structure built for commerce, to capture the spaciousness of the open road, the warmth of sunlight on the face, and the feelings of windy stretches and of movement. This automobile sales department has been housed in such a way that the show room dominates, as it should, the entire building, asserting itself as an expanse of glass which reaches up across the façade and as a central hall which fills the whole hollow core of the interior.²⁰⁶

Pared-down ornamentation and the “machine aesthetic” began changing the course of American commercial design in the late 1920s. Modernist shop fronts, with extensive glazing, dramatic lighting, and simplified lettering were built in large American cities, especially New York, to promote luxury goods and clothing items.²⁰⁷

By the end of the decade, shop fronts were adopted for branches of department stores, such as Sears Roebuck on Wisconsin Avenue, D.C. (1940) by architect John Stokes Redden, with its distinctive corner glass cube.²⁰⁸ This trend was still favored in the late 1940s, as evidenced by the Hochschild Kohn store in Baltimore at Belvedere Avenue and York Road (1949), which sported a glazed double height curved entrance motif.²⁰⁹ Both modernist and expressionist architects harbored a fascination for the use of glass, aided by technical breakthroughs in glass manufacture by such companies as Pittsburgh Plate Glass, which experimented with tempered glass and the ability to use smaller mullions, and, in general, with lower cost production of glass. During these same years, automobile designers fashioned models with larger and larger areas of glass.

²⁰⁵ See Theodore C. Larson, “The Citroen automobile sales building, Paris,” *Architectural Forum* 67 (June 1930), 539. It is worth noting that the outside concrete was a “light buff” as would be the case for the Lustine showroom. In 1933, André Citroën opened a stunning showroom directly on the Champs-Élysées with show windows 30 feet high.

²⁰⁶ *Architectural Forum* 59 (Oct. 1933), 308.

²⁰⁷ An example of a car showroom with full, faceted, glazing and a minimally ornamented stone frame can be found in Ernest Cormier’s Motordrome Store, erected in 1923 on Sherbrooke Street in Montreal, illustrated in Isabelle Gournay, ed. *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* (Montreal: Canadian Center for Architecture, 1990), 35. Completed in 1932, the Philadelphia headquarters of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, which has been labeled America’s first International Style skyscraper, featured continuous store front glazing at street level, with a rounded corner.

²⁰⁸ Hans Wirz and Richard Striner, *Washington Deco: art deco design in the Nation’s Capital* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 69.

²⁰⁹ (*Baltimore* (Oct. 1948), 41; *Baltimore* (July 1950), 1; Sheryl Cucchiella, *Baltimore Deco: an architectural survey of art deco in Baltimore* (Baltimore: Maclay & Associates, 1984).

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As previously mentioned, the *Washington Post* juxtaposed the adjectives “streamlined” and “Modern” to describe the new Lustine showroom in 1950 (as well as, as early as 1940, some of its Oldsmobile offerings). The new building found its most direct roots in the distinctive brand of modernism that American architects and industrial designers devised in the 1930s, and which historian David Gebhard has conveniently labeled “Streamline Moderne.”²¹⁰ Contrasting with the more syncopated and ornate “Jazz Moderne” of the “Roaring Twenties,” this idiom adopted the aerodynamic profiles intrinsic to airplane manufacturing and matched the sensuous, rounded bodies that designers of automobiles (as well as of trailers and roadside diners) were experimenting with. Interest in Streamline Moderne was fed by publicity in the United States about European Modernism – especially information about works by architects such as J.J.P. Oud and Erich Mendelsohn.

In addition to evoking speed through curvaceous lines and horizontal banding, and using ocean linear imagery, such as porthole windows and metal railings, “Streamline Modernists” simplified massing, ornament, and lettering. They used expanses of vitreous veneers instead of textured materials, matte metal accents instead of bronze. To American business owners plagued by the Depression, renovating or rebuilding a store, restaurant, or hotel lounge in this new idiom made sense. Sleek, sensuous, but rarely aggressive or vulgar, it brought novelty at a rather reasonable cost and evoked Hollywood glamour, as many movie sets followed the Streamlined zeitgeist.²¹¹

Although the idiom is presently associated with “exotic locales” like Los Angeles and Miami, many outstanding Streamline Moderne buildings are still extant in the Capital region. They include the shopping center in Old Greenbelt designed by Douglas Ellington and Reginald Wadsworth (1935-37), part of a National Historic Landmark precinct,²¹² the Hecht’s Warehouse by Abbott, Merkt & Company (1936), the former Greyhound Terminal at 110 New York Avenue NW by Wischmeyer, Arrasmith & Elswick (1938-39), on the National Register of Historic Places,²¹³ the WTOP radio transmitter in Wheaton by E. Burton Corning (1939),²¹⁴ and the Silver Theater and shopping center in Silver Spring designed by John Eberson for Sidney Lust.

Less ascetic than the International Style, Streamline Moderne continued to be locally popular through the late 1940s. It characterized, for example, Lust’s and Eberson’s unrealized theater-shopping center opposite the University of Maryland sports stadium in College Park.²¹⁵ Lustine modernized his Oldsmobile dealership building

²¹⁰ David Gebhard, “The Moderne in the US, 1920-1941,” *Architectural Association Quarterly* 2 (1970): 4-20.

²¹¹ For more information, see Donald Albrecht, *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

²¹² The symmetrical curved facades of the businesses in Greenbelt’s town center were also inspired by the avant-garde housing work of Dutch architect J.J.P. Oud, particularly his iconic storefronts for the Kiefhoek (1925-30) and Hook of Holland (1924-27) housing projects in and near Rotterdam.

