MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property Name: John Higgins House  Inventory Number: M-26-10-66

Address: 300 Great Falls Rd.  City: Rockville  Zip Code: ____________

County: Montgomery  USGS Topographic Map: Rockville

Owner: ____________________________________________________________

Tax Parcel #: __________  Tax parcel Map Number: __________  Tax Account ID Number: __________

Project: MD 189 Streetscape  Agency: SHA

Site visit by MHT staff  X no  ___ yes  Name: ___________________  Date: ____________

Eligibility recommended  _____  Eligibility not recommended  X

Criteria:  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  Considerations:  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ E  ___ F  ___ G  None

Is the property located within a historic district?  ____ no  ___ yes  Name of District: _______________________

Is district listed?  ____ no  ___ yes  District Inventory Number: ___________________

Documentation on the property/district is presented in:

Project Review and Compliance Files

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)

The John Higgins House is a 2-1/2 story house, 5 bays wide with 2 over 2 windows. There are also oriel windows on
the first floor. The exterior has been covered in aluminum siding and the roof is covered in asphalt shingles. While
this is a 19th century house, the building lacks integrity. SHA proposed that it along with several other houses might
form an extension of the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. However, given the lack of integrity, the Trust is
of the opinion that the house and the district are not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places
under Criteria A, B or C.

Prepared by:  Rita M. Suffness, SHA  Date Prepared:  05/05/2000

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended  _____  Eligibility not recommended  X

Criteria  ___ X  ___ A  ___ X B  ___ X C  ___ D  Considerations  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ E  ___ F  ___ G  None

MHT Comments:

Anne E. Bruder
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services  September 25, 2000

Date  9/24/01  Date
Site: M:26/10/66
John Higgins House
300 Falls Road
Built: 1889

The John Higgins House occupies the northern lot of the 13 acre estate locally known as "Higginsville". Constructed for John J. Higgins, the 9 room house was occupied until 1932 by his family. In the 1960s its front facade was altered by stone veneer, new windows, and the flattening of its corner turret, but vestiges of its Queen Anne / Eastlake vocabulary remain on the rear and sides.
Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name  (indicate preferred name)

   historic  The John Higgins House

   and/or common

2. Location

   street & number  300 Falls Road
   city, town    Rockville
   state         Maryland
   county        Montgomery

3. Classification

   Category   Ownership   Status   Present Use
   district   building(s)   public   occupied   agriculture
   structure   private
   site   both
   object   Public Acquisition   unoccupied   commercial
   in process   work in progress
   Accessible   yes: restricted   educational
   being considered   yes: unrestricted   entertainment
   not applicable
   no

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

   name        Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Bruns
   street & number  300 Falls Road
   city, town    Rockville
   telephone no.: 762-7815
   state and zip code   Maryland 20850

5. Location of Legal Description

   courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montana County, Land Records
   liber 4963
   street & number  Montgomery Co. Courthouse
   folio 817
   city, town    Rockville
   state         Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

   title        None
   date
   repository for survey records
   city, town
   state
Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The John Higgins house faces west on Great Falls Road where it intersects with Potomac and Williams Streets. It is sited near the western extreme of the lot. The land slopes steeply down to the east. Thick shrubbery and a number of evergreens shade the south facade. Larger, deciduous trees are at the rear of the house.

This large two-and-1/2-story, modified hipped-roofed house sits on a fieldstone foundation that rises in the rear to accommodate the steep slope. It is sheathed in stone veneer on the west facade, first story and asbestos shingle siding on the remaining facades on both stories. The roofing material is asphalt shingles. The plan is a square with a one-story addition at the southeastern corner. Almost all of the windows are two-over-two or one-over-one, now covered with storm windows as are the doors. A skylight is near the center of the front sloping roof. There is one interior chimney.

Although a late-19th-century house, little remains in architectural detailing from that period. The basic house form of this vernacular Queen Anne-style house, however, is intact.

The northwest (front) facade has three bays. Single two-over-two sash windows are in the first two bays of the second story. A four-light small oval window is in the first bay of the first story while a double entrance door with transom is in the middle bay. Covering the doorway is a one-story open portico with hipped roof supported on two square posts. Flagstone covers the foundation and steps. A wide two-story tripartite bay with paired one-over-one windows in the center bay of the second story and single one-over-one windows on either side. Single aluminum framed windows are in each side on the first-story bay. This bay is topped with a turret which flares slightly at the eaves, as does the line between the first and second levels.

The east facade has three bays. Individual two-over-two sash windows are on both stories of the first bay; smaller one-over-one sash windows are in the second bay, both stories. Another small four-light oval window, identical to that on the front, is in the third bay on the first story near the northwest corner. A large gable dormer with triple windows projects from the center of the roof on this facade.

The southeast (rear) facade is asymmetrically arranged with four two-over-two sash windows placed randomly in the additions and main block. A projecting one-story kitchen addition with deck and exposed stairway dominate this facade. An enclosed area with covered exterior door are directly above. The remaining facade at the northeast corner appears recessed, but is actually the main block exposed. An interior brick chimney rises well above the roof of the house and addition.

Continued on attachment 7.1
8. Significance

Specific dates 1889 Builder/Architect Edwin West (presumed) Builder
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
The Higgins family figured prominently in the social and commercial history of Rockville for three generations. The John Higgins house, though heavily disguised by the application of modern materials, was one of three fashionable houses built in "Higginsville" by Sophia Higgins and her two sons between 1873 and 1890.

