NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Thomas and Company Cannery

other names/site number M:21-168

2. Location

street & number East Diamond Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Gaithersburg N/A vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Montgomery code 031 zip code 20877

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[X] private	[X] building(s)	1	buildings
[ ] public-local	[ ] district		sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site		structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure		objects
	[ ] object		
		1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date 5/29/90

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register.
[ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

M:21-168

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Industry/Manufacturing Facility	Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
no style	foundation: Brick walls: Brick roof: Metal (tin) other: Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Thomas and Company Cannery is a one to two-story tall, free-standing load-bearing brick rectangular structure composed of four discrete, structurally independent but contiguous elements, built between 1917 and 1918, with a non-contributing addition constructed in 1956. Although in general disrepair, the exterior of the cannery retains its original integrity. The building interior, however, has been significantly modified over the years and has lost most of its original detailing, fabric and equipment. All of the major building components, with the exception of the 1956 addition to the north elevation of the structure, contribute to its industrial and architectural character. The 1956 addition was constructed of the same building materials as the original structure and does not detract from its significance.

XX See continuation sheet No. 7.1
for GENERAL DESCRIPTION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

All of the major building components of the Thomas and Company Cannery were constructed between 1917 and 1918. An addition was added to the north elevation of the structure in 1956. The eastern most portion of the building (identified on the sketch and boundary map as the shipping portion of the Cannery) is made up of two, two-story rectangular, brick bearing wall structures, covered by a single, continuous gabled roof. Construction on the east half of this portion (#1 on the Resource Sketch Map) was initiated first, with the west half (#2) following shortly after. The interior walls of this portion are exposed brick, the first floor is a concrete slab on grade. Brick piers penetrating the slab rise up to varying heights, supporting some of the original interior wood columns. These wood columns are is an advanced state of deterioration. Steel posts have been added to this section of the structure to reinforce and help support the second floor. The second floor structure is wood joists and flooring, both of which have suffered extensive water damage and are in poor condition. The roof structure in this portion of the building is made up of wood tie beams, in poor to deteriorated condition, spanning the width of the building. The roofing is a single layer of corrugated steel decking which replaced the original metal pan roof. There is a gabled cupola over part of the western end (#2) of this portion of the building, originally installed to provide filtered natural light into the structure.

Adjoining the western end of the shipping building is a single story, 16' high, brick bearing wall structure (identified on the sketch and boundary map as the main processing building, #3). The interior walls of this section are exposed brick. This portion of the building has a concrete floor 2" to 4" higher than the floor in the east structure. The roof for this portion of the building is composed of steel trusses spanning the width of the building, bearing on the brick exterior walls. Running the length of the roof is a gabled clerestory structure glazed on its north side with operable, louvered glass panels. This feature was designed to allow natural light to illuminate the processing and assembly operations of the Cannery.

Directly west of this portion of the building is the original one-story, brick boiler house (#4 on the Resource Sketch Map), which still contains the International Boiler Works machinery installed for the processing system. The interior walls are exposed brick and the floor is a concrete slab on grade. This small structure is covered by a single layer of corrugated metal, which replaced the original metal pan roofing, supported by 2x6 wood framing.

Attached to the north elevation of the main processing building is a one- story, brick building which was constructed after World War II, around 1956 (#5 on the Resource Sketch Map). The interior walls of this structure are exposed brick, the floor is a concrete slab on grade, and this element of the building is covered by a wood-framed, corrugated metal, gabled roof. This portion of the Cannery, although constructed of compatible materials and in a simple style, is not a contributing element to the complex.

Added to the south elevation of the eastern portion of the building, directly adjacent to the B & O Railroad tracks, are three, one-half story lean-to structures; two constructed of concrete block, and one of metal. The dates of their construction are unknown, but probably post 1956.

To the north is a partially paved lot between the building and East Diamond Avenue. To the east of the building is an open lot and to the west is a one story building that is not part of the Cannery property.

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.2

8. Statement of Significance

M:21-168

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Industry	1917-1940	N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Thomas and Company Cannery, which started operations in Gaithersburg, Maryland in 1917, was the first and largest vegetable cannery in Montgomery County, Maryland. Its opening provided this primarily agriculturally based region with an important local market for vegetables grown in and around Gaithersburg, with farmers coming from Buckeystown, Adamstown, Poolesville, Fairfax, and other areas. Prior to its construction, local farmers were required to truck produce, the major agricultural crop in the area, to markets in Baltimore and Washington. The Thomas cannery provided a much needed local market which would stimulate the local economy by reinvesting revenues within Gaithersburg and the immediate area. At the time of its construction, until well after World War II, the cannery was the primary employer in Gaithersburg, providing regular full and part-time employment for more than 200 people, and hundreds of additional jobs for migrant workers employed picking vegetables grown in the surrounding area. Until its closure in 1963 after fire damage, the factory remained the major employer in Gaithersburg and the primary market for locally grown produce. The factory canned peas, pumpkin and corn, supplied both the local retail market and the war effort during Wars I and II. During the war years the cannery expanded operations and functioned on a three shift schedule to provide vegetables for shipment to troops. After the war, the cannery continued to produce vegetables under the brand names "MY-T-Nice," Ever-Good," "Barbara Fritchie," and "On-Top" corn, peas and succotash. The cannery represents very important local industrial development in Gaithersburg in the early part of this century, utilizing the abundant agricultural resources of Montgomery County and providing extensive employment for both migrant and permanent workers up until the factory's closing in 1963. It was the first industrial development in this rural, agriculturally based community and, until closing, the primary locally based industry.

☒ See continuation sheet No. 8.1

For HISTORIC CONTEXT and MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN data.

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance	A.D. 1870-1930
Modern Period	A.D. 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Economic (Commercial and Industrial

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): Industry/Manufacturing Facility

Known Design Source: none

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.2

HISTORIC CONTEXT: The Canning Industry in Maryland

Overview:

The process of canning vegetables and seafood in the United States was focused in the eastern portion of the country, primarily in Maine and Maryland.[1] The early part of the 19th century was a struggle for finding a safe method of purifying canned materials to prevent spoilage and much of this research and experimentation was conducted in Maryland by individuals whose names are synonymous with canning today; Thomas Kensett, John Winslow Jones, and Louis McMurray.

Due to the pressures of providing a safe method of transporting foodstuffs great distances by slow methods, such as boats and carriages, coupled with the potential economic benefits to the individuals and cities developing such methods, great efforts were expended in finding new and efficient means of canning. There was no single, revolutionary invention by one person that created the canning process used throughout Maryland and the rest of the country, but rather a series of developments and inventions of packaging and processing that were created in direct response to identified problems.

