HA-237 1814

Bel Air Academy
24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue
Bel Air
Private

This four bay plastered stone rubble building, now a private residence, was built in 1814 for the Bel Air Academy. The schoolroom door was in the west bay of the facade, and the exterior was entirely unadorned save for the bell cupola astride the roof ridge. The Academy was a state-chartered private college preparatory school from 1814 until it merged with the Bel Air Graded School in 1888, and many of Harford County's most prominent men received a classical education in its two rooms. The building continued to house the primary grades until 1900 when it was sold to J. Robert Ayers who remodeled it as a private residence.

HA-237
1302375304

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Bel Air Academy

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1st

CITY, TOWN
Bel Air

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Maryland

COUNTY
Harford

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Robert N. Turner

Telephone #: 838-6406

STREET & NUMBER
24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

CITY, TOWN
Bel Air

__ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code
Maryland 21014

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Liber #: 723
Folio #: 50

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Harford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Bel Air

STATE
Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bel Air Academy, now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Turner, is at 24 E. Pennsylvania Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. The main block of the building is a two and one half story plastered stone rubble structure, four bays wide with a slate gable roof and two gable roofed, shingle sided dormers. An inside end chimney rises in each gable end. There are no windows in the gable ends save for one in each gable to light the attic. The shutters have been permanently nailed shut over these windows. The present entry is in the second bay from the west. The windows are 6/6 double hung sash framed by louvered shutters. The rear (north elevation) shows two dormers in the roof, three windows in the second story, and two windows and the former back door, which was made into a window in 1945 when that end of the hall was converted into a bathroom. The lintel of this last window suggests that the back door was cut through in 1900 when the school building was converted into a residence. The two story frame ell at the northeast corner was added at that time. In 1900 there was a porch around the L-shaped back, which accounts for the door in the west elevation of the ell. The front (south) elevation has an entrance into what was once the kitchen. The remaining portion of the back porch was enclosed and is now the kitchen. It has a pair of 9 pane casement windows in the north and west elevations and a door in the south part of the west elevation.

An old newspaper photograph shows the structure when it was a school. The major changes are the removal of the bell tower from the roof and the addition of dormers as well as the moving of the entrance one bay to the east, the addition of the porch, and of shutters to the front windows. The interior was one big room downstairs and one one up. The chimneys served stoves, not fireplaces. The staircase was probably in the northwest corner.

The interior of the present building has two rooms of different sizes with the hall between them on the ground floor. The single run, closed-string staircase rises in the east side of the hall. The north end of the hall was enclosed to make a bathroom in 1945. It has turned balusters and the fat, late 19th century newel post so common in Bel Air. The windows are set deep in the walls. They and their deep sills and the aprons appear to be original. The door surrounds (c-1900) come so close to matching that only a close inspection reveals the difference. The west chamber (the bed-sitting room) has a wide hall door with French doors. This change was made in 1945 to accommodate a wheelchair. A fireplace with knotty pine mantel, over-mantel, and cupboards in the northwest end of the room were also added in 1945. The chimney breast projects into the east chamber in the east wall, but there never was a fireplace there. There are long narrow chimney cupboards in both ends, however. The back (north) window has been blocked in the east room by the enclosure of the porch. The ground floor room in the ell was formerly the kitchen. It is wainscotted in tongue and groove boards taken from an old built in cupboard. Against

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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 1814 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This charming "colonial" building is one of the most significant of the remaining early 19th century buildings in Bel Air. From its construction in 1814 until the turn of the 20th century it was the home of the Bel Air Academy. The academy system was a semi-state-supported education system which provided schools with classical curricula which prepared students for college entrance. From 1814 to 1858 several academies were established in Harford County. The state provided an enabling act, and the local communities provided finance and a Board of Trustees. The Bel Air Academy (Harford County Academy) was incorporated in 1811. The academy opened in 1814 in this building on property owned by merchant Thomas Hays. Hays's 1814 tax return shows "the walls for a stone still house 23 feet by 30 feet two stories high" on Scotts Improvement. It is possible that this building was completed and donated for the use of the school. Hays conveyed title to the property to the Academy in 1839 (23/136). The consideration was $1.00.

The first headmaster was the Rev. Reuben H. Davis, a Presbyterian Minister. He married Mary Archer Hays, a sister of Thomas Hays. The classical curriculum was supplemented by an English department which included grammar, geography, bookkeeping, history and science as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic..

