

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE  
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property Name: Mary Elizabeth Henson House Survey Number: AA-893

Property Address: Bacontown, Md.

Project: CDBG Bacontown Sewer Installation (9203650) Agency: Anne Arundel Co.

Site visit by MHT Staff:  no  yes Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

District Name: Bacontown Historic District Survey Number: AA-

Listed  Eligible \_\_\_\_\_ Comment

Criteria:  A  B  C  D Considerations:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G  None

The resource  contributes/  does not contribute to the historic significance of this historic district in:

Location  Design  Setting  Materials  
 Workmanship  Feeling  Association

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

The Mary Elizabeth Henson House is a small two-story board and batten dwelling constructed in circa 1870. Mary Henson was the daughter of Maria Bacon, origin of the town, who's house is no longer standing. This house contributes to the National Register eligible Bacontown Historic District as part of the collection of three buildings that hold local significance in the history of African-Americans in Anne Arundel County. It is significant under Criterion A as part of a group of structures that possess symbolic historical significance that represent the development of African-American communities in Anne Arundel County.

Documentation on the property is presented in: Review and compliance files and Maryland Inventory Files

Prepared by: Donna M. Ware, Anne Arundel County

*Jo Ellen Greese*  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services 12/17/92 Date

NR program concurrence:  yes  no  not applicable  
*R. Andrews* 12.21.93  
Reviewer, NR program Date

*gms*

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

I. Geographic Region:

- Eastern Shore (all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)
- Western Shore (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's)
- Piedmont (Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
- Western Maryland (Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

- Paleo-Indian 10000-7500 B.C.
- Early Archaic 7500-6000 B.C.
- Middle Archaic 6000-4000 B.C.
- Late Archaic 4000-2000 B.C.
- Early Woodland 2000-500 B.C.
- Middle Woodland 500 B.C. - A.D. 900
- Late Woodland/Archaic A.D. 900-1600
- Contact and Settlement A.D. 1570-1750
- Rural Agrarian Intensification A.D. 1680-1815
- Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
- Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930
- Modern Period A.D. 1930-Present
- Unknown Period (  prehistoric  historic)

III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

- Subsistence
- Settlement
- Political
- Demographic
- Religion
- Technology
- Environmental Adaption

IV. Historic Period Themes:

- Agriculture
- Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning
- Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
- Government/Law
- Military
- Religion
- Social/Educational/Cultural
- Transportation

V. Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Village

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): House

Known Design Source: None

**AA-893**

**Built c. 1870 (oral tradition)/ 1896-99 (written sources)**

**Mary Elizabeth Henson House**

**Bacontown, Anne Arundel County**

**Private**

The Mary Elizabeth Henson House is significant as the oldest surviving building in the predominately African-American community of Bacontown, which was established by free slaves prior to the Civil War. This building is associated with members of the Bacon family, for whom the community is named. It is architecturally important as an intact example of a shotgun house. This vernacular building form has antecedents with dwellings constructed in Africa, and was brought to America by transported slaves.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. AA-893

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic  Mary Elizabeth Henson House

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 3587 Whiskey Bottom Road  not for publication

city, town Bacontown  vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Anne Arundel County

## 3. Classification

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

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

name Sadie and T H Williams (c/o Edna Queen)

street & number 3587 Whiskey Bottom Road telephone no.:

city, town Laurel state and zip code: Maryland 20724

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Anne Arundel County Courthouse liber 4552

street & number Franklin Street folio 111

city, town Annapolis state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

# 7. Description

Survey No.

AA-893

<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 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 Mary Elizabeth Henson House sits on a long, narrow lot on the north side of Whiskey Bottom Road in the small, predominately African-American community of Bacontown. It is located directly across the street from the Mt. Zion AME Church. The house, which sits back from the road approximately 80', faces southwest.

This small, vernacular, gable-front, frame structure is one-and-a-half stories tall. Board-and-batten siding is the predominant exterior material, and the walls rest on a very low foundation. The building features a T-shaped plan that is achieved through three building episodes. The main portion is the front, gable-front block. It is two-bays wide and spanned by a full-width, shed-roof screen porch that is heavily rebuilt. In back of the principal block and arranged perpendicular to it, is a one-and-a-half story founder addition. Its unusual massing and conspicuous placement suggest that it is not original to the building, but it is sheathed in the same board-and-batten siding found on the main portion of the building, which indicates it is historic. The third building episode is represented by the small, one-story, shed-roofed addition located at the dwelling's northeast corner. Walls of this comparatively recent addition are sheathed with both dropped and flush siding.

