FHR 8-300 (11-78)

F-5-61

United States Department of the Interior MAGI # 1150602638
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic: Mount Airy

and or common: Mount Airy Historic District

2. Location

street & number: various streets — n/a not for publication

city, town: Mount Airy — n/a vicinity of — congressional district: Sixth

state: Maryland — code: 24 — county: Carroll code 013, Frederick code 021

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	___ public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	X commercial	___ park
___ structure	X both	___ work in progress	X educational	X private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	X religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	X government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	X yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name: multiple private and public owners (more than 50)

street & number:

city, town: ___ vicinity of — state:

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: 1. Frederick County Courthouse 2. Carroll County Courthouse

street & number:

city, town: 1. Frederick 2. Westminster — state: Maryland Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title: Maryland Historical Trust Inventory of Historic Sites — has this property been determined elegible? ___ yes X no

___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

date: 1984

depository for survey records: Shaw House, 21 State Circle

city, town: Annapolis — state: Maryland 21401

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
excellent	deteriorated	unaltered	X original site	
X good	ruins	X altered	moved	date n/a
fair	unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources

Contributing	Noncontributing	
172	25	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
172	25	Total

Number of previously listed National Register properties included in this nomination: 0

Original and historic functions and uses: agriculture, commercial educational, industrial residential, religious transportation

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Mount Airy Historic District comprises a cohesive group of commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical buildings dating from the late 19th through early 20th centuries located within the corporate limits of Mount Airy, a small town on the border of Carroll and Frederick Counties in rural west-central Maryland. The brick B.& O. Railroad station on Main Street represents the town's origin as an early transportation center for the region; the present building was constructed in 1882, but a B.& O. depot had been established on the site as early as 1838. A group of commercial buildings extends along both sides of Main Street for approximately one block north of the station and two blocks to its south; primarily two-story, shed-roofed, frame or brick storefronts, these buildings are the result of early 20th century rebuildings of Mount Airy's downtown, parts of which were destroyed in a series of fires between 1903 and 1926. The residential areas of the district, lying to the north, south, southwest and southeast of the commercial core, are characterized by houses illustrating vernacular forms and popular stylistic influences of the late 19th and early 20th century. The majority are frame, two-story, three bay, center gable I houses of a traditional form widespread in rural central Maryland from the mid-19th century until well into the twentieth; in many of these houses, a stylish corner turret or other architectural ornament is grafted onto the basic traditional form. Several examples of the popular early 20th century Foursquare and Bungalow forms occur as well. Main Street features a number of larger, relatively high-style houses of the period, expressing Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival trends. The houses are mostly set well back from the street on shaded lawns. Three churches are located within the residential area: the fieldstone, vernacular Greek Revival Pine Grove Chapel (1846); brick, Gothic-influenced St. James Episcopal Church; and Norman stone Calvary Methodist Church (1916). The district retains a high level of integrity, with few intrusions; alterations are generally reversible, and generally limited to artificial siding and minor storefront renovations. Of the 197 total buildings located within the district, 172 or 87%, contribute to the district's significance.

For General Description, see Continuation Sheet No. 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Mount Airy Historic District is concentrated along Main Street and several intersecting streets in the town of Mount Airy, which straddles the Carroll-Frederick County boundary in rural west-central Maryland.

The geographical and historical focus of the district is a small commercial core, lining Main Street for approximately three blocks between Hood Street and Prospect Avenue. The commercial core rests in a topographical basin, and residential development characterizes the hills which rise gradually to the north, south, southeast, and southwest.

The focal point of the commercial center is the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot located on the east side of North Main Street, adjoining the tracks on the north; this rectangular one-story brick building with a broad overhanging gable roof was completed in 1882 in the third expansion of a facility which had been established on the site in 1838. Following the recent decline in rail traffic, the depot was abandoned, and has recently undergone a sensitive rehabilitation for reuse as a medical office.

The commercial center extends primarily south of the depot along South Main Street. (Two contributing commercial buildings are located north of the depot, the Classical Revival F & M Bank and a two-story, flat-roofed brick storefront.) Lining South Main Street between the railroad tracks and Park Avenue, fronting directly on the sidewalks, are two-story, shed-roofed, brick or frame storefronts. Most of these buildings are the result of early 20th century reconstruction of Mount Airy's downtown, which was ravaged by a series of fires beginning in 1903; only one surviving building, 2-4 South Main Street, predates this era. The decorative detailing of these buildings generally includes an ornate cornice of wooden brackets, pressed metal, or corbeled brickwork. The Mount Airy Public Library is unusual for its Neoclassical cut-stone facade and pedimented parapet. On South Main Street beyond Park Avenue are a series of large 1½ story buildings which formerly served as lodgings for railroad passengers; #216 is notable among these for its slate-clad mansard roof.