By 1850 Thomas Kensett was canning large quantities of corn, green peas and tomatoes in Baltimore in a single facility. Although his products were readily accepted in the marketplace, a lack of proper processing led to significant losses due to spoilage. In 1860 Isaac Solomon developed a process in Baltimore of sealing cans "air-tight" prior to immersing them in an open bath for cooking.[2] This reduced the amount of spoilage and increased the shelf-life of most canned products. Solomon also introduced the use of calcium chloride in the cooking water, this significantly reduced the cooking time and increased production.

During the Civil War, Baltimore was the center of transportation, with the Baltimore & Ohio operating trains through Lake Erie ports to Chicago. In addition, the Chesapeake Bay was filled with shipping, heading both north and south. The combination of Baltimore being a transportation hub, and the Chesapeake Bay providing large quantities of seafood, made the city a natural setting for the canning industry and industrial development. Due to the abundance of oysters in the Bay, in the 1870's Baltimore took the lead from Maine as the center of oyster canning.[3] The "Cove Oysters" from Baltimore became known throughout the United States. Due to the general short shelf life of oysters and other seafood, it became necessary to improve the processing methods that had been developed primarily for vegetables. In 1874 a Baltimore canner, Andrew Keyser Shriver, perfected a closed-kettle retort (cooker) that improved the quality control of the processing system and shortened the cooking time.[4] This invention both solved the most difficult purification problems with oysters and seafood, and increased production for all canning. The closed-kettle retort process continues to be used today.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.3

There were numerous other developments in the canning industry that took place in Maryland, and particularly in Baltimore, such as an improved tinning process to prevent "Corn Black", and enameled linings in cans to preserve the color and freshness of seafood. In addition, Maryland was the first State to attempt to stabilize the distribution and sale of canned foods in America, organizing the Canned Goods Exchange in 1882 in Baltimore.[5]

REGIONAL IMPACTS

Although Baltimore was the center of the19th century canning industry in Maryland, the increased demand for canned goods, linked to the outbreak of World War I, created a need to regionalise the industry.[6] By the start of the 20th century, the high economic return and the ready availability of fish, crabs and oysters from the Chesapeake Bay led Baltimore's canning activities to increasingly center around seafood, with fewer and fewer processing plants handling vegetables. Also, the transport of vegetables from outlying counties and farms to Baltimore still posed concerns over spoilage. To address these conditions, numerous small canning industries grew up in outlying areas. Located in smaller towns, these processing factories were developed to serve local farmers and local markets.

THE THOMAS AND COMPANY CANNERY

One of the new leading families in the 20th century canning industry in Maryland were Frank and Clyde Thomas. Prior to opening the cannery in Gaithersberg in 1917, Frank Thomas was operating a canning plant in Adamstown and in Frederick. With the start of World War I, and the entreaty of President Woodrow Wilson to canners to "make possible the expansion of their enterprises which will be necessary as the stupendous undertaking of the great war develops", the Thomas family decided to expand their business and applied for a permit to construct a flour mill, grain elevator, and fertilizer mixing plant in Gathersberg, and, on the cannery property, a hogpen, a warehouse and tank. The original warehouse remains as the primary element on the current cannery site.

The Thomas cannery was opened to primarily serve the local farmers and canned goods market. Although it evolved into the largest and longest lived cannery in Montgomery County, and remained in operation until 1962, the factory remained the focus of Gaithersberg industry and economy. It provided an important local market for farmers, employment for local and migrate workers, and, during World War II, when the factory was operating continuously to meet another "War demand", employed the work of German prisoners-of -war, which were housed at the corner of Goshen and Snoffers School Road.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.4

The Thomas cannery, was constructed around the technological canning advancements developed in the 19th century, combined with the assembly-line production process advanced by the new auto industry. The design of the Thomas Cannery complex follows closely the work being done by Albert Kahn in the development of expandable factories, both in the orientation of the buildings and in their open-end design.

The factory represents a number of significant elements in the context of the canning industry in Maryland; the regionalization of the cannery industry in Maryland, away from Baltimore; modest, local industrial development in the canning business; state-of-the-art processing systems and factory design; and, the shift away from a central, economic, industrial base in Baltimore, to regional and local economic independence. The Thomas cannery illustrates the diversity of the canning industry in Maryland and the importance of local and regional developments in the economic growth throughout the State.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.5

Baltimore and Frederick, Maryland were early industrial centers for food canning (corn, oysters and peas in particular) in the United States after 1860. Widespread low-cost distribution became possible after 1905 when the sanitary or open top can using double seamed rather than soldered top and bottom was developed.[7] The industry was highly dependent on transportation networks to move raw produce to factories and finished goods out. Although agriculture was the economic base of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County through the 19th century, rail transportation enabling large scale food processing did not arrive until 1873. No canning industry existed in Montgomery County until Thomas and Company moved to Gaithersburg in 1917.

The Thomas family had already developed a successful Western Maryland cannery business in Adamstown before selecting Gaithersburg as the site of a new operation.[8] On February 27, 1917, Town of Gaithersburg records show that Thomas and Company was issued a building permit for a canning factory. On September 17, 1917, Mr. Thomas applied for a permit for a flour mill, grain elevator, fertilizer mixing plant, and canning factory. From June to September 1918, Thomas was issued three building permits: the first for an addition to the factory, the second for a hog-pen at the factory property, and the third for an addition to the warehouse and tank.[9] The cannery was built on a large parcel on Chestnut Street extending along the B&O tracks at Ward's Station, conveniently located for rail shipping and receiving.

The complex consisted of a brick and concrete block, tin roofed cannery building which contained the production line, kettles for preparing the vegetables, fillers, cappers, cookers, and a cold water cooling canal from the factory to the finished goods warehouse. The "Pea Vinery," a machine which separated pods from vines and shelled peas for washing, was located at the far back of the lot. Corn was prepared and run through the "cutters" next to the factory. After processing, the product was cooled by sending it through the canal, and was stored in the finished goods warehouse. The original 1917 brick structure remaining on the property was the factory and storehouse for canning supplies, primarily sugar and cans.[10]

The factory originally canned corn and pumpkin, then peas and corn. The pea season was for 4 to 6 weeks beginning in late May or June followed by a 6 week slack time, then corn production until October. The product was put into gallon cans for wholesale and institutional sale.[11]

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.6

Other than agricultural supply and products, the cannery was the only industry of size in the area. The operation employed about 200 people when canning, needing approximately 130 to 140 to run the line. The seasonal employment provided income opportunities for high school and college students, women with families, and wage earners needing supplemental part-time income. Students were paid 25 to 50 cents an house for preparation in the 1940s and 1950s and more responsible positions up to $1.00 per hour in the mid-fifties.[12] Many people worked shifts or several days a week, but during the height of the season when the operation continued until all produce was processed, some people worked from opening at 5 or 6 a.m. until midnight or later.[13]