The roofline displays very little overhang. The front gable features a wide verge board, while the cornice treatment on the rest of the building is limited to a small piece of trim board attached at the top of the battens. One chimney is present. It is located on the flounder addition, and is aligned with the ridgeline of the front section. It is short and extends only seven brick courses above the roof.

Excepting for the one-over-one windows in the upper gable of the front block, and a six-light, fixed-sash window in the northwest wall of the founder section, all visible windows are six-over-six sash types. Chamfered window surrounds are found on the first floor of the main building, with plain unmitered surrounds used around the remaining openings. The building's main entrance is located on the right side of the front block. It features four horizontal panels beneath a large, single pane of glass. The rear entrance, located in the northeast wall of the one-story addition, features pairs of windows that run the full length of the door.

There are several outbuildings associated with this property, all of which appear to date to the mid-20th century. An infilled well is located near the dwelling's west corner.

The interior was not surveyed do to owner objection.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. AA-893

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

Specific dates	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> local				

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

This simple vernacular building is culturally significant for its association with the development of the African-American community of Bacontown. According to tradition, it was built about 1870 for Mary Elizabeth Henson. Henson was the daughter of Maria (sometimes written Moriah) Bacon, for whose family the community is named. This is the oldest surviving building within Bacontown.

The house is a typical and inexpensive, late-19th century dwelling. With its two-bay, double-pile, side-entry, open-plan, dwelling belongs to the family of architecture known as the shotgun house. Shotgun houses are closely associated with African-American settlements in the southernmost landscapes of the mid-Atlantic region. According to John Vlatch's study, both the form and philosophy of this building type can be traced from Yourban culture in Africa to Haitian settlements and finally to New Orleans and the American South. The basic characteristics of the shotgun house include a gable front and a plan that is one room wide and one to three rooms or more in length (1).

Bacontown developed as a community of free blacks prior to the Civil War. Many of its inhabitants were manumitted by the Dorsey family who owned substantial land holdings in the area. The Dorsey family alone manumitted over ninety slaves between 1799 and 1860, and also gave and or willed to former slaves the land that is now Bacontown (2).

This building stands on part of a 30 acre parcel that Acsah Dorsey willed to three former slaves. The will, written in 1880, divides the land between Maria Bacon; Maria's daughter, Virginia "Jerry" Moore; and Lou Scoat (or Scott). All three women were married at the time the will was written, but the document makes no reference to their husbands. The three were manumitted between 1858 and 1860, were already living on the property. On October 22, 1899, Maria Bacon made her will. She leaves her house (which is no longer standing) to her grandson, William T. Henderson. Mary Elizabeth Henson receives the house in which she was residing and one acre of attached land (3).

According to tradition, the present building was built when Mary Elizabeth Henson was about 19 years old. This provides a c. 1870 date of construction (4). Period tax assessment, however, do not reference anyone by the name of Henson. In 1879, Maria's husband, Samuel is assessed for livestock. No mention is made of Maria. Maria's name is found in the 1879 assessment. She is listed as owning 10 3/4 unimproved acres. In 1896, Maria Bacon is assessed for a dwelling valued at \$150, and 9 acres valued at \$10. Either the county tax assessments are incomplete or Henson's house was actually constructed between 1896 and 1899.

Other historic Bacontown buildings include Mt. Zion Church (AA-892) and St. Jacob's Lodge and Cemetery (AA-894).

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No AA-893

- (1) Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Bit House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- (2) Manumission Records of Anne Arundel County index. Located at the Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland.
- (3)  *Wida, Patricia*. Unpublished report prepared for the Anne Arundel County Historic Sites Survey. Located at Anne Arundel County Department of Planning and Code Enforcement, Annapolis, M
- (4) *ibid*

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.51 acres

Quadrangle name Laurel

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UTM References  Do NOT complete UTM references

A              
Zone Easting Northing

B              
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Anne Arundel County tax map 19, block 12, parcel 110. This represents the legal boundaries of this property

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 Sherri Marsh

organization Anne Arundel County Historic Sites Survey date May-96

street & number Anne Arundel County Department of Planning (410) 222-7441

city or town Annapolis state MD

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

AA-893

**Built 1870 (oral tradition)  
or 1896-99 (written record)**

**Mary Elizabeth Henson House  
Bacontown, Anne Arundel County  
Private**

**MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA**

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Development Period(s): Industrial/Urban Dominance (1870-1930)