These downtown buildings are generally well-maintained; alterations are limited to the first-floor level, and consist primarily of minor storefront renovations. The streetscapes are continuous, with very few gaps or incompatible structures; the only significant gap south of the railroad tracks occurs between #116 South Main Street and the Library to its north, apparently the site of a now-vanished building. North of the tracks, the former site of the Mount Airy Milling Co. grist mill (which was accidentally destroyed by fire in recent years) now provides parking for the adjacent F & M Bank. An automobile service station on the east side of North Main Street at Prospect Avenue, and a modern one-story photo studio at #1 South Main Street, constitute the only significant intrusions into the otherwise remarkably cohesive historic downtown.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

Just beyond the commercial area along North Main Street, four large frame houses reflecting pattern-book Queen Anne and Colonial Revival designs command shaded lots atop a steep bank on the east side of the street; most of the other houses in the residential area north of downtown are more modest, and conform either to the traditional three-bay, two-story, center-gable I house type (especially typical of West Church Street and North Main Street) or to the popular early 20th century hip-roofed Foursquare form (several notable examples of which appear on East Church and Oak Streets). St. James Episcopal Church, a brick Gothic Revival building, rests in a triangle formed by North Main and West Church Streets and St. James Avenue.

A considerably larger historic residential area focuses on South Main Street, south of the commercial center. From Hood Street south to just beyond Flower Avenue, South Main Street presents a continuous series of detached houses reflecting a variety of styles and periods from the Civil War to the 1920s. These include some of the most architecturally elaborate 19th century houses in the district, concentrated in the two blocks immediately south of downtown: noteworthy examples are #410 South Main Street, a large mansard-roofed dwelling with Queen Anne sash of multiple colored lights, and #602, a gable-fronted house clad in fishscale and sawtooth patterned shingles, with imitation half-timber decoration and a patterned slate roof. Several South Main Street houses have a turret; the high incidence of this feature throughout the district distinguishes Mount Airy from other small towns of the period in rural Maryland. Perhaps the most emphatic expression of this element appears on the house on the east side of South Main Street just north of Sunset Avenue, where an overscaled conical-roofed tower dominates the small 1½-story building.

A number of house types are represented on South Main Street, including the vernacular I house and popular Foursquare and Bungalow; this mixture continues on Paradise Avenue, running east of South Main Street for one block. Dorsey Avenue, which parallels South Main Street north of Paradise, features some small turreted I houses. Hill Street, which lies parallel to South Main Street on the west, and the cross streets Sunset Avenue, Calvary Street, Hood Street, and Baker Street, are characterized by a particularly cohesive group of almost two dozen frame I houses in very good condition, many of which retain porches with turned posts and jigsawn brackets. Park Avenue, ascending a gently-sloping hill south-southeast of the commercial downtown, is characterized by houses whose types are consistent with those in the other residential areas (primarily I houses and Foursquares), but which are somewhat larger than most and are set in slightly broader yards.

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

Very few intrusions or incompatible land uses occur in the residential areas south of downtown. A few commercial enterprises are located in historic buildings in the block of South Main Street closest to the business center; similarly, Park Avenue has some small businesses and a parking lot adjacent to downtown. The character of these areas, however, is overwhelmingly residential. Two churches are located on South Main Street: Calvary Methodist Church, a stone building dated 1916 of Norman Gothic design, and the Pine Grove Chapel, a vernacular Greek Revival-influenced fieldstone building built in 1846, the oldest surviving building in Mount Airy.

