

AA-891
Laurel Racetrack
Laurel
Private

construction began in 1909

Laurel Racetrack is Maryland's second oldest racing facility. The complex occupies 231.8 acres and is dominated by a 42,063 sq. ft. grandstand. This 1911 building was originally built in the Classical Revival idiom, but as a result of a 1953 expansion and remodeling, now principally reflects the Moderne Style.

Historically, the Laurel Racetrack is significant for its association with the development of Maryland's nationally respected thoroughbred racing industry. Throughout its history Laurel Racetrack has maintained a reputation as a state-of-the-art racing facility, featuring competition by the world's best thoroughbreds.

AA-891
Laurel Racetrack
Laurel

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period: Industrial/Urban Dominance

Prehistoric/Historic Period Themes: Architectural; Social

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Suburban

Historic Function and Use: Horse Racing

Known Design Source: None

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. AA-891

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Laurel Racetrackand/or common

2. Location

street & number 3600 Laurel Racetrack Road not for publicationcity, town Laurel vicinity of congressional district state Maryland county Anne Arundel

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Laurel Racing Association Limited Partnership

street & number P.O. Box 130 telephone no.:

city, town Laurel Maryland state and zip code: Maryland 20725

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Anne Arundel County Court House liber 3826

street & number Church Circle folio 310

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. AA-891

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.

Containing 231.8 acres, Laurel Racetrack is located off Laurel Racetrack Road, directly south of the boundary between Anne Arundel and Howard Counties and directly east of the border separating Anne Arundel and Prince Georges Counties.

In addition to the dirt racetrack, the complex features a number of buildings that include a grandstand, paddock, service building, manager's dwelling, as well as numerous small, ancillary storage and supply structures.

The racetrack's most dominant building is the **grandstand**. This very large and principally rectangular building occupying an area of 42,063 sq. ft., faces southeast and overlooks the racetrack below. Built in 1911 and significantly expanded in 1953, this imposing building is predominately constructed of stucco-covered, reinforced concrete. Brick is employed for both structural and veneering purposes. The low-pitch, hipped roof is covered with heavy-grade corrugated metal and is pierced by dozens of ventilator and heating ducts. Stylistically the building conveys a Modeme appearance. The building's horizontal emphasis is emphasized by continuous bays of fixed-sash windows and minimal decorative embellishment. The grandstand's present appearance is largely a result of the 1950s expansion, though some of the more classically-inspired, c. 1911 detailing is retained. Most notable are the full-height brick pilasters that rise up and engage the roofline. These are accented with terra cotta capitals featuring horse heads, acanthus leave, and egg-and-dart designs. Another original feature is the west side entrance that leads from the grandstand toward the adjacent paddock. This doorway features a broken pediment and surround.

The multiple-level seating area is now enclosed behind fourteen bays of plexi-glass. Each bay contains twenty-five, fixed panes. In front and below of the enclosed seating area is a raised concrete standing area. This is unenclosed and situated directly adjacent the track.

The grandstand building contains almost all of the tract's public facilities, including clubhouse, betting counters, restaurants, gift shops, and other service facilities.

The most unique, as well as one of the oldest buildings at Laurel Racetrack, is the 1920s-era, polygonal-shaped **paddock** building. This one-oversized-story structure, with its low-swept roof, is visually divided into three levels. The top of the building is crowned by a round ventilator, styled as a cupola. The pinnacle of the cupola descends with a concave pitch, terminating with a flared, upward kick at the base. Clerestory windows are located directly below the exposed rafters of the roofline. These run the circumference of the building, and are arranged in bays of five windows, with each window in turn containing five lights.

A porch engages the paddock building directly beneath the clerestory windows and echoes the polygonal shape of the main body of the building. Bays are separated by wide wooden posts and spanned by a non-structural arch. Several bays are enclosed, but the majority remain open to the outside.

