Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties number: BA-2687

Name: B0193/THORNTON MILL RD. OVER BR. OF WESTERN RUN

The bridge referenced herein was inventoried by the Maryland State Highway Administration as part of the Historic Bridge Inventory, and SHA provided the Trust with eligibility determinations in February 2001. The Trust accepted the Historic Bridge Inventory on April 3, 2001. The bridge received the following determination of eligibility.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Eligibility Recommended _____ Eligibility Not Recommended __X____

Criteria: ____A ____B ____C ____D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G __None

Comments:_____

Reviewer, OPS: Anne E. Bruder Date: 3 April 2001

Reviewer, NR Program: Peter E. Kurtze Date: 3 April 2001

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BRIDGES
HISTORIC BRIDGE INVENTORY
MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION/
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

MHT No. BA-2687

SHA Bridge No. B 0193 Bridge name Thornton Mill Road over Branch of Western Run

LOCATION:

Street/Road name and number [facility carried] Thornton Mill Road

City/town Sparks/Hunt Valley 0.4 mi S of Quaker Bottom Road Vicinity _____

County Baltimore

This bridge projects over: Road ___ Railway___ Water X Land ___

Ownership: State _____ County X Municipal _____ Other ___

HISTORIC STATUS:

Is bridge located within a designated historic district? Yes _____ No X

National Register-listed district ___ National Register-determined-eligible district ___

Locally-designated district _____ Other _____

Name of district _____

BRIDGE TYPE:

Timber Bridge _____:

Beam Bridge _____ Truss -Covered ___ Trestle ___ Timber-And-Concrete ___

Stone Arch Bridge ___

Metal Truss Bridge _

Movable Bridge _____:

Swing _____ Bascule Single Leaf ___ Bascule Multiple Leaf _____

Vertical Lift _ Retractile _____ Pontoon _____

Metal Girder _____:

Rolled Girder _____ Rolled Girder Concrete Encased _____

Plate Girder _____ Plate Girder Concrete Encased _____

Metal Suspension ___

Metal Arch ___

Metal Cantilever ___

Concrete X:

Concrete Arch_____ Concrete Slab X Concrete Beam ___ Rigid Frame _____

Other _____ Type Name _____

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DESCRIPTION:

Setting: Urban _____ **Small town** _____ **Rural** __X__

Describe Setting:

Bridge B0193 carries Thornton Mill Road in a north-south direction over Western Run which flows in a easterly direction. The area is relatively undeveloped with only two houses within sight of the bridge and a wooded area around the bridge.

Describe Superstructure and Substructure:

Bridge B0193 is a two span concrete slab bridge on stone abutments with a concrete pier, built in 1920. The spans are 10.0 feet and the overall length is 24.0 feet. The curb to curb width is 16.7 feet and the deck out to out width is 18.7 feet; the skew is 25 degrees. The wingwalls are stone and are flared on the western face of the bridge but parallel to the line of the bridge on the eastern face. The parapets are solid concrete and integral to the deck; they are seriously deteriorated. The roadway supports two way traffic and is posted for restricted load.

Discuss Major Alterations:

Baltimore County files do not indicate that major alterations have occurred.

HISTORY:

WHEN was bridge built (actual date or date range) __1920__

This date is: Actual __X__ **Estimated** ___

Source of date: Plaque __ **Design plans** __ **County bridge files/inspection form** __X__

Other (specify) _____

WHY was the bridge built?

The need for a more efficient transportation network and increased load capacity in the decades following World War I.

WHO was the designer?

State Highway Administration

WHO was the builder?

Unknown

WHY was the bridge altered?

Unknown

Was this bridge built as part of an organized bridge-building campaign?

As part of an effort by the State to increase load capacity on secondary roads during the 1920s.

SURVEYOR/HISTORIAN ANALYSIS:

This bridge may have National Register significance for its association with:

A - Events _____ **B- Person** _____

C- Engineering/architectural character _____

Was the bridge constructed in response to significant events in Maryland or local history?

Reinforced concrete slab bridges are a twentieth century structure type, easily adapted to the need for expedient engineering solutions. Reinforced concrete technology developed rapidly in the early

twentieth century with early recognition of the potential for standardized design. The first U.S. attempt to standardize concrete design specifications came in 1903-04 with the formation of the Joint Committee on Concrete and Reinforced Concrete of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Maryland's road and bridge improvement programs mirrored economic cycles. The first road improvement program of the State Roads Commission was a 7 year program, starting with the Commission's establishment in 1908 and ending in 1915. Due to World War I, the period from 1916 -1920 was one of relative inactivity; only roads of first priority were built. Truck traffic resulting from war-related factories and military installations generated new, heavy traffic unanticipated by the builders of the early road system. From 1920 to 1929, numerous highway improvements occurred in response to the increase in Maryland motor vehicles from 103,000 in 1920 to 320,000 in 1929, with emphasis on the secondary system of feeder roads which moved traffic from the primary roads built before World War I. After World War I, Maryland's bridge system also was appraised as too narrow and structurally inadequate for the increasing traffic, with plans for an expanded bridge program to be handled by the Bridge Division, set up in 1920. In 1920 under Chapter 508 of the Acts of 1920 the State issued a bond of $3,000,000.00 for road construction; the primary purpose of these monies was to meet the state obligations involving the construction of rural post roads. The secondary purpose of these monies was to fund [with an equal sum from the counties] the building of lateral roads. The number of hard surfaced roads on the state system grew from 2000 in 1920 to 3200 in 1930. By 1930, Maryland's primary system had become inadequate to the huge freight trucks and volume of passenger cars in use, with major improvements occurring in the late 1930s. Most improvements to local roads waited until the years after World War II.