The cannery had a ripple effect on the Gaithersburg economy. Laborers, field workers and pickers were needed to cultivate and harvest peas and sweet corn for the plant. Truckers, administrative and sales representatives were needed to transport and sell the product. Local workers captured the bulk of the jobs until the late fifties, when migrant workers were first employed for field and production work.[14] Alternative cannery crops created a more stable farm economy than one based exclusively on dairying or grain production, and one which remained constant as long as the cannery was in production. The income from seasonal farm labor and cannery production was in turn pumped back into Gaithersburg's strong farm supply and retail businesses. For some businesses and families, the cannery income was crucial for financial survival, especially during the 1930s and 1940s.[15]

During the WW II era, manpower was scarce because of armed service demands. A German Prisoner of War camp was established near Gaithersburg, roughly on Goshen and Snouffers School Road. The POWs were utilized to keep the operation running, largely in the fields, but some also worked in the cannery operation in Gaithersburg.[16]

There were some drawbacks to such an industry operating in the small town. The odor from production waste and residue could become pungent enough in the hot and humid summers to overpower most of the town, and drainage was a problem from the start.[17] A filtration plant was installed,[12] but this did not ever completely alleviate the problems. Nearby neighbors appealed to the Mayor and Council for relief on occasion and the situation was always resolved without drastic action.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.7

In 1956, the cannery was acquired from the Thomas heirs by Jenkins Brothers Cannery Company of Frederick, Maryland.[19] Migrant workers were brought from Florida to work at the plant and were housed in frame "dormitories" within the cannery complex. In 1958, a fire broke out in a dormitory, killing an infant. The City of Gaithersburg then notified the cannery that the housing had to be removed. Another fire broke out at the cannery in June of 1962 doing $10,000 in damage.[20] A resident on West Diamond Avenue, several blocks away recalls ..."like shots being fired or firecrackers exploding" could be heard at their apartment.[21]

The fire investigation revealed that 15 migrant workers were present, housed in a "chicken-coop-like structure within the confines of Jenkins Brothers Cannery Company...."[22] The approximately 30X12 foot structure housed 15 workers in four partitioned rooms with outside entrances. There was a community lavatory in the structure but toilet facilities were available only in the factory. The city ordered Jenkins Brothers to remove workers and the substandard dormitories or face legal action.[23] The loss of low-cost labor together with the waning of local agricultural in favor of suburban housing and development was a double blow and the cannery operation was not restarted. The smokestack and some portions of the cannery complex were taken down. The finished goods warehouse was rebuilt, and expanded for other uses and is now leased by Standard Supply for warehouse space. The old 1917-1918 factory and storehouse remain vacant. The cannery was designated a Gaithersburg landmark in 1987.

Footnotes:

[1] May, Earl. "The Canning Clan," 1937, The McMillian Company, New York, p. 150.

[2] Keche, Edward, "Masters of the Art of Canning." Maryland History Magazine, vol 67, pgs. 351-362.

[3] May, Earl. "The Canning Clan," 1937, The McMillian Company, New York, p. 240.

[4] Keche, Edward, "Masters of the Art of Canning." Maryland History Magazine, vol 67, pgs. 351-362.

[5] May, Earl. "The Canning Clan" 1937, The McMillian Company, New York, p. 371.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.8

[6] Canning Trade Magazine: History of Canning Industry, 1914 issue.

[7] "Food Preservation." Encyclopedia Brittanica 15th ed. 1974. p 492.

[8] Williams, T.J.C., and Roger McKinsey. History of Frederick County, Maryland, Vol. II Biographical Record; 1910, L. R. Titsworth and Co. pp.1431-1434.

[9] Town of Gaithersburg permits records for 1917, 1918. City Hall, 31 South Summit Avenue.

[10] Interviews with John S. Thomas, March - May 1986. Mr. Thomas as nephew/son of owners John F. Thomas and Clyde E. Thomas, worked at the cannery as a boy and was timekeeper as a young man. Interview with James Wriley Jacobs. Mr. Jacobs' began working at the cannery at age 14. His father was both manager and Superintendent of the cannery from 1917 until retirement about 1950.

[11] Gaithersburg, The Heart of Montgomery County, 1978, City of Gaithersburg. p. 97.

[12] Charles W. Walker, when asked in 1978 what boys did in Gaithersburg in his youth, (1920-30) replied "Everybody worked at the cannery as soon as they were old enough." (Gaithersburg Gazette, undated clipping. John S. Thomas, James W. Jacobs, and interview with Lee Manuel, May, 1986. Mr. Manuel worked at the cannery in the fifties to finance his education.

[13] John S. Thomas.

[14] Interview with Janet Thompson Manuel, May, 1986 and The Montgomery County Sentinel, June 28, 1962.

[15] John S. Thomas.

[16] John S. Thomas.

[17] The Montgomery County Sentinel, 9/30/18 reported a suit of the County Commissioners acting as County Board of Health to refrain Thomas & Company of Gaithersburg from permitting refuse from their canning factory to be heard in Circuit Court...judge ordered nuisance to be abated or injunction would be granted.

[18] Gaithersburg, The Heart of Montgomery County, p. 97.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8.9

[19] Montgomery County Land Records 2210/512 Thomas & Co. to Cullen S. Jenkins et. al. Deed dated April 5, 1956 included all lands conveyed to Thomas & Co. by I. T. Fulks (2.701 acres, April 24, 1917, (PBR262/398) Talbott et. al. (302/64 Jan. 20, 1921), John A. Selby on 7/6/1950 (Fred. Co. CKW1402/279) and Fitzhugh T. Clarke (1773/191&197) part of land called "Zoar" conveyed to Thomas & Co. by Lena V. Bohrer Ward & husband by deed dated July 30, 1947 (1093/169). The core Fulks/Cannery property is part of the 1,238-1/2 acre land grant "Zoar" patented by Robert Biscoe and son Gerard in 1793 incorporating several earlier grants. Martha Meem, wife of George A. Meem of Georgetown, purchased 200 acres of Zoar known as "Rawlings Rest" from Mary R. Bibb in 1863. Henry C. Ward and Ignatius T. Fulks, operating as the company of Ward & Fulks, purchased the cannery property from Martha Meem on April 29, 1873 (EBP10/388).

[20] Sentinel, 6/28/1962.

[21] Janet Manuel. The Manuels lived in the West Diamond Avenue/Water Street area.

[22] Sentinel, ibid.

[23] Sentinel, ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical References

M:21-168

May, Earl, "The CAnning Clan," 1937, The McMillian Company, New York.

Canning Trade Magazine: History of Canning Industry.

Kechel, Edward M., "Masters of the Art of Canning," Maryland History Magazine.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Montgomery County (M:21-168).

