

Ferry-Webster House  
703 Roland Avenue  
Bel Air  
Private

This gracious Queen Anne house is one of the largest of its kind in Bel Air. Between two dormers, the large front gable tops a second story bay window. Directly below the gabled and shingled bay of the front porch projects. All of this gives the impression that the house is symmetrical, but in fact these important elements are shifted one bay to the south. The house has small wooden shingles on the second story, a slight overhang and shiplap below, a common Queen Anne conceit that is rare in Bel Air. The house has the only living hall in Bel Air. Some halls have fireplaces but this one is the true large living hall complete with a fireplace (and an imposing Eastlake Mantel) in the south east corner.

The house was the last of at least four houses built and lived in by Edward Ferry, a Bel Air entrepreneur who owned the lumber yard and several canning warehouses at the railroad station. Around 1900 his financial empire unravelled, and the house was sold to R. Harry Webster, a partner in the canning brokerage of Smith, Webster, Inc.

ADDENDA (May 1990)

Ferry-Webster House  
703 Roland Avenue  
HA-1489

Paragraph 1

- 1) Change Line 2 to read: "**The majority of the house is clad in vinyl shiplap.**"
- 2) Change Line 7 to read: "Two gable roofed, **vinyl-clad** dormers with a pair of 4 pane casements flank what appears to be a center front gable . . . "
- 3) Change Line 9 to read: "The gable is decorated with fish-scale **vinyl** shingles and is lighted by a **screened** window."
- 4) Change Line Change Line 10 to read: "Directly beneath the gable (in the second story) is a hexagonal bay window with a hip roof and three **1/1 windows.**"

Paragraph 2

- 1) Change Line 6 by deleting the following sentence: "Major windows have wooden louvered shutters."

Paragraph 3

- 1) Change Line 3 to read: The south elevation has one bay and a two story porch. **This former sunporch is now enclosed in vinyl with glazing in the original opening.**
- 2) Delete this sentence on Line 5: "This porch has a balustrade."

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Ferry-Webster House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

703 Roland

1st

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Harford

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_\_DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_\_SITE

\_\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_PUBLIC

PRIVATE

\_\_\_BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

\_\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_\_PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_TRANSPORTATION

OTHER apts.

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Jackie Lee Davis

Telephone #: 734-6357

STREET & NUMBER

1010 Carsins Run Road

CITY, TOWN

Churchville

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21014

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County Courthouse

Liber #: 1008

Folio #: 461

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
<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 _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This large two and a half story house is at 703 Roland Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. The first story is shiplap: the second story is small wood shingles. The house is very slightly L-shaped which gives the north two-thirds of the roof a hip configuration. The north third is a gable roof with a gable having two 2/2 windows in it on the south elevation. The front elevation has 6 bays, but because of the disposition of dormers and gable it still gives the effect of being balanced. Two gable roofed, fish-scale shingled dormers with a pair of 4 pane casements flank what appears to be a center front gable, although the gable is actually shifted one bay to the south. The gable is decorated with fish-scale shingles and is lighted by a 6 pane window. Directly beneath the gable (in the second story) is a hexagonal bay window with a hip roof and three shuttered 2/2 windows. Directly beneath that, and again emphasizing the apparent balance of the facade is a gable-roofed projecting bay of the otherwise hip-roofed front (west) porch. This gable is also decorated with fish-scale shingles. Both elements of the porch are carried on slim posts, turned with another turn at hip and neck. Solid scalloped brackets have a circle cut out of the top corner.

The main windows of the house are 2/2 with the following exceptions: a 6/6 window just north of the bay window, which probably lights the staircase; the first story front windows which are 2/4; a triplet of rectangular Queen Anne windows just north of the door which are set staggered upwards and light the stairway; casements in the east bay of the south elevation and the south bay of the east elevation on the second story ( a sunporch). Major windows have wooden louvered shutters. The main entrance is set in the line of front gable, bay window, and porch projection. A massive 8 panel door is topped by a wide single pane transom.