With a diverse topographical domain encompassing numerous small and large crossings, Maryland engineers quickly recognized the need for expedient design and construction.

In the early years, there was a need to replace the numerous single lane timber bridges. Walter Wilson Crosby, Chief Engineer stated in 1906, "The general plan has been to replace these [wood bridges] with pipe culverts or concrete bridges and thus forever do way with the further expense of the maintenance of expensive and dangerous wooden structures". Within a few years, readily constructed standardized bridges of concrete were being built throughout the state.

The creation of standard plans and a description of their use was first announced in the 1912-15 Reports of the State Roads Commission whereby bridges spanning up to 36 feet were to use standardized designs.

Published on a single sheet, the 1912 Standard Plans included those structures that were amenable to such an approach: slab spans, (deck) girder spans, box culverts, box bridges, abutments, and piers (State Roads Commission 1912). Slab spans, with lengths of 6 to 16 feet in two foot increments, featured a solid parapet that was integrated into the slab, with a roadway of 22 feet.

In the Report for the years 1916-1919, a revision of the standard plans was noted:

> During the four years covered by this report, it has been found necessary to revise our standard plans for culverts and bridges, to take care of the increased tonnage which they have been forced to carry. Army cantonments...increased their operations several hundred per cent, and the brunt of the enormous truck traffic resulting therefrom, was borne by the State Roads of Maryland. In addition to these war activities, freight motor lines from Baltimore to Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and various points throughout Maryland,

and the weight of many of these trucks when loaded, was in excess of the loads for which our early bridges were designed (State Roads Commission 1920:56).

Published on separate sheets, the new standard plans (State Roads Commission 1919) for slab bridges reveal that the major changes was an increase in roadway width from 22 feet to 24 feet and a redesign of the reinforcement. The slab spans continued to feature solid parapets integrated into the span. The range of span lengths remained 6 to 16 feet, but the next year (1920) witnessed the issue of a supplemental plan for a 20 foot long slab span (State Roads Commission 1920).

Based upon documentary evidence, Baltimore County and City were the early pioneers in concrete bridge building in Maryland. The first reinforced concrete bridge documented in Maryland was the bridge at Sherwood Station, built in 1903 by Baltimore County.

Evidence from historic maps suggests that almost all of the extant concrete slab bridges built before 1940 in Baltimore County replaced earlier bridges. With the exception of two bridges, all of these structures lie on roads whose alignments have changed little since the middle of the nineteenth century. The two exceptions are both located on Shelbourne Avenue in Arbutus. Shelbourne Avenue does not appear on the 1850 map of Baltimore County but does appear on the 1915 map. Both concrete slabs bridges on Shelbourne Avenue, however, were built after 1915. The evidence therefore suggests that these two bridges were also built to replace previous structures.

When the bridge was built and/or given a major alteration, did it have a significant impact on the growth and development of the area?
There is no evidence to suggest that the construction of this bridge had a significant impact on the growth and development of this area.

Is the bridge located in an area which may be eligible for historic designation?
Would the bridge add to or detract from the historic/visual character of the potential district?
This bridge is not located in an area which may be eligible for historic designation.

Is the bridge a significant example of its type?
No, this bridge is not a significant example of its type.

Does the bridge retain integrity of important elements described in Context Addendum?
The character defining elements appear to be in place, however the parapets are badly deteriorated.

Is the bridge a significant example of the work of a manufacturer, designer, and/or engineer?
The bridge is not a significant example of the work a manufacturer, designer, and/or engineer.

Should the bridge be given further study before an evaluation of its significance is made?
No additional study will be needed before an evaluation of the significance of this bridge is made.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