See also end notes for Section 8.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: City of Gaithersburg

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.66699 acres

USGS quad Gaithersburg, MD

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	309800	4334750
B			
C			
D			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet No. 10.1

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes only the city lot upon which the resource stands.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John J. Cullinane, AIA

organization John Cullinane Associates date October 24, 1989

street & number 1214 28th Street, N. W. telephone 202-337-7124

city or town Washington state D. C. zip code 20007

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Being a parcel of land conveyed to Rockville Fuel and Feed by deed dated March 8, 1967, and recorded among the Land Records of Montgomery County, Maryland in Liber 3599 at Folio 668, the said parcel also being shown on a plat of subdivision entitled "Parcel A, a subdivision of Rockville Fuel and Feed Co." and recorded in the aforesaid Land Records in Plat Book 106 as Plat 12306, and being particularly described as follows:

Beginning for the same at a point on the North 76°15'10" West, 301.81 foot line as shown on the aforesaid plat, said point being 210.00 feet from the southeasterly end of said line and running thence;

1) North 76°15'10" West, 91.81 feet to a point; thence
2) North 69°40'10" West, 105.00 feet to a point; thence
3) North 19°46'06" East, 173.04 feet to a point; thence
4) South 58°32'10" East, 190.00 feet to a point; thence
5) South 15°07'05" West, 126.34 feet to a point of the beginning containing 29054.23 Square Feet or 0.66699 of an Acre

Survey

Magi No

DOE

7/21/86

M: 21-168

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic: Thomas & Company Cannery

and/or common: The Cannery

2. Location

street & number: 14 Chestnut Street ___ not for publication

city, town: Gaithersburg ___ vicinity of congressional district: 9

state: Maryland county: Montgomery

3. Classification

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

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

name: Rockville Fuel and Feed Co.

street & number: 14901 Southlawn Dr. telephone no.: 762-3988

city, town: Rockville state and zip code: Maryland 20850

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Montgomery Co. Land Records Plat 12306

street & number: Montgomery Co. Courthouse liber xxx

city, town: Rockville folio state: Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title: None

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. M:21-168

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	X deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date of move _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

At its site near the southwest corner of the Diamond-Chestnut intersection, the T-shaped Gaithersburg cannery typifies light American industrial architecture of the early-20th century. Solid brick walls pierced with banks of large window openings support an array of pitched-roof gables intersecting at right angles. Functional simplicity and structural strength are reflected in the open construction of the complex. As with many such facilities, plant expansion and upgrades in mechanization are mirrored in the alterations and add-ons to which structures of this sort lent themselves.

The most arresting feature of the cannery's exterior is the skylit monitor roof that runs the length of the main food-processing wing, terminating with a tiled and stepped gable end. Monitors were common features on the roofs of iron foundries, bakeries, and factories of all types, admitting light and exhausting gases and steam. The cannery's monitor is thoroughly pierced with debris thrown from Diamond Ave., but its iron framework and operating gear appear to be intact.

A large cupola atop the food-preparation building adjacent to the monitor distinguishes this two-story structure, further identified by its triple-thick brick walls and heavily timbered lower level. Clearly, considerable quantities of vegetables or machinery occupied the second floor, given the density and cross-section of the squared posts that support the floor beams.

Corrugated steel sheet covers all roof gables, raised internally by a collection of truss types. Both timber-framed and angle-iron trusses with tie-rods are present. Self-supporting roofs were basic to such operations as canning, where columns and interior walls would interfere with floor activity.

North of the original cannery are two interlocking flat-roofed brick structures that may have served in part as canning warehouses but which do not form a part of the site presently under consideration. Their construction appears considerably later than that of the cannery and their designs do not relate to the integrity of the cannery itself.

Throughout the cannery are signs of deterioration that have resulted from its abandonment some 20 years ago. The boiler house and portions of the two-story structure show advanced degredation of brickwork. Heavy vegetation and trash obscure additional wear and features that would help to reveal other aspects of cannery operations.

While conventional in terms of national structural styles, the cannery is a distinctive complex in the Washington metropolitan area, symbolizing the emergence of Gaithersburg as a commercial center in the peak years of its agricultural development.

8. Significance

Survey No. M:21-168

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	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	X industry	___ politics/government	X other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1917 **Builder/Architect** local history

check: Applicable Criteria: __A __B __C __D
and/or
Applicable Exception: __A __B __C __D __E __F __G

Level of Significance: __national __state __local

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

Significance

Thomas & Company Cannery was the first, largest, and longest operating food cannery in Montgomery County and the only sizeable industry in Gaithersburg. It provided a local market for area farmers and jobs and income to the community. Fire damaged the cannery building in 1962 when local agricultural production was waning in favor of suburban development and the cannery operation was not resumed. The brick 1917 cannery and storehouse building, now vacant, retains its characteristic WWI era industrial architectural features.

History and Support

Baltimore and Frederick, Maryland were early industrial centers for food canning (corn, oysters and peas in particular) in the U.S. after 1860. Widespread low-cost distribution became possible after 1905 when the sanitary or open top can using double seamed rather than soldered top and bottom was developed. 1/ The industry was highly dependent on transportation networks to move raw produce to factories and finished goods out. Although agriculture was the economic base of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County through the 19th century, rail transportation enabling large scale food processing did not arrive until 1873. No canning industry existed in Montgomery County until Thomas & Company moved to Gaithersburg in 1917.

The Thomas family had already developed a successful Western Maryland cannery business in Adamstown before selecting Gaithersburg as the site of a new operation. 2/ On February 27, 1917, Town of Gaithersburg records show that Thomas Company was issued a building permit for a canning factory. On September 17, 1917, Mr. Thomas applied for a permit for a flour mill, grain elevator, fertilizer mixing plant, and canning factory. From June to September of 1918, Thomas was issued three building permits: the first for an addition to the factory, the second for a hog-pen at the factory property, and the third for an addition to the warehouse and tank. 3/ The Cannery was built on a large parcel on Chestnut Street extending along the B&O tracks at Ward's Station, conveniently located for rail shipping and receiving.

continued on attachment 8.1

M:21-168

The complex consisted of a brick and concrete block, tin roofed cannery building which contained the production line, kettles for preparing the vegetables, fillers, cappers, cookers, and a cold water cooling canal from the factory to the finished goods warehouse. (See annotated 1930 Parris and Sanborn map, attachment 8.4) The "Pea Vinery", a machine which separated pods from vines and shelled peas for washing, was located at the far back of the lot. Corn was prepared and run through the "cutters" next to the factory. After processing, the product was cooled by sending it through the canal, and was stored in the finished goods warehouse, fronting on Chestnut Street. This warehouse has been rebuilt and is now used by Standard Supply. The original 1917 brick structure remaining on the property was the factory and storehouse for canning supplies, primarily sugar and cans. 4/