The north elevation is the one with the ell. It is 4 bays wide with a pair of dormers like those in front and the massive chimney stack rising just behind them. The south elevation has one bay and a two story porch, the second story a sunporch and the first story porch with a molded cornice carried on turned posts like those in front. This porch has a balustrade. The site elevations show clearly that the second story is given the appearance of projecting over the first by two rows of shingles which slant out before the join with the shiplap of the first story.

The rear (east) elevation shows the ell to be only a slight projection.

This house is now divided into 6 apartments and only the living hall was available for inspection; nevertheless, from the shape of the house and the disposition of the windows a floor-plan can be suggested. The living hall is, of course, behind the door. It appears to be as deep as the main block with the provision of a service hall in the back. It is as large as most parlors. It has a fine Eastlake mantel with green tiles surrounding the square opening in the southeast corner. A closed string staircase rises along the west wall just north of the front door. The dog-leg is at the bottom, perpendicular to the wall plane. The string is panelled, the balusters are turned, and the turned newels have a block and knob finial. Panelled wainscotting occupies the other three walls and molded woodwork with "doorbell" corner blocks and middle blocks surround the doors. The effect - especially with the shabby bookcases which fill the room, is warm, cozy, and informal - exactly the effect that the Queen Anne living hall was meant to convey. The open circulation plan of the mature Queen Anne style was not adopted, however.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1890

BUILDER/ ~~ARCHITECT~~ Edward Ferry

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This large Queen Anne house is the only house in Bel Air with a genuine living hall. It represents a growing maturity of the Queen Anne style in Town. This house, however, reflects Bel Air's inability to build an asymmetrical house. The house, despite its obvious Queen Anne elements and its living hall, is more of a classically balanced house than the major national Queen Anne buildings. Further, the floor plan works around the living hall in a very traditional way or it probably does. The surveyor only got in the hall, but the hall does not open into the other rooms in the open and airy way of the mature Queen Anne floor plans. Three perfectly ordinary late Victorian doors lead to the other rooms. Further, a study of the outside of the building will convince the viewer that the room to the south of the hall was probably the parlor and that the northern rooms were, respectively, dining room and kitchen. The traffic flow, therefore, is more typical of the classical house than of the Queen Anne.

The house was built in 1890 by Edward Ferry on land he leased from Mary Dallam (67/420). He redeemed the land the next year (69/393). This house represents the culmination of Ferry's domestic building in Town. There is no evidence that he was a carpenter or a contractor. He did own the lumber yard and building supplies store at the railroad, and he built so many houses that one is forced to the conclusion that he was either very restless or a speculative builder. The first house he is recorded as building was the first house on the lot at 520 Mast Street which he built in 1884. This house burned in 1889, but from descriptions it was the basic Bel Air three bay front gable Victorian with two story bay windows on the gable ends. This was probably not his first house; there is no record of where he lived before 1884 unless it was with his mother, Barbara Dunnigan. In 1885 he built 636 Rock Spring Avenue (the Archer-Wysong House). This house has developed a Queen Anne look, but it is virtually certain that that was due to a post-1890 remodeling. Without the Queen Anne skin, the house is simply ancestor of the late Victorian house with the projecting two side bays like those being built on Roland in 1899. In 1888 he built the house at 628-630 Rock Spring, a double Victorian house with a front gable over each unit. This present house is much larger than any of the previous houses, and that and the spacious design suggest that Ferry felt he had "made it" and could afford to spread himself a little. Whether he could was debatable, since it all came down in a welter of lawsuits around the turn of the century.

Perhaps he was simply restless. In 1895 he took his family to Philadelphia where he intended to sell musical instruments for the wholesale firm of Wymans (Harford Democrat, March 8, 1895). So far as one can tell, he had never had a previous connection with musical instruments, but 19th century entrepreneurs were often amazingly mobile: witness editor Charles Bouldin's switch to being a shirt

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Harford Democrat

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies parcel #52 in the Town of Bel Air.

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

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

4 December 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET & NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

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

Three regular doors open to the other rooms. This probably made the whole house easier to heat.

