

Site M:26/10/38

Sophia Higgins House

~~101 South Van Buren Street~~

200 W Jefferson

Built: 1892

Private

Sophia Barnard Higgins was Georgetown-born, wealthy, cosmopolitan and strong-willed. She took over the Higgins business following her husband's death and remained a prominent figure in Rockville's social and cultural history. The several houses she built for herself and her family on Falls Road caused the area to be nicknamed "Higginsville". This large frame house was the last one she built; she shared it with her unmarried daughters. Once boasting a broad verandah in front and Queen Anne detailing, it has been enclosed in aluminum siding and shorn of most of its decorative elements, including the front porch. Much of the Eastlake-inspired woodwork and lighting fixtures on the interior is extant.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. 26/10/38

Magi No. 1650542604

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Sophia Higgins houseand/or common Waters house

## 2. Location

street & number ~~101 South Van Buren Street~~ 200 W. Jefferson  not for publicationcity, town Rockville  vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 8state Maryland county Montgomery

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

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

name Ralf Neuschaefferstreet & number 101 South Van Buren Street telephone no.: 251-1027city, town Rockville state and zip code Maryland 20850

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse liber 4824street & number Montgomery County Land Records folio 862city, town Rockville state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title National Register (West Montgomery Avenue Historic District) - 1974date locally designated Historic District - 1974  
M-NCPPC - 1976  federal  state  county  localdepository for survey records City of Rockvillecity, town Rockville state Maryland

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

101 South Van Buren Street is situated at the junction of South Van Buren and Jefferson Streets, a few yards southeast of Falls Road. Built in 1892, this large square three bay by three bay frame house has a high brick foundation which makes it appear taller than its 2 1/2 stories. The ridge line of the steep gable asphalt-shingled roof runs east-west, with a central brick chimney, and there are smaller gables on the front and sides of the house.

The main (east) facade on South Van Buren Street has a secondary gable with a second-story projection below; this projection now seems to be unsupported, as the original covered porch was removed some time ago. Beneath this projection, four steps lead to a small cement stoop at the entrance door; the door has side lights and a two-light transom. To the left of the projecting gable are two one-over-one windows with plain trim.

On the south side there is a cross gable from the mid-point to the rear corner of the house. Beneath the gable is a two-story, shallow three-sided bay with slightly pitched roof. The windows in each of the three facets of the bay are narrow one-over-one double-hung sash. The middle window is a double one.

Under the secondary cross gable at the north side are one-over-one windows on the first and second floors; there is one long one-over-one window lighting the interior stair landing. Although there are many double windows in the house, windows on this facade are single. A covered porch topped with railed balcony is attached to the north-northeast corner of the house; it has cinderblock piers and was enclosed by aluminum and glass/screen panels in 1975.

The rear (west) facade has two windows on the upper story and a shed-roofed attic dormer with multi-paned double windows. Behind the main block to the west is a one-story, one bay shed-roofed addition over a high cinderblock foundation. Two basement entrance doors are at ground level. On the south side of the addition a flight of stairs leads to the service porch and entrance on the first floor.

The two alterations (1940s and 1974/75) have resulted in the loss of most exterior trim and ornamentation. The front porch was removed, the side porch enclosed, shutters and window trim removed, new roofing material added and the house sheathed in light yellow aluminum siding in these two alterations, leaving little original exterior detailing. However, much of the interior trim is original -- including wide reeded door and window mouldings with bulls-eye headblocks, Eastlake-inspired front hall stairway, and the brass hardware and lighting fixtures throughout the house.

The house has been divided into apartments for some years, and is now in the process of being sold out of the Waters family. There are attractive plantings to the rear of the house, which is of a lower elevation than South Van Buren Street.

B-11 B

# 8. Significance

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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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1892 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 1892 house was the last home of one of the most interesting women in 19th century Rockville. Sophia Dorothy Barnard (Higgins) was raised in a wealthy Georgetown banking family.<sup>1</sup> Her education, cosmopolitan attitude, business acumen and strong anti-slavery views were considered "unfeminine" and somewhat radical by Rockville society during the 1850's and 60's. In 1871 she purchased 13 acres of land bordering Great Falls Road and built a house.<sup>2</sup> Her sons built adjoining houses, resulting in that area being nicknamed "Higginsville". In 1892 she built the subject house as a residence for herself and her three unmarried daughters.<sup>3</sup> Its attractiveness is now compromised by proximity to the intersection of three heavily traveled major arteries, and it has lost some of its shade trees and gardens to the bulldozer and pavement.