²¹³ Illustrated in Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim, and Dickran Tashjian, *The Machine Age in America, 1918-1941* (New York: Brooklyn Museum in asso with Abrams, 1986), 177.

²¹⁴ Again, the restrained curves in this building harkens back to the influence of J.J.P. Oud’s work. Streamlined Moderne also owes some of its inspiration to department store design by the German architect Erich Mendelsohn.

²¹⁵ Thomas M. Cahill, “The Week in Real Estate,” *Washington Post* (Dec. 12, 1943), R6.

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with a concave curve and mounted a slender, vertical OLDSMOBILE neon sign over the entrance—which served as a kind of Moderne landmark to auto alley in Hyattsville until the late 1980s.²¹⁶ (Plate 6)

Few automobile showrooms were erected in the United States during the 1930s. However, manufacturers had enough capital to open a few “object lessons” showrooms in the Streamlined Moderne idiom.²¹⁷ Located on the ground floor of New York City’s Chrysler Building, the Chrysler showroom by Reinhard & Hofmeister (1936) became a “leading tourist attraction”: it had “concave ‘invisible glass’ windows” that were “deeply recessed to eliminate reflections;” as a result, “the cars and the public inspecting them were visible from the street.”²¹⁸ Entrusted to industrial designer Walter Doring Teague, the Ford showroom at 1710 Broadway (1938) was equally sensational, as it occupied six floors.²¹⁹ General Motors did not commission showrooms, but its spectacular pavilion for the New York World’s Fair of 1939, designed by Norman Bel Geddes (with the technical support of Albert Kahn’s architectural office) was the epitome of the Streamlined Moderne ethos.

During the depression years, Modernism more commonly manifested in designs for less expensive gas stations, more so than for full dealership plants. By 1930, “many of the large oil companies and their local distributors understood the value of nationally recognized logos and signs, from Mobil’s flying horse to the Texaco star, and realized that neat, clean, and efficient buildings were part of an effective advertisement package. Radical proposals for prototype service stations were designed in the Chicago office of Holabird and Root.²²⁰ In Talbot Hamlin’s *Forms and Functions of Twentieth Century Architecture* (1952), Germany is presented as the leader for exploring “the possibilities in concrete, steel, and glass for realizing light, graceful, and modern gasoline stations.” Several ultra modern examples in Frankfurt, Hanover, and the Dusseldorf-Cologne Road have flamboyant rounded flat canopied roofs.²²¹

Constructed in large quantities, industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague’s white porcelain-clad Texaco stations featured flat, rounded canopies supported by slender columns.²²² The Standard Oil Company developed a modern and cost efficient “standardized filling station unit” featuring a lightweight continuous glass wall of roughly square panes on two sides of the building; the architects were Clauss and Daub.²²³ Floor to

²¹⁶ See Edward Engel, “Rescuing a Glowing Past,” *Washington Post* (Aug 9, 1990); the sign was purchased by Paul S. Swedlund. The article mentions that the vertical sign was donated to the E.E. Olds Transportation Museum in Lansing, Michigan, and a horizontal sign to the Pioneer Auto Museum in Murdo, S.D.

²¹⁷ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 86 mentions that, during the 1930s dealers moving to suburban locations were advised to “put up an oversize rendition of one of the modern gasoline service stations that were put up everywhere, and wait to add on more space if the economy improved.”

²¹⁸ Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1930: architecture and urbanism between two world wars* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 303.

²¹⁹ *Architectural Forum* 68 (Apr. 1938), 325-332.

²²⁰ Illustrated in Wilson, *The Machine Age in America*, 186-187.

²²¹ Talbot Hamlin, Vol 3, *Forms and Functions of Twentieth Century Architecture* (1952), 619.

²²² “Commercial Salesroom and Service Station,” *Architectural Forum* (Jan. 1941), 129.

²²³ “A Standardized Filling Station Unit,” *Architectural Record* (Dec. 1938), 458. Standard Oil anticipated building 100-200 units of this design per year across the nation.

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ceiling glazing was widely popularized by George Keck's glass Crystal House built for the second summer of Chicago's Century of Progress International Exposition in 1934.

8.3-c - Modernism and design merchandising enter the mainstream, late 1940s

As World War II drew to an end, major automobile manufacturers were once again willing to act as tastemakers for their franchisees, who were expected to spend 450 million dollars on new showrooms.²²⁴ In 1944, the Studebaker Corporation published *Postwar housing and facilities for Studebaker dealers*; in 1945, the Ford Motor Company issued *Plans for new and modernized sales and service buildings for Ford, Mercury and Lincoln dealers*. That same year, GM held a Design Competition for Dealers Establishments which was "approved by the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of Canada" and attracted 217 submissions.²²⁵ The outcome of this competition, and of additional research by GM services, was the publication, in 1948, of *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties*. Conceived as a "presentation of ideas rather than plans," a "practical guide of features that yield larger returns on money invested in remodeling or new construction," a "reference for analyzing space requirements," and a "basis for discussing building specifications with architects or contractors," this profusely illustrated book (Plates 45-48) gave GM dealers exhaustive merchandising and styling advice and undoubtedly informed the Lustine design.²²⁶

