

Capsule Summary
SM-541
Bell Motor Company Building
Leonardtown
Private

c. 1939

In 1918, J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell opened a farm implements and appliance store in Pearson, Maryland. The two, however, made an important step on January 17, 1923. It was on this date that they began a Chevrolet franchise car dealership. Today, Bell Motors is the second oldest Chevrolet car dealership in the entire world.

In 1939 the Bell's erected a modern brick building in Leonardtown at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Washington Street. Soon after they opened their Leonardtown office, Pearson, Maryland and much of the land around it was condemned by the United States government to make way for the Patuxent Naval Air Station. After 1942, the Bell's focused their business in the town. Like many automobile dealerships in the early and mid-twentieth century, the Bell's not only sold cars but also farming implements, trucks, tractors, refridgerators, washing machines and many other appliances. These products, however, were dropped in the 1950s and 1960s as the Bell's concentrated on selling cars.

The brick, one and two story building in Leonardtown, while extensively modified to accomodate the expansion and changes of the business, remains a significant commercial building located in the center of Leonardtown. The primary elevation with its large picture windows and tan brick surrounds are distinctive characteristics of the building.

SM-541, Bell Motor's Building--Leonardtwn Office
St. Mary's County
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization:	Western Shore
Chronological/Developmental Period:	Modern, 1930-
Historic Period Theme:	Architecture, Commerce

Resource Type

Category:	Building
Historic Environment:	Town
Historic Function and Use:	Car Sales and Service Center
Known Design Source:	None

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. SM-541

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Bell Motor Company Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number SW corner of Washington Street and Park Avenue not for publication

city, town Leonardtown vicinity of congressional district 3

state Maryland county St. Mary'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 J. Ernest and T. Webster Bell

street & number PO Box 656 telephone no.: (301) 475-2355

city, town Leonardtown state and zip code Maryland, 20650

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber 45

street & number folio 310

city, town Leonardtown state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. SM-541

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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.

Contributing Resource Count: 1

The Bell Motor Company Building is located on the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Washington Street in the public square of Leonardtown, Maryland. The building, oriented on an east-west axis, is bounded by Park Avenue on the north, Washington Street on the east, the Leonardtown Bank of the Eastern Shore Trust Company (SM-345) on the south, and by a large parking lot on the west.

Erected in 1939, the two story, five-to-one common bond brick commercial building has a flat roof and a one story brick addition on the south side. The building extends almost the full length of the lot. The primary or east elevation of the main section is distinguished by a centrally located pair of metal doors, shaded by a semicircular awning, flanked on either side by three picture windows. Immediately above these bays is a black and white sign that reads "BELL MOTOR CO." Above this sign are a series of five, two light casement windows surrounded on all sides by decorative, vertically placed, tan colored, soldier bricks. Above this decorative brickwork is a stepped parapet that hides the flat roof. The same elevation of the 1950s one story addition, constructed in an all stretcher bond, exhibits a similar decorative treatment--a centrally located metal door flanked on either side by three medium sized picture windows. These bays are all shaded by an awning. Immediately above the awning is a blue and white sign reading "BELL CHEVROLET OLDSMOBILE BUICK." This sign is surrounded by tan colored stretcher bricks. Above the sign is a stepped parapet that hides a flat roof.

The sides of the main building also exhibits a stepped parapet that gradually descends from the two story front elevation to the one story rear section. The north side is punctuated by a pair of metal doors, a two pane picture window, a fifteen light casement window and a series of three garage doors that permit entry into the service department. A non-contributing metal sheathed building is attached to the main brick section.

8. Significance

Survey No. SM-541

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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
check: Applicable Criteria: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D and/or	
Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> local	

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

In 1918, J. Ernest Bell and T. Webster Bell opened a farm implements and appliance store in Pearson, Maryland. The two, however, made an important step on January 17, 1923. It was on this date that they began a Chevrolet franchise car dealership. Today, Bell Motors is the second oldest Chevrolet car dealership in the entire world.