Sophia's father, Robert Barnard, came from England and set up a banking house. He was also the Treasurer of the C&O Canal Company from 1841-1846.<sup>4</sup> The Barnard family's summer house "Normanstone" was located near the present site of the British Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. Sophia was born in Georgetown in 1824. In 1847 John H. Higgins sought her hand in marriage, but agreed to leave the Higgins farm several miles east of Rockville (present Twinbrook area) and to move to town to please the urban-minded Sophia. The general merchandise store he bought in Rockville was financed by the Barnards and master-minded by Sophia. He also agreed to free his slaves.

Higgins was one of the more prominent "Unionists" in town and was arrested by J.E.B. Stuart's Confederate cavalry forces when they took Rockville in July 1863. Arrested with him were several other citizens as well as a 17 year old Union soldier named Eblen, whom Sophia had been nursing and shielding in their home on Adams Street (#101 North Adams). The attached letter from Sophia to her mother recounts the capture and eventual release.<sup>5</sup>

#8 Continuation page 8.1

John Higgins was elected one of the first Town Commissioners in 1864 when that form of town government was adopted. After he died in 1870, Sophia sold the Adams Street house to settle the estate and in 1872 purchased 13 1/2 acres on Falls Road. The house she built there was #308 (demolished in 1982). The other "Higginsville" houses belonging to her sons are still standing at #300 and #304 Falls Road.

After John Higgins' death, Sophia had formally taken over the business as S.D. Higgins & Sons Company. She ran it with her two sons and son-in-law until 1888. But the Company went out of business owing many debts, and to raise capital, Sophia sold her property on Falls Road to J. Heath Dodge for \$8,000. The property included "12 1/2 acres, a good dwelling house with fruitage and fish pond".<sup>6</sup>

The new 1/3 acre lot Sophia purchased in 1892 was located opposite the Baptist Cemetery on Van Buren Street (once the stable lane of the Prettyman family).<sup>7</sup> This site was in the midst of the rapidly developing area of newer homes in the fashionable Queen Anne/Eastlake style. Sophia's large, new house had airy verandahs on two sides (now removed or enclosed) and also had bedrooms on the first floor to better accommodate one of her maiden daughters who was crippled.

Sophia died at age 83 in 1907, and the house remained in the family until the death of her last daughter in 1936. Most of the major alterations were done after this period, but before 1950 when Hilda Waters purchased the house. It was sold in 1984 to the current owner.

Sophia's two sons later pursued military, law and real estate careers. Her daughters married into the merchant and professional families of Rockville. Today her Higgins, Wilson, Welsh and Talbott grandchildren and great-grandchildren are prominent members of the Community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Most of the Barnard family information is taken from genealogical records on file at the Montgomery County Historical Society. In addition, Maud Wilson Betts (Mrs. David Betts) supplied or clarified information in an oral interview.
2. Montgomery County Land Records, Liber EBP 11, folio 87.
3. Montgomery County Sentinel May 6, 1892 and Montgomery County Tax Assessments, 1890-1894.
4. Scharf, History of Western Maryland, Vol. I, p. 713 of 1968 reprint.
5. See letter attached; Ironically, after the war Sophia got Eblen a job in her family's bank, but he embezzled funds and fled west. In later years Sophia's children would receive small sums of money signed "Eblen", but never any explanation or address.
6. Land Records, Liber JA 14, folio 482 and JA 19, folio 172 and Sentinel April 18, 1890.
7. The 1893 Tax Assessment valued the 1/3 acres of "Exchange and New Exchange" at \$250, plus improvements valued at \$2,250.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Montgomery County Land, Tax and Equity records  
Montgomery County Sentinel  
Higgins family file, Montg. Co. Historical Society  
General County histories; Scharf, History of Western Maryland

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .33 acre

Quadrangle name

Quadrangle scale

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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	Anne W. Cissel	date	August 1984
organization	Peerless Rockville	telephone	762-0096
street & number	P.O. Box 4262	state	Maryland 20850
city or town	Rockville		

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

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101 South Van Buren St.  
Sophia Higgins House