Planning Automobile Dealer Properties explained how to build a "psychologically attractive and physically comfortable" showroom in order to "produce a profit" and to "fit the traffic." Showrooms were supposed to "stimulate sales by guiding customers in pre-selection of a new car, by quickening their desire to buy. They were designed to "reduce selling costs by performing advertising and merchandising functions that reduced personal selling expense." The display of merchandise needed to "facilitate observations and comparisons that promote quick and accurate buying decisions." Showroom design was meant to "complement product appearance without competing for customer interest."²²⁷

Locating and shaping showrooms "in relation to traffic" was of the utmost importance. Windows needed to be placed within the field of vision of drivers and designed in such a way as to increase their viewing time. On an "Inside Lot," as was the case for Lustine in Hyattsville, *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties* recommended that dealers "expose the showroom out to the property line at the far end of the lot," and set back "other portions of the building that would obscure the showroom to approaching traffic." Using a three-sided window helped maximize daylight, a key merchandising concern since car bodies, generally painted in dark colors at the time,

²²⁴ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 88.

²²⁵ Genat, *The American Car Dealership*, 44. DC architect Jerome O'Connor entered the competition for program # 1. His drawing is available at the Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division.

²²⁶ General Motors Corporation, *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties* (Detroit: General Motors, 1948), 1. At the time GM was veering toward much more radical modernism than what was expounded in this book. For the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan, it commissioned Eero Saarinen as architect (1949-55). In 1986, the AIA designated the Tech Center the outstanding architectural project of its era.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

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absorbed a lot of light.²²⁸ A minimum height of 10'6" was recommended to "achieve good product lighting with good atmosphere." It was best to extend windows "up close to the ceiling to permit light from bright skies to strike the ceiling and be reflected down on to the displays."²²⁹ Tilting windows inward (a rather fashionable thing to do at the time) was not advisable. Dealers willing to espouse the "modern trend toward surrounding the showroom with a continuous expanse of glass" could choose between several corner treatments:

When curved walls are used in forming the corners of a store front, it is architecturally consistent to use curved plate glass to make the building more attractive. Curved window panes are more expensive than flat panes, and are available only on special order. Surface glare is more pronounced on curved glass windows but this is not a serious objection.²³⁰

Store fronts were to be "neither so plain as to suggest inadequate facilities, nor so pretentious as to suggest that pricing may not be competitive." Recessing them from the property line extended "an obvious invitation to window shoppers."²³¹ Built-in canopies, as used in the Lustine showroom, were recommended to reduce glare and keep showroom interiors cool, as was the idea to carry "the materials used on the outside pier or wall to the inside wall," in order to "suggest the absence of glass" and to lead "people into a salesroom psychologically."²³² For the same reasons, using doors "entirely of glass" -- as was the case for Lustine -- was recommended. Doors and doorways needed to be located and designed to "cause the least interference with approaching traffic's view of showroom displays."²³³

Planning Automobile Dealer Properties recommended that cars "rest on the floor" as they were "styled to look their best when seen from eye level by people in a standing position." Built-in lighting in ceilings was deemed "effective" but required "architectural preparation."²³⁴ The GM book also provided advice on the size and location of demonstrator parking stalls, new car storage, conditioning, and delivery stalls. It called for a "good selling atmosphere" in the sales manager's office.

Architectural magazines, which architect Jackley undoubtedly consulted, spread novel design ideas for showrooms and dealerships and provided a rich and innovative palette of options.

The October 1945 issue of *Architectural Forum* reproduced four premiated designs from the recent GM competition for functionally designed dealerships. None were by well known architects and one was quite

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. Low ceilings were definitely counterproductive in an auto showroom; negative evidence of this principle is illustrated by Frank Lloyd Wright's Maximilian Hoffmann showroom (1954) on Park Avenue for Porsches and BMW; illustrated in Robert Stern, Thomas Mellins, David Fishman, *New York 1960: architecture and urbanism between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 592-593.

²³⁰ *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties*, 13.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

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radical for its reliance on massive expanses of glass for what is essentially an elegant but minimalist box. All demonstrated "with impressive unanimity how complete has been the conquest of modern architecture in commercial buildings."²³⁵

In September 1949, *Progressive Architecture* published a Dodge showroom in New York City (L Motors, at 175th Street and Broadway, completed in 1948) by the maverick apparel store and hotel designer Morris Lapidus, who argued it was "completely wrong to design for automobiles a showroom that looks like a salon or a night club." Lapidus's showroom featured a rotunda made of beveled glass. The magazine's editors noted Lapidus's "conscious use on the interior of materials and effects usually associated with outdoors": brick, flagstone, wood siding, planting beds, and a terrazzo floor.²³⁶ (Plate 49) *Progressive Architecture* published twice (in December 1949 and September 1950, too late to have influenced Jackley) designs of the Field Chevrolet Company by Gruen and Krummeck in Maplewood Missouri. An exciting and bold design, the Field showroom, which was entirely glazed, was shaped as a flying triangle with rounded corners. The building gave the impression of a "bird cage" topped by a slender but deeply projecting canopy.²³⁷ (Plate 50)

In September 1950, *Progressive Architecture* published a more conventional design, by Curtis and Davis in New Orleans, whose dramatic features were a broad wavy canopy and an "open front plan wherein the entire space constitutes the show window."²³⁸ (Plate 51) Another example of a showroom with an impressive corner rotunda was Capitol Motors, a Chrysler/Plymouth dealership in Trenton, New Jersey, designed by Victor Bohm (1949). Dramatic night lighting in the floor to ceiling glass display space showcased the latest models to great advantage.²³⁹ Architectural photographs published in design magazines and stored in digital collections at the Library of Congress provide a good index of showroom trends in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The boldest showrooms featured the combination of floor-to-ceiling and curved glass with flat roofs, frequently irregularly shaped spaces, with dramatic lighting and striking free standing lettering. Signs acquired greater prominence and independence, sometime becoming freestanding, and often featuring neon.

