M: 24-19-3 1820
"Ace" Esworthy House, site
(Griffith House)
14011 Darnestown Road (MD 28)
Darnestown

Probably the oldest house in Darnestown, this 1 1/2-story log and frame house was an integral part of the town since 1820, when it was built by the town's first wheelwright, Samuel Leeke. It has also served as a tavern, twice as a general store, as the town's post office, and as a polling place. The house remained little changed until the ownership of Ace Esworthy, who removed the porch and log storehouse about 1932 and replaced them with a frame bedroom addition. Besides his auto repair business, Ace also served as a Montgomery County commissioner in the mid-1940s. The house was demolished in April of 1987.

There is also a town cemetery located on this lot. It was about 40 feet wide and occupied most of the side and rear part of the lot. There were about 15 to 30 headstones. Although there is no above-ground evidence of it today, some remnants of the Darne family and a number of other early residents are believed to be buried there. It is well-known to the long-time residents of Darnestown. The cemetery probably dates from the 1860s--the last burial being about 1916. Discussions with long-term residents have brought to light the fact that headstones formerly in place in the cemetery are now used as a walkway for a neighboring house. These headstones can be seen today.

Survey No. M:24/19-3

Magi No.

DOE ___yes ___no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic: Griffith House

and/or common: "Ace" Esworthy House

2. Location

street & number: 14011 Darnestown Road ___ not for publication

city, town: Darnestown ___ vicinity of congressional district

state: Maryland county: Montgomery

3. Classification

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

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

name: Floyd Eaton

street & number: 1110 Bonifant St. telephone no.:

city, town: Silver Spring, state and zip code Maryland 20910

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: MontgomeryCounty Courthouse liber 362

street & number: folio 127

city, town: Rockville state Md.

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title: Md. Hist. Trust, State Historic Sites Inventory Form

date: July, 1983 ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town: state

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	_X_ original site
_X_ 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.

The Griffith house is a 1½ story log and frame house. The main part, which is the oldest, is entirely of log construction. It contains two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. There is a large chimney block on the west side of the house which serves the fireplace in the liv.rm. and also the fireplace in the bedroom directly above. There are two dormers projecting from the gable roof at the front, and a portico has been built over the centrally-located front door. The house has one over one light windows with the exception of the dormers which are six over six lights. There is also a din. rm. and kitchen downstairs, and a bath. There is a more recent frame addition at the east side of the house which contains two bedrooms. In the rear, a single story shed addition slopes off the back of the main house. There is also an enclosed porch across the back.

The house remained little changed from the enclosed picture taken in the late 1800s, until the ownership of Ace Esworthy. The porch across the front and the log storehouse on the east side (where Fisher, and later, Griffith, had their businesses) are still remaining in the enclosed picture taken about 1932. Shortly after this, Esworthy removed the porch and the log storehouse and replaced them with the portico and the frame bedroom addition. He also enlarged the porch across the back and enclosed it. The weatherboard siding of both earlier photos was replaced by a wide white siding, shown in today's picture.

8. Significance

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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
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	X other (specify) Local History
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

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.

This house, listed on the 1865 map as Sam Fisher's store and Post Office, and on the 1879 map as the house and store of Julian Griffith, is probably the oldest house in Darnestown. It seems to have been an integral part of the life of the town since its beginnings - as the home and shop of the town's first wheelwright, then as the town's general store, and most recently as the home of Ace Esworthy, whose auto garage beside it was a gathering place of many of the town's residents.

In January 1820, Samuel Leeke purchased this land, a triangular-shaped lot of .435 acres, from William Darne. Leeke was the first wheelwright in the community and built his house and shop here. In November of 1823, Leeke sold the property for $800 - "...the lot and house where Leeke now resides....as sold to Leeke by William Darne Jan. 12, 1820."[1]

In 1831, the property was involved in an equity case and was advertised for sale - - "formerly occupied by Samuel Leeke and others as a tavern...."[2] and sold at that time for $514. By 1865, after changing hands several times, the property came to Samuel Fisher, a merchant, who had his general store here. He was in partnership with his brother-in-law, trading as Fisher and Benton. Fisher was also postmaster of Darnestown. Fisher died about 1868, and the property was sold for $2250 to Ulysses Griffith and James Windsor who had been previously renting it. This was the same lot which "contains the store house and dwelling formerly occupied by Samuel M. Fisher and now by Ulysses Griffith and James S. Windsor."[3] Ulysses had purchased a share to set up his son, Julian, in business. Griffith (Julian) and Windsor became the merchants of the town.

After about 10 years, Griffith and Windsor dissolved the partnership and Windsor left to open his own store. This property stayed in the Griffith family until 1917 when it was sold to Ernest Ricketts. "...same land upon which storehouse and dwelling occupied by Julian Griffith".[4]

Ricketts sold to Ray Davis in 1924, who in turn sold to George "Ace" Esworthy

Griffith House (Esworthy) con't.