The factory originally canned corn and pumpkin, then peas and corn. The pea season was for 4 to 6 weeks beginning in late May or June followed by a 6 week slack time, then corn production until October. The product was put into gallon cans for wholesale and institutional sale. 5/

Other than agricultural supply and products, the cannery was the only industry of size in the area. The operation employed about 200 people when canning, needing approximately 130 to 140 to run the line. The seasonal employment provided income opportunities for high school and college students, women with families, and wage earners needing supplemental part-time income. Students were paid 25 to 50 cents an hour for preparation in the 1940s and 50s and more responsible positions up to $1.00 per hour in the mid-fifties. 6/ Many people worked shifts or several days a week, but during the height of the season when the operation continued until all produce was processed, some people worked from opening at 5 or 6 am until midnight or later. 7/

The cannery had a ripple effect on the Gaithersburg economy. Laborers, field workers and pickers were needed to cultivate and harvest peas and sweet corn for the plant. Truckers, administrative and sales representatives were needed to transport and sell the product. Local workers captured the bulk of the jobs until the late fifties, when migrant workers were first employed for field and production work. 8/ Alternative cannery crops created a more stable farm economy than one based exclusively on dairying or grain production, and one which remained constant as long as the cannery was in production. The income from seasonal farm labor and cannery production was in turn pumped back into Gaithersburg's strong farm supply and retail businesses. For some businesses and families, the cannery income was crucial for financial survival, especially during the 30s and 40s. 9/

During the WWII era, manpower was scarce because of armed service demands. A German Prisoner of War camp was established near Gaithersburg, roughly on Goshen and Snouffers School Road. POWs were utilized to keep the operation running, largely in the fields, but some also worked in the cannery operation in Gaithersburg. 10/

continued on attachment 8.2

There were some drawbacks to such an industry operating in the small town. The odor from production waste and residue could become pungent enough in the hot and humid summers to overpower most of the town, and drainage was a problem from the start. 11/ A filtration plant was installed 12/, but this did not ever completely aleviate the problems. Nearby neighbors appealed to the Mayor and Council for relief on occasion and the situation was always resolved without drastic action.

In 1956, the cannery was acquired from the Thomas heirs by Jenkins Bros. Cannery Company of Frederick, Maryland. 13/ Migrant workers were brought from Florida to work at the plant and were housed in frame "dormitories" within the cannery complex. In 1958, a fire broke out in a dormitory, killing an infant. The City of Gaithersburg then notified the Cannery that the housing must be removed. Another fire broke out at the cannery in June of 1962 doing $10,000 in damage. 14/ A resident on West Diamond Avenue, several blocks away recalls that the sound of the exploding cans ..."like shots being fired or firecrackers exploding" could be heard at their apartment. 15/.

The fire investigation revealed that 15 migrant workers were present, housed in a "chicken-coop-like structure within the confines of Jenkins Bros. Cannery Company...." 16/ The approximately 30X12 ft structure housed 15 workers in four partitioned rooms with outside entrances. There was a community lavatory in the structure but toilet facilities were available only in the factory. The City ordered Jenkins Bros. to remove workers and the substandard dormitories or face legal action. 17/ The loss of low-cost labor together with the waning of local agricultural in favor of suburban housing and development was a double blow and the cannery operation was not restarted. The smokestack and some portions of the cannery complex were taken down. The finished goods warehouse was rebuilt, and expanded for other uses and is now leased by Standard Supply for warehouse space. The old 1917-18 factory and storehouse remains vacant.

Footnotes:

1. "Food Preservation". Encyclopedia Brittanica 15th ed., 1974. page 492.

2. Williams, T.J.C., and Roger McKinsey. History of Frederick County Maryland , Vol. II Biographical Record; 1910, L.R.Titsworth & Co. This edition 1967, Baltimore, Md. Regional Publishing Co. pp. 1431-1434.

3. Town of Gaithersburg permits records for 1917, 1918. City Hall, 31 South Summit Avenue.

4. Interviews with and annotated map, attachment 8.4, by John S. Thomas, March - May 1986. Mr. Thomas as nephew/son of owners John F. Thomas and Clyde E. Thomas, worked at the Cannery as a boy and was timekeeper as a young man. Interview with James Wriley Jacobs. Mr. Jacobs' began working at the Cannery at age 14. His father was both Manager and Superintendant of the Cannery from 1917 until retirement about 1950.

continued on Attachment 8.3

MHT# M-21-168
Thomas Cannery
Attachment 8.3

5. Gaithersburg, The Heart of Montgomery County, 1978, City of Gaithersburg. p.97.

6. Charles W. Walker, when asked in 1978 what boys did in Gaithersburg in his youth, (1920-30) replied "Everybody worked at the Cannery as soon as they were old enough." (Gaithersburg Gazette, undated clipping. John S. Thomas, James W. Jacobs, and interview with Lee Manuel, May, 1986. Mr. Manuel worked at the Cannery in the fifties to finance his education.

7. John S. Thomas.

8. Interview with Janet Thompson Manuel, May, 1986 and The Montgomery County Sentinel, June 28, 1962.

9. John S. Thomas.

10. John S. Thomas.

11. The Montgomery County Sentinel, 9/30/1918 reported a suit of the County Commissioners acting as County Board of Health to refrain Thomas & Co. of Gaithersburg from permitting refuse from their canning factory to be heard in Circuit Court...judge ordered nuisance to be abated or injunction would be granted.

12. Gaithersburg, The Heart of Montgomery County, p. 97.

13. Montgomery County Land Records 2210/512 Thomas & Co. to Cullen S. Jenkins et. al. Deed dated April 5, 1956 included all lands conveyed to Thomas & Co. by I.T. Fulks (2.701 acres, April 24, 1917, (PBR262/398) Talbott et. al ((302/64 Jan. 20, 1921), John A. Selby on 7/6/1950 (Fred. Co. CKW1402/279) and Fitzhugh T.Clarke (1773/191&197) part of land called "Zoar" conveyed to Thomas & Co. by Lena V. Bohrer Ward & husband by deed dated July 30, 1947 (1093/169) The core Fulks/Cannery property is part of the 1,238-1/2 land grant "Zoar" patented by Robert Biscoe and son Gerard in 1793 incorporating several earlier grants. Martha Meem, wife of George A. Meem of Georgetown, purchased 200 acres of Zoar known as "Rawlings Rest" from Mary R. Bibb. in 1863. Henry C. Ward and Ignatius T. Fulks, operating as the company of Ward&Fulks, purchased the Cannery property from Martha Meem on April 29, 1873. (EBP10/388.)