By comparison, most dealerships in the Capital Region still looked rather dowdy. For instance, the self-proclaimed "luxurious showroom" and state-of-the-art design for the Nash franchisee in Alexandria looked traditional and unassuming.²⁴⁰ The compact and boxy "storefront" configuration was far from extinct. Local architects Schreier and Patterson provided an elegant version for Mayflower Motors a Lincoln/Mercury dealer

²³⁵ "Design Competition for Dealer Establishments," *Architectural Forum* 83 (Oct. 1945), 117-125.

²³⁶ *Progressive Architecture* 30 (Sep. 1948), 65. This stretch of Broadway in the Fifties maintained its status as Manhattan's automobile row until the late 1960s. At the time, Lapidus was designing snappy stores in Cumberland, Maryland.

²³⁷ *Progressive Architecture* (Dec. 1949), 65.

²³⁸ *Progressive Architecture* (Sep. 1950), 78.

²³⁹ Capitol Motors, business at 625 S. Broad St., Trenton, New Jersey. Night detail. Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc., Photographers, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division.

²⁴⁰ *Washington Post* (Jan. 11, 1948), M6. This was one of the very first advertisements we found with a representation of the actual physical plant of the dealership.

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at 1125 15th St, N.W (1946).²⁴¹ (Plate 52) New ideas, however, began to emerge. In 1948, Ourisman Chevrolet, probably Lustine's most direct competitor, built a two-story, slightly projecting, show window for its dealership in Southwest D.C. Manufactured by Pittsburgh Plate Glass, the three-sided outsized opening was surmounted by extremely large and simple letters spelling OURISMAN CHEVROLET across its length.²⁴² (Plate 53) At roughly the same date, Bethesda's Covington Motors at 7301 Wisconsin Avenue (presently the Air Right Building) built a three sided, projecting rectilinear show window. (Plate 54) On Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Al's Motors, a Chrysler dealership established in the early 1920s, boasted a new plant designed by architect Raymond Mims and built in 1948; it featured streamlined curved glazing, glass curtain walls, a metal cornice, and glass block siding and transom, but it was smaller than the Lustine showroom.²⁴³ Multi-sided glazing also characterized the snappy showroom for Montgomery Stubbs Motors, at 1200 East West Highway in Silver Spring (c.1950)²⁴⁴ By 1950, Fasanko Motors of College Park (Plate 9) had an attractive entirely glazed building, protected by a canopy, and topped by a centrally located vertical sign.²⁴⁵ Chevy Chase Chevrolet on Wisconsin Avenue boasted a four story building with a dramatic corner entrance into its glazed showroom. (Plate 55)

8.3-d - Originality, quality and modernity of the Lustine design

Dano Jackley followed many practical recommendations expounded in *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties* in his commission for Philip Lustine. But the showroom was by no means a slavish imitation of GM's suggestions. In fact, none of the sixteen plans and perspectives proposed at the end of *Planning Automobile Dealer Properties* was as monumental and simple, or in other words as compelling, as what Jackley achieved in Hyattsville. He was ingenious in adapting GM's recommendations to existing site conditions. Since the showroom was not "ideally" located at the intersection of two streets, recessing the second show window simulated a "corner statement." In plan, the double curve eased the spatial and traffic flow between the grand car showroom and the smaller parts sales area. The resulting wall contour resembled the profile of a car (although we do not know whether this was a conscious decision on Jackley's part). The architect retained the essence of the Streamline Moderne style -- in particular, dynamic sweeping curves, both vertical and horizontal -- but abandoned the dated and "anecdotal" detailing associated with this idiom. His decisions exemplified the recommendation stated by *Progressive Architecture* in September 1950 to use a "rather broad design palette" and reject "fussiness or small detail."²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ We believe this dealership moved from 2819 M. Street where it sold de Sotos before the war.

²⁴² Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, Ourisman Chevrolet I, Theodor Horydczak, photographer (1948), Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Collection.

²⁴³ "Al's Motors, 3910 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington County, VA," National Register Form (000-7381).

²⁴⁴ Montgomery Stubbs Motors, 1200 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland. Exterior of Montgomery Stubbs Motors, Theodor Horydczak, photographer, c. 1950, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division.

²⁴⁵ See advertisements in the *Prince George's Post*, for instance, (Oct. 5, 1950), 16.

²⁴⁶ "Progressive Architecture critique. Automobiles sales and service buildings," *Progressive Architecture* (Sept. 1950), 75.

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By extending the canopy to the passageway toward the service center, in a kind of porte cochere, Jackley produced a mass proportionate to the width of Route 1; the deep overhang also had the practical advantage of reducing glare. The Lustine showroom is a singular example of a 1 ½ story building with a double curved facade.²⁴⁷ Its height was far above average for suburban dealerships. Using such large sheets of curved glass would have been quite costly, but greatly contributed to the beauty, elegance, and grandeur of the showroom.²⁴⁸ In its bold features, perhaps the showroom functioned as a kind of autobiographical design for Philip Lustine, reflecting the big promises, fearless predictions, and strong personal stamp the owner put forth in his advertisements.