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s): architecture; social/cultural

Resource Type:

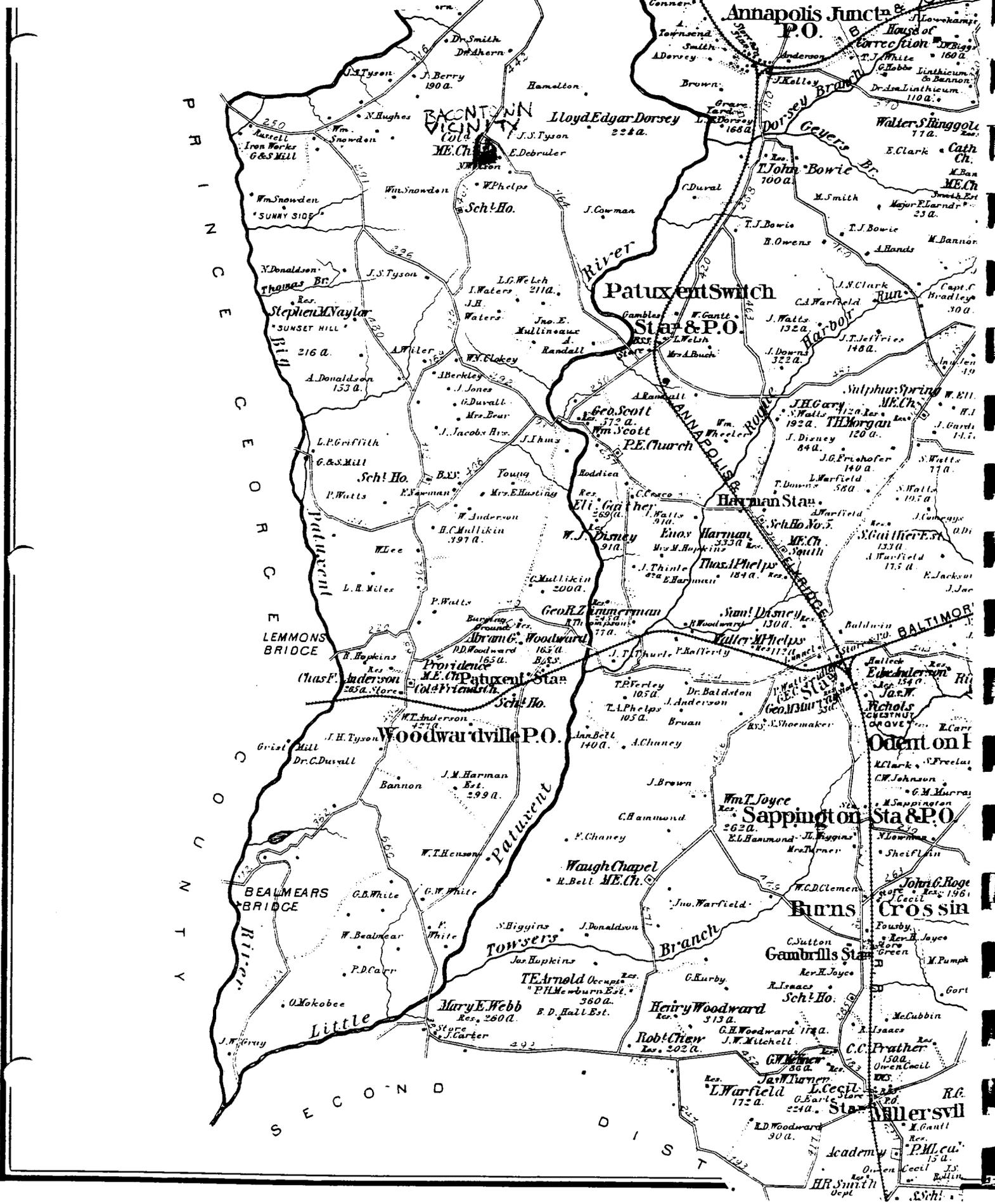
Category Type: Building

Historic Environment: suburban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): dwelling