14. Sentinel, 6/28/1962

15. Janet Manuel. The Manuels lived in the west Diamond Avenue/ Water Street area.

16. Sentinel, ibid.

17. Sentinel, ibid.

MHT# M:21-168
Thomas Cannery
Attachment 8.4

Sanford and Parris Insurance Map, 1930
Cannery Complex notes from John S.Thomas, May 1986

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. M:21-168

Interviews with John S. Thomas, James Wriley Jacobs, Janet and Lee Manuel. Town/City of Gaithersburg Minutes and Building Permits 1917- 1930. 1930 Sanborn and Parris Fire Insurance Map, Montgomery County Land Records. Gaithersburg, The Heart of Montgomery County.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____ Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A				B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Montgomery County Plat #12306. Fronting on Chestnut Street, bounded by the B&O Railroad tracks to the west.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

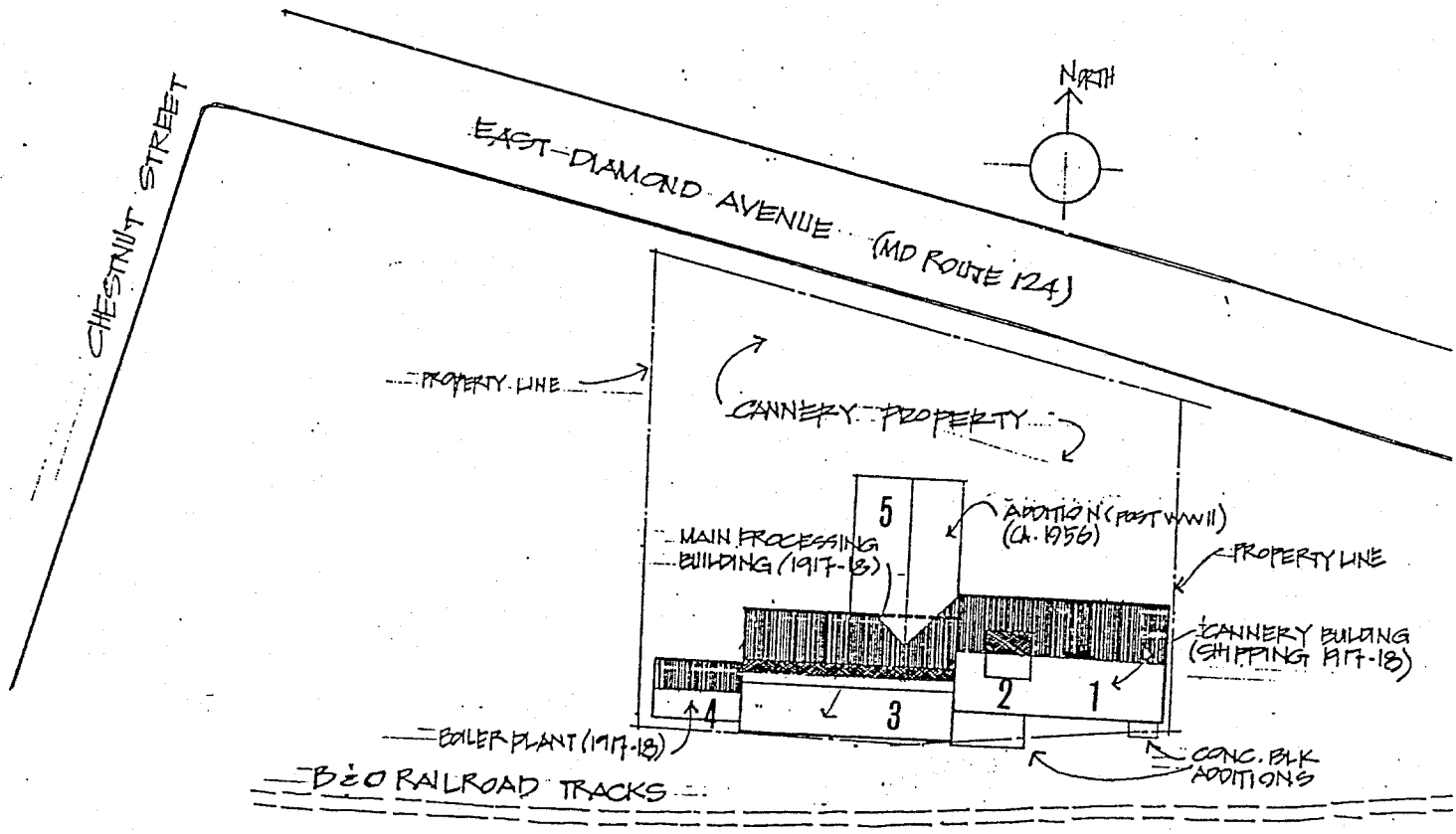
name/title	Judith Christensen / David Shayt		
organization	City of Gaithersburg	date	January 1986
street & number	31 South Summit Avenue	telephone	948-3220
city or town	Gaithersburg	state	Maryland 20877

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.

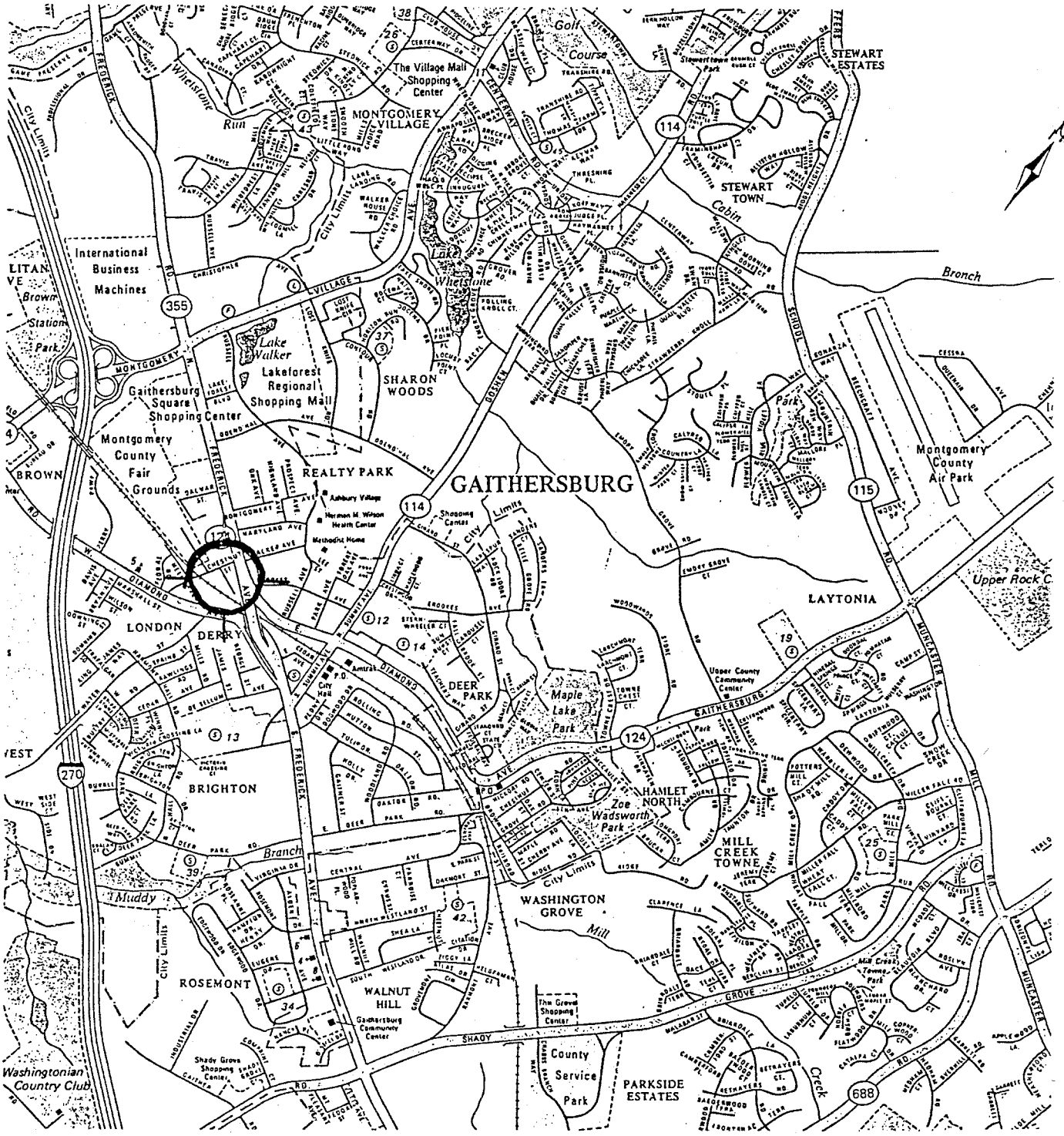
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