The placement of, and lettering combination for, signs at Lustine-Nicholson was also rather unusual, if not unique; most dealerships had signs on concrete posts that were not integral to the design). Parallel to Route 1, the edge of the showroom canopy carried metal letters spelling LUSTINE NICHOLSON, and, to cater to both inbound and outbound traffic, diagonally placed metal frames on either end of the canopy supported signs indicating *LUSTINE*, with a particularly prominent curvilinear L on top, and CHEVROLET at the bottom.²⁴⁹

The blurring between exterior and interior, the impression of lightness, of a building “floating” along Route 1 is memorable. It is made possible by the use of a steel frame. High quality materials were employed for finishes; the aggregate used to cover the piers and frame the glass doors has visual interest and nice coloring.²⁵⁰ The brushed aluminum provided textural contrast and the terrazzo floors were undoubtedly chosen both for their durability and rich texture.²⁵¹ Inside the color scheme was purposely neutral, so as not to detract attention from the cars themselves. The showroom was air-conditioned—a fairly novel feature in 1950—and recessed lighting was mounted in all the right places to show the automobiles to advantage. Lustine led the trend toward very high interiors among dealerships in Prince George's County.

According to the *Hyattsville Inquirer*, the Lustine showroom “captured the spaciousness of the open road” and transcended its commercial purpose to become a local landmark. The newspaper was certainly alluding to the fact that one was carried to “Hollywood, bright lights, glamour and all.” Indeed, glamour seemed to have been

²⁴⁷ Architectural historian Richard Longstreth, Department of American Studies, George Washington University, telephone conversation with Isabelle Gournay (Oct. 12, 2004): “I can’t think of any thing like it.”

²⁴⁸ For instance, the Lustine design is far more effective than that of another Chevrolet dealership, illustrated by Genat (who does not identify its location), featuring the same curved wall profile, but which was built of strictly straight glass panes, creating beveled corners. See Genat, *The American Auto Dealership*, 31.

²⁴⁹ Subsequent signs were not as architecturally distinguished. Anne H. Oman, “Tacky Treasures, Roadside Relics; An Archeologist Uncovers Relics Along Route 1 Tacky Treasures” *Washington Post* (Jan. 12, 1979), Weekend-1 mentions the revolving punching-bag neon sign advertising the Lustine Chevrolet dealership. Trisha Collopy, “Route 1: Maryland’s Miracle Mile,” *Capital News Service* (Apr 21, 1995) mentions “white and blue tinsel snap(ped) in the wind behind a 1950s sign of a man in a blue suit stretching his arm out to the world.”

²⁵⁰ The quality of the aggregate makes us wonder whether it was by John Joseph Earley who did precast walls for Anderson Chevrolet Company, Baltimore (1951). Lustine does not appear on our list of Earley’s works, however.

²⁵¹ See Thomas C. Jester, *Twentieth-century building materials: history and conservation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 23; terrazzo was almost universally adopted in US car showrooms.

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in rather short supply in Prince George's County! It is not an exaggeration to say that the monumentality of the Lustine dealership amounted to a modern version of the "Sublime," as its mass and design trigger mixed impressions of awe and admiration.

Interiors

After the showroom, the key space for selling new automobiles, both the parts and service operations were vital components of Lustine's business. Of the two, the parts department was the most mundane. The layout of the parts department was considered as a model of functionality. (Plate 17)

It is such that it extends all the way from the front sidewalk on Baltimore Avenue, past the new car showroom and business offices, to the Service Department. The Parts Department can be reached through modern glass doors by new car salesmen and their customers in the showroom. It is not hidden away among the grease racks. Displays of parts in the department can be seen from the showroom.²⁵²

Should a car customer be interested in inspecting additional accessories, he can be ushered quickly to the Parts Department counter.

Service Department

When customers brought their cars to be serviced at Lustine Motors, they drove through the porte-cochere, under the canopy, to a bay close to the front of the service building on the north side of the complex. The customer would meet with the "service writers" to discuss what was needed and then leave their car at the entrance to the service building. (Plate 19) A "car jockey" would drive the car, sometimes snappily, down the middle of the service building and out the rear service doors on the middle of the north façade, where the car would be parked until the mechanics were ready to service it.²⁵³ When a mechanic was available, a "car jockey" would bring the car back inside to the appropriate bay for servicing.²⁵⁴

On the southeast side of the vast service building on the second floor was a space the mechanics called "the tower area"—it was behind the showroom and over the parts department. The tower had a double window overlooking the entire service building. The service manager watched the operation from up there. When the

²⁵² "Daily Sales Report," *News From the Profit Area*, 1-2.

²⁵³ Car jockeys were expected to drive the customers' cars with flourish in a sort of promenade down the center of the service building—in what was mainly show for the benefit of the customer, since the car was then simply taken back out the rear bay and parked until a mechanic was available. Car jockeys wore uniforms and worked to impress, especially, female customers and make them feel confident about the service operation. We believe this is a job Lustine made available to African American men.

²⁵⁴ This and the following two paragraphs are based on a telephone interview Mary Corbin Sies conducted with Bill Brode on September 9, 2005. Mr. Brode worked as a line mechanic at Lustine starting in 1968 and worked his way up to manager of the New Car Prep department in 1975.

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service writers finished writing up repair orders (RO's), they were sent to the tower by pneumatic tubers. The service manager received all the orders and watched each mechanic to determine who was finishing a job and ready to take on the next repair job. When a mechanic became free, the service manager would call him and send the RO down by pneumatic tube. The car jockeys then fetched the car and the mechanic went to work.