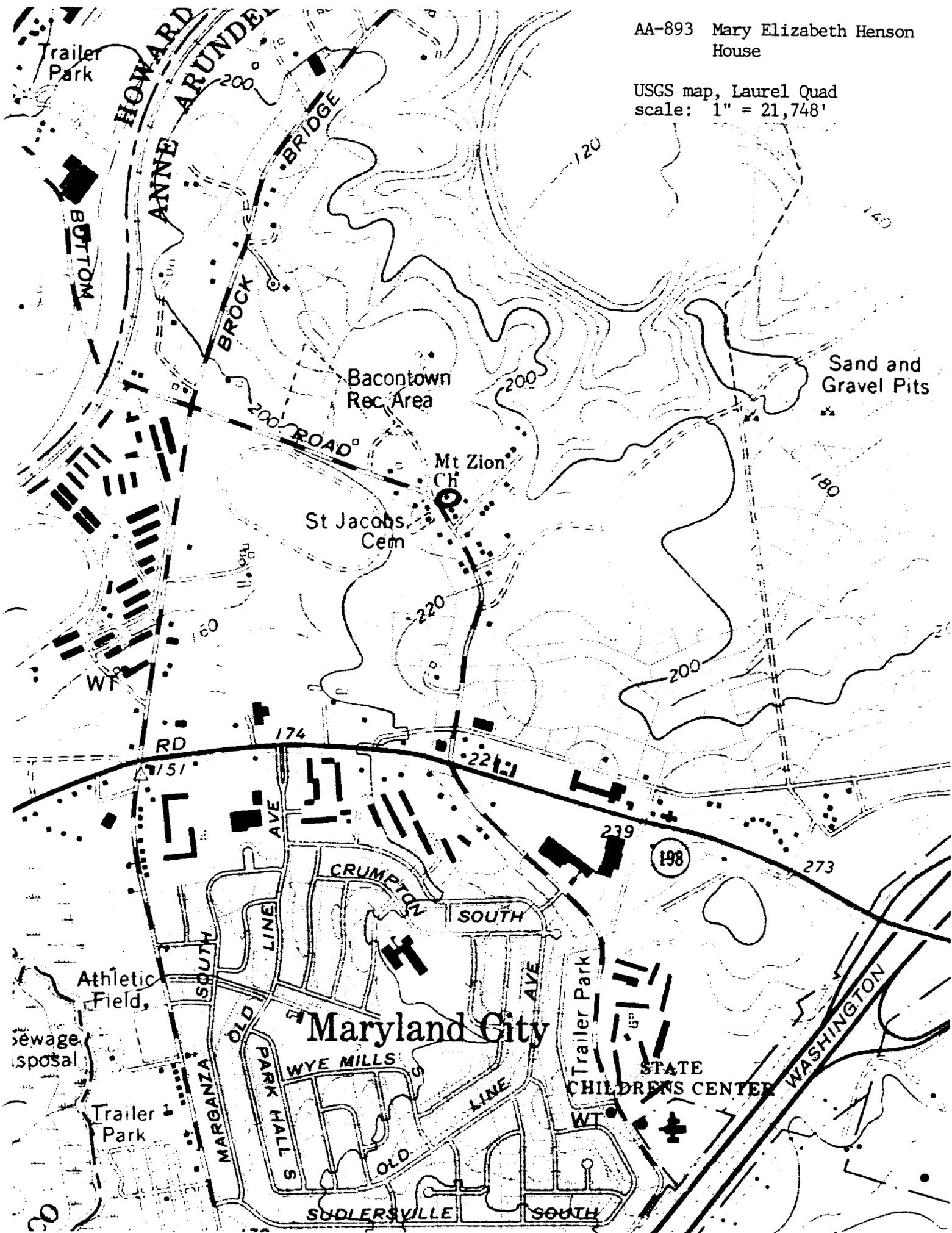
Known Design Source: none

Atlas of Anne Arundel County, Maryland  
by G.M. Hopkins, 1878



AA-893 Mary Elizabeth Henson House

USGS map, Laurel Quad  
scale: 1" = 21,748'





AA-893



AA-893



AA 893

MARY Elizabeth Henson House

Baltimore, Anne Arundel CO

Photo by ShERRI MARSH, 1997

Negative at Maryland SHPO

Carriage facing east

Photo 1 of 2



AA-893

MARY Elizabeth Henson House  
Bacantown, Anne Arundel Co.

Photo by Sherr, Marsh, 1997

Negative at Maryland SHPO

Camera facing North

Photo 2 of 2