In 1939, however, the Bell's erected a modern brick building in Leonardtown at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Washington Street. Soon after they opened their Leonardtown office, Pearson, Maryland and much of the land around it was condemned by the United States government to make way for the Patuxent Naval Air Station. After 1942, the Bell's focused their business in the town. Like many automobile dealerships in the early and mid-twentieth century, the Bell's not only sold cars but also farming implements, trucks, tractors, refrigerators, washing machines and many other appliances. These products, however, were dropped in the 1950s and 1960s as the Bell's concentrated on selling cars.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM-541

Personal Interview with Tommy Bell, February 1997.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 25 acres

Quadrangle name Leonardtown, Md

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

Same as per deed reference.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk E. Ranzetta. Historic Sites Surveyor

organization St. Mary's County Planning and Zoning

date February, 1997

street & number 22740 Washington Street

telephone (301) 475-4662

city or town Leonardtown

state Maryland

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

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

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
 Shaw House
 21 State Circle
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 (301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
 DHCP/DHCD
 100 COMMUNITY PLACE
 CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023
 514-7600

SM-541, Bell Motor Company--Leonardtown Office
St. Mary's County
8.1 Significance

Chain-of-title (Please note that all records can be found in the Land Records Office, St. Mary's County Courthouse in Leonardtown, Maryland unless otherwise noted.)

Reference: Liber 45, Folio 310

Grantee: J. Ernest and T. Webster Bell

Grantor: Emily H. Waring, wife of Edward J. Waring and Emma Q. Hamilton, wife of George E. Hamilton

Date: July 20, 1953

Reference: Liber EBA 19, Folio 86 and 87

Grantee: Edward J. Waring and George E. Hamilton (of the Leonardtown Implement Company)

Grantor: L. Allison Wilmer, trustee for Nettie E. Wilmer (widow of William F. Greenwell)

Date: April 13, 1920

Notes: William F. Greenwell died intestate and the property was obtained by Waring and Hamilton.

