

SITE NUMBER: WA-IV-125

ADDRESS: 21 West Water Street, Smithsburg, MD

OWNER/LOT NUMBER/ACCESS: Town of Smithsburg, 595/145, public access

BUILDING DATE: late 19th/early 20th century

21 West Water Street is a massive, frame, freestanding structure currently used as the Smithsburg Town Hall. The building holds offices for the mayor and the local police, as well as meeting rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society.

It is a north-facing, deep, symmetrical, two-and-a-half-story, four-bay, structure whose three-story projecting square tower is a visual landmark as one enters Smithsburg from the west. The building has been extensively cosmetically altered, but still retains building elements that gives clues to how it appeared in the past. The structure is sheathed in asbestos shingling and rests on a stone foundation. The mansard roof is covered with an artificial roll. The principal entrance is protected by an intact, three-bay, eastlake porch and consists of a set of replacement double doors. A secondary entrance is located in the tower projection. The fenestration consists of pairs of windows on the front facade and single windows on the side elevations. All windows are rectangular, wooden sash, double-hung, one-over-one (front) or two-over-two (side) windows. Windows in the third floor of the tower have been boarded up.

The building is set on parts of original lots 26 and 27, vacant lots that were owned by Robert Gordon and Radarick [sic] Shepley, respectively, according to the 1814 plat of the town. No building appears on the site, then owned by B.C. Bishop, on the 1875 map either. However, the extant building does appear on the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns as 34 Water Street. These maps indicate

that the first floor of the building contained a dwelling, the second floor contained the opera house, and the third floor contained lodge rooms.

The building is within the Western Maryland Geographic Organization, the Development Period of Industrial/Urban Dominance, and falls within the Historic Period Themes of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning; and Social/Education/Cultural.

Prepared by Julie Mueller, April 1991

**MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN:**

**STATEWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Geographic Organization: Western Maryland

Chronological/Development Periods: Industrial/Urban Dominance

Historic Period Themes: Social/Educational/Cultural; and  
Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: buildings

Historic Environment: small, rural town

Historic Function and Use: civic and social

Known Design Source: unknown



# 7. Description

Survey No. WA-IV-125

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

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

## The Setting

21 West Water Street is a massive frame, freestanding structure currently used as the Smithsburg Town Hall (Washington County). Located directly at the public-right-of-way, the building takes up most of its 65.5' x 169' lot (595/145). The building is sited on Smithsburg's principal east-west thoroughfare along a residential strip of freestanding frame dwellings, most of which were constructed during the late 19th and early 20th century.

## Exterior

21 West Water Street is a north-facing, deep, symmetrical, two-and-a-half story, four-bay, structure whose three-story projecting square tower is a visual landmark as one enters Smithsburg from the west. The building has been extensively cosmetically altered, but still retains building elements that gives clues to how it appeared in the past. The structure is sheathed in asbestos shingling and rests of a stone foundation. The mansard roof is covered with an artificial roll. The principal entrance is protected by an intact, three-bay, eastlake porch and consists of a set of replacement double doors. The secondary entrance is located in the tower projection. The fenestration consists of pairs of windows on the front facade and single windows on the side elevations. All windows are rectangular, wooden sash, double-hung, one-over-one (front) or two-over-two (side) windows. Windows on the third floor of the tower have been boarded up.

## Interior

The first floor of the Town Hall can be divided into two sections--the front half holding the police and mayor's offices and the back half housing the Smithsburg Historical Society. The front half has been altered with the addition of modern partitions and paneling. A center hall divides the mayor's office from the police station. The hall also has two restrooms leading off of it. The Historical Society headquarters are located in one large room. There is a small office for the Society at the back of the building in a rear addition. The first floor also has an enclosed stairwell along the east elevation that leads up to the second and third floors. The second floor houses the council rooms in the front and a stage area, kitchen and restrooms in the rear. The third floor houses the masonic lodge.