## APPENDIX

*The following letter was written by Sophia Dorothy Barnard Higgins to her mother, Mrs. Robert Barton Barnard, of Georgetown:*

Rockville  
June 29, 1863

My dear Mother:

I suppose news of our tribulation reached you today. First place Saturday morning I got up to find Maria, my cook, gone, and heard during the day that Basil and Charity at William Trent's also gone. Mr. Muncaster's servant cleared out. Well, I had been expecting for the last two years to find it so, but still it was a blow. I was very busy all Saturday, and hardly got to bed, before I heard horsemen going by and the clanking of sabres and spurs. "Federal pickets", thought I, and laid me down and slept in peace. After breakfast, I was getting the children ready for Sabbath School. I saw a Federal guard with six hundred condemned horses going by to Washington. I told John to come home after school and stay with his sister, Dora, and little Frank, whilst I went to church. As John came in at the front gate, I heard a terrific yell, and there appeared what I thought were six colored men on horseback rushing up to our gate and drawing up in line. Dora screamed, "Rebels, Ma!" I thought it impossible. The next moment I saw a whole column with the Rebel Flag charging furiously down past William Brewer's, and the next a discharge of musketry and cannon in the rear, and there was a demand to know where the man who lives here was. I could with truth say he was not in. "Where was he?" and tell I did not. Eblen came running in to get us into the cellar, when the men surrounded him, saying "You are the one we are looking for" and took him, calling him a "cursed Yankee". I followed on to beg for him, but no use. I have not seen or heard from him since.

I broke through the charging columns with the pistol balls flying, rushed through the back way to the Church just in time to warn Mr. Higgins, Mr. Bowie, Mr. Dawson and Williams to stay in the Vestry room, for they, the Secessionists, were vowing vengeance on them.

I came back bringing the children through the melee. I flew to get Mr. DeSillum (the Presbyterian minister) to put himself out of the way and give John Vinson time to prepare himself. They did at Mr. Prout's, but I was too late to save Mr. Moulden and Mr. Bailey.

I remember nothing but the thick rank and clanking of sabres, yells and furious charges. They were pouring in at every lane and road from the Falls.

On my return I was beset with applications for Mr. Higgins. "Where was he?—In the Village—Could not they get in the store?"

Higgins

"If I did not open that store, they would break it open." "Pull it down". "Had I the key?" "Yes, I had the key." "Well, now you have to be accommodating." I just told them if Gen. Wade Hampton or General Jeb Stuart would send one of their aides with a guard and said I must open it, I would. "Now, that is ladylike. We will pay you in Confederate script". I replied, "I take no pay for what you take. Remember, if you go into that store, I go too, but I do not wish you to have anything out of it".

It ended in my finding a Rebel Captain Cissel of Maryland, who showed me Gen. Stuart. I sent Dr. Hodges to ask him if I was compelled to open the store. He sent an order back for me to stay in front of the store "and let one of them dare to resist you." I stayed there six hours, repelling their persistent endeavors and having a full view of their movements.

There had been no firing after the first assault. A brigade of Federals came up as far as the Poor House and though too feeble to oppose the whole force, yet skirmished on the outskirts of the village. There were three brigades of Rebels in all, about 8,000. One brigade went charging down the turnpike, capturing an incoming Federal wagon train of 170 wagons. They skirmished down as far as the stone tavern (5 miles from Washington), sweeping the whole country of horses and servants. John, with bitter tears, declared his intention of taking Charlie's horse upstairs, but I took him and hid him in the bushes in the garden and saved him.

George Peter, Messrs. Miller, White and Brown, (all Secessionists) pleaded hard for the rescue of Eblen and that Union men should not be molested. Had it not been for their endeavors, every Union man would have been taken and every store laid open, for Gen. Lee had ordered such to be done, but Gen. Stuart countermanded the order at the earnest protestations of the Secessionists, for they said to carry out such an order would be their (Secessionists) entire ruin. At six the Rebels deployed out in the open fields below the village and came up a solid Column, one-half under Gen. Lee, turning out towards Brookeville, and one-half under Gen. Stuart, towards Frederick. They had a battery of six pieces. No infantry. They carried their prisoners off, compelling Capt. Vinson, tho' too ill to stand alone, to mount a horse, at the point of their sabres, and go with them.