8. Significance

F-S-61

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400–1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1838–1930 **Builder Architect** n/a

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, C
Applicable Exceptions: none
Level of Significance for Evaluation: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Mount Airy Historic District is significant for its architecture, and for its association with the development of transportation in west-central Maryland. Architecturally, the district comprises a cohesive collection of commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical buildings dating from 1846 through the early 1930s; these buildings and their setting retain a high level of integrity, and the district clearly conveys the character and feeling of a rural Maryland town in the early 20th century. The houses within the district reflect a variety of stylistic influences: they consist primarily of frame "I-houses" reflecting a vernacular form widely used in rural Maryland from the mid-19th century through at least the first three decades of the twentieth. In addition, several examples represent the popular Foursquare and Bungalow trends of the early 20th century, and a number of larger houses, chiefly along Main Street, reflect Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival designs apparently derived from pattern books. The residential areas within the district are characterized by neatly-tended, tree-shaded lawns; notably few intrusions or insensitive alterations break the continuous streetscapes. Many of the houses within the district feature a corner turret, adding to the visual interest of the streetscapes and the unique character of the district. Modern alterations, where they occur, are generally reversible and by no means so extensive as to detract from the district's capacity to convey a sense of time and place. A small commercial area, characterized by two-story, shed roofed, chiefly early-20th-century storefronts, provides an anchor for the residential areas lying to its north and south, and represents both a past and present focus for the distric The district derives additional significance from its association with the development of transportation in the region; an early and important center of both rail and highway transportation, the district owes much of its current appearance to improvements in these modes of transit which occurred around the turn of the 20th century.

For History and Supporting Documentation, see Continuation Sheet No. 4

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Mount Airy's association with the development of transportation dates back to the 1730's, when a major road heading westward from Baltimore passed through the area which came to be known as Ridgeville, now within the corporate limits of the Town of Mount Airy and just south of the Mount Airy Historic District. The impetus for the development of Mount Airy proper, however, came a century later, when the main line of the newly-formed Baltimore and Ohio Railroad reached the area in 1831. Parr's Ridge, just south of the present town, presented a formidable obstacle, and a system of inclined planes was constructed to enable the underpowered locomotives of the day to master the 830-foot summit. This system was used until 1838, by which time more powerful locomotives had been constructed and heavier loads were being hauled. To detour around the heights at Ridgeville, a spur line was built on the north side which reduced the climb by 80-100 feet. This spur went through what is today known as Mount Airy. The B&O bought this right-of-way from the first resident of Mount Airy, Henry Bussard, built a depot, and named Bussard the station agent for the new location.

Mr. Bussard immediately saw the potential for developing his land in and around the new railroad. To encourage settlement here (which would result in the sale of building lots), he donated the land and materials for the construction of a church. His slaves and those of Henry S. Davis and George Davis furnished the labor to constrict the Ridge Presbyterian Church. This is the oldest remaining structure in town, and was finished in 1846. It is known today as Pine Grove Chapel. Up to the time of the Civil War, it was used as both a church and school. During that war, it was occupied by the Northern Army as a barracks for guard troops protecting the railroad and the crossroad in Ridgeville.

In 1876, Bussard died and his estate (consisting of a number of building lots, as well as his principal residence) was dispersed. Milton Bussard acquired the residence and about 50 acres (the residence was located on the site of the Municipal Parking lot nearest Main Street, while the barn was on the Eastern lot near Park Avenue). What is now Main Street was a part of the old Buffalo Road running from Washington to Buffalo New York. Where the tracks crossed Main Street became the center of the new business district, and building progressed out from the tracks both north and south. Hotels were built to accommodate train passengers and "drummers," or traveling salesmen.

The railroad brought not only commercial travelers into town, but also carried other passengers with different purposes. The healthful atmosphere from which Mount Airy gets its name was recognized by the 1880's, when the Robert Garrett Sanitarium for sick children was established on the North Main Street hill, opposite the present elementary school. This widely-known institution treated tubercular and contagious diseases, and comprised a hospital, contagious disease building, nurse's housing, servants' quarters, a morgue and a small graveyard. In the 1920's, the same salubrious qualities attracted vacationers, who began to frequent resort homes such as Ridgecrest (805 South Main Street, adjacent to Pine Grove Chapel).

See Continuation Sheet No. 5

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

A further boost to Mount Airy's growth occurred in 1895, when the construction of a railroad tunnel brought between 200 and 300 construction workers to the town. The boom in population encouraged the development of new businesses, and the downtown commercial area grew sharply. In 1896, the town was incorporated, and operated with a mayor and five council members.

In 1903, the first of three great fires wiped out the town south of the railroad, except for the building (2-4 South Main Street) immediately adjacent to the tracks. Occupied today by Dennison's Variety Store, it is the only original surviving business establishment, other than the railroad depot. In 1914, the town north of the railroad was wiped out, up to the home and business of John Runkles. This house stood at the northwest corner of Main Street and Prospect Road, the present site of the F. & M Bank parking lot.