Many prominent Harford County men were educated at the school: Gov. Augustus Bradford, Judge Henry D. Harlan, Judge James D. Watters, Dr. John M. T. Finney, Mayor James H. Preston, Col. Otho S. Lee, Judge William H. Harlan, Judge William P. Maulsby, Attorney General Thomas H. Robinson, the Rev. William P. Finny, and Dr. William S. Archer. As well, men prominent in Maryland education taught at the school.

The Academy was united with the Graded School in 1888, and classes were held in the brick building on Gordon Street. C. Milton Wright, long time Harford County Superintendent of Schools and local historian, was the principal. Some classes may also have been held at the old building because it was not sold until 1900 after a law suit (equity 70/157, 1897) over debts resulting from work done by Joseph Gorrell on the building in 1859.

Robert Ayres bought the building in 1900 for $425. It was probably in bad shape if an old newspaper picture is any indication. Mr. Ayres planned to turn the building into a private residence. According to a story handed down in the family of the present owners, Mr. Ayres had a job that took him away from home a lot. Another source says he was a sea captain. At any rate, Ayres intended to have the door where it was in the west bay and turn the large downstairs room into two rooms, a parlor

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

HA-237

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

C. Milton Wright. Our Harford Heritage.
Harford Democrat
Interview with Mrs. Robert Turner, 18 May 1979.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies parcel #859 in the Town of Bel Air, 65' x 150'.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
M. Larew, Architectural Historian

DATE
27 April 1979

ORGANIZATION
Town of Bel Air

TELEPHONE
838-8700

STREET & NUMBER
39 Hickory Avenue

CITY OR TOWN
Bel Air

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
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

the north wall, covering where the old cookstove went, is a cupboard and the door to the corkscrew back staircase. These are made of the same tongue and groove material. Parallel to this room is the new kitchen, made by enclosing part of the old back porch.

The second story has its hall running along the back (north) side of the house, lighted by the three back windows. The west chamber in the second story is a bit oddly shaped because of the intrusion of the enclosed attic staircase in the east end of the room. The second bedroom (the east one) in the old school block is more conventionally shaped. A third bedroom and a bath are in the second story of the ell. The back staircase comes up the north wall of that bedroom.

With the exception of the window surrounds and aprons, all of the interior woodwork, the stairs, and the disposition of the rooms dates from 1900 or later. The chimney cupboards in the east chamber may be original.

and a dining room. The second story would have been a repeat - two bedrooms. The ell on the northeast side was to be a kitchen. Mrs. Ayres, however, had other plans. She had always wanted a center hall plan house and the fact that her house lacked one bay in width to make a symmetrical center hall plan bothered her not a whit. As soon as her husband left town she altered the plans. The door was shifted one bay to the east, and a new staircase was built. The result was an off-center hall plan with the west chamber being smaller than the east. Mr. Ayres was so annoyed, it is said, that he refused to move into the house. Whatever the truth of the legend, the hall is off center, and Mr. Ayres sold the property to George Yarish 18 months later for $660.70 provided Yarish assumed the mortgage (102/473). Mrs. Yarish was related to the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Turner, so the house has been in the family since 1901, although it has gone through several conveyances since then. Mrs. Katherine Thorn Turner's name entered the title for the first time in 1946 (309/315). She brought an invalid sister back to Bel Air from Baltimore after World War II. At that time the west chamber was altered to make it a bed-sitting room. The hall door was replaced by a wide entry with French doors to accommodate a wheelchair and a small bathroom was made by partitioning off the north end of the hall and closing off the back door. The old front porch which ran the length of the south elevation was replaced by the present small entrance porch at the same time. Subsequently the Robert Turners turned the old kitchen in the ell into a dining room and enclosed part of the old back porch as a new kitchen. The ell has recently been covered in aluminum siding.

Bel Air Academy

723/50 13 September 1966
Zero, Inc.
to
Katherine Turner, widow
a life interest with power to sell, convey, mortgage, or lease, but not to will. At her death the property is to go to Robert N. Turner and Anita, his wife. (Robert Turner is the present owner.)

723/48 13 September 1966
Katherine T. Turner, widow
to
Zero, Inc.
Straw

582/144 1 September 1961
H. Elizabeth Esley
to
Katherine T. Turner, widow
Straw

582/142 1 September 1961
Katherine T. Turner, widow, & Agnes D. Thorn, unmarried
to
H. Elizabeth Esley
Straw

501/365 19 April 1958
H. Elizabeth Esley
to
Katherine T. Turner, widow, & Agnes D. Thorn, unmarried
Straw

501/363 19 April 1958
Katherine T. Turner, widow
to
H. Elizabeth Esley
Straw

406/3 2 December 1953
The Gralan Corporation
to
Katherine T. Turner, widow

406/1 2 December 1953
Katherine T. Turner
to
The Gralan Corporation

309/315 30 September 1946
Leo B. Lathroum & Mary, wife, of Baltimore City
to
Anna C. Plock, Katherine Thorn Turner, and
Agnes D. Thorn

309/314 30 September 1946
Anna C. Plock, widow
to
Leo B. Lathroum & Mary, wife

198/431 8 June 1926
Evelyn Yarish, widow, Frances Yarish, Charles
and Helen Yarish and George Leo Yarish
to
Anna C. Plock
The property of George H. Yarish, deceased.