The open interior has a dirt floor, and features an elaborate system of exposed, cantilevered ceiling trusses. This complicated truss system is supported by six, floor-to-ceiling posts that are centered in the middle of the building. Situated between the posts is a raised, hexagonal, dais, a low banister, with untumed balustrade, runs along the building's perimeter, near the wall line.

(See Continuation Sheet)

8. Significance

Survey No. AA-891

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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) recreation

Specific dates	1909-11 / 1953	Builder/Architect							
Check:	Applicable Criteria:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> local					

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

Laurel Racetrack is significant for its association with the development of Maryland's nationally respected thoroughbred racing industry. Built in 1909-11, and enlarged and renovated in 1953, Laurel raceway has maintained a reputation as a state-of-the-art racing facility, featuring competition by the world's best thoroughbreds. The prominence of this place in the horse racing world is reflected in the high quality architecture displayed in both its 1909-11 and 1953 construction.

Laurel Racetrack officially opened on October 13, 1911 and was proclaimed as the pre-eminent racing facility in Maryland and one of the best tracks in the nation. Its construction occurred during a boom period in Maryland thoroughbred racing; a period of growth significantly enhanced by a concurrent gambling reform movement taking place in Illinois, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Rhode Island (1).

Laurel Racetrack is Maryland's second oldest racing facility, with the oldest being Pimlico in Baltimore. In 1909 H.D. Brown, a Florida racing promoter sought to establish a second track in Baltimore, but finding opposition to his effort, Brown decided to abandon the idea of Baltimore as the location, and selected a site in rural Anne Arundel County. The site near Laurel was selected because of the low price of land, its location near a Baltimore and Ohio Railroad station, and for its proximity between Baltimore and Washington (2).

In order to realize his idea, Brown enlisted the support of the Maryland State Fair Association. As a result, when Laurel's informal thirty-day season opened in 1910, it was required to coincide with a four-county fair, also held at the site. The corporate name of Laurel Racetrack was the Maryland State Fair, Inc. (3). In addition to the one-mile turf track, the Laurel complex offered a clubhouse, grandstand and paddock. The track manager lived in the property in a previously existing farmhouse. A large building used as a fair exhibit hall is now demolished.

1911 marked the year of the first official season of racing at Laurel. During the season, six races were run ranging in distance from five furlongs to one-and-one-sixteenth miles (4). Three years later, Brown and the other original investors sold out to James Butler, a New York grocery entrepreneur. The new owner signed Matt J. Winn, a well known Kentucky Derby promoter, as general manager. While Laurel Racetrack's fame was eclipsed by Pimlico and its Preakness Race, from the outset Laurel enjoyed a prestigious reputation and featured horses from the nation's, and sometimes, the world's top stables (5).

Racing's popularity, both at Laurel and nation-wide, suffered from the economic downturn of the 1930s and shortages and tumult of the war years. In the succeeding post-war boom, Laurel's new management created Washington D.C. International. This new type of race competed the best horses of Europe against America's top contenders and by the 1950s it was famous the world over.

(See continuation sheet.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. AA-891

(1) Joseph B. Kelly, At the Track: Thoroughbred Racing in Maryland, 1870-1973; Maryland Historical Magazine, Volume 89, Spring 1994. p. 69.

(2) Ibid, p. 70.

(3) John Goodspeed, The Scent of Horses in the Air, But Laurel Means Homes and Schools, Baltimore Sun, February 4, 1952.

(4) Ibid (6) 1984 interview by Donna Ware with Joseph Kelly, Reporter for Washington Star and Baltimore Sun

(5) Kelly, p. 71 (7) Laurel Centennial, Laurel City Council, 1970

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name Laurel _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

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	Sherri M. Marsh		
------------	-----------------	--	--

organization	Anne Arundel County Historical Sites Survey	date	October 1996
--------------	---	------	--------------

street & number	2664 Riva Road	telephone	(410) 222-7441
-----------------	----------------	-----------	----------------

city or town	Annapolis	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
DHCP/DHCD
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

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

Located west of the paddock and grandstand, and facing approximately west, is the **manager's dwelling**.