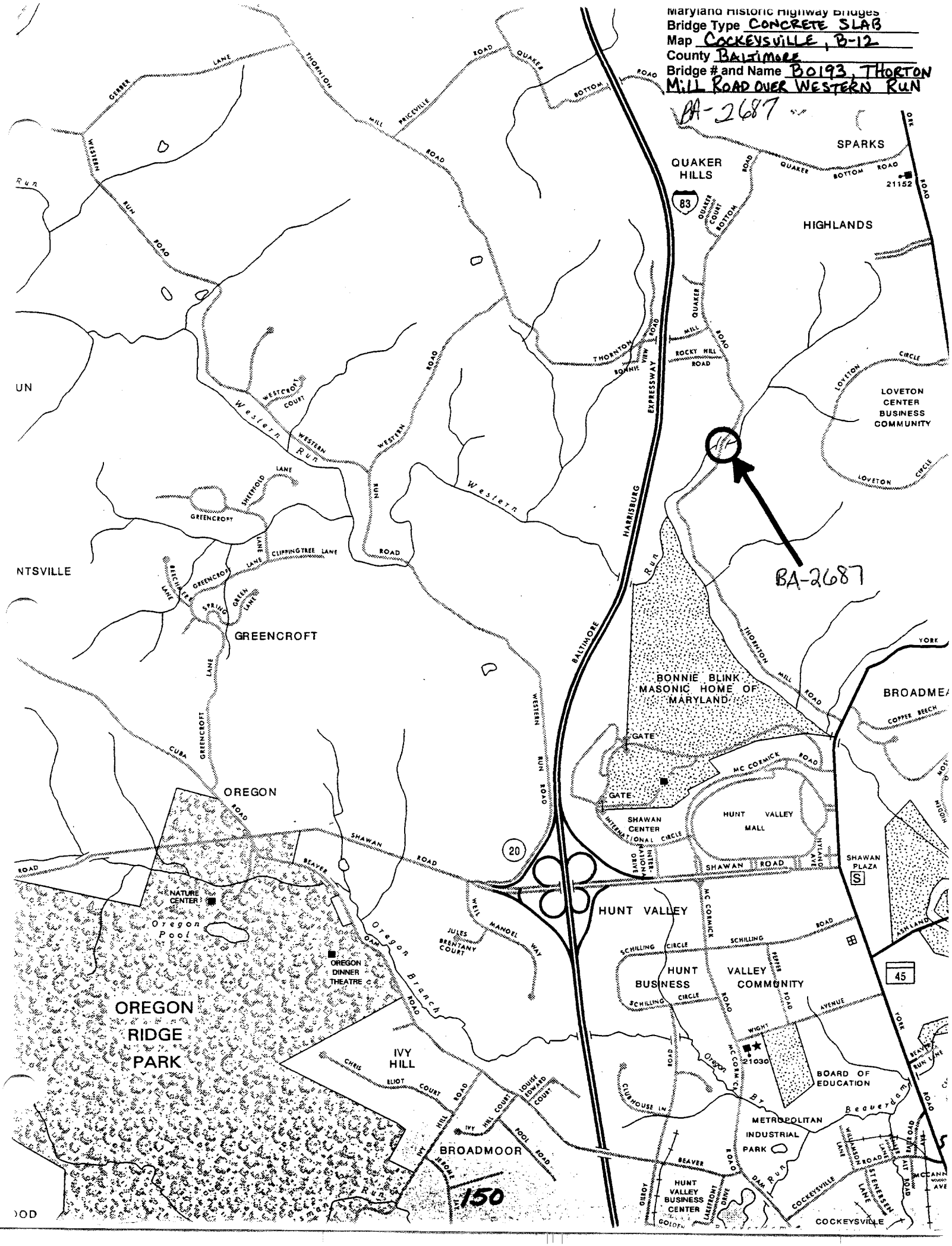
County inspection/bridge files X **SHA inspection/bridge files** _____
Other (list):

BA-2687

SURVEYOR:

Date bridge recorded 08/15/95
Name of surveyor Colin Farr
Organization/Address P.A.C. Spero & Company, Suite 412, 40 West Chesapeake Ave., Baltimore, MD 21204
Phone number (410) 296-1635 **FAX number** (410) 296-1670

Maryland Historic Highway Bridges
Bridge Type CONCRETE SLAB
Map COCKEYSVILLE, B-12
County BALTIMORE
Bridge # and Name B0193, THORTON MILL ROAD OVER WESTERN RUN
BA-2687



Inventory # BA-2687

Name B0193 - THORNTON MILL RD OVER A BRANCH OF WESTERN RUN

County/State BALTIMORE COUNTY/MD

Name of Photographer DAVE DIEHL

Date 1/95

Location of Negative SHA

Description SOUTH APPROACH LOOKING NORTH

Number 1 ~~22~~ of ~~35~~ 4

Inventory # BA-2687

Name B0193 - THORNTON MILL RD OVER A BRANCH OF WESTERN RUN

County/State BALTIMORE COUNTY/MD

Name of Photographer DAVE DIEHL

Date 1/95

Location of Negative SHA

Description WEST ELEVATION LOOKING NORTHEAST

Number ~~23~~ 2 of ~~35~~ 4

Inventory # BA-2687

Name B0193- THORNTON MILL RD OVER A BRANCH OF WESTERN RUN

County/State BALTIMORE COUNTY/MD

Name of Photographer DAVE DIEHL

Date 1/95

Location of Negative SHA

Description EAST ELEVATION LOOKING NORTHWEST

Number ~~24~~ 3 of ~~35~~ 4

Inventory # BA-2687

B0193 - THORNTON MILL RD OVER A BRANCH

Name OF WESTERN RUN

County/State BALTIMORE COUNTY | MD

Name of Photographer DAVE DIEHL

Date 1/95

Location of Negative SHA

Description NORTH APPROACH LOOKING SOUTH

Number ~~25~~ 4 of ~~35~~ 4