102/473 6 December 1901
J. Robert Ayres and Sadie J. Ayres
to
George Yarish
$660.70
Yarish to assume the mortgage (1901, 103/452)

100/131 14 July 1900
Thomas H. Robinson, Trustee
to
J. Robert Ayres at private sale
$425
Robinson was trustee for the sale of the property
in an equity suit (1897, equity 70/157) Daniel
Scott and Anne G. Winchester vs Harford Academy.
Scott and Winchester were the heirs of Otho Scott
(d. 1864) who had a lien against the Harford
Academy assigned to him by paying the debt. The
debt was owed by the Academy to Joseph Gorrell

a contractor who had done some work on the Academy and had furnished the materials (to the tune of $802.06) in 1859. When the Academy didn't pay Gorrell sued in 1860. Scott paid Gorrell, and the lien was assigned to him. Scott died in 1864. His heirs revived the suit in 1884. This suit was dated 1897, and the sale was dated January 3, 1898. It was confirmed by the court and this is the deed.

23/136 26 December 1839
Thomas Hays
to
The Harford Academy
$1
It is not clear why the conveyance was made in 1839 since the school was built and went into operation in 1814.

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

N.R. FILE SHEET 1302374304

HA [redacted] 237

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Bel Air Academy

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: North side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Main ST and Hickory Ave.

CITY OR TOWN: Bel Air

STATE: Maryland | CODE: | COUNTY: Harford | CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP			STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District ☐	Building ☐	Public ☐	Public Acquisition:		Occupied ☐	Yes:
Site ☐	Structure ☐	Private ☐	In Process ☐		Unoccupied ☐	Restricted ☐
		~~Both~~ ☐	Being Considered ☐		Preservation work in progress ☐	Unrestricted ☐
Object ☐						No: ☐

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Agricultural ☐	Government ☐	Park ☐	Transportation ☐	Comments ☐
Commercial ☐	Industrial ☐	Private Residence ☐	Other *(Specify)* ☐	
Educational ☐	Military ☐	Religious ☐		
Entertainment ☐	Museum ☐	Scientific ☐		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Mr & Mrs Robert Turner

STREET AND NUMBER: 24 East Pennsylvania Ave

CITY OR TOWN: Bel Air | STATE: Md | CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

STREET AND NUMBER: HARFORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE 40 S. MAIN ST.

CITY OR TOWN: BEL AIR | STATE: MARYLAND | CODE:

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: | STATE: | CODE:

STATE: COUNTY: FOR NPS USE ONLY ENTRY NUMBER DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Foir ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed ☐	
INTEGRITY	(Check One) Altered ☐ Unaltered ☐	(Check One) Moved ☐ Original Site ☐

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Stone stucco building, 2 ½ stories.

Two windows out a door downstairs, four windows spaced unevenly upstairs. One room deep, this house faces south, the ridgeline running east-west, with a ~~[illegible]~~ frame ~~[illegible]~~ wing running north ~~along~~ the east wall.

Peaked dormers have windows that are ~~[illegible]~~ two lights over ~~two~~ ~~[illegible]~~, while windows elsewhere are four over four.

Wide eaves on the slate roof are clearly 19th Century.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

AK-557

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Pre-Columbian ☐	16th Century ☐	18th Century ☐	20th Century ☐
15th Century ☐	17th Century ☐	19th Century ☐	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Abariginal	Education ☐	Political ☐	Urban Planning ☐
Prehistaric ☐	Engineering ☐	Religian/Philasaphy ☐	Other *(Specify)* ☐
Histaric ☐	Industry ☐	Science ☐	
Agriculture ☐	Invention ☐	Sculpture ☐	
Art ☐	Landscape Architecture ☐	Sacial/Humanitarian ☐	
Cammerce ☐	Literature ☐	Theater ☐	
Cammunicatians ☐	Military ☐	Transportation ☐	
Canservatian ☐	Music ☐		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)*

Now a ~~multi~~ family home, this was Belvin's first high school building, a semi-private school built in 1814 and used until 1883 as an academy.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