Now for a projected floor plan. South of the hall is probably the parlor, for this corner of the house is lighted by two windows in front and one on the side. North of the hall is probably the dining room with the kitchen behind that, and possibly a hall behind the living hall.

Whatever fireplaces there are must feed internally to the large north stack because that stack is in the wrong place for the hall fireplace.

Despite the elegance and size of the house, it is only larger than the conventional L-shaped house in Bel Air. If it were not for the living hall, which is unique, it would just be a large house. Three other houses in Town have fireplaces in the hall, but the halls are long and reasonably narrow and more suited to a country dance than to sitting around the fire.

manufacturer in the same period. In the Spring of 1896 he was back in Town declining to serve an election judge because of the press of business (Ibid., April 3, 1896). In October appears a puzzling break in the pattern. The Harford Democrat for October 30 announces "Mrs. Edward Ferry is ill at her home, Hazel Dell". Now this house was the former home of Stevenson Archer. His wife and children had been living at 636 Rock Spring (Ferry's old home) since they bought it in 1891. Stevenson Archer had been in jail for embezzlement. The Hazel Dell title shows no trace of Edward Ferry. Did he lease 703 Roland in 1895 when he went to Philadelphia and rent Hazel Dell on his return?

In 1897 Ferry sold his lumber yard to Hanway & Keen and in November of that year he became the agent for the Washington Life Insurance Company after the death of agent Allen Hoffman. Ferry and his mother, Barbara Dunnigan, saw their investments so entangled that by the turn of the century various people were suing them. One by one all the properties were sold: her house on Rock Spring, the lumber yard land, the hotel and office building on Courtland. When the sales were made Ferry, his family, and Mrs. Dunnigan had returned to Philadelphia. In 1902 the house on Roland was sold to R. Harry Webster for \$4600 (104/300).

Webster had, until 1899, been the cashier of the Aberdeen Bank. In that year he joined with Willard G. Rouse and Christian Smith to form Smith, Rouse, & Webster (later Smith, Webster), a canning brokerage and private banking firm with offices at 18 Office Street in Bel Air. Canning brokers made a lot of money when they were making money, but the business was notoriously unstable. In 1908 the First National Bank of Havre de Grace sued the firm, and various properties were sold. Mrs. Webster bought the house for \$6750 (125/98). By that time they had added more land to the original lot. In 1921 Smith, Webster (Rouse had bought himself out) traded buildings with the Harford Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Their new office at 33 Courtland was the very same hotel Mrs. Barbara Dunnigan had lost in 1900. They mortgaged it. In 1923 they defaulted on the mortgage, lost the building, and that was, presumably the end of the firm. The same year Mrs. Webster defaulted on the house mortgage and Edwin H. Webster bought the house for \$9500 (183/253). This is probably a son since Col. Edwin H. Webster, who would have been R. Harry's brother, died in 1893. After a 1931 law suit Henry Webster bought the property for \$8100. The estate had around 8 acres at the time. In 1940 the executors of the will of Henry Webster sold it to Sanner Bailey and William Kral (263/7). It was at that time that the house was divided into apartments. In 1942 the Krals bought out the Baileys (273/186), and in 1976 the Krals sold it to their son-in-law and daughter, Mr. & Mrs. Jackie Lee Davis, the present owners.

While one of the most elegant houses in Bel Air, this house has attracted law suits and mortgage defaults and is currently divided into six apartments.



Harriet A. Webster  
the men were trustees in First National  
Bank, Havre de Grace, et al vs. Smith  
Webster  
\$6750

104/300

14 May 1902  
John S. Young & S. A. Williams, trustees  
to  
R. Harry Webster  
\$4600  
Young & Williams were trustees in Young &  
Williams vs Edward Ferry et al