Relieved, I thought all had gone and I went to the Church to tell my prisoners to wait another hour and they would be safe. When Mr. Bowie said, "Here comes a squad", there was an ominous "Halt" outside and the door opened. The gentlemen never stirred, I never changed my position. Emma Holland gave a slight sob. There was a dead silence, but in the growing dark I could see that Mr. Higgins and Mr. Bowie were deadly pale. Then, "Is Mr. Dawson here?", "Yes,

sir". Rising, he walked out, Emma Holland with them. The guard looked first at me. It was Captain Cissel. He hesitated then looked at Higgins. "Lieut. Wilkes, come here. I have forgotten the name." "Mr. Higgins," replied the Lieut. "Come out." I went up and threw my arms around Mr. Higgins. "Good-bye". "No leave-taking, if you please", said the Lieut. "There can be no objection to his leaving directions."

In solemn procession, we moved up the street as far as the square, when the Captain, said, "Ladies, you can go no farther". The Seccessionists gathered around Mrs. Bowie and myself declaring they had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Bowie was rather short. I said "I know positively that not one of you could have any influence today, as Gen. Stuart had a written list of all the Union men's names. *But some one here furnished that list.*" They left me alone after that.

I broke down once only, through the day and that was when the children knew that their father was a prisoner. I went down and gathered all Mr. Higgins' papers and money out of the safe. I buried the money. I sent for John and Eliza Martin (colored) to stay with me as I was alone with my children.

About one o'clock I heard the back gate slam and someone called "Dora". It was Mr. Higgins! The Rebels took him out towards Laytonsville. They met the other columns filing in from Brookeville. Somehow, they seemed uneasy about Judge Bowie and, stopping to rest, concluded they had better let him go, and besides the Federal troops were passing through Rockville and as they had no horses for the three could not hope to retain them and move rapidly.

I heard many say they were going to give Pennsylvania a taste of the war. Notwithstanding all, they behaved better than I expected; never entered the house. They had feasted on Uncle Abe's army rations. Had captured enough coffee, a *rarity*. "They did not fight for 13 dollars a month." "They were going to run all the Yankees off the face of the earth." "But we are gentlemen. We don't distress women and children and destroy dwellings."

Tuesday, the 30th  
Eblen got home two o'clock this morning, so faint and exhausted that I had to help him to bed. The Rebels carried him to the confines of Carroll County. Mr. Bailey, the Postmaster, and Mr. Moulden, the Provost, were offered their liberty unconditionally at Brookeville, but Mr. Bailey refused to leave Eblen, for he feared if he wearied, they would shoot him on the road, as they did several prisoners on the march. They concluded not to leave Eblen. Bailey carried him several miles on his back. Moulden helped. They both passed their arms under his shoulders and kept him from fainting. They had not one mouthful to eat from Sunday morning till they were released at 11 o'clock Mon-

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101 South Van Buren St.  
Sophia Higgins House

day night at Clagettsville, where they were ordered back five miles this way and released. The reason was soon apparent, for just then they came to the advance guard of the 2nd Regular Cavalry, who were in hot pursuit. They were not permitted to stop for water, except as they crossed the streams, they dipped up a hatful. They had 300 colored men prisoners, whom they had gathered from the various farms. They slashed at them if they attempted to drink at the streams. Eblen saw one shot because he was too weak to keep up with the others. The Sergeant who had them in charge tried to beg food from the Rebels for his prisoners, but could get none. In all they marched nearly 70 miles.