8. Significance con't.

in 1929. Esworthy had operated a car repair service here since 1926 in a garage building next to the house. The garage was built of concrete block by Esworthy and his brother-in-law Joe Torreyson. Esworthy also served as a member of Montgomery County Council during the late 1940s. After Esworthy died in 1979, the house was sold to Floyd Eaton, the present owner. The house is now mostly unoccupied and opened only occasionally as a beauty shop.

1. X/148, Mont. Co. Land Records
2. BS 3/341 " " " "
3. EBP 5/270 " " " "
4. 262/76 " " " "

There was also a small cemetery at the rear (the point of the triangular lot) of the property, which is well-known to the old families of Darnestown. However, this cemetery is never mentioned in any of the land records as the property has changed hands over the years. A daughter of the Ricketts, who lived there from 1917 to 1924, says she remembers there were four to six stones, but some were unmarked.1 The stones were very old and weathered at that time. At least one body was removed during the'20s or'30s. It has been supposed that some of the Darne family were buried here, but it is highly unlikely, for many reasons. It is more probable that some of the very early residents of that part of the town were the ones buried there. There is no above-ground evidence of the cemetery today, although I understand the tombstones are probably still around the property.

1. conversation with Mrs.Katie Ricketts Lowery Koonce

Information about this house also obtained from Dottie Esworthy Majors. Information about the cemetery from Mrs. Majors, Mrs. Becky Offutt, and bits of input from many other Darnestown residents.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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1. The Mont. County Story - Feb. 1982 - "Darnestown, as it Was" by Jane Sween.
2. Jane Sween's research notes of Land Records of various Darnestown lots.
3. MNCPPC Hist. Sites Investory - 1983 - "Darnestown Hist. District"

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .435 acres

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

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 Nancy Houston

organization **date** August 1985

street & number **telephone**

city or town **state**

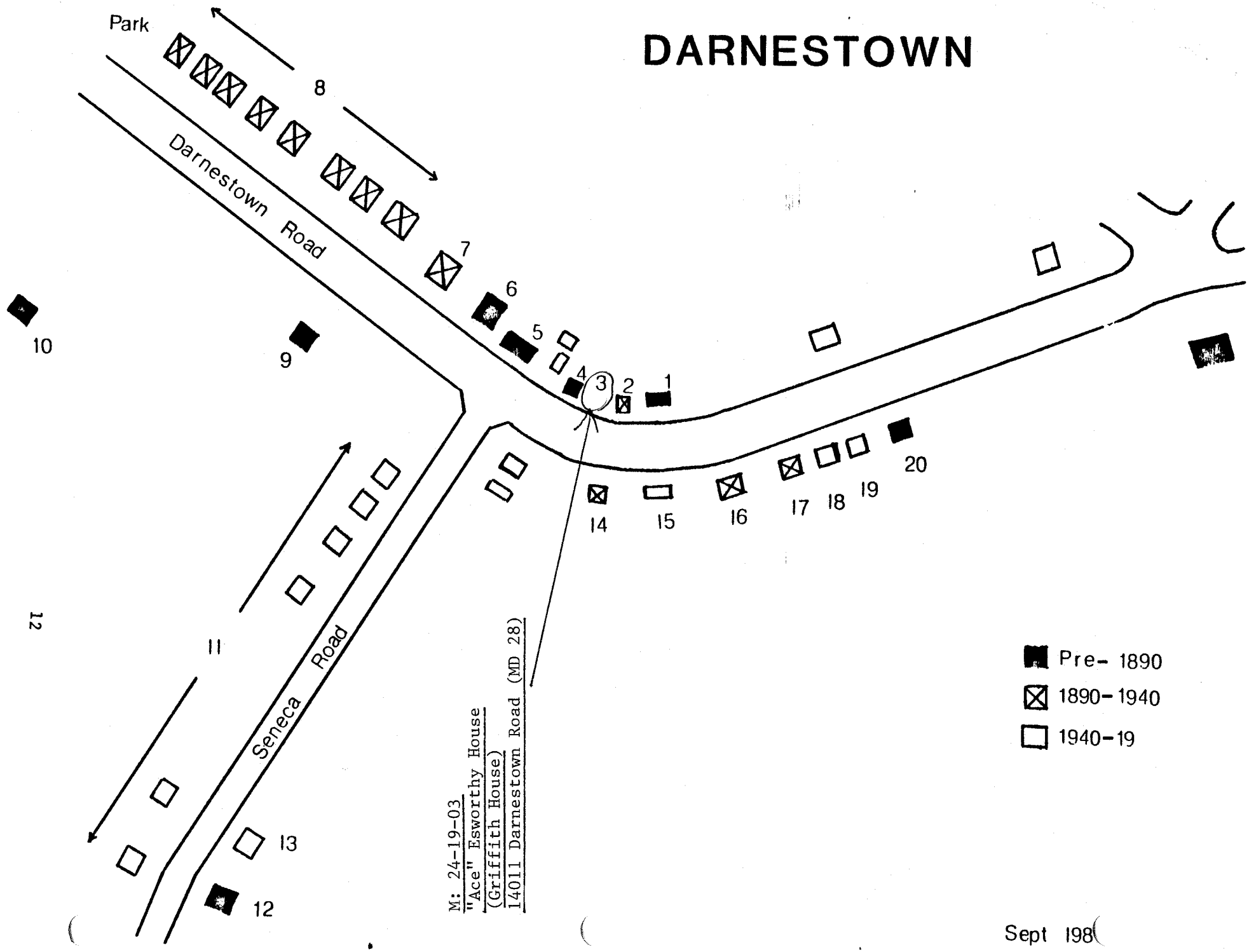
The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