A third great fire in 1925 wiped out the Charles Runkles Mill directly north of the railroad depot, and a year later a fourth destroyed much of the Peoples Lumber and Supply Company yards. These fires finally galvanized the town into forming a volunteer fire company. It purchased its first pumper in 1921, an American LaFrance which is still owned by the company. The first president was Asa Watkins and the first chief was Herman S. Beck, Sr. who served in that capacity for 27 years.

1916 was a year of great physical growth in the town. The Mount Airy Canning Company was formed and operated until 1940. The Calvary Methodist Church was rebuilt. The present Town Office Building was burned and rebuilt that year, omitting the jail which had been a part of the former structure. The large Mount Airy Milling Company structure was rebuilt after the fire of 1914 destroyed the previous structure. A high school was also constructed in that year.

As many as six passenger trains a day passed through Mount Airy during that time. And though horses and wagons were still the primary road transport, another great change was in the offing. Automobiles and trucks were becoming more numerous, and the 1920's saw the beginnings of paved roads to get the autos out of the mud. The old National Pike passing through the Ridgeville area became a part of transcontinental Route #40, going from Baltimore to California. Other public improvements made in the 1920's included the town's water system, on which construction started in 1924 and concluded in 1928 with the building of the north-end water tower at a cost of $1200. Potomac Edison began supplying electricity in 1928, replacing the Delco Electric Plant which had served a few subscribers from its plant off Prospect Road, behind the milling company.

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

The rapid growth of truck transportation in the freight business, and buses and airplanes in the passenger business sent the highly-regulated railroads into decline. By 1949, the last passenter train had made its run through Mount Airy. The railroad depot has been sensitively adapted to other use, and most of the track has been removed.

In the 1960's, Maryland Route 27 bypassed Mount Airy, and the new interstate route 70 diverted the east-west traffic from Ridgeville. Improved roads affording easy access to shopping centers in nearby Frederick and Westminster, and in the city of Baltimore, took a toll on Mount Airy's downtown merchants, but an active program of downtown revitalization is well under way. The town's location within an hour's commuting time to Baltimore and Washington, D. C., has lately resulted in the development of residential subdivisions.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Beck, Herman S., Jr. "Ridgeville/Mount Airy, Maryland, Origin and Early History" (unpublished manuscript on file at Maryland Historical Trust)

Linderman, Sandra L. "The Metamorphoses of Ridgeville/Mount Airy Origin and History" (unpublished manuscript on file at Maryland Historical Trust)

McKinsey, Folger. "Bentztown Bard Revisits Mt. Airy Years After" Baltimore Sun, March 11, 1939.

Harwood, Herbert H. Jr., Impossible Challenge: The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Maryland. Baltimore: Barnard, Roberts & Co., Inc., 1979.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Western Maryland. Philadelphia, 1882; rpt. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1968.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Mount Airy Historic District were selected to encompass the maximum number of historic resources which retain integrity of form, materials, feeling, and association and to exclude properties whose integrity has been severely compromised by incompatible alterations, or which do not relate to the themes or period of the district's signinicance. Immediately to the south of the southern boundary is an area which includes several houses whose period and styles are similar but which have lost integrity of feeling through a high concentration of modern intrusions, non-residential land uses, and alterations. To the southwest and southeast of the district lie modern residential subdivisions and non-conforming open space. East of the commercial core is an area of modern housing and 20th-century storage buildings; to the west is a modern industrial plant which is not associated with the development of the town during its period of significance. Northwest and northeast of the district is primarily non-contributing open space. Topographical features help define the district's boundaries: the commercial core is located within a deep basin, with residential development on the hills radiating above it.

F-5-61

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet No.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 102 acres

Quadrangle name Damascus, MD and Libertytown, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundaries are depicted on the attached map; for boundary justification, see Continuation Sheet No.