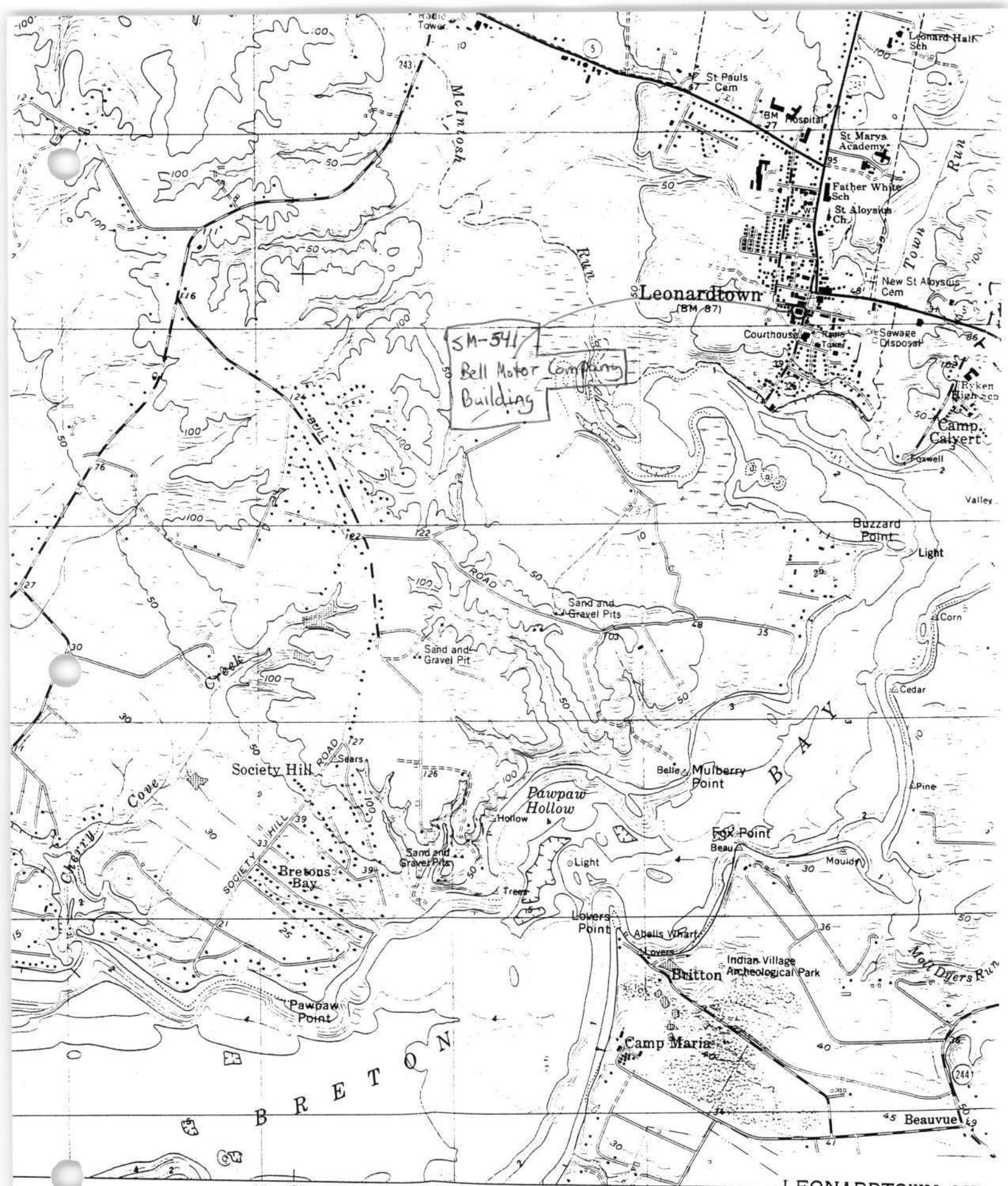
Reference: Liber JJG 5, Folio 199

Grantee: William F. Greenwell

Grantor: Francis F. Greenwell, trustee

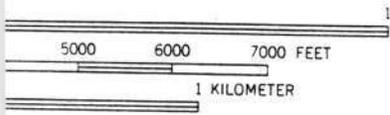
Date: May 5, 1898

Notes: As a result of a decree in the Circuit Court of March 7, 1898, the property was sold. The case involved Sarah M. Greenwell and William F. Greenwell administrators of William F. Greenwell versus Harry Spalding. The 1/4 acre tract at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Washington Street was called the "Drug Store Property."