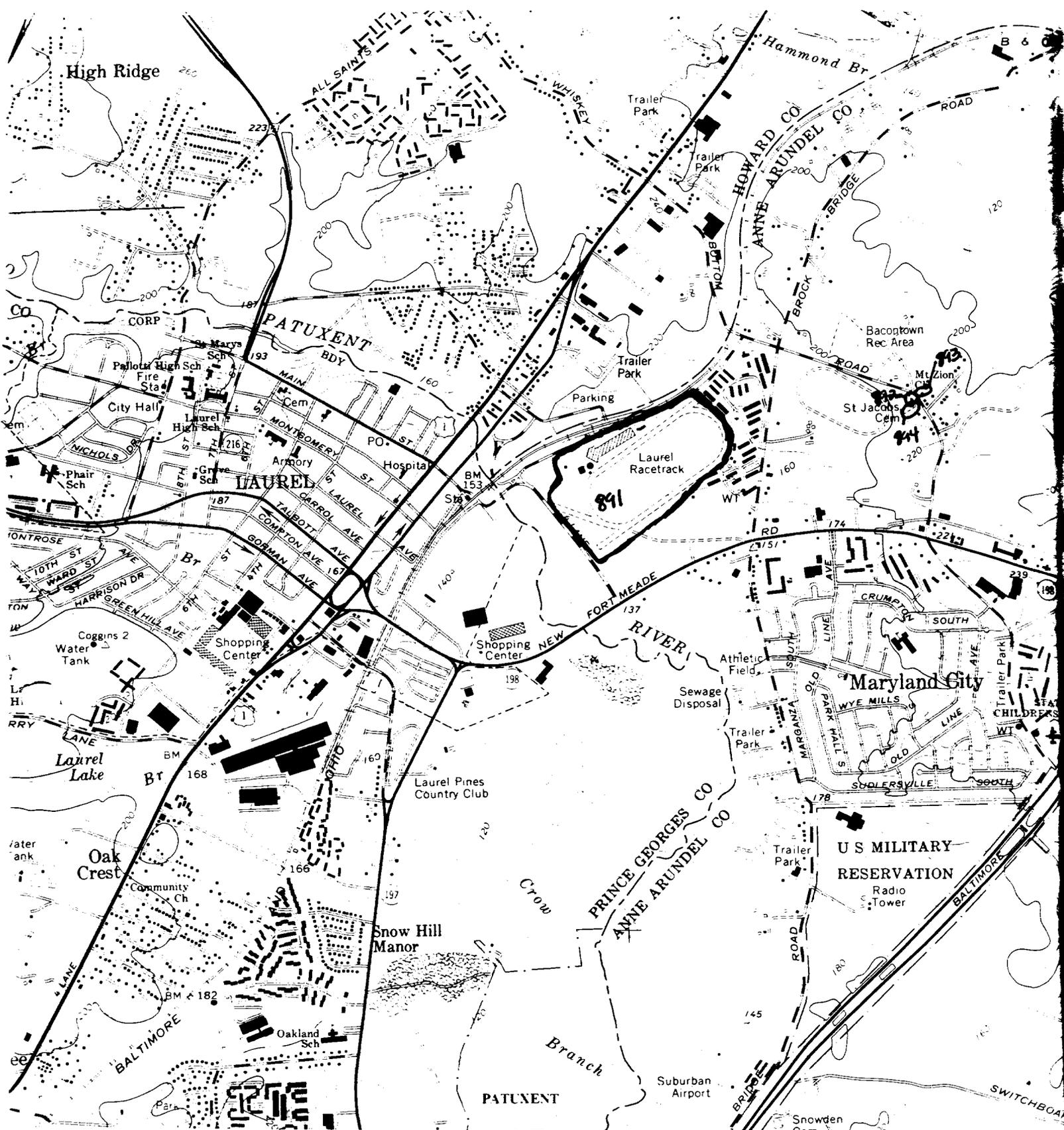
: late 19th century frame, German-sided, two-and-a-half story, center-hall-plan house consists of three sections. The front section has a hipped roof, with two, front-facing cross gables. A two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed ell projects from the rear of the building, terminating in a one-story, shed-roof addition. A full-width, hipped-roof porch spans the front facade. Supported by six, square posts, it features fancy, jig-sawn balusters. The centrally-located doorway contains sidelights and a multi-pane transom. On the second level the center bay is dominated by a pair of segmental arch windows. These are surrounded by a wide segmental casing.