History and Support
The financial collapse of S.D. Higgins & Son mercantile business in 1889 forced both Sophia Higgins and her son John J. Higgins to settle their debts by selling their properties. Mrs. Higgins had carried on the family business since the death of her husband in 1871. On a 13 acre estate on the Great Falls Road she had constructed a fine new house and deeded a one half acre lot to each of her sons. 1/ Her younger son Frank was a real estate attorney who was not affected by the failure of the business. But her elder son John had taken out a $2,000 mortgage to privately finance the building of his new residence, which he lost when creditors foreclosed to satisfy the business debts. 2/

The advertisement for the sale of the property appeared in February, 1890, and described the house as
nine rooms besides a hall, bathroom and kitchen...the kitchen and bathroom having appliances for furnishing them with hot and cold water...entire house except attic heated by hot water heating apparatus....

The advertisement also stated that the two story house with attic was new and "has never been occupied". On the day of the public auction, Nicholas D. Offutt bid $2,850 for the house, and on the same day sold the house privately back to the Higgins, but in Laura Muncaster Higgins' name. 3/

Continued on attachment 8.1
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property:  .50 acres

Quadrangle name:   

Quadrangle scale:   

UTM References:  do NOT complete UTM references

Verbal boundary description and justification:

Being Lot 1 of Block C of Hill-an-Dale subdivision fronting on Falls Road.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:  Anne W. Cissel / Dwayne Jones / Stephen Kay

organization:  Peerless Rockville

date:  August 1985

street & number:  P.O. Box 4262

telephone:  762-0096

city or town:  Rockville

state:  Maryland

code:  20850

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
The John Higgins House
Attachment 8.1

John and Laura improved their property by planting many young shade trees. In April, 1891, these trees were the subject of the Town Commissioners' vote to request John Higgins to remove the trees planted in the road in front of his house due to several complaints. Today, several of these large trees still closely border Great Falls Road.

John became a founder and Assistant Treasurer of the Farmer's Bank, School Examiner, an officer of the Agricultural Society, and Trustee of the Rockville Academy. In 1916, still seeking improvement of the "Higginsville" area, John petitioned the Town Council for 270 feet of concrete sidewalk on Falls Road, "he would pay for the labor". The Higgins' raised eight children in the house. John died in 1922 and Laura ten years later.

After 1908 Clarence Hickerson was the owner of Sophia's house nearby at #308 Great Falls Road as well as the original Higgins lands. Mr. Hickerson owned the flour mill on the north side of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks in Rockville and extensive real estate in town; after 1932 he added the John Higgins house to his holdings. Like the former owner of the land he was forced to mortgage his properties during the Depression; at the 1935 Tax Sale of the subject house the only bidder was the Loan Association which held the mortgage.

The building partnership of Franklin and Bradley Karn invested in the land in 1938, but it was not until the post-war era that the Higginsville area property was subdivided for new housing. Franklin Karn named his new development "Hill-an-Dale". The John Higgins house was platted in 1952 as Lot 1 of Block C, lying north of Dale Drive and west of Laura Lane (streets named for Mr. Karn's daughter and grandson). Mr. Karn lived in the Sophia Higgins house during this period, but the house was later demolished.

The Van Piper family owned the John Higgins house until 1963, and it remained unaltered until that time. The subsequent owners were the Kabaker family, who gave the old home a new look. Its exterior was covered with asbestos shingles, a layer of stone veneer was applied to the front facade, and the fenestration was changed to include neo-Georgian oval windows; a new entry porch replaced the old verandah. But some traces of the Queen Anne/Eastlake style remain in the Rockville bay with incised bracketing on the south side of the house, third floor fancy windows, and the pyramid roof topping the partially disguised corner turret.

Since 1977 Henry and Ruth Bruns have owned the property.

Footnotes on attachment 8.2
Footnotes:
1. Frank Higgins received his acreage in 1886 and contracted with Edwin West for construction of his residence. John Higgins received his half acre in 1889 (Montgomery County Land Record JA13/6) and due to the similarities of construction and detailing such as the Rockville bay it, too, is attributed to Edwin West. For Frank Higgins House see Survey Site 26/10/7.
4. City of Rockville Minutes - Record Book #1 (1886-1917).
5. Higgins family information is found in several files at Montgomery County Historical Society, as well as newspaper abstracts, memoirs by various writers, and public records.
6. Tax Sale in August, 1936 recorded in Judgment Record 78/145 for 12-3/8 acres and a two-story, 10 room house with two baths.

M: 
John Higgins House
Attachment 7.1

The southwest facade has two-over-two sash windows on each story of the first bay. A two-story "Rockville bay" is in the second bay; decorative braces on either side of the first story support the second story. Paired windows are centered in this bay, which is topped by a gable with two-light round-arched attic window. A stairway off the kitchen addition and rear deck provides access to a small, shaded brick patio.

Interior

A small vestibule with original tile is reached through the double entrance doors. The large entry hall and dining room make up the front two rooms; two parlors make up the rear two. Much of the original wood work is intact, including the stair railing. The parlors retain the original mantle pieces.

See attachments 7.2, 7.3 for plans.