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

state	code	county	code
Maryland	24	Carroll	013
Maryland	24	Frederick	021

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mt. Airy Historic District Task Force and Peter E. Kurtze
Assistant National Register Administrator

organization Maryland Historical Trust date July 1984

street & number 21 State Circle telephone (301) 269-2438

city or town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

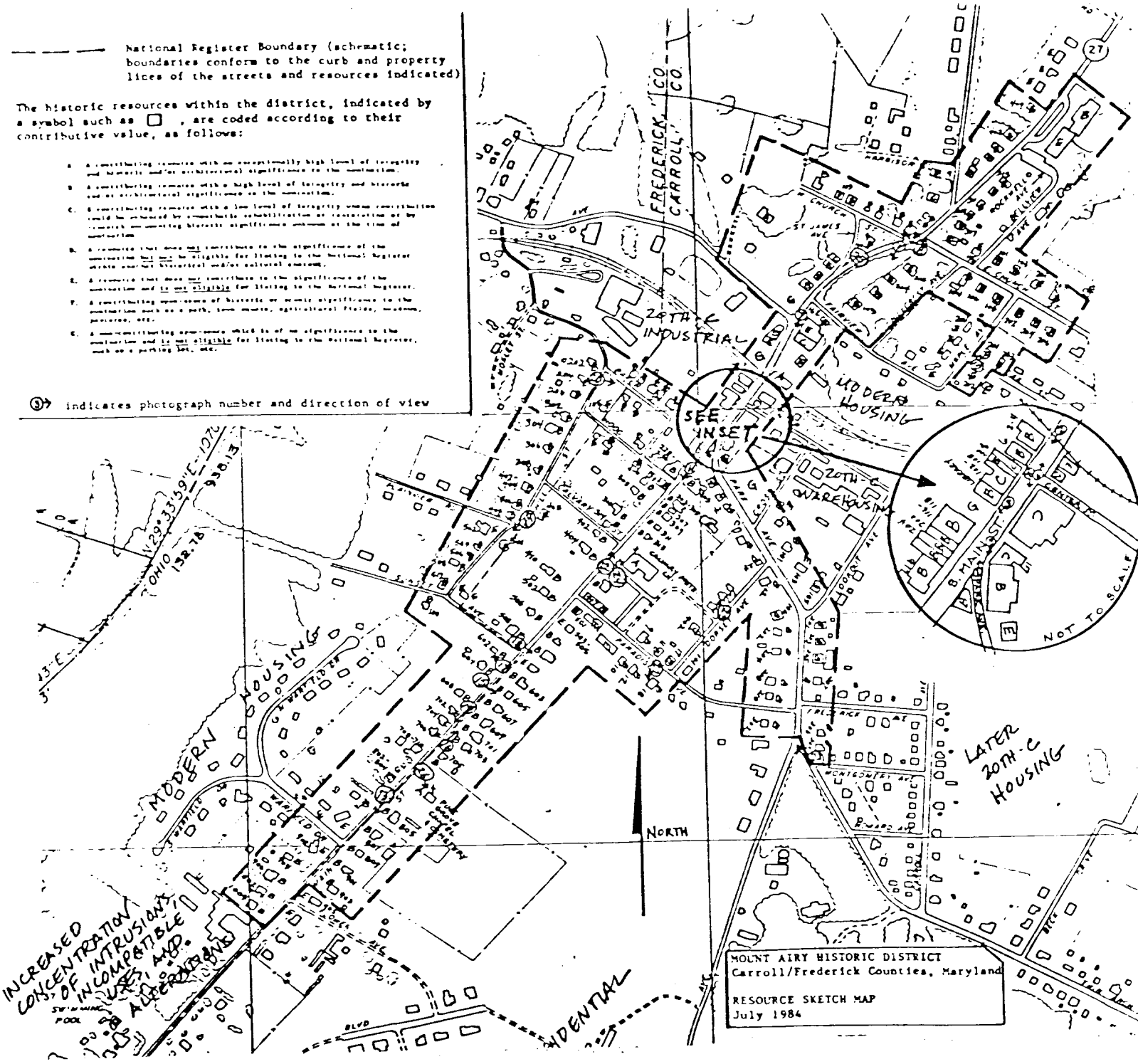
date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration


National Register Boundary (schematic; boundaries conform to the curb and property lines of the streets and resources indicated)
The historic resources within the district, indicated by a symbol such as ☐ , are coded according to their contributive value, as follows:
indicates photograph number and direction of view
FREDERICK CO
CARROLL CO
29TH INDUSTRIAL
MODERN HOUSING
SEE INSET
20TH-C OLDER HOUSING
MAIN ST
NOT TO SCALE
MODERN HOUSING
LATER 20TH-C HOUSING
NORTH
INCREASED CONCENTRATION OF INTRUSIONS, INCOMPATIBLE USES, AND ALTERATIONS
RESIDENTIAL
MOUNT AIRY HISTORIC DISTRICT
Carroll/Frederick Counties, Maryland
RESOURCE SKETCH MAP
July 1984