A cellar under the rear addition provides a view of the original rear elevation of the building and its original shiplap siding. There is a partial basement dug out under the main structure.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. WA-IV-125

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

**Specific dates** Bet. 1893-1896 **Builder/Architect** Excelsior Hall Improvement Co.

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance:  national  state  local

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

The current Town Hall of Smithsburg has served a variety of uses over its history, including its original function as an opera house and lodge. Today, the building holds offices for the mayor and the local police, as well as meeting rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society. Based on the French Second Empire style of the structure, as well as indications in the tax records, the structure was erected between 1893 and 1896.

The Town Hall is set of parts of original lots 26 and 27--vacant lots that were owned by Robert Gordon and Radarick (sic) Shepley, respectively, in 1814. The site remained devoid of structures for much of the 19th century, but may have been farmed or filled with orchards. According to the 1877 map of the town, the still vacant site was owned by B.C. Bishop at that time. Deeds indicate that B.C. Bishop was probably Benjamin Bishop who may have been a brother or uncle of Emily Bishop, a renowned artist of her time (see WA-IV-204). In 1892, Benjamin deeded this land to Emily and her sisters, Lucy and Susan. The following year the land was sold to the Excelsior Hall Improvement Company of Smithsburg whose intention it was to erect an opera house. According to available county tax records, the building was built between 1893 and 1896, when it is listed on the tax record as a \$2300 improvement. Known as Excelsior Hall, it may have been the only opera house or entertainment hall in Smithsburg. Both the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns indicate that the structure housed a dwelling on the first floor, an opera house on the second, and lodge rooms on the third. Whether this combination of functions was the original intent of the Excelsior Hall Company is not known. Apparently, the Company did not succeed, defaulted on their loan in 1907, and sold the building to Allan and Reuben Smith in 1915.

(continued...)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. WA-IV-125

See attached sheets

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .25

Quadrangle name Smithsburg, MD

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

D 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

E 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

F 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

G 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

H 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

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

name/title Julianne Mueller

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date July 1991

street & number 2730 Ordway Street, N.W. telephone 202-364-6594

city or town Washington, D.C. 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

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

Page 8.1

The Smith brothers may have continued to have the building serve its social functions, if the 1916 and 1923 Sanborns are correct. However, the Smithsburg Historical Society claims that the building housed a textile mill and that it may never have been used as an opera house. In 1925, the Smith brothers sold the building to the Eader family, who in turn sold it to the Smithsburg Community Association in 1926. The deed notes the structure as "the former Excelsior Hall." The building had been divided into many apartments which were removed when the building was converted into civic use. The addition to the building containing the office on the ground floor and the stage, kitchen, and restroom on the second floor was erected shortly after the building's purchase by the Community Association.

Today, the building houses the Smithsburg municipal offices, the police station, lodge rooms, and the Smithsburg Historical Society and is known as the Town Hall.

The chain of title was traced to 1892.

- February 9, 1892 (98/249), Deed from Benjamin Bishop to Emily, Lucy, and Susan Bishop
- May 9, 1893 (100/398), Deed from George Pearson, Attorney for Emily, Lucy and Susan Bishop, to Excelsior Hall Improvement Co. of Smithsburg for the sum of \$300
- July 2, 1907 (126/426), Deed from Henry Keedy, Attorney for mortgage default to Excelsior Hall Co. of Smithsburg for the sum of \$2800 "...following described real estate...improved by a large frame building known as Excelsior Hall..."
- July 7, 1915 (147/200), Deed from Excelsior Hall Company of Smithsburg to Allan C. and Reuben W. Smith for the sum of \$3300
- March 17, 1925 (170/660), Deed from Allan C. Smith and Chester and Susan Brandenburg to John and Flora Eader for the sum of \$10
- October 21, 1926 (175/420), Deed from John and Flora Eader to Smithsburg Community Association Inc. for the sum of \$8000 "...being formerly known as the Excelsior Hall..."
- May 12, 1975 (595/145), Deed from the Smithsburg Community Association, Inc. to the Town of Smithsburg for the sum of \$1