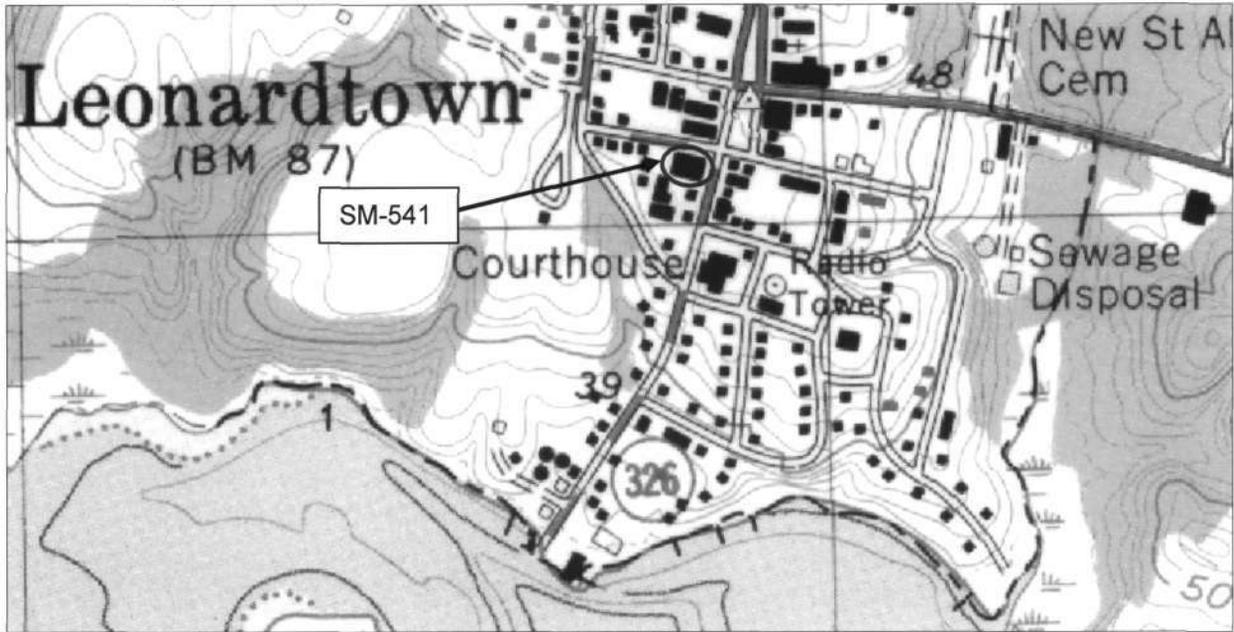
SM-541
Bell Motor Company
Building

LEONARDTOWN, MD.
SW/4 LEONARDTOWN 15' QUADRANGLE
38076-C6-TB-024



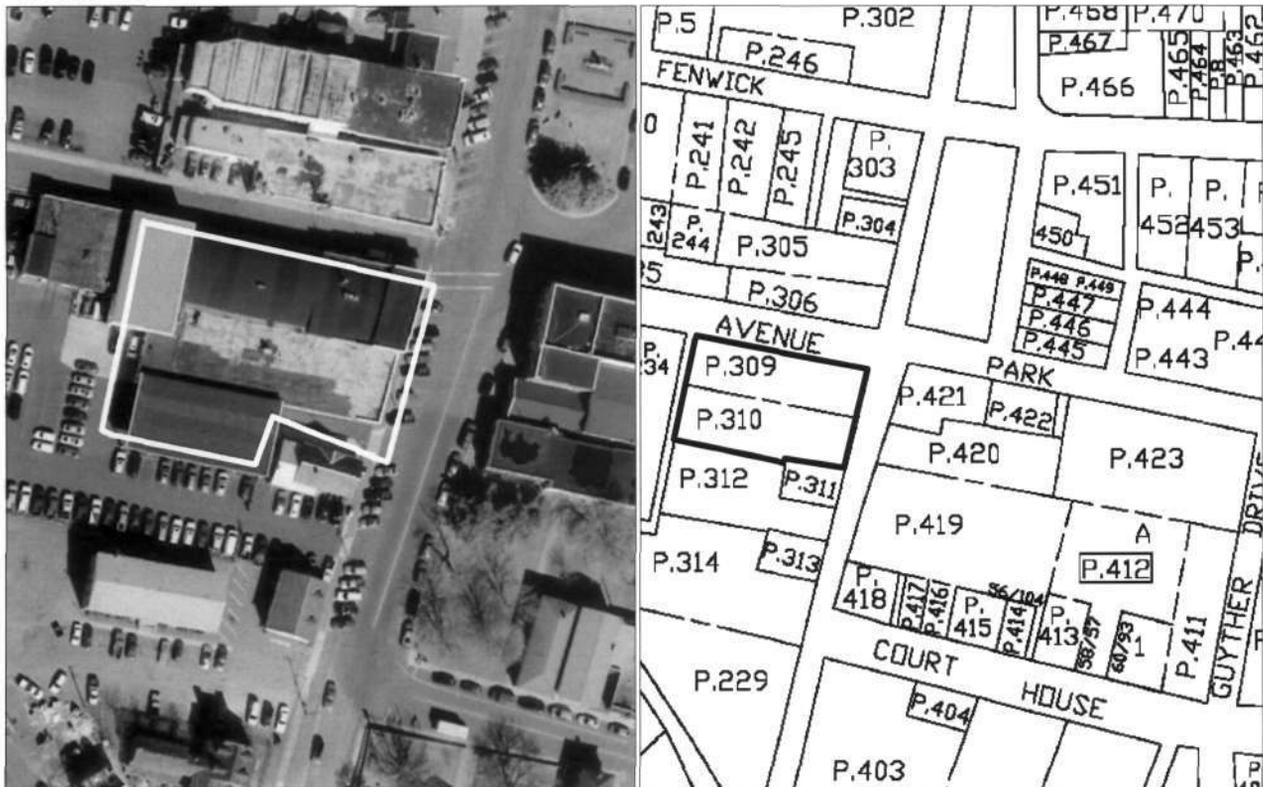
INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL
ROAC
1963
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982
PHOTOREVISED 1984
DMA 5200 1 211 000

SM-541
 Bell Motor Company Building
 22675 Washington Street (MD 326), Leonardtown
 Leonardtown quad 1963 (Photorevised 1984, Bathymetry added 1982)



National Web Map Service 6" Orthophoto Map,
 c. 2007-08

Tax Map 133, Parcels. 309-310





SM-541

Bell Motor Company Building
St. Mary's County, Md

Kirk Ranzetta

Dec 1996

Md SHPO

E + N elevations

1/1