The original 1951 service building stretched roughly two-thirds of the present building and terminated in a small two-story area which was a comfort and changing area for the mechanics. The section contained bathrooms and rooms for changing into and out of uniforms and for general cleaning up before leaving work. In the service bays, cars were raised on hydraulic lifts that were set in-ground. Close to the front of the service department, there was one bay with a recessed (dug out) area where the front end machine was used. A "second building"—really an extension of the service building to the back of the Lustine lot, was originally built as a body shop shortly after 1950. Around roughly 1968, the body shop was converted to a trip shop, which customized cars with things like vinyl tops, fancy upholstery, and etc. This area was subsequently converted to a new car prep shop in the early 1970s.

Final thoughts

Strengthening the primacy of glass in showroom design, the Lustine design encouraged other dealers to espouse fantasy and whimsy, and anticipated the trend toward free-standing showrooms, often "in the round," which lasted well into the 1960s.²⁵⁵ At that time, the fashion changed somewhat. Instead of flat canopies, curved or jagged roofs were favored, as was the case for S. Thomas Stathes' zigzag used car showroom for Royal Motors, Inc. in Brentwood (1960).²⁵⁶ An opposite trend, maybe inspired by the desire to downplay the reputation of outrageous showmanship car dealers had acquired among the general public, was to adopt utterly simple, rectilinear masses. Two good examples of this economy-driven trend were erected in Hyattsville: Bob Banning Plymouth, which opened in 1957 adjacent to the Lustine showroom, and John S. Samperton's new Palmer Ford Dealership at Jamestown Road and Hamilton Street around 1961.²⁵⁷ (Plate 56) The latter type led naturally to the rather uninspired designs for automalls more common today.

Route 1 and its "tacky" and exotic "Roadside Relics" acquired archeological status in the late 1970s.²⁵⁸ Endangered Streamline Moderne landmarks such as D.C.'s Greyhound Terminal were saved from the wrecking ball. In 1984, the Art Deco Society of Washington awarded Lustine Oldsmobile one of its ten annual certificates

²⁵⁵ For example, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in its October 1956 issue covering South America illustrated a circular showroom in Caracas. In the 1960s, many Dodge showrooms had a circular shape. Bruce Goff's RBM of Atlanta dealership (1968) featured two circular buildings, including a glassed-in showroom with a parabolic ceiling.

²⁵⁶ *Architects' Report* (Summer 1961). *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (Oct. 1956) shows a dealership in Rio de Janeiro exhibiting thin shell concrete vaults. See also Dexter Chevrolet in Detroit, King & Lewis architects, *Architectural Record* (Dec. 1959), 133-134 and Bob Peck Chevrolet, 800 North Glebe Road in Alexandria, VA, which rebuilt its showroom with a waffle shape, space-age roof.

²⁵⁷ *Potomac Valley Architect* (Jan. 1961). Another example is Stann & Hilleary's Rockmont Motor Dealers in Rockville (1960), demolished.

²⁵⁸ Anne H. Oman, "Tacky Treasures."

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“for outstanding preservation, revival, or renovation of design from the 1920s and '30s” and commended its effort toward preserving the integrity of its Hyattsville showroom.²⁵⁹

Few dealerships erected around 1950 have maintained their original appearance and fewer still can boast the high quality design of the Lustine-Nicholson showroom.²⁶⁰ Documentation, preservation, and revitalization efforts in Hyattsville have primarily concerned the section of Route 1 immediately south of the Lustine showroom: the pre-1950 Hyattsville Area is on the National Register of Historic Places (documentation prepared in 1982 by Christopher Owens, M-NCPPC Park Historian). The area was updated and re-designated as an expanded National Register District in December 2004²⁶¹ and under the current designation, the Lustine Properties are listed as ‘contributing’ resources.

In 2001, M-NCPPC developed a planning study for a Prince George's County Gateway Arts District that would focus on the Route 1 corridor from the District line northward, to include the City of Mount Rainier, the Town of Brentwood, the Town of North Brentwood, and the City of Hyattsville. The study was based on the premises that the entire corridor had experienced economic decline and was in need of revitalization, and that the four communities were home to a number of artists who lived and worked in the area and whose presence and activities could be further developed to produce additional arts-related projects and economic spin-off benefits.²⁶² Since 2001, M-NCPPC, the four municipalities, the Prince George's County Commission, and the Prince George's County Executive have supported the concept of the Gateway Arts District.

In November 2004, Eakin/Youngentob Associates (EYA) of Bethesda proposed a mixed use development entitled Arts District Hyattsville to occupy substantial acreage on the west side of Route 1 in Hyattsville, including the site of the 1950 Lustine Showroom and Service Center.²⁶³ The initial proposal called for complete demolition of the Lustine dealership plant and redevelopment of the site with live/work townhouses, condominiums, and retail establishments at street level. Subsequent negotiations between EYA, M-NCPPC, and the City of Hyattsville produced an agreement to demolish the Lustine Service Center (over the winter of 2005-2006), but to retain, restore, and adaptively reuse the 1950 showroom (Plates 57-58) since “the Lustine Chevrolet Building at 5710 Baltimore Avenue, Hyattsville is a historically and architecturally important structure within Prince George's County and the State of Maryland.”²⁶⁴ EYA adopted this plan and, at present,

²⁵⁹ Ann L. Trebbe “Delighted With Deco; Aficionados Salute, Snap up Designs Of the '20s and '30s,” *Washington Post* (June 4, 1984), B3.