Significance

A preliminary architectural evaluation of the Town Hall was made in January 1991 by Julianne Mueller during a survey of Smithsburg. At that time a survey site number WA-IV-125 was assigned and it was determined that the structure is a contributing element to Smithsburg's historic social and architectural character. A summary sheet on the building with photographs was submitted to the Maryland Historical Trust in May 1991. The summary provides a basic description of the building and places it with the Maryland

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

Page 8.2

Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan: State Historic Context (Western Maryland Geographic Organization; the Development Period of Industrial/Urban Dominance; the Historic Period Themes of Social/Educational/Cultural; and Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning).

Upon the suggestion of the Smithsburg Historical Society, the general history of the Town Hall was researched. It was concluded that the building served an important social role during the town's 20th century history, is an altered (though reversible) example of French Second Empire architecture, and meets the following eligibility criteria (A and C) for listing on the Maryland Register.

**Criterion A -- The property is associated with significant historical events.** This building served as a social and civic center for Smithsburg for much of the 20th century.

**Criterion B -- The property is not associated with a significant person.**

**Criterion C -- The building exhibits exceptional architectural design, method of construction, or craftsmanship, or is the product of a trained architect.** The building has been cosmetically altered over the years. However, the basic interior and exterior fabric of the building is intact and could be rehabilitated. Despite its alterations, the Town Hall is a contributing element to the architectural significance of Smithsburg. Because of the alterations, however, the building would not qualify as an individual landmark.

**Criterion D -- The property may provide important information about history or prehistory.** The property has not been assessed for its archeological potential. It is possible that 20th-century archeological remains might be found near the building.

CONTINUATION SHEET

SURVEY NO. WA-IV-125

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page 9.1

Smithsburg Historical Society, photographic files

Washington County Deeds and Tax Records

MAPS:

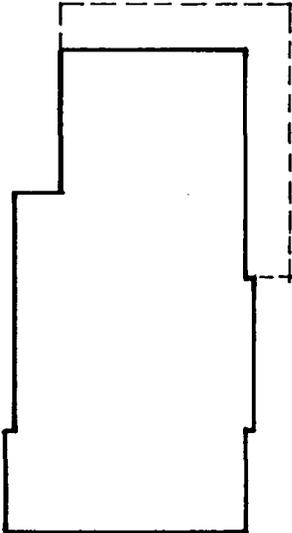
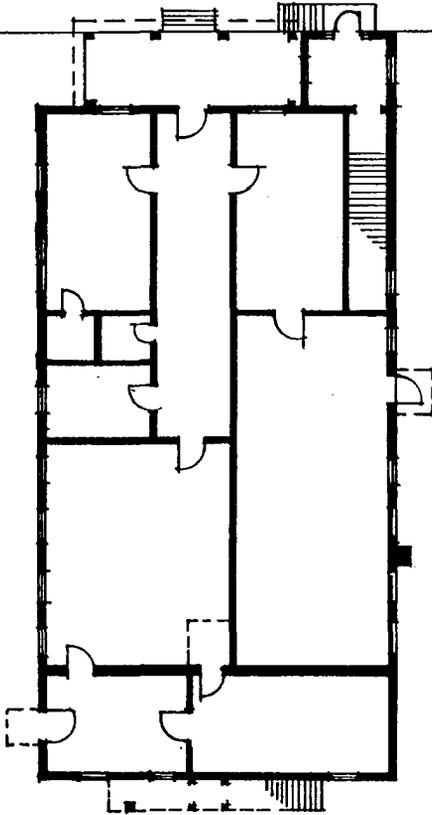
1814 Plat of the town