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

FIGURE 1
DARNESTOWN



Sept 198

M: 24-19-3

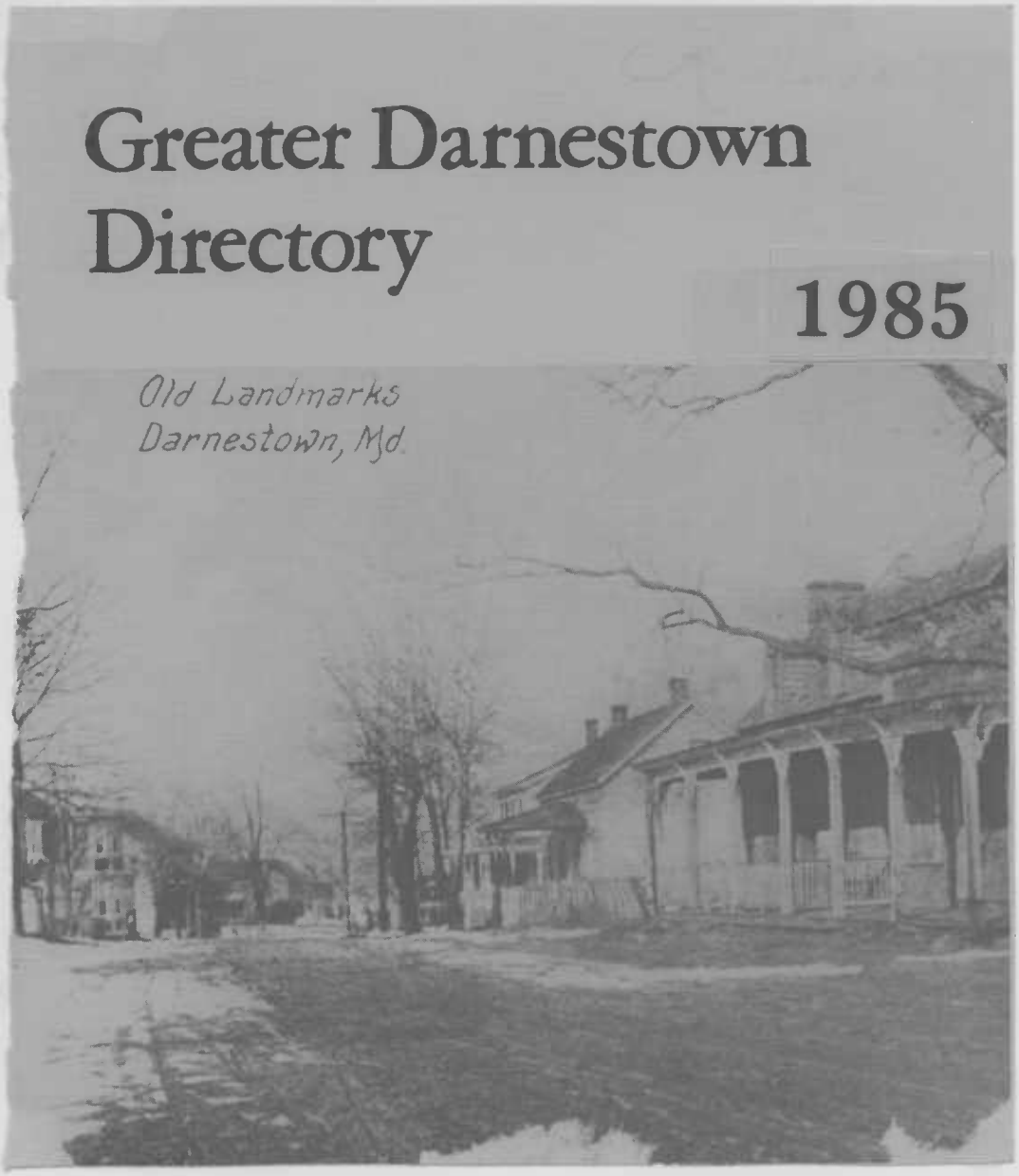
GRIFFITH-ESWORTHY HOUSE

1932 photo
shows
porch and log
storehouse
still there

1985 photo

shows west side
of house

M:24-19-3



Cover of Darnestown area phone directory

Photo taken late 1800s

Griffith-Esworthy house in right forground

NOTE: the next house 2nd from right

shows the east side of the Ann Wells house

1985 photo taken from approximately same location.