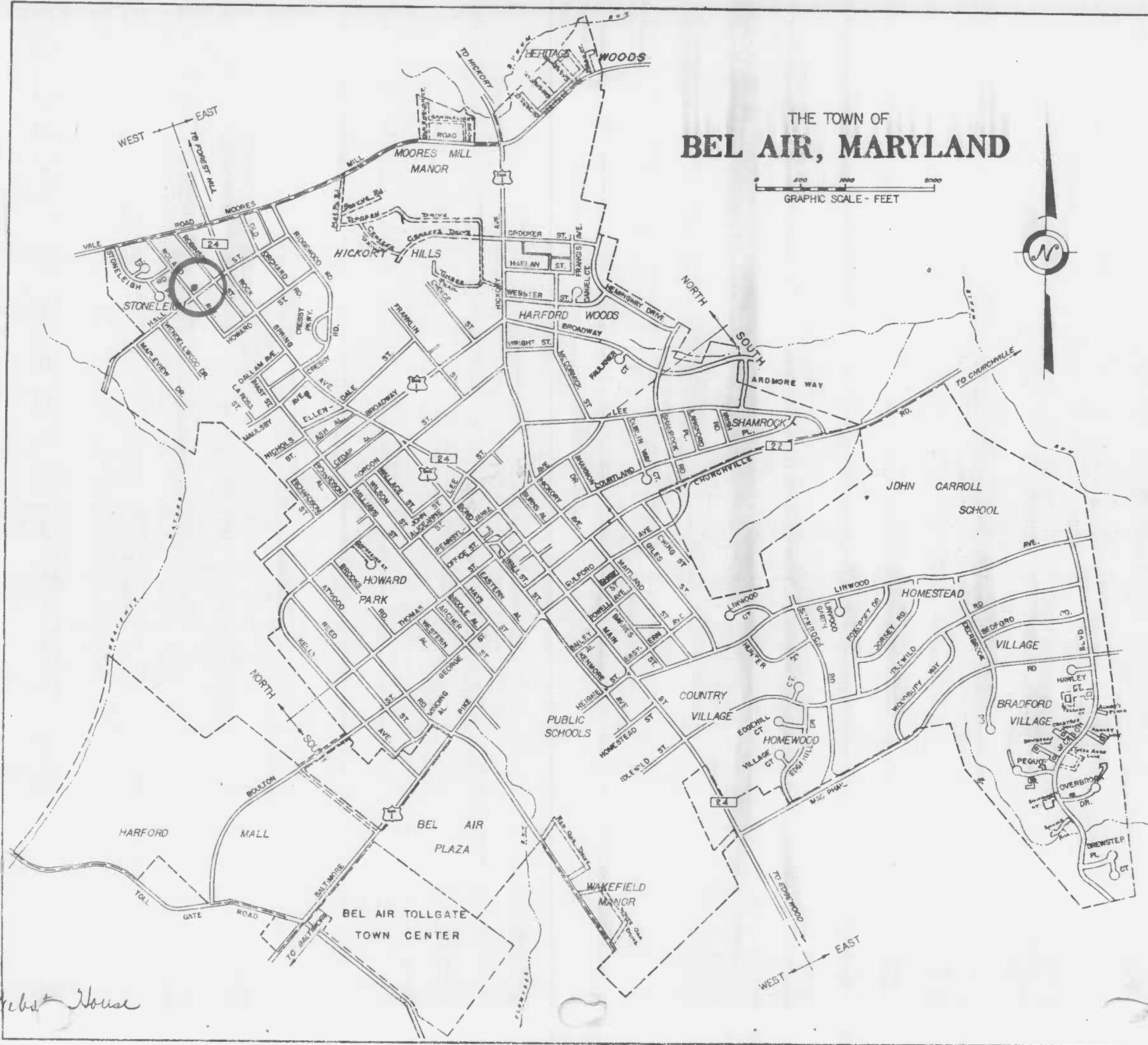
69/393

12 February 1891  
Mary C. Dallam  
to  
Edward Ferry  
\$1317.50  
release from lease

67/420

21 March 1890  
Mary Dallam  
to  
Edward Ferry  
lease

# THE TOWN OF BEL AIR, MARYLAND



HA-1489  
*Ferry Sub House*



Ferry-Webster House  
# 134/1489  
703 Roland Avenue  
Gullie Mueller  
5/1/90  
Facing northeast







HA-1489 Ferry-Webster House, 703 Poland Bel Air  
w. elev  
M. Larew, 1979