1877 town map

1916 Sanborn

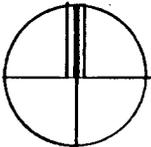
1923 Sanborn Map

WEST WATER STREET



MAPLE AVENUE

not to scale



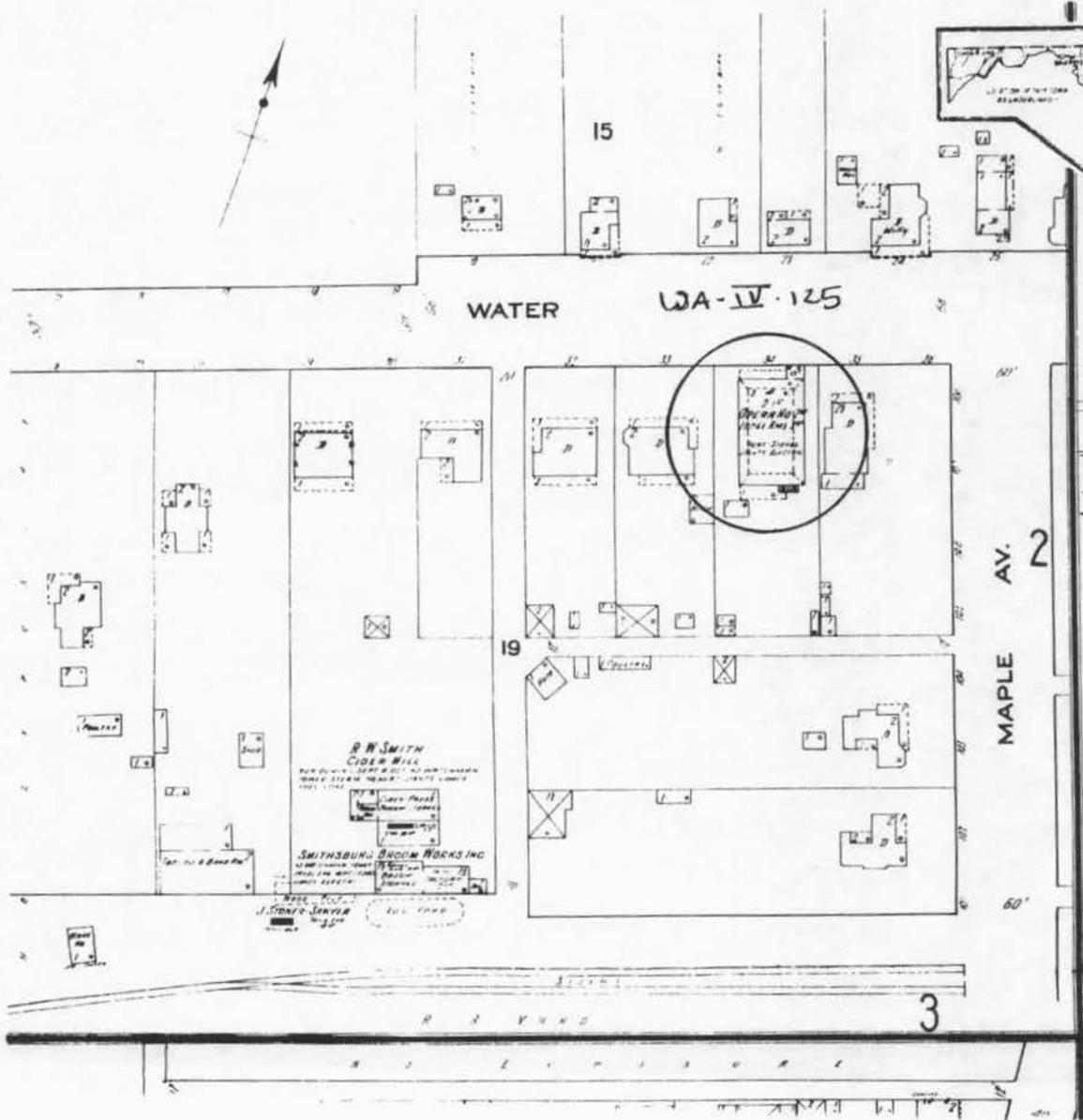


**Community House and West Water Street, Smithsburg, Md.**

WA-IV-125 1930s?