PS-2746



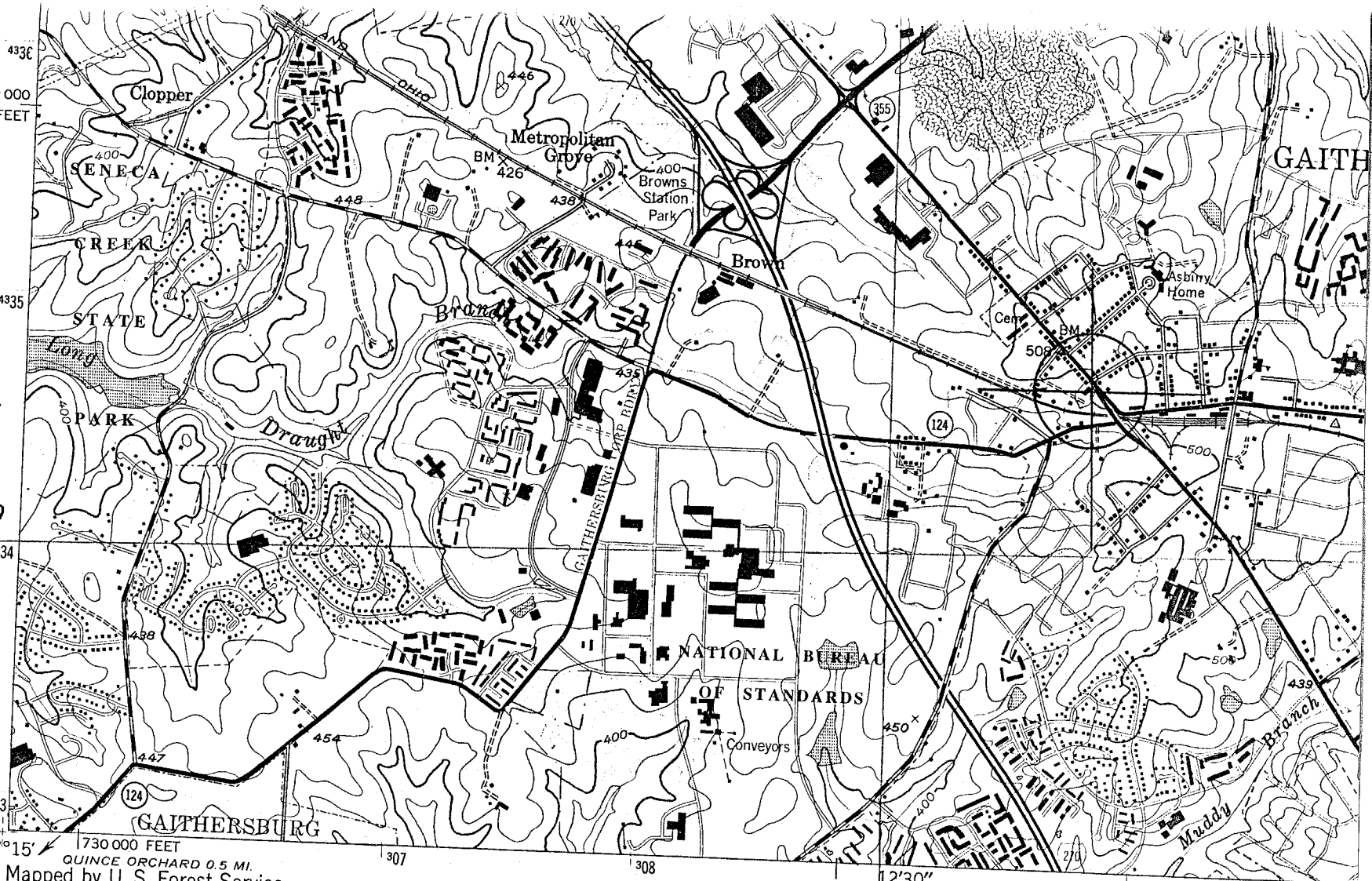
Resource Sketch Map 1989
(Not to Scale)



Site Location Map 1989

See Continuation Sheet No. 7.3

Thomas & Co.
Cannery
M:21-168
Montgomery Co.
Maryland
18/309800/4334750



Mapped by U. S. Forest Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USC&GS, WSSD, and USGS

Topography from aerial photographs by KEK plotter 1944
Aerial photographs taken 1943. Field check 1945

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 8 meters south and
25 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reserva[illegible] shown on this map

Area covered by dashed ligh[illegible]purple pattern is subject to controlled
inundation

MN
GN
8°
142 MILS
1°23'
25 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:[illegible]