Remaining fenestration is primarily six-over-six, double-hung sash openings, and are evenly spaced. The west wall of the ell deviates from this pattern by containing widows of varying length, as well as two extremely narrow window openings. Furthermore, the front block's west wall contains a cut-away bay window.

In addition to the grandstand, paddock and manager's dwelling, the racetrack complex also contains numerous, small, utilitarian structures, and are of recent construction.

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

The mid-1950s also saw the expansion and renovation of Laurel's physical plant. The grandstand building underwent a major expansion. This included the addition of two showplace clubhouses. Portions of the old complex were retained, including a 1920s indoor paddock, which according to the unsubstantiated report of a former track official, is the only indoor paddock in the country (6). In 1966 the grandstand was enclosed, using glass reinforcements to hold up the individual panes. This system resulted in panes of glass suspended from panes of glass, and at the time, was considered a feat of British engineering (7).



LAUREL
 USGS 7.5 minute series
 Scale: 1:24,000
 1965, photo revised 1979

Site Number: AA-891
Site Name: Laurel Racetrack
Location: 3600 Laurel Racetrack Road,
Laurel



AA-891

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO BY SHERRI M. MARSH, AUG 1996

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

GRANDSTAND

PHOTO 10 of 13



AA-871

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO, MARYLAND

PHOTO BY Donna Ware, 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

GRANDSTAND

PHOTO 2 OF 13



AA-891

Laurel Racetrack

Anne Arundel CO, Maryland

Photo By Sherri M. Marsh, Aug, 1996

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

GRANDstand Pilaster Detail

Photo 3 of 13



AA-891

Laurel Racetrack

Anne Arundel CO., MARYland

Photo By Donna WARP, 1984

NEG. AT MARYland SHPO

Grandstand Pilaster Detail

Photo 4 of 13



AA-891

LAUREL RACETRACK

PHOTO BY DONNA WARE, 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPD

GRANDSTAND

PHOTOS OF 13



AA-89.1

LAUREL RACE TRACK, MANAGER'S DWELLING

Anne Arundel CO., MARYLAND

Photo By DONNA WARE, 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

WEST ELEVATION

Photo 6 of 13



AA-891.

LAUREL RACE TRACK, MANAGER'S DWELLING
ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO BY DONNA WARE, AUGUST 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

N. ELEVATION

PHOTO 7 OF 13



AA-891

LAUREL RACE TRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO BY DONNA WARE, AUGUST 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPD

Paddock

PHOTO 8 OF 13



AA 891

Laurel Race track

Anne Arundel Co., MARYLAND

Photo B/ Donna Ware, AUG. 1984

NEG at MARYLAND SHPO

Paddock INTERIOR

Photo 9 of 13



AA 891

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO BY DONNA WARE, AUG. 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

PADDOCK INTERIOR

Photo 10 of 13



AA 891

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

Photo By DONNA WARE, AUG. 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

Paddock INTERIOR

Photo 11 of 13



AA-891

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO BY Donna WARE, Aug. 1984

NEG. AT MARYLAND SHPO

PADDOCK INTERIOR

PHOTO 12 of 13



AA 891

LAUREL RACETRACK

ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MARYLAND

PHOTO B1 DONNA WARE, AUG. 1984

NEG, AT MARYLAND SHPO

PADDOCK INTERIOR

PHOTO 13 of 13