WA-IV-125





**KEY**

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- 1/4" = 5' (Scale)
- 1/8" = 2 1/2' (Scale)
- 1/16" = 1 1/4' (Scale)
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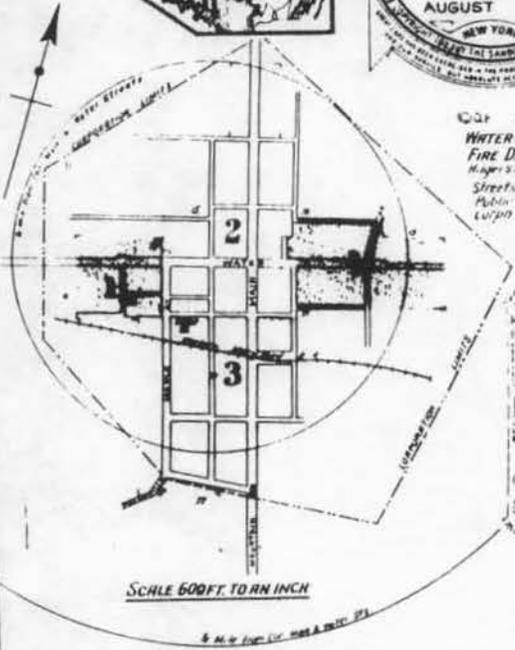
(128)  
12 Smithy



QAF 42-11  
 WATER FACILITIES: None  
 FIRE DEPT.: None. Help given by  
 Neighbors. Fire Dept. Active limits  
 Streets and paved grades level  
 Public lights electric by private  
 Corp.