²⁶⁰ Lustine is pictured at <http://www.agilitynut.com/showrooms.html>, an excellent website devoted to commercial architecture.

²⁶¹ Kristie Baynard and Laura V. Trieschmann, Hyattsville Historic District (Amended and Expanded) (National Register Form PG 68-10 (June 27, 2004)).

²⁶² M-NCPPC, *Prince George's County Gateway Arts District Planning Study* (M-NCPPC: www.mncppc.org, Sept. 2001), 1.

²⁶³ The EYA Website promoting Arts District Hyattsville can be found at <http://www.eya.com/index.cfm?neighborhoodid=6B5240AC-96B6-175C-99CE06061246A2C6&fuseaction=microsites.welcome>.

²⁶⁴ Historic Preservation Commission Memo Re: DSP-04076 – Hyattsville Redevelopment (Formerly Lustine Properties) within Hyattsville National Register Historic District, Amended and Expanded (68-10) (M-NCPPC, August 2, 2005).

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the Lustine Showroom has been adaptively reused as "The Lustine Center," a community center and exercise facility for Arts District Hyattsville. (Plates 59-61)

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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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

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name Arts District Hyattsville Master Assn Inc
street & number Suite 300, 4800 Hampden Ln telephone _____
city or town Bethesda state Maryland zip code 20814

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16.84-45



Langley Park
Langley Park Sch
MERRIMAC
Shopping Center
Carole Highlands Sch
Chillum Manor
Chillum Heights
Michigan Park Hills
De Sales Hall
Anselmory Sch

Adelphi Park
University Gardens
Green Meadows
Brookside Manor
Chillum Heights
Michigan Park Hills
Avondale Terrace
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

University Hills Recreation Center
University Park
College Heights Estates
Northwestern High Sch
Prince Georges Plaza
Orem Jr High Sch
Kirkwood
Queens Chapel Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

College Heights
University Park
West Riverdale
Hyattsville Hills
Castle Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

University of Maryland
College Heights
University Park
West Riverdale
Hyattsville Hills
Castle Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens
MOUNT RAINIER
Brentwood
Cottage City

Langley Park
Adelphi Park
University Gardens
Green Meadows
Brookside Manor
Chillum Heights
Michigan Park Hills
Avondale Terrace
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

University Hills Recreation Center
University Park
College Heights Estates
Northwestern High Sch
Prince Georges Plaza
Orem Jr High Sch
Kirkwood
Queens Chapel Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

College Heights
University Park
West Riverdale
Hyattsville Hills
Castle Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

University of Maryland
College Heights
University Park
West Riverdale
Hyattsville Hills
Castle Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens
MOUNT RAINIER
Brentwood
Cottage City

Langley Park
Adelphi Park
University Gardens
Green Meadows
Brookside Manor
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North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

Langley Park
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University Gardens
Green Meadows
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Avondale Terrace
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University Hills Recreation Center
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Northwestern High Sch
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Queens Chapel Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

College Heights
University Park
West Riverdale
Hyattsville Hills
Castle Manor
Queenstown
North Woodridge
Kaywood Gardens

University of Maryland
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University Park
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MOUNT RAINIER
Brentwood
Cottage City

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5710 Baltimore Avenue
Hyattsville, MD
Washington East, DC - MD 38076_H8_TB_024
1965 Photorevised 1979
N4314 - W332

Photo 1

Lustine Motors

Principal-East Façade.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 2

Lustine Motors

Principal-East façade, detail of eastern curved windows.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 3

Lustine Motors

Principal-East façade, detail of parts department entrance door.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 4

Lustine Motors

Detail of main entrance to showroom East façade.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 5

Lustine Motors

Oblique view of Southeast façade and principal-East façade and curved canopy roof.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 6

Lustine Motors

Principal-East façade, porte-cochère entrance to service center.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 7

Lustine Motors

Northwest façade, viewed from porte-cochère detail of glass door.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 8

Lustine Motors

North façade, view of office block side.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 9

Lustine Motors

View of office block showing West and North façades.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 10

Lustine Motors

Northwest façade, detail of painted signs and view of service station from rear.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 11

Lustine Motors

North façade, view of westernmost portion and fenced in "back lot."

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 12

Lustine Motors

South façade of service center, westernmost portion.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 13

Lustine Motors

South façade service wing, window rhythm detail.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 14

Lustine Motors

Southeast façade from parking lot, the "Discount Truck Center" mural with the red Chevy truck visible.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005

Photo 15

Lustine Motors

Southernmost East façade, parts department area.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer, c. 2005



LUST

PARTS DEPT.

TENT SALE

LUZZE SUNDAY

Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

Principal - East Façade.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
c. 2005

#1



Chevrolet
Heartbeat
SALE

PARTS DEPT.
5710

CHEVY TENT
EXTRAVAGANZA

SALE

Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Principal-East facade, detail of
eastern curved windows.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer.

C. 2005

#2

PARTS DEPT.