AA-237

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wright, C. Milton Our Harford Heritage, 255-57
402, -5, -7, -11, -14, -23.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: JEAN S. EWING

ORGANIZATION: MARYLAND HISTORIC TRUST

DATE:

STREET AND NUMBER: 21 STATE CIRCLE

CITY OR TOWN: ANNAPOLIS

STATE: MARYLAND

CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

_____
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

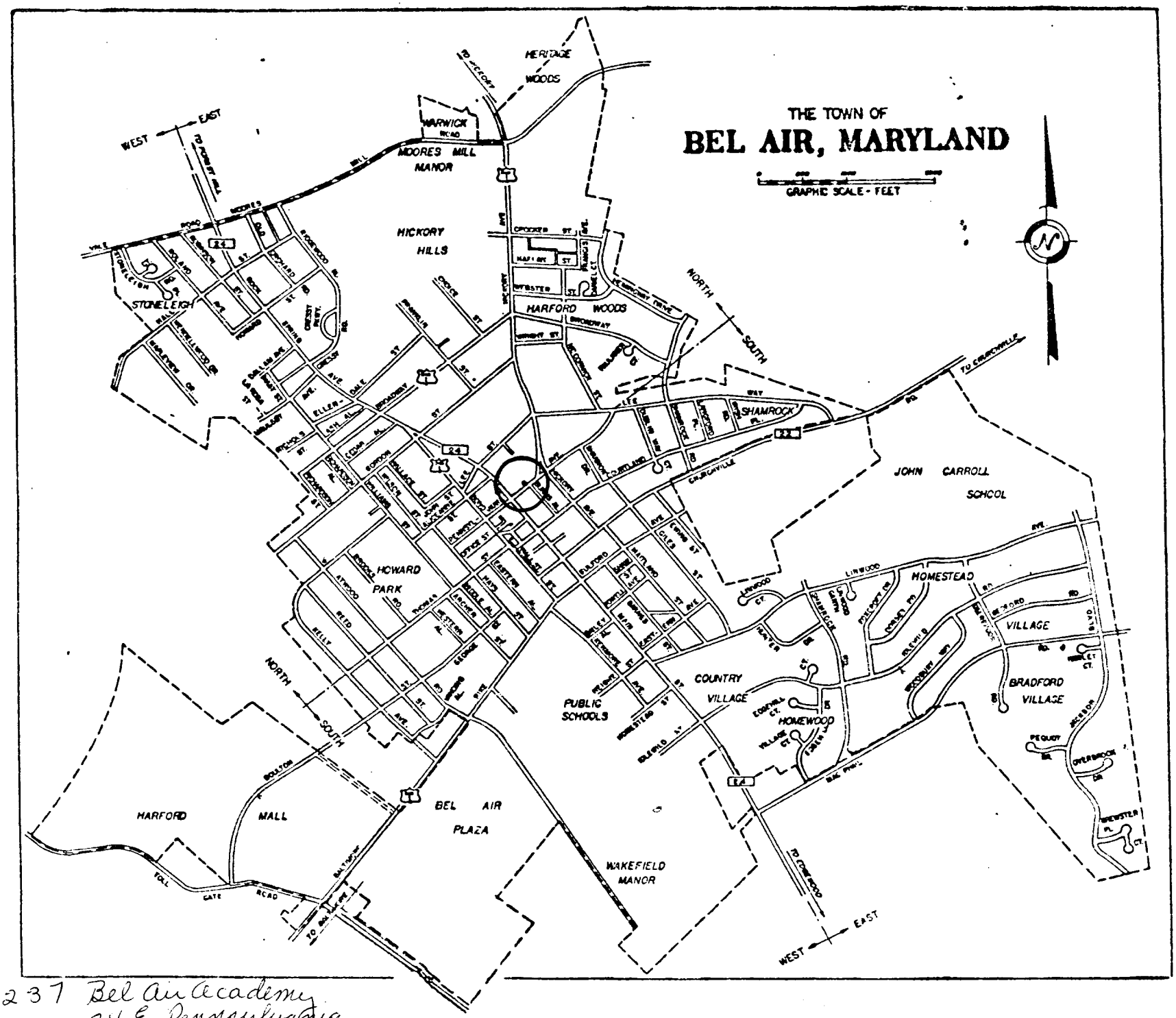
Date _____

ATTEST:

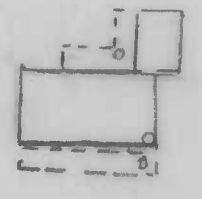
_____
Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

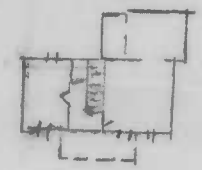
SEE INSTRUCTIONS



HA-237 Bel Air Academy
24 E. Pennsylvania
Bel Air.