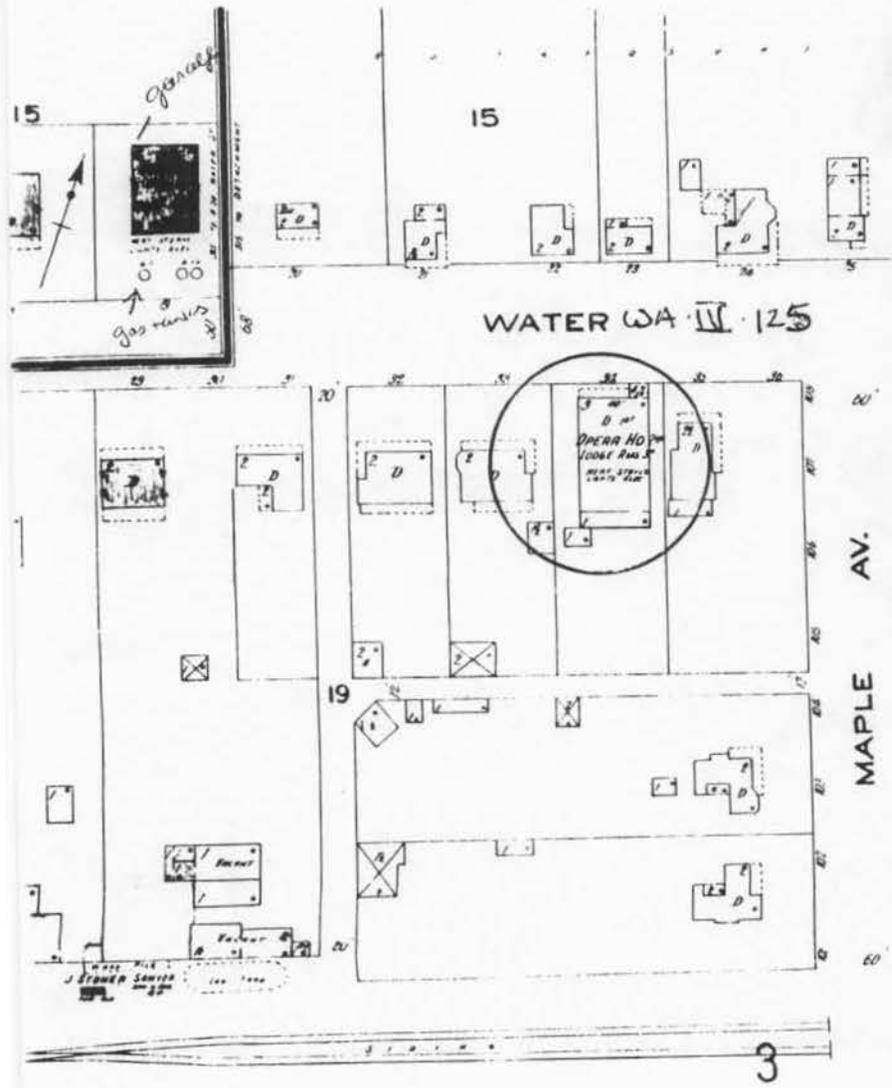
**KEY**

1	WOOD
2	BRICK
3	CONCRETE
4	IRON
5	STEEL
6	GLASS
7	PAVEMENT
8	RAILROAD
9	WATER
10	SEWER
11	STREET
12	ALLEY
13	YARD
14	DRIVE
15	ROAD
16	RAILROAD
17	WATER
18	SEWER
19	STREET
20	ALLEY
21	YARD
22	DRIVE
23	ROAD
24	RAILROAD
25	WATER
26	SEWER
27	STREET
28	ALLEY
29	YARD
30	DRIVE
31	ROAD
32	RAILROAD
33	WATER
34	SEWER
35	STREET
36	ALLEY
37	YARD
38	DRIVE
39	ROAD
40	RAILROAD
41	WATER
42	SEWER
43	STREET
44	ALLEY
45	YARD
46	DRIVE
47	ROAD
48	RAILROAD
49	WATER
50	SEWER
51	STREET
52	ALLEY
53	YARD
54	DRIVE
55	ROAD
56	RAILROAD
57	WATER
58	SEWER
59	STREET
60	ALLEY
61	YARD
62	DRIVE
63	ROAD
64	RAILROAD
65	WATER
66	SEWER
67	STREET
68	ALLEY
69	YARD
70	DRIVE
71	ROAD
72	RAILROAD
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150	DRIVE
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153	WATER
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155	STREET
156	ALLEY
157	YARD
158	DRIVE
159	ROAD
160	RAILROAD
161	WATER
162	SEWER
163	STREET
164	ALLEY
165	YARD
166	DRIVE
167	ROAD
168	RAILROAD
169	WATER
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171	STREET
172	ALLEY
173	YARD
174	DRIVE
175	ROAD
176	RAILROAD
177	WATER
178	SEWER
179	STREET
180	ALLEY
181	YARD
182	DRIVE
183	ROAD
184	RAILROAD
185	WATER
186	SEWER
187	STREET
188	ALLEY
189	YARD
190	DRIVE
191	ROAD
192	RAILROAD
193	WATER
194	SEWER
195	STREET
196	ALLEY
197	YARD
198	DRIVE
199	ROAD
200	RAILROAD



**INDEX**

SPECIALS	8
High School	11
St. Ann's Episcopal Church	2
Stoner Sewer, J., Wood File, &c.	1



N M LU 908  
 41.25' 40.25' 24.3' 26.4' 50.00'  
 R J MA FV G327  
 RICHARD G. BACHTTELL  
 462/600

MILTON D. LAWYER  
 389/176  
 110.2' 27.50' 30.5' 30.5' 41.25'  
 ROBI J C E WIL R TIV V  
 41.25' 26' 57'

60' 117'  
 C&P TELEPHONE CO.  
 253/293

CHARLES E. DEANER  
 411/611  
 264'