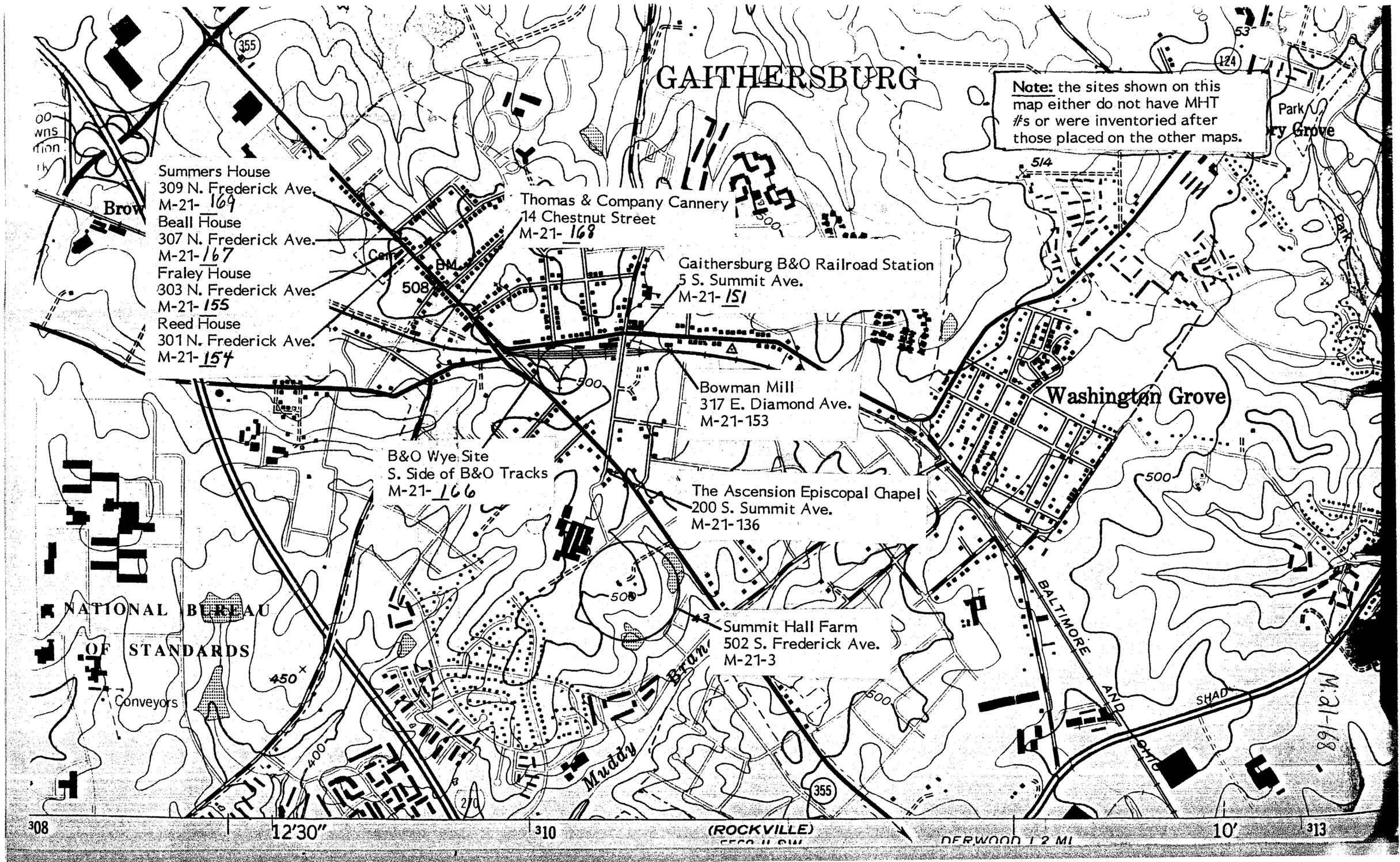
1 ½ 0

1000 0 1000 2000 3000

1 .5 0

CONTOUR INTER[illegible]
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERT[illegible]

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATION[illegible]
FOR SALE BY [illegible] U. S. GEOLOGICAL SU[illegible]
A FOLDER DESCRIBI[illegible] OPOGRAPHIC MAPS A[illegible]


GAITHERSBURG
Note: the sites shown on this map either do not have MHT #s or were inventoried after those placed on the other maps.
Summers House
309 N. Frederick Ave.
M-21-169
Beall House
307 N. Frederick Ave.
M-21-167
Fraley House
303 N. Frederick Ave.
M-21-155
Reed House
301 N. Frederick Ave.
M-21-154
Thomas & Company Cannery
14 Chestnut Street
M-21-168
Gaithersburg B&O Railroad Station
5 S. Summit Ave.
M-21-151
Bowman Mill
317 E. Diamond Ave.
M-21-153
B&O Wye Site
S. Side of B&O Tracks
M-21-166
The Ascension Episcopal Chapel
200 S. Summit Ave.
M-21-136
Summit Hall Farm
502 S. Frederick Ave.
M-21-3
Washington Grove
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
Conveyors
Muddy Branch
BALTIMORE AND OHIO
SHAD
Park
355
124
514
508
500
450
400
308
12'30"
310
(ROCKVILLE)
10'
313
M.21-168

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #2 OF 6

Thomas & Co Cannery

MI-21-168

Montgomery Co., MD

Photo by John J. Cullinane

January 1989

Neg: John Cullinane Assoc
1214 28th St, N.W
Washington, D.C. 20007

View looking S.W. showing the north and east elevation of the storehouse portion of the cannery

2/6

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #1 OF 6

Thomas & Co. Cannery M:21-168

Montgomery Co. Md.

Photo by John J. Cullinane

January 1989

Neg: John Cullinane Assoc.
1214 28th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

View looking S. at the N. elevation of the cannery, showing the boiler plant to the right, processing plant in the middle, storehouse to the left, 1950s additions in the foreground.

1/4

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #5 OF 6

Thomas & Co. Cannery M:21-168
Montgomery Co., MD
Photo by John J. Cullinane
January 1989
Neg. John Cullinane Assoc.
1214 28th St.
Washington, D.C. 20007
View looking N.E. showing the S. elevation of the boiler plant & processing portion of the cannery. Lean-to additions are show on the lower section of the building

3/6

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #4 OF 6

Thomas & Co Cannery M:21-168
Montgomery Co., Md.
Photo by John J. Callerame
January 1989
Neg. John Callerame Assoc.
1214 28th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
View looking N.W. showing the S elevation of the storehouse portion of the cannery. Lean-to additions are shown in the lower section of the building.

4/6

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #5 OF 6

Thomas & Co. Cannery M:21-168
Montgomery Co., Md.
Photo by John J. Cullinane
January 1989
Neg: John Cullinane Assoc.
1214 28th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

View looking S. at the N. elevation of the boiler plant and processing portion of the cannery; 1950s addition to the left.

THOMAS & COMPANY CANNERY, MONTGOMERY CO. MD #6 OF 6

Thomas & Co. Cannery M:21-168
Montgomery Co., Md.
Photo by John J. Cullinane
January 1989
Neg: 1214 28th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C 20007

View looking E. at the W. elevation
of the 1950s addition

6/6