5710

PARTS HOURS

**M-F 7:30AM-5PM
SAT. 9:00AM-4:00PM**

Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

PG: 68-41-45

Principal-east facade, detail of
parts department entrance door.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
C. 2005

#3

CHEVROLET

5710



Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Detail of main entrance to
showroom East facade.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#4



SAVE YOUR
TOOTH ★

CHEVROLET
EXTRA
★

Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Oblique view of Southeast facade
and principal-East facade
and curved canopy roof.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#5

SERVICE



FIN SERVICE
ALL OF OUR SERVICE
IS AVAILABLE
AT ALL
SERVICE



Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Principal-East facade, port-cochère
entrance to service center.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#6



FOR SERVICE

• THIS IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW
• WORK IS BEING DONE

FOR SERVICE WRITE-UP

Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

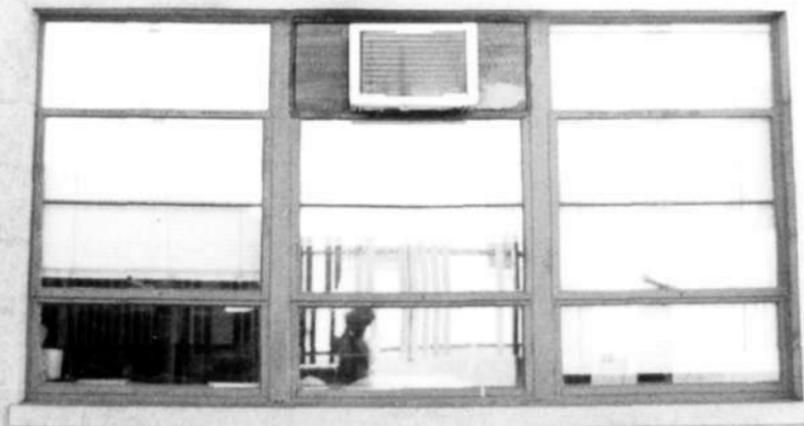
Hyattsville, MD 20781

Northwest facade, viewed from
port-cochere detail of glass door.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#7



Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

PGI: 68-41-45

North facade, view of office block
side

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
c. 2005

#8



Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

View of office block showing
West and North facades.

Mary Corbin Sies, Photographer

c. 2005

#9

SON



INDUSTRIAL

OFFICE BUILDING

LUSTINE

Goodwrench QUALITY

Lustine Motors

PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Northwest facade, detail of painted signs and view of service station from rear.

Mary Corbin Sies, Photographer

c. 2005

#10



Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

South facade of service center,
westernmost portion.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#12



Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

PG: 68-41-45

North facade, view of westernmost
portion and fenced in "back lot."

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
c. 2005

#11



PG: 68-41-45

Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave
Hyattsville, MD 20781

South facade service wing,
window rhythm detail.

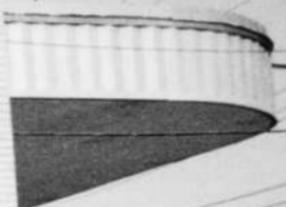
Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
c. 2005

#13

DISCOUNT



TRUCK CENTER



Lustine Motors
5710 Baltimore Ave.
Hyattsville, MD 20781

PG: 68-41-45

southeast facade from parking lot,
the "Discount Truck Center" mural
with red Chevy Truck visible.
Mary Corbin Sies, photographer
c. 2005

#14



Lustine Motors PG: 68-41-45

5710 Baltimore Ave.

Hyattsville, MD 20781

Southernmost East facade,
parts department area.

Mary Corbin Sies, photographer

c. 2005

#15

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. HR-7
PG: 68-41-45
Magi No.
DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Lustine Chevrolet Automobile Dealership

2. Location

street & number 5710 Baltimore Boulevard not for publication

city, town Hyattsville vicinity of congressional district

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Mr. Philip Lustine

street & number _____ telephone no.: _____

city, town _____ state and zip code _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. _____ liber _____

street & number _____ folio _____

city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Survey No. HR-7

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.

This structure is 2 stories high and is multifunctional in terms of space usage i.e., sales, service, and parts divisions are all located under the large flat roof. The facade, where two auto display rooms are, has lots of glass with small metal panes. A protruding cornice-like element has a corrugated effect, is capped with aluminum, and echoes the round corners below it. At the roofline are three metal and neon signs, the central one is oriented to the East and directly parallel to the street; the others, face the automobile traffic along the north and south bound U.S. Route 1. Two facade doorways are wide enough to allow automobiles in and out of the showroom floor. Pedestrian doors are glass with metal frames. The north elevation has glass panels sandwiched between cast stone piers. The service department entrance is adjacent and oriented toward the rear of the stone piers. The south elevation is 6 course common brick bond and houses the parts division. At the rear of the huge building are the service bays. The wall plane is completely lined with metal casement windows, above which are corrugated metal sections. The entire wing must extend for nearly 200 feet. The whole dealership was built in 1950.

A separate temporary structure is located near the southern property boundary which is the automobile leasing division of Lustine, Inc. The mobile home unit is one story tall with 8 bays, a flat roof, and sided with vertical wood panelling. A wooden entry porch that faces north has metal posts which support the corrugated plastic shed roof. The unit rests on a trailer bed and concrete block piers. Also and most importantly is the location of the many, many current model year Chevrolet automobiles.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1951 **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.

As early as 1922 when designated on a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map this site was once three individual properties with frame dwellings. Lustine Chevrolet moved into the new automobile showroom, service and parts departments in 1951 after two of the residences were razed. The third house, known as the Rose Mansion, was demolished in 1979 to allow more space for the storage and display of new automobiles.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. HR-7

- Polk's Maryland Washington Suburban Directory 1954/55
- Prince George's County Metropolitan Directory 1950
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1959

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

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G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Helen P. Ross

organization George Washington University

date 3/27/87

street & number

telephone 202 994 6070

city or town

state

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