ROBERT W. SHEARER  
 462/288  
 264'

BRIAN D. LAWYER  
 604/113

HUBERT KLINE  
 727/404  
 264'

ANTHONY E. METZGER  
 879/373  
 264'

HOWARD P. NEWMAN  
 455/505  
 264'

DEE R. PEPPLER  
 818/588

HOWARD P. NEWMAN  
 382/614  
 264'

RICHARD F. SMITH  
 437/648  
 264'

JOHN P. HARSHMAN  
 290/2  
 264'

BERNADINE G. REAMS  
 568/309  
 264'

HARRY W. KINDLE  
 297/133  
 272' 268/683

HARRY I. ENGLISH  
 751/461  
 0.50A.

DAVID J. MULDOON  
 728/175

THOMAS W. BUSSARD, JR.  
 731/730

DANIELE E. BUTT  
 746/16

JUNE E. MUMMA  
 765/493

ROY C. KLINE  
 910/214

MD. 66 WA-N-125

ST WATER ST.

MILTON D. LAWYER  
 457/543  
 195'

DAVID L. WILLIAMS  
 887/70  
 195.00'

PAULA A. GYURISIN  
 656/148  
 195'

RICHARD K. RICE  
 681/388  
 195'

DONALD L. PRYOR  
 745/772  
 168.84'

TOWN OF SMITHSBURG  
 595/145  
 168.84'

THOMAS V. WINOWIECKI  
 720/34  
 168.84'

J. D. CALLAMARI, JR.  
 771/317  
 110'

ST. ANN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
 107/163

5 7 4

MAPLE AVE.

SMITHSBURG  
 EMERGE  
 MED.  
 SE  
 849/131  
 1.66

GARRETT GARRETT  
 602/500

JOHN A. FERRO  
 690/653

DEE R. PEPPLER  
 818/588

THOMAS D. ECKSTINE  
 726/933  
 153.90'

SUZANNE S. ALEXANDER  
 569/341  
 175.9'

P. MARK DIVELEBISS  
 737/490  
 320'

LEWIS B. BARTON  
 463/344  
 320.61'

CHARLES H. HENRY  
 855/671  
 292'