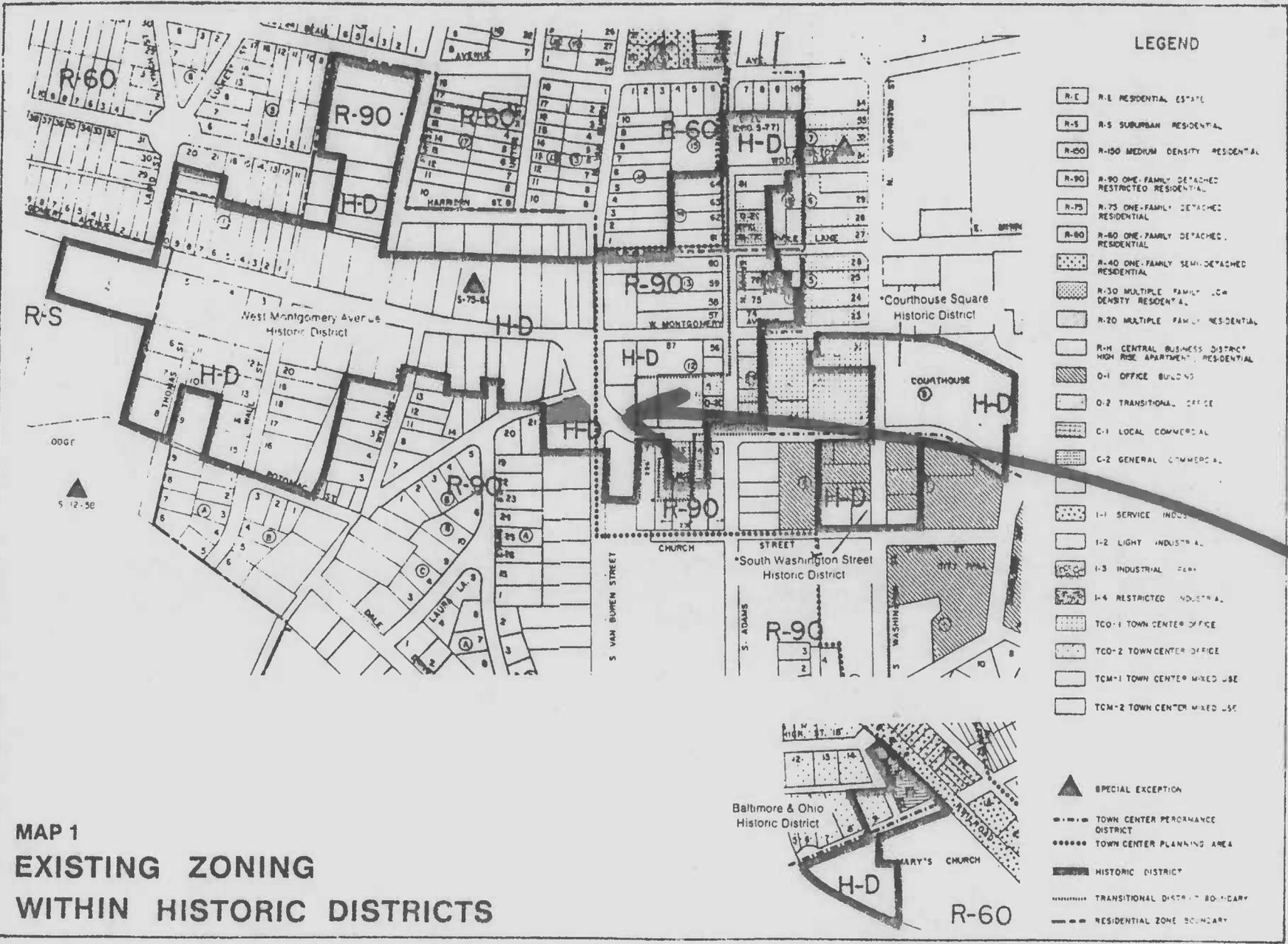
What hurts me more than all is that Mr. Peter said he would go to Lee and see if he could get Eblen off. Told Lee that nothing but his being a weakly man (boy) had spared him from being clubbed to death by the Secessionists. Mr. Peter prevented me from going to Lee and Mrs. B. revealed the fact that as the last Rebels were leaving the village Judge Bowie heard them say, "Stuart's Cavalry are the elite of the Southern Army."

I could, by what I know, justly get the punishment of many prominent Secessionists, but I shall never hurt a hair of their heads. But I shall certainly tell George Peter of his treachery.

I expect to send this across the country to Colesville, as we have no mail this week.

With love to all, I am

Your affectionate daughter,  
Dora B. Higgins."



**MAP 1  
EXISTING ZONING  
WITHIN HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

\*Note: For discussion and planning purposes South Washington Street and the Courthouse Square district are considered independent Historic Districts even though they are shown on the existing zoning map as one district.

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 M: 26/10/38  
 Sophia Higgins House  
 101 South Van Buren St.  
 Rockville



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M: 26/10/38

101 So. Van Buren St,  
SOPHIA HIGGINS HOUSE  
SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1020-3

RICHARD H. ANDREWS  
1608 Farragut Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20851

AUGUST, 1984