1904



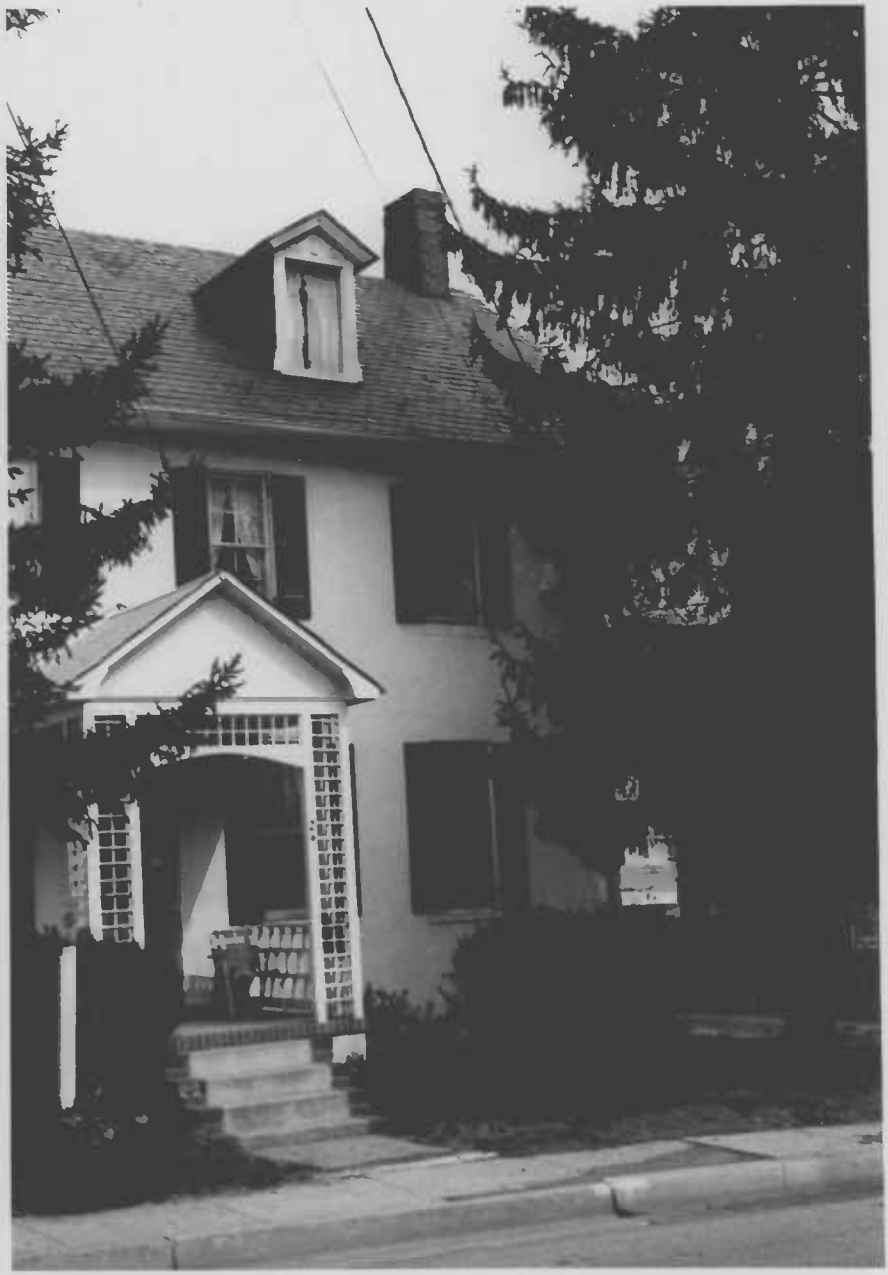
PRESENT

TRACED by

M. LAREW

BEL AIR ACADEMY
24 E. PENNA. AVE.
BEL AIR, MD
HA 237

SCALE 1" = 50'



HA-237

e portion of s elev

M. Larew 1979

HA-237 Bel Air Academy 24 E Penna Bel Air
N elev of main block N + E of ell
M. Larew 1979

HA-237 Bel Air Academy 24 E Penna Bel Air
[illegible]
M. Larew, 1979

HA-237 Bel Air Academy
24 E. Pennsylvania Ave
Bel Air
[illegible]
[illegible]
Photo after [illegible]
[illegible]