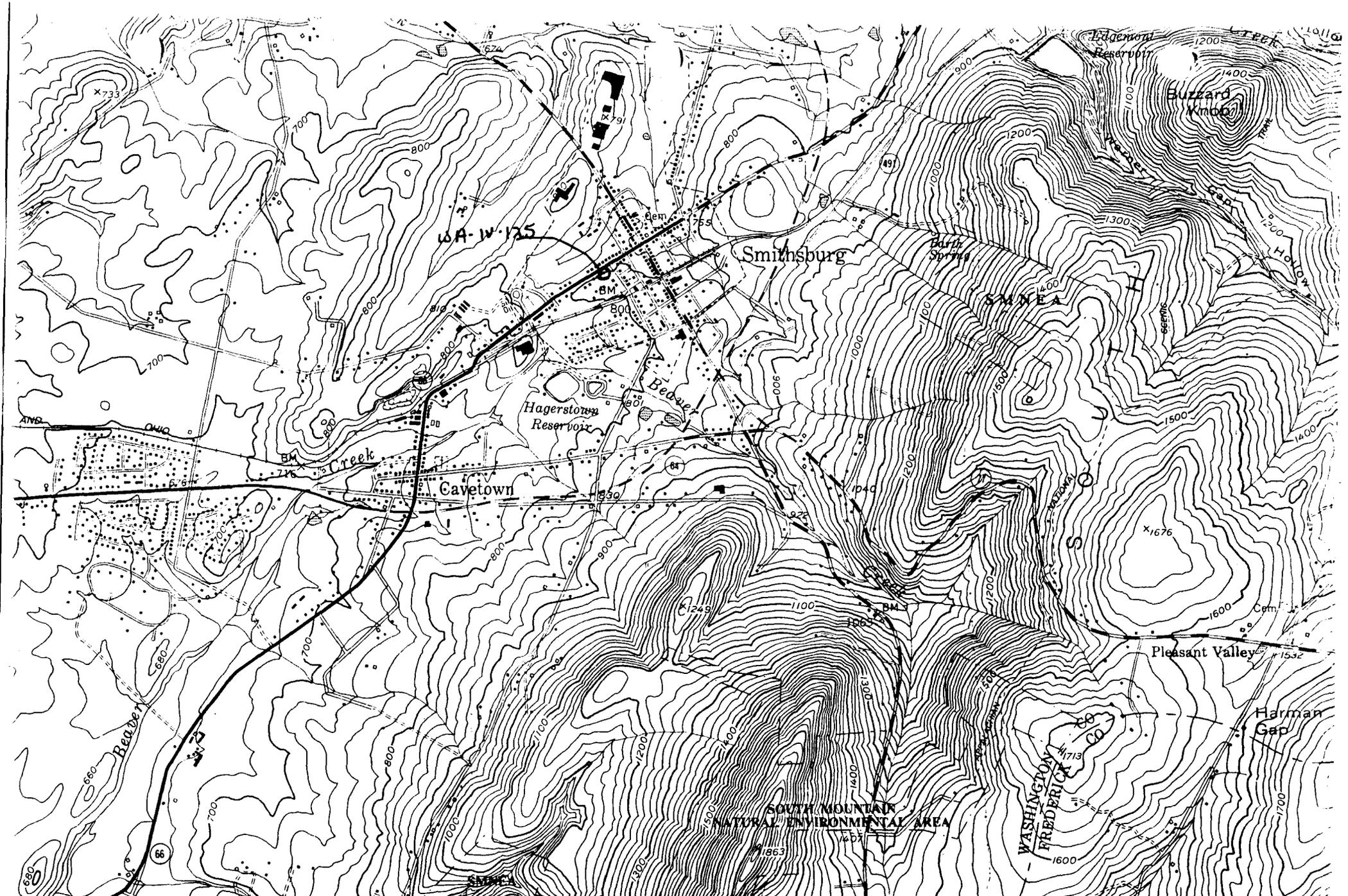
HOWARD P. NEWMAN  
 418/563  
 156.6'

112.09'

133'

OF SMITHSBURG  
 396/485

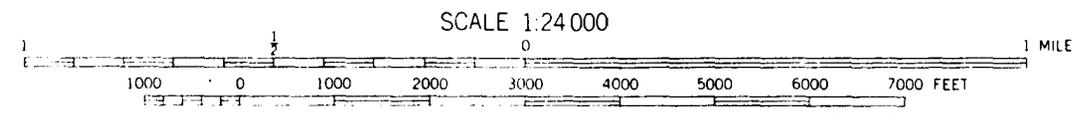




TINA 1.9 MI. 630 000 FEET 1277 278 35' 279 (MYERSVILLE) WOLFVILLE 3.8 MI. GARFIELD 2.3 MI. 32'30" 282  
 (MD.) 5463 11 SE 10 MI. TO U.S. 40

ological Survey

from aerial





BSA

Boy Scouts of America

PARKING  
FOR  
VISITORS  
ONLY

UNAUTHORIZED  
VEHICLES  
WILL BE  
TOWED AWAY  
AT OWNER'S  
EXPENSE

WA-10-125

7/1991

J. Mueller

S. elev.



NO PARKING  
ANY OTHER VEHICLES

NO PARKING  
POLICE CARS

WA-10725

7/1991

J. Mueller

E. elev.



WA-1V-125

7/1991

J. Mudler

W. elev.



WA-10-125

7/1991

J. Mueller

X + W elev.



WA-IV-125

21 West Water St, Smithsburg

Julie Mueller